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## Splitting

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## Splitting

### Author Bio

Ellianie Vega is a senior with a double major in English and WGS and a minor in Japanese. She has worked on The Mercury for four years and is currently Senior Editor. For the past two years, she has belonged to the Academy of American Poets. In her spare time, she enjoys working at WZBT 91.1, writing fiction, and playing the Final Fantasy soundtracks very loudly and poorly on her untuned piano.

# Splitting

ELLIANIE VEGA

I.

This earth was birthed by two of the heavens: Izanagi, he who invites, and Izanami, she who invites, and hand-in-hand they welcome us to the earth. They did not bear their children, for their inheritors were made from the broken parts of themselves. Izanami was the first woman, but not the first mother, and she passed before her husband. Rotting with grief, Izanagi followed his woman into the afterlife, found her body ripe with death after she had dined on nothingness at the hearth of the underworld. And thus, the day, the night, and storms were born from Izanagi's grieving body. While purifying his heavenly self at the edge between the living and dead, he filled a wooden cup with water. From the water washing out of the hollow of the father's right eye slipped the sun daughter, Amaterasu, from his left eye slipped Tsukiyomi, the night son, and from the flowing tears and snot from his nose fell Susanoo, the son of salt and sea and storms. Grief and emptiness drew a sharp line between day and night, and made woman into the bright and righteous and made man into he who brings darkness and silence and death.

II.

Washed from the hollow of his eye, I was born from a man dragged from the ripe stench of his wife's body. I am motherless. Born from the underworld, between life and death, I am the harmony that feeds the night and the sea. Without me, the moon could never shine, water would never rise and form clouds. Though cut from the same cloth as my siblings, I am forced to stay far above them; my scolding heat can be made gentle by loving from afar.

As day is married to night, I was fettered to my brother, Tsukiyomi, and, as two halves to a whole, we had no qualms initially. I shared the sky with him, but was safe from his lustful grasp that twists the tides, that twists my brother Susanoo of the sea and makes him bloom storm clouds from the friction between them. He, unable to proliferate, could never understand the responsibility of birthing the earth, the tenderness between parent and child.

While my hands were full, busy with sowing the seeds of life,

Tsukiyomi stood silent and watched, his eyes black and empty, stoic, stirring, psychotic, violent without reason. One season's end, Uke Mochi, the goddess of food, invited him to view her bounty, to show him the world she designs. From my place in the heavens, I watched from afar. In celebration, she spit fish into the sea and coughed up rice paddies from her stomach. She opened her mouth and out ran wild game, deer leaping through tall grass. Uke Mochi grew a garden from words and she harvested her creation in loving arms. I watched Tsukiyomi's face turn, twisted and creased.

*Disgusting*, he swore at her, and she continued gathering, preparing for the feast, paying him no mind. *Why would the divine desire the ephemeral and earthly?* he bellowed.

*Why can't the divine recognize the earthly as divine?* said Uke Mochi to herself, disappointed with her guest, cursing his ignorance under her breath. She stood with her back to him, harvesting, harvesting, harvesting, and as the sun set, Tsukiyomi crept behind her with his fists suspended in the air. I watched him so far below me, exerting his lack of power by squelching life from her body, his fists crashing down on her head and then squeezing around her neck.

I watched him so far below me, and knew that's where he belonged, exiled from the heavens. Disgusted by his brutality, his audacity, I forever severed myself from the night, exiling him to live away from me, gifting him no choir, no audience, no power.

I watched Uke Mochi as her body disintegrated and made millet and rice and beans and her eyebrows crawled away and became writhing silkworms, pieces of her scattered all about. In the life wrought from her body, I saw women worked for the greater good even after their demise, leaving their own gifts for their children's harvests, gifting them a legacy.

With my heat, I feed the fauna from Uke Mochi, I stoke her creation like a smoldering fire, until all the earth crawls with her gifts of life, their lives ephemeral and fleeting, but intriguing, worthwhile nonetheless. I feed her children, and one day, her children will feed mine.

### III.

Sulking and alone, I yearned for others to share in my world; I harbored a void that could only be filled with my own children. I took Susanoo's sword between my heavy hands and bore three women, and I watch my daughters bear life. They tend to the golden fields of rice, their hair straight down their backs, singing to themselves, basking in my light, sleeping in the sun. Inspired, Susanoo molded men in his im-

age, his temperamental, ever shifting image.

I smelled the grain going up in sweet, suffocating smoke, and this was the sin that cast the last man out of heaven. Jealous of my daughters, Susanoo had set the fields aflame. I watch my daughters grow only to have their fields raped by men.

Man makes the earth ache, rendering its soil and seeds infertile through abuse. Man is hollowing out my earth, drinking oil, ripping holes in the cotton of the clouds, sprinting with such speed he scorches the earth behind him. He rushes to new ground because he's neutered that which he leaves behind. Man thinks he can pillage and run from his destruction, like Tsukiyomi, like Susanoo, but now he's cornered like prey, raising the sea walls above himself. He has nowhere to run but the afterlife, and I will push him into the underworld.

Oh, to remember day and night, women and men, were equals before they were opposites. Oh, to know the earth is not in your hands. Oh, to watch the patterns perpetuate. Oh, to see it again and again.