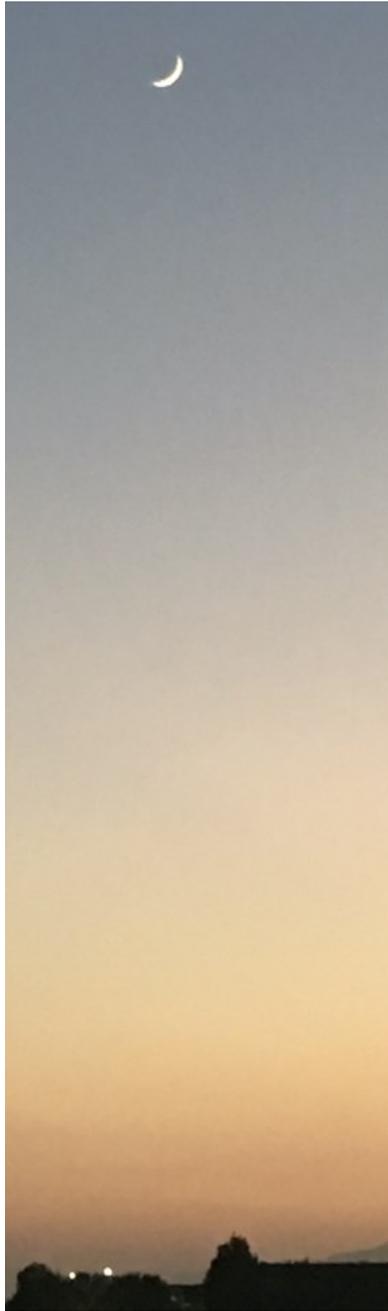


## *Cities that Remain on Earth*



As we know many cities never left Earth, but remained behind. Why did they do it? If you ask, these cities will tell you: *None of your planets, they say, has a moon like ours.* No, say the

migrated cities—we've got bigger moons, more moons, hundreds of them. *You don't have our moon, say Old Earth's cities. Our moon, alone in its singular sky, suspends the entire sunset below it.* What are you talking about? the Diasporan cities reply. Our moons are beautiful: beautiful when facing our cities, beautiful in profile, beautiful even when turned away from us. Say the never-launched cities, *You think you love them, your dozens of moons. Who can believe that? Your eyes always move from moon to moon. You distrust their beauty, ever looking elsewhere. You call that love? Night after night, we look to one moon only. We bathe in its light. We go back for more. Now that's real love.* All this makes Diasporans impatient. Don't be ridiculous, we say. Do you love each child less because you have more than one? Go ahead. Moon over your dead moon. We'll get back to our work and transform every dead surface we find.

If you are ever on Earth, you can judge for yourself. If you have the patience, watch them stare all night long at that one object. They're obsessed with it.

## *Nuuk*



The City of Nuuk rests on the equator of a planet inclined at a  $90^\circ$  angle to its sun. The south pole is hot as a kiln. The north pole's near absolute zero. Only at the equator can human beings thrive: here, the sun neither sets nor rises. It hovers between thaw and simmer, just above the sea's surface.

To the north, frigid coal seams run deep into mountainsides. To the south are the seething whitewater fisheries. The people of Nuuk, miners and fishers, grow fluish in the frost or light-headed in the south polar heat. Most laborers die young, but on Sunday afternoons, families walk the beach to stare at an always-setting sun, temperate and warm. Millions travel to see this sight.

## *Dark Star*



Albuquerque, a city whose people had always loved sunshine, could not find an appropriate planet. What they got was a cold world orbiting a white dwarf, a sun which emitted very little light. Albuquerque's first migrant generation developed rickets and a severe lassitude. From infancy, their very lives depend upon Vitamin D supplements

When Albuquerque arrived on its planet, the darkness was so deep that its citizens could not read one another's faces. To convey emotion, they stroked one another's hands. Over generations theirs became a language of touch, one hand on another. As they speak to one another, Albuquerqueans flick, pinch, caress and squeeze. When they experience emotion strongly enough, their gestures advance along the inner wrists and forearms, then to shoulders, throat, face, scalp, and nape.

This constant physical contact releases oxytocin and reduces cortisol, so much so that Albuquerque's interpersonal violence has plummeted.

Albuquerque's citizens treat off-world guests courteously. However, they rarely touch outsiders, and never with the focused abandon with which they touch one another. As a result, an Albuquerquean conversation may seem formal and brusque, even dismissive.

Be assured that Albuquerque intends no disrespect—it is simply that strangers, even the haptically fluent, often mishear. No one in that city will ever show you the palms of their hands.