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Red Hen Press

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# *You Were Watching from the Sand*

SHORT STORIES BY  
Juliana Lamy

A stylistically and conceptually daring collection that winds from fantastical horror to mischievous domestic realism and always keeps in its sharp, compassionate view the material, spiritual, and emotional lives of Haitian people.

Playful, kinetic, and devastating in turn, *You Were Watching from the Sand* is a collection in which Haitian men, women, and children who find their lives cleaved by the interminably strange bite back at the bizarre with their own oddities. In “belly,” a young woman abandoned by her only living relative makes a person from the mud beside her backyard creek. In “We Feel it in Punta Cana,” a domestic child servant in the Dominican Republic tours through his own lush imagination to make his material conditions more bearable. In “The Oldest Sensation is Anger,” a teenager invites a same-aged family friend into her apartment and uncovers a spate of disturbing secrets about her. Written in a mixture of high lyricism, absurdist comedy, and Haitian cultural witticisms, this is a collection whose dynamism matches that of its characters at every beat and turn.

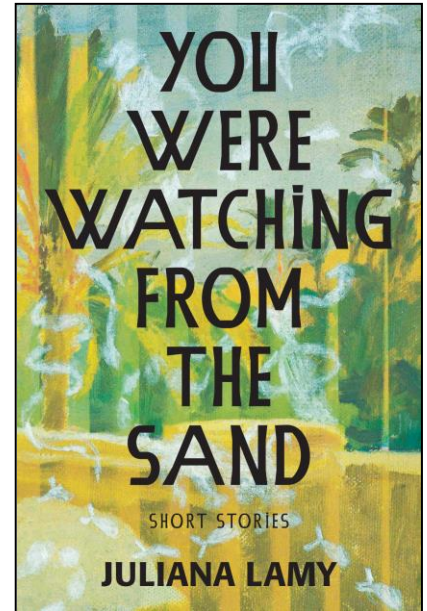
## ADVANCE PRAISE

"Every sentence Juliana Lamy writes is like a match being struck. Not many authors debut with her clarity of vision, inventiveness, and verbal agility, and I would wager almost anything that *You Were Watching from the Sand* will mark only the first chapter in an important body of work."

—Kevin Brockmeier, author of *The Ghost Variations: One Hundred Stories*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Juliana Lamy is a Haitian fiction writer with a bachelor’s degree in history and literature from Harvard College. In 2018, she won Harvard’s Le Baron Russell Briggs Undergraduate Fiction Prize. She spends much of her free time baking, because the measuring it requires is the best she’s ever been at anything math-related. She splits her time between Iowa City, Iowa, where she is an MFA candidate in fiction at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, and South Florida, where she was raised after immigrating from Haiti.



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**FROM YOU WERE WATCHING FROM THE SAND**

From “belly”

She has to wake them up now. Auntie Farrah wrote all about that, too, in the first pages of the journal. You don’t need much to wake up something that doesn’t need to breathe—Auntie Farrah taught Arbor how to make her own mud toys when she was little, tiny bears and dogs and dragons that would chase her up and down the hall until Auntie called her in to get her hair braided. They were more like wind-up toys, like those Jack-in-the-Boxes or those spinning ballerinas—nothing but movement. They don’t need much of you, just the piece of your consciousness and your life that you decide to give.

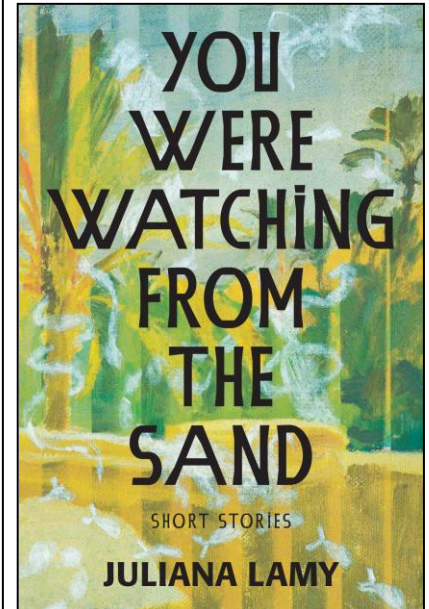
Auntie Farrah told her that she’s no guest in her own body: she lives in it and it’s hers.

And Arbor started to think of herself as a packed house with something wild and sharp and life-giving in every corner. She could wake up those breathless things with the plaster from the roof of her mouth, the flakes of tile tucked into her nail-beds.

But the directions in the journal Auntie Farrah leaves her talk about something else. Talk about feeling a body shift and pull under you as its chest gets swollen with brand-new breath. Feeling it warm itself, its blood a stovetop fire, as the clay smooths out and softens into skin.

And the book tells her that it’s not just a psychic thing. She can’t just *imagine* breaking off pieces of herself to share. It embarrasses her, reading about the physical tokens you have to use to bring a body to life—piss and mucus and other things she skips over because she can’t stand to read them out even within the deadbolted quiet of her own head.

But there’s spit, too. She can do that one.



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