

Eva Haas
Welcome Home, excerpt

“I can’t wait till I can drive,” Rennie said, almost to herself as she trailed behind me. The handle of the overfull grocery bag yawned thinner and thinner in her hands like an open mouth.

“Where would you go first?”

“I don’t know. Away.”

“I would go on some long vacation,” I said. My voice was nearly lost in the hammering and drilling and sawing. Cars streaked by on my other side. “Somewhere really foreign and strange, where I don’t speak the language and can live in the woods.”

“You’d leave me alone?”

“We could go together.”

“I don’t want to hide out. I want to leave.”

“You’ll be able to soon enough,” I said.

Rennie’s face seemed to close. This was new, like a flower blooming in reverse. Not withering exactly, but turning back time, petals ravelling themselves tightly back into wintry buds.

Mom had been the same way. Sometimes she would go sullen and silent for hours, grow a skin like on bad milk, and all you could do was wait it out. Instead of watching Rennie, my eyes found the growing skyscrapers, stretching spindles of steel higher and higher, wishing.

“Do you think someday we could live somewhere like that?” Rennie said, looking at one of the billboards as we passed. *THE VILLAS*, it said in huge glossy script. *WELCOME HOME*.

“Of course.”

Her eyes traced the image, blown up and bloated a thousand times its size, made gaudy with saturation and color. The windows seemed to glitter all the way up into the cloud cover. “I wonder.”

I nudged her. “I’ll make sure to reserve the penthouse suite for you.”