

## Wilderness House Literary Review 12/2

*Dina Greenberg*  
**Setting Anchor**

Ivy hears the thunder, how it curls up and over itself, ebbing and churning and folding. A low rumble at first, but now she feels the storm gathering power, its timbre a growing weight in the pit of her stomach. The weight is familiar. Kneeling to reach into Rocco's doggy bed, Ivy winces. Her bones crackle and she imagines her own demise not so far behind their sweet pet. Wrapped in a cashmere shawl Ivy hopes Celia won't miss, the little Yorkie lies still against her thrumming heart. She rocks him in her arms as a mother would her baby, grateful that Celia is visiting her niece for the weekend. No chance for her to coax Ivy off her course. After thirty years, Ivy knows Celia's ways.

At the boat launch, chop slaps against the bulkhead. The skiff groans on its tethers. Ivy takes small, careful steps, the dry bag slung over her shoulder and Rocco inside her canvas tote. As the dock shifts beneath her, Ivy unwinds the rain-slick lines from their cleats. A jagged streak of lightning shears the moonless sky; thunder-deaf, Ivy clambers aboard.

Even at low throttle, she sees the ghost-white phosphorescence as the hull parts the storm-chopped waves. Ivy remembers a time with her father at the fishing pier. A passing pleasure boat trailing its gleaming wake. At nine, she believed her father had conjured this magic for her alone.

She pilots the skiff into the last cut, cord grass tunneled and vividly green as her beacon sweeps the bend. Ahead lies the spit of land she's never once located without Celia's instructions. Until now.

Just off-shore, Ivy kills the engine and sets the anchor. The rain's turned chilly. Muck-and-salt-tasting in the wind. Her bare legs sting, chalky-pale as the sand dollars she and Celia collect here each summer. The hull sways and rocks. Ivy hears her father's words. Familiar. Daggers fueled first by fury or disappointment, then finally a profound and relentless disgust that barred Ivy from her childhood home, from her family. Even from the long months of her father's dying.

She lifts the tote, Rocco no heavier than the spare sweatshirt and shorts folded neatly inside the dry bag. Ivy scoots her bottom across the bow, holding the tote aloft, and slips her sandal-clad feet into the water. Brackish waves lap at her thighs as she wades to shore.

The soil beneath the banyans is heavier than Ivy would have expected—so many years since she's hauled buckets of mud from the ocean to dribble sand castles as her parents looked on. Ivy digs with the spade she's pulled from the dry bag, and when the grave is deep, as deep as she imagines a grave must be, she places Rocco inside, the cashmere shawl now a proper shroud.

Finally, Ivy's flashlight beam haloes the grave site, a slight mound with three sand dollars pressed tenderly at the center. Kneeling, she extracts her childhood Bible. "The Lord is my shepherd," she begins.