

**Laura Forwood
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The Last Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō

I call for life, for you, ‘ō‘ō,
To, in feathered darkness, lay duet,
And quaver until the quivered solo.

I throw back my head to when we set
This sweet song as our matching tones,
With nectar leftover dropping gems on our nest.

At night—bites stolen—our cheeseboard—your home.
Scrambled atop a chair, to escape the yolk-spindled tails.
Dirt dwellers, debris, dark cavities in the corner.

Malformed russet brown, twin teeth like a pyre.
A heart waiting in the grass. Rehearsed in pursuit, set
To that same voiceless choir.

A breath leaves the song, and gasps through to get
To that pleading warble. An absence passes through
hands, to claws, to talons. The song unmet

I call for you, for life, ‘ō‘ō,
Tender moulting mornings, no birdsong below,
‘ō‘ō, ‘ō‘ō, ‘ō‘ō

(Context: the Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō, Hawaiian honeyeaters, were the last species of an entire bird family of species which went extinct, partly due to the invasion of predating rats to which they were defenceless. The last male Kaua‘i ‘ō‘ō continued singing the mating call for years after the last female was likely killed.)