

THE POST OFFICE BARREL: EXPERIENCE

She can't fathom the size of a whale
though she knows the price of light and heat.
She can't fathom the strength of a whale
or the hubris of a slim harpoon against it.

Tides inch out, later encroach on the shore.
Waves peak; thunder breaks the night.
She waits, pulling her shawl over thinning hair.

The children toddle unsteadily; she imagines
the ship rocking. Cracked picture in hand,
she says, "Daddy." They learn the word, not the face.

She learns to spin stories of the messenger.
The man like a harpoon flung from the Galapagos
Bringing her husband's words and her fate.

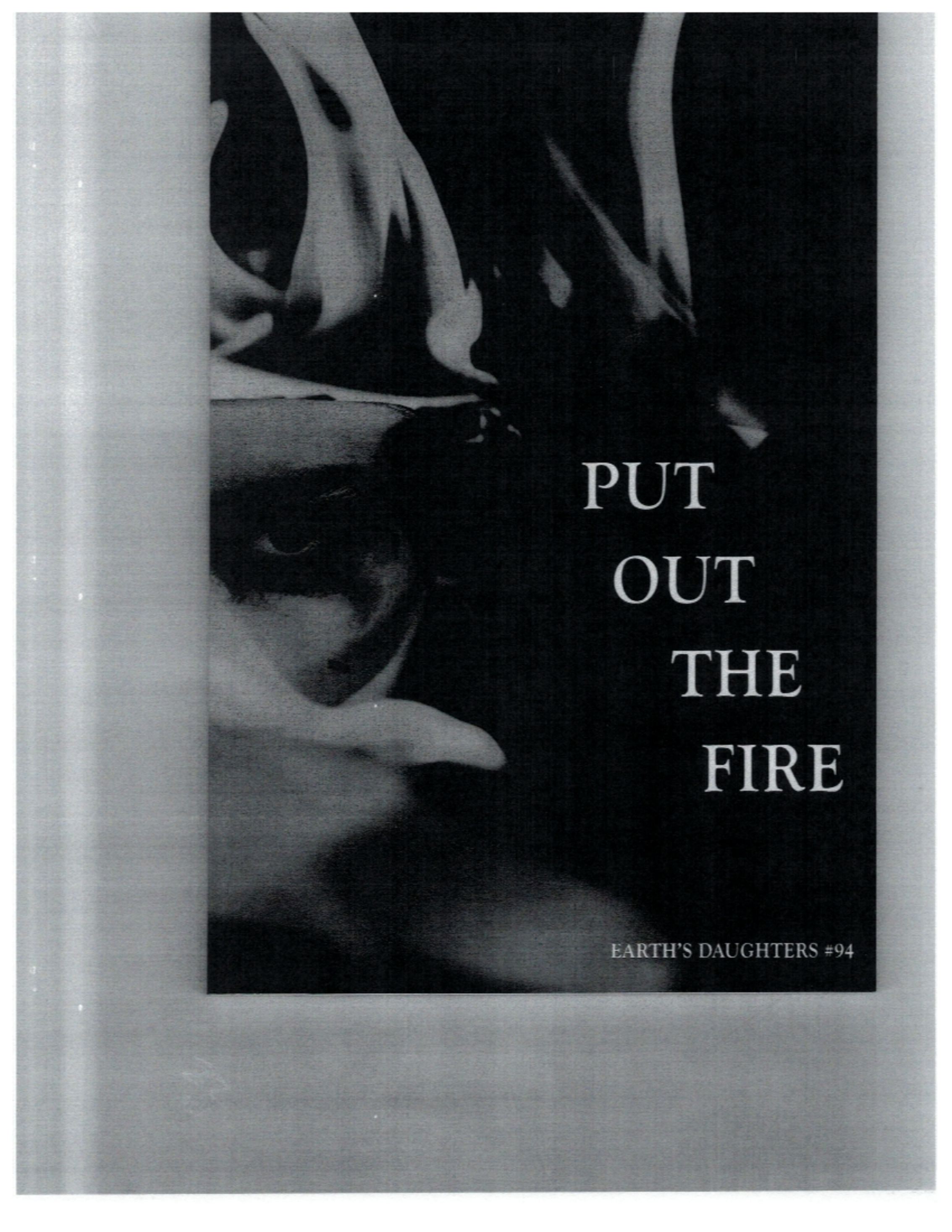
She envisions a man traveling from Floreana,
his weathered hand holding a weathered letter.
Her husband writes that he is healthy. The catch

is healthy. Just a few more months till homecoming.
She envisions a man from Floreana, the letter
thin and sallow as his face. Words scrawled in fever.

Halting script that's utterly clear. Death cannot
be proud. Its spoils are tossed to the sea. She
cannot survive the news, but she will.

Remembering Jonah, she wishes a whale
would swallow her husband, spit him on home shores.
She prays for God's grace and God's will.
Forces as mysterious as the ocean's depths.

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FIRE

EARTH'S DAUGHTERS #94