

*The Unnatural and Accidental Women* by Marie Clements

AUNT SHADIE: I didn't want her to see me the way he began to look at me. It wasn't that he said anything cruel, but men can be cruel with the twist of their face. I could feel myself disappearing, becoming invisible in his eyes; and when I looked in the mirror, what I held good like a stone deep inside was gone. I could no longer see myself. In life, you see yourself in how the people you love see you, and I began to hate seeing myself through his eyes. I began to hate my reflection. The stone though ... loved his strong arms and body, loved the way his body tanned to meet mine in the summer times, loved the way he used to love me. I thought my silence complemented his voice, thought my redness, my stone, gave him weight. I have this child--light and dark, old and new. I place my stone in her and I leave. I was afraid she would begin to see me the way he saw me, the way white people look up and down without seeing you--like you are not worthy of seeing. Extinct, like a ghost ... being invisible can kill you.