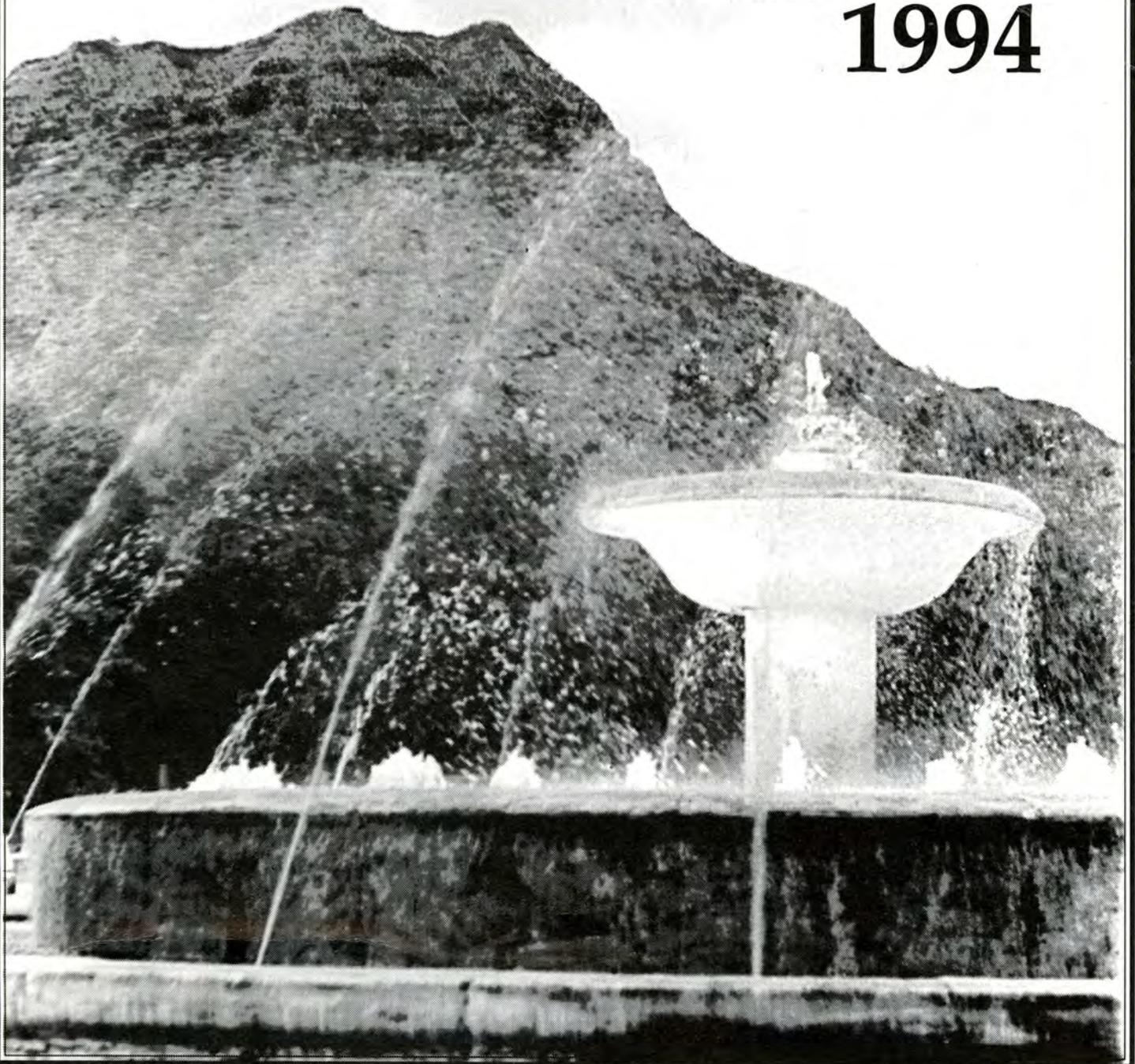


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English 10V



ESL 4

A Witness To Crime

Mitchell Grey

It was a nice and sunny Friday afternoon back in American Samoa, so I decided to spend a night at my friend's house. This was during the summer of 1989, when I was eleven years old. I was having so much fun with my friend, but little did I know that our fun would soon end.

That night was calm and peaceful, so my friend and I decided to take a walk through the park across from his house, locally known as Lion's Park. As we walked slowly through the park, we both heard a cry. At first, we thought it was a cat, but as we got closer to the source of the sound, we noticed that it was the cry of a young girl.

We started running through the park. The light got dimmer as we got close the park's end. But there was still enough light for us to see. We did not expect to see what we saw, and we were both surprised. There was a large man lying on a little defenseless girl. It was this little girl who was crying.

This large man, who appeared to be in his early twenties, was trying to force sexual intercourse on this child. This girl must have been six or seven years of age. The young girl was trying with all her might to push this man off her. But she was not succeeding.

We were about to help her, but before we did, the man jumped up. When he got off the girl, his pants were half-way off, and he was not wearing a shirt. He then pulled his pants

up and stared at us.

Fear rushed through our bodies. We thought he might try to hurt us. But the unexpected happened. He started to run away from us. While running, he tripped over the root of a rather large mango tree and lay still, as if he had been knocked unconscious after falling.

§

I then ran to the pay phone at the other end of the park, while my friend tried to calm this little girl. I dialed 911 and explained to the operator what had happened and what I had witnessed. I also told the operator that the man who had tried to rape this girl was lying unconscious at the other end of the park.

The operator then told me that she would send an ambulance and a police officer to the scene of the crime. I told the operator that the little girl was crying and just couldn't seem to stop. I thought to myself, after what this little girl has gone through, who wouldn't cry.

My friend carried the little girl to where I was standing at the pay phone. There we patiently waited for the police officer and ambulance to arrive.

About ten minutes after I had placed the call, the ambulance and the police officer's car arrived. The paramedics covered the girl with a blanket, took her into the ambulance,

and drove her to the hospital to be examined.

§

My friend and I were exhausted from all the excitement. Tired as we both were, though, we were not allowed to go home. The police officer told us that he had to take us downtown to the police headquarters for questioning. The police officer then asked us to lead him to where the man lay unconscious.

The man was still lying in the same spot. The policeman slipped handcuffs onto both of his hands and took him to the car. The policeman told us to sit in the front seat while he drove us to the police station.

When we arrived at the police station, the policeman took the man and locked him up in a jail cell so that he would not harm anyone

any more. He then took my friend and me into a small room, where he asked us all sorts of questions. He asked us to tell him what we had seen. We told him the whole story. After we had answered all of his questions, the police officer drove us home.

§

On the way home I was wondering what would have happened to this innocent little girl if we had not walked through the park. Then I started to think that maybe God wanted us to walk through the park to come to the aid of this child. I started to think that this was a little too much excitement for an eleven year old. But I sure am glad that my friend and I took this walk through the park. ♦

Gion Festival in Kyoto

Yoshiko Hammond

There is a special atmosphere when people start to prepare for the Gion Festival in Japan.

Once a year, in Gion, a part of Kyoto, people have this festival to wish for happiness, defense of the homeland, and a good harvest. Preparations begin about two weeks before the final event.

During that time, I started to hear the bells, "Kon Kon Chiki Chiki Kon Chiki Chi," which is the sound of very ancient music. The sound lets me know that this is the end of the rainy season and the start of the long, hot summer.

I'm from Kyoto, which is the most traditional city in Japan. The historical temples and buildings are still everywhere in the city, because Kyoto was the only big city that didn't get hit by bombs during the wars.

Kyoto is special in many traditional ways, because the emperor had the family estate there for over a thousand years. I felt something special about the city while I lived there, and I always could sense the good old part of Japan.

When I was a teenager, though, I didn't like the special things about my hometown. Beautiful old temples and hundreds of images of Buddha were almost spooky. The blood-

stained ceiling in the temple from a great battle terrified me. I guess I was too young to understand those historical things in my city, even though the festival always attracted me, just like it has attracted people for many years.

The festival was always very joyful and prosperous. People wore special old costumes of deep, ancient colors of gauze and gold strings. Costumes glittered every time they moved. Their faces were proud, and their movements were majestic, as if they were spellbound by royal spirits.

The night of the festival, time goes back a thousand years, and I became one of those ancient people. There were thousands of people from all over Japan, and foreign people also. The police blocked off the six-lane road, but there still wasn't enough space to walk without touching other people.

Once I entered the wave of people, I just had to keep going. Watching the people play the bells and pipes, listening to the same tunes of ancient music for hours, going nowhere, I just kept walking under the light from hundreds of lanterns. I was hypnotized by the night of the ancients during the Gion Festival in Kyoto. ♦

Are We Really Sisters?

Hyun Kyung Ko

I have three sisters, who are the most important people in the world to me. They sometimes are my friends, life advisors, and mothers to me. However, whenever I see myself in a mirror, I wonder if my sisters and I are really sisters because I don't resemble them. My second sister, Lisa, who lives with me, is especially different from me in many ways.

First, Lisa and I have different appearances. She has a fair complexion, a round face with big eyes like buttons, full eyelids, and dimples that appear in her cheeks whenever she smiles. On the other hand, I also have a round face, but I'm darker and have small eyes, like buttonholes, with thinner eyelids; moreover, whenever I smile, my eyes only become smaller, and I have no dimples. In addition, Lisa has thin, long legs, so she likes to wear short skirts; however, I have thick, short legs, so I like to wear trousers or short pants, instead of skirts.

Not only do Lisa and I have different appearances, but also our habits are different. My sister loves to read a book as much as she loves her boyfriend. For example, whenever she reads a book, she never eats anything;

moreover, she sometimes stays up late reading. On the other hand, I hate to read a book as much as I dislike taking bitter medicine. For example, as soon as I begin to read any book, I fall asleep. Furthermore, my sister doesn't play any sports outside because she is afraid that her skin will get darker, but I like to play sports outside, like tennis, swimming, and jogging.

Lisa and I also have contrasting personalities. My sister likes to clean and organize her room, so before she goes to bed, she always cleans her room no matter how tired she is. On the other hand, I don't like to clean my room, even when I have time. In addition, my sister isn't afraid of speaking in front of people; however, I don't like speaking in front of people because as soon as I stand in front of people, my face turns red, and I forget everything that I have to say.

In summary, Lisa and I are different in many ways, as shown above. Thus, we get into arguments many times, but fortunately we are very close, and the arguments don't continue over an hour. I guess it is because we are really caring sisters! ♦

A Day in Lai Thieu

Truc T. Le

It was eight o'clock on a summer morning, and my family and I were ready to go visit my great-grandfather. He lived outside of Saigon in Lai Thieu, not far away.

It took one and a half hours by motorcycle to get to my great-grandfather's house. We arrived at his house at 9:30. In front of his house was a terrible bridge. It was made of three thin tree trunks with a thin board on them. Underneath, it had four legs made of four small tree trunks.

Every time we got to the bridge, my little cousin had to call someone to help us get the motorcycles across the bridge. I was so scared the legs of the bridge would break and I would fall in the river because I didn't know how to swim.

In front of my great-grandfather's house was a big flat yard. He had planted many different kinds of flowers around the yard, such as pink roses and jasmine. In front of the yard and in the back of his house was a big garden. He had planted a lot of fruits many years ago, such as durian, mango, jack fruits, mulberry, coconut, longan, mandarin, and mangosteen. These kinds of fruits could support him. He sold them at the market, or he traded them with other people to get rice

and vegetables.

We really loved this place, because it was so natural and so quiet. Sometimes we heard a loud sound in the garden. It was a cicada's sound. And sometimes we heard a cricket making noise from the field or from some place in the bush.

My uncle, my cousins and I took a trip around the garden, and found some fruits to eat. My uncle climbed up the mangosteen tree; this fruit was our favorite. My uncle would throw some mangosteen down for us standing at the foot of the tree. We waited for the fruit. When his hands got to the fruit, he didn't know where we were standing, but he kept throwing them, and they landed on our heads. We yelled at him, but he just laughed at us. Our voices were so loud in the quiet garden that people around the garden stared at us.

He knew that the dark would come very soon, and we had to return to our home, because there were no lights on the road. Before we got on the motorcycles, we had to cross the bridge again. So we had to call someone to help us over that terrible bridge. ♦

Home

Keybon Saleapaga

Home is my favorite spot, a village in Samoa called Leone. Maybe you have been there, but if you haven't, I will tell you about it. The scenery, the animals, friends, and family make Leone a very special place for me. The waterfall, pond and rain are the extra touches of Leone. This type of environment is seldom seen today.

The lush green mountains that surround Leone stand tall. They attract birds, and I often climb to the top and hunt for them. Sometimes when I am climbing to the top, I run into wild pigs. I stand for a second, and when they charge, I run and climb a tree. When I shoot my gun into the air, the wild pigs go away. When I reach the top of the mountain, I catch my breath and breathe in the fresh air. I smell the fresh dew from the forest and hear the sound of the waterfall nearby. It is beautiful and cool. I hear the water crashing against the rocks and feel the water spray. The pool below the waterfall is pure, cold and very deep. Watching the water makes me feel like jumping in.

The stream from the pool below the waterfall leads to a pond that is calm and quiet. Usually my friends and I fish there in the morning on weekends. We compete to see who can catch the most fish. At night we party at the pond and share a few drinks. Telling jokes and talking about our girlfriends are parts of our conversation. Conversations

make the pond a sentimental gathering place for us. We break up for the night, and I head home to rest for the next day.

I wake in the morning to the roosters crowing. I get up and call them to come by yelling "Ponce" to feed them. Then I feed my pigs bananas and pig feed. While they are eating, I clean up the pig pen. The dogs come around and jump on me, begging for food. When I feed them, they start to bark and fight, but calm down when I give more food.

After my chores, I am ready to eat breakfast with my family. My grandmother is always waiting at the table for me. She is a very special, wise person. She teaches me a lot about life. While sitting at the kitchen table, she stresses to me about my priorities. She always says, "God first, then family, school, and, last, girls."

It rains a lot in Leone because of the humidity. When the rain falls, I can see and hear it coming from the mountains. We have a metal roof; therefore, I can hear a sound like pebbles hitting metal. I fall asleep to the music of the rain.

These are things that make Leone my favorite spot. The scenery, the animals, and my family and friends all contribute to making Leone a true paradise. Now that I have told you about Leone, wouldn't you like to visit it someday? For me the truth is that there is no place like home under the sun. ♦

Gyadruk: An Old Friend of Mine

Rinchen Zhashe

I miss Gyadruk very much. He is not a human being; he is a big black Tibetan dog. There are several reasons why he is not only my best friend, but also very important to my family.

First, he saved my life once. One day in 1984, I went to look for some yaks that had run away to a remote mountain several days away from my family's pasture. When I passed the foot of a hill, I saw something coming toward me. Immediately I recognized that it was a bear. "My God!" I thought, "I will be eaten by the beast!" I changed my direction and tried to run away. But the bear ran much faster than I did. In a few minutes he was just three or four feet behind me. Suddenly, something jumped down into the space between the bear and me. I heard a great noise echoing from the rock that stood on top of the mountain. Gyadruk had come to save me, and I saw that he was fighting with the bear. They had fought for about thirty minutes when finally my father reached us.

He killed the beast with a gun. Gyadruk was wounded seriously fighting to save my life.

Second, while protecting the animals in our pasture, Gyadruk fought with wolves and wild dogs many times. For example, one stormy night in the summer of 1986, he went around our tent, sheep-pen and everywhere around our pasture. At midnight two wolves rushed into the sheep-pen and each of them caught a sheep. Like a flash of light, Gyadruk jumped and tightly gripped a wolf's throat, killing him. Then he fought with the other one and saved all our sheep.

Finally, Gyadruk was always busy in my family's pasture. He was born in 1978. For a dog, 16 years old is very old. It is the same as a person who is 70 years old, but Gyadruk is not retired yet. As a guard dog, every day and night he always goes around our pasture. For instance, last winter he and my father together killed three wolves, and he caught a thief who tried to steal a horse. ♦

My Grandmother

Jin N. Zhou

My grandmother is one of the thousands and thousands of humdrum Chinese women in China. She is kind of short and small, but she is just like many old Chinese women, because during the old days, they were small in size, but strong in mind.

It is special for me to compare my grandmother to the others, because I cannot forget those days I lived with my grandmother in my early childhood, 1966 to 1976, during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

I was born in those days, and my family was living in the city. Because of the Cultural Revolution, my parents got into so many different kinds of funny meetings and useless work. They did not have time to take care of me because at that time I was nineteen moons old. For this reason, they sent me to live with my grandmother for awhile in a small village.

During the Cultural Revolution, there was a lack of food and living supplies everywhere in China, but it was a little better in the villages than in the cities because villagers had the chance, or the land, to grow some vegetables or something they needed for their living in those days.

I remember my grandmother raised some chickens in the back yard; therefore, she invited me to collect a couple of eggs for my

breakfast in the morning. At that time there was also a lack of rice and meat, and there was no milk at all.

In this difficult period, my grandmother always tried to think of any idea to find some food for me. For example, she grew beans, fished, and hunted; and in those days, my grandmother also took care of my cousin, too, but she always put me first.

On a frozen winter morning, because of the icy weather, all the crops in the back yard died, and we had to depend upon my hardy grandmother to find anything that could feed us. Finally, the winter was over, and everything came to life again for the spring, and the Revolution that involved everyone in China ended.

I lived with my grandmother for a long time, and we survived the Cultural Revolution just because of my hardy grandmother.

Time goes by fast, but I cannot forget those days that I lived with my grandmother, for my grandmother always took care of me first. This tells me now how a strong Chinese woman takes care of her grandchildren in a difficult period of their lives. My grandmother has become for me the greatest woman in the world! ♦

A stylized, monochromatic graphic of a computer workstation. It features a monitor with a white frame and a dark screen, a keyboard with two rows of white circular keys, and a mouse with a cord. The entire graphic is rendered in shades of gray. Five lightning bolt symbols are positioned around the monitor, suggesting power or connectivity. The text "English 22" is overlaid on the monitor's screen area.

English 22

The Rough Water Swim

Michiko Cole

Ignorant or courageous, I entered the Waikiki Rough Water Swim.

I'd never learned to swim until I met my husband when I was 25. He taught me how to swim, very patiently. Once, when we were living in Japan, he yelled at me, "Don't stop!" in the middle of a swimming pool while I was desperately gasping for air.

Later, when we took a trip to exotic resorts in South East Asia, he walked with me when I did my laps in the wild ocean. This, I must say, was a pretty patient task because we swam every single day during our four-month vacation.

Even now, we swim together almost everyday, although he doesn't have to watch me any more.

The Rough Water Swim is a swimming race, which takes place on Labor Day every year. It's a 2.4 mile race, starting from Kaimana Beach. From there it goes out about 700 meters off the shore and across Waikiki Bay. Swimmers finish on the beach in front of the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Approximately 1,000 - 1,200 people participate in the race every year.

§

When we first moved to Hawaii in 1985, my husband showed me Kaimana Beach, and we started to swim there regularly.

In the summer of 1986, when we were looking at the beautiful sunset after our usual swim, my husband all of a sudden said to me, "Let's do the Rough Water this year."

The race would start from exactly where we were standing in two weeks. I was surprised and very skeptical about my ability to accomplish it.

I told him, "Gee, I don't know."

Then he said, "Why not?"

I questioned myself, "Why not?"

The ocean looked so beautiful and so immense, I felt the powerful strength of mother nature. Witnessing worshipful nature right in front of my eyes, my little fear and doubts seemed insignificant. This immense nature made me think I could do anything I wanted at that moment.

After going through this emotional process, I said to him, or rather to myself, "O.K."

§

The ocean was pretty rough on the day of the race, but I swam far out, farther than I had ever been. But strangely, I wasn't scared, nor was I worried. I didn't even feel tired. I was only determined to finish the race. That was all I had in mind.

I took my time and kept an even pace and finally, three and a half hours later, I finished.

Because I was fighting the current the last 900 meters, reaching the shore seemed to take forever. When I finished the race, I was very happy and relieved, but more than anything I was thirsty.

§

My husband met me when I finished the race, more than two hours after he had finished. He told me how worried he was. He wasn't worried about my being drowned. He

was worried about how I would feel if I had to quit. He was right. I told him, "I would feel like a failure for the rest of my life if I'd quit."

Then he said to me, "You'd never be a failure because you tried."

Of course, my time was slow (very slow), but it didn't matter. What mattered about the event was that I challenged the fear and doubt I had and learned that I can do anything if I am determined. ♦

China Girl

Patricia Kaneta

I see Sophia five times a week at midnight because my eight-hour shift ends when Sophia's graveyard shift begins.

Sophia's eyes are dark brown, and they are always about halfway open. Her uniform is wrinkled; I have often watched her pull it out of her locker, in which she also keeps her dirty white shoes.

Sophia smells like stale bologna, but she is a pretty girl with short black hair. She reminds me of an Asian boy because she does not wear make-up anymore since she had her eyelids permanently tattooed. Her bright pink lips are smiling most of the time. Sophia has beautiful white skin that looks as soft as cotton.

Sophia saved fifty thousand dollars in the five years she has lived in America, and she bought a gift shop in Chinatown. The name of her store is East West Best, and you can find her working there from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sophia tells me daily about the fancy jewels and ceramic Chinese ducks she sells in her store. I never hear Sophia complain about how much she works.

When Sophia finishes working at one of her two full-time jobs, she heads home to her one-bedroom apartment in Makiki. Sophia

lives with her Portuguese husband, Albert, and their beautiful daughter, Elizabeth.

Albert is a craftsman. He carves wood and makes tikis out of koa wood. He sells his crafts on the weekends at the swapmeet.

Elizabeth is a half-Chinese, half-Portuguese little girl, who reminds me of Shirley Temple. Sophia and Albert spend up to two hundred dollars per outfit for their daughter's clothing, including lace socks and Nike shoes.

Sophia's seventy-five year old mother cleans and cooks for the family. She too lives in the one-bedroom Makiki apartment. She speaks only Chinese, so she does her shopping in Chinatown, where she buys her favorite fish: eel.

Sophia and Albert are working hard to buy a house. They want to be able to provide a good home for Elizabeth. They are struggling now to buy a house with three bedrooms, so they do not have to share every inch of living space they have now in their one-bedroom apartment.

Hopefully when the dream comes true, Sophia will have to work only one job. It would be nice to see Sophia's pink lips smile all of the time. ♦

What Is a *Bisa*?

Young Jo Kim

Most people take an interview before they get a job. I also have the experience of a first interview. I can't forget it.

After I had lived in Hawaii for two months, I looked for a job; however, speaking English was the worst problem for me. I worried about it before I applied for a job, but I wanted to try a local job, not a Korean business.

"You are a bold man. God takes care of you," I shouted to myself.

I went to Ala Moana Shopping Center. I strolled and looked around restaurants and stores.

I saw a sign that said "Help Wanted." I couldn't make up my mind whether to apply or not. I watched the people who worked there. They spoke in English and worked so fast.

I walked back and forth, uncertain what to do.

Someone who worked there asked me, "May I help you?"

I couldn't say anything, but I stared at the "Help Wanted" sign.

"Do you want to apply for a job?" an employee asked me.

I nodded in assent. I couldn't understand exactly; however, I understood what she said to me because she gestured at the sign.

She gave me an application.

"Please, fill it out, and turn it in," she

explained.

I felt shy. I couldn't say anything except "Yes."

§

After a week, I received a phone call. "Hello, may I speak to Young Jo Kim?" a man asked.

"I'm Young Jo Kim," I answered.

"This is Cafe Siam. Do you have time tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"I want to interview you between three and five o'clock."

"Yes."

"O.K., see you tomorrow."

"Yes." I only could say, "Yes, Yes, Yes."

I didn't know what I had to do. I looked for a conversation book. I studied about interviewing in English. I made up a lot of expected questions for interviews and practiced answering them. I memorized all of the questions and answers and practiced a conversation with my brother.

§

When I met the manager, I could answer the questions. Most of my expected questions came up; however, suddenly I faced

a difficult word.

“Do you have a green card?” the man asked.

I didn’t study about green cards. “What’s a green card?” I questioned.

He explained about green cards, but I couldn’t understand his English. I was dizzy, and I wanted to escape from this situation.

“Do you have a permanent visa?” he asked slowly.

I couldn’t understand why he asked a new question.

“What is a bisa?” I asked.

I heard it like *bisa*, not *visa*. *B* and *V* are confusing to me.

“Don’t you know vi—sa?”

“Yes.”

“Vi—sa.”

“No, what is a bi—sa?” I almost cried.

“When you came to the U.S., you got it.”

“Oh! Visa. I have it.”

Of course, I knew *visa*, but I couldn’t understand his pronunciation.

§

After I passed the interview, I worked for Cafe Siam, which is a Thai restaurant in Ala Moana Shopping Center. Even though I didn’t know Thai food and could not speak English well, they taught me how to cook Thai food, and I worked there as a cook.

I enjoyed working there. When we were busy, we were friendly with the other workers and told humorous stories, so we made work not so hard. Other employees liked me because I respected them and worked hard. I made nice friends at Cafe Siam. They were Thai, Laotian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Filipino. Sometimes, we went to the beach and Waikiki. We took pictures and played games.

I drop in to visit Cafe Siam once in a while. I eat Thai food, and I meet my friends. I can’t forget my first interview in the U.S. It was a good experience for me. ♦

Kanani

Debra Malia

Colleen Kanani Dower. If ever there were an unforgettable person, it would be she. Kanani was one of my five sisters. She was born on May 23, 1950, the second child of nine children in our family.

When Kanani walked into a room, her presence never went unnoticed, with her sometimes uncontrolled spiral hair and her unconventional attire. Her clothes would never be too brightly colored or highly decorated, but she would wear a floral shirt with striped pants that had no matching colors. She would say that as long as the colors blended they went together.

One of Kanani's hobbies was weight lifting. Her 5 feet, 4 inch physique was strong looking. She looked like a woman who could hold her own. In the early seventies her form of transportation was a motorcycle. It was almost unheard of to see a female motorcyclist in Hawaii in those days.

I learned very young never to be shocked at anything Kanani did, wore or said. That's Kanani, I would think. Kanani was almost ten years older than I. As a child, no matter how much I admired Kanani's boldness and different ways, I would never have dreamed of ever wanting to be like her. I wanted simple; Kanani was far from simple.

The first time I ever tried marijuana I was around nine or ten. Kanani decided it was

time for her little sister to get stoned. Instead of getting any kind of high, I ended up getting sick to my stomach. My mother was horrified. I swore I would never do it again.

The day of Kanani's high school graduation she moved out of the family home. She couldn't wait to get out of the house and be on her own. "No more rules!" she said.

For the next few years she lived in a dilapidated shack in the farm fields of Ewa Beach. The only plumbing that she had in the house was a garden hose that came through a hole in the kitchen wall to the sink. At least she had the luxury of being able to do her dishes indoors. There was an outhouse and another garden hose rigged up as an outdoor shower. She made her living as a farmer, growing and harvesting marijuana plants from her backyard. Her roommates were two German shepherds.

After a while she had had enough of this life and went to college. She moved in with our grandmother and worked as a cocktail waitress. She later graduated from the University of Hawaii with a B.A. in art.

§

Kanani then went on to New York City to work on her master's degree. She supported herself by working all sorts of

unconventional jobs, such as night club stripper, household mover, and powerlifting trainer. Kanani ended up living in New York for almost ten years. After she graduated, she worked in an art gallery and also did a lot of work from her own art studio.

Kanani lived in an old factory district in Brooklyn. Her apartment was a huge loft that used to be a cotton factory. We called each other regularly. Whenever I needed comforting or needed to bitch, usually about another sister, I would call Kanani. I would often take trips to New York to visit her.

At this point in our lives we were both mature women and could experience each other in a different way than we had when I was a child. I came to respect her even more than I had before. I really looked up to her and was proud of the person she had become: smart, confident, humorous. She taught me that it was okay to be out of the ordinary, and also to stand up for what you want and believe. Those are very valuable lessons. Whenever I have to do repairs on my home or upgrading, my first thought is usually how I'm going to be able to afford it. Then I think, Kanani did that to her place, so I can do it.

§

Early in 1990, Kanani was diagnosed with cervical cancer. Everyone in the family, including Kanani, was hopeful. I knew she would die. I can't explain why I felt so sure of this. Kanani moved back to Hawaii. We convinced her that she couldn't fight this battle alone and that she would need her family.

On November 2, 1990, my daughter Nicole was born. According to hospital policy, only one person could be with me and that person was to be my former husband.

Since Kanani had never had a child and would never be able to, I convinced the doctors to allow her into the labor and delivery room.

Kanani's presence was a blessing for me. While my daughter's father sat there agitated and helpless, Kanani comforted me. During the twelve hours of labor, I was highly explosive. Kanani sat beside me with her hand on mine and said nothing. When I needed coaching or a little more strength, Kanani knew exactly what to say to me. She even tried to get me to laugh. "Hang in there, Debbie. The little shit will be out soon," she said.

She even took control of the delivery room after my daughter was born. She didn't want any bright lights on the baby or loud noises around the baby. I was worry-free, knowing Kanani was at the helm.

§

On December 17, 1991, after a long, hard battle, Kanani died. She suffered with pain so incredibly in the end that after her death she looked at peace. Her death was devastating for me. How can you possibly prepare for a loved one's death?

I did a lot of soul searching and reevaluating of my own life. Losing Kanani at such a young age made me look at my period of existence differently. Our lives are only temporary situations, and eventually we all must die. It is important to me now more than ever before to do whatever makes me happy and not let any person or situation stand in my way.

It's amazing how Kanani continues to teach me even after she's gone. I miss Kanani, but I have accepted her death. And, knowing Kanani, if there's an afterlife, then she's out there making a difference. ♦

A Difference in Tradition

Akiyo McFeeters

Anyone who steps into a new country for the first time feels that everything is fresh and promising. You feel exalted and want to learn everything the country might offer. Yet many people tend to hold on to their own traditions and sometimes it creates problems.

Something like whether you should remove your shoes before entering a house or keep them on may sound trivial, but if your tradition is to take your shoes off at the door and you insist on requiring this action of someone in the new country, where they keep their shoes on inside the house, you may experience embarrassment and humiliation. Such was my experience when I first moved to the United States seventeen years ago.

I met my husband in Japan and married him there. When our daughter was almost two years old, we moved to Santa Barbara, California, where his parents lived. We left Japan on the night of September 8, 1977. It was raining. It was my first flight. Because of the rain and darkness outside, I was very nervous, but I could not deny the ecstasy I felt at the prospect of seeing another country.

Once the plane left the ground, I could see lights in the city shining like stars in the darkness, so pretty and ethereal. I felt a sense of no return. Because I was nervous about flying and the plane was so small, I did not have even a wink of sleep.

When we arrived at Travis Air Force

Base in northern California, it was daylight. It was hot and dry. The first impression of California I had as the plane descended was how vast and how brown everything was. We stayed at Travis that night and flew to Santa Barbara the next day.

§

My in-laws were waiting at the airport. I was not sure what their reception of me would be. I had heard many stories about rejection of Asian wives by American in-laws, but my worry was unnecessary. They welcomed me eagerly, and I immediately warmed to them.

My husband had been serving in the Air Force, and he was to report to Korea as soon as he settled in our daughter and me. We had about one month to get settled. While we hunted for an apartment, we stayed with his parents for three weeks. They took us around and introduced us to their friends. Everyone was wonderful towards me. During those three weeks, I thought I had pretty much adjusted to the American way of life.

§

One thing I could not bring myself to do, though, was to wear my shoes inside the house. In my culture we learn to remove

shoes at the door. To me, it was more than a cultural practice; what bothered me most was the thought that someone could bring germs into the house on the shoes that they wore outside. So I kept removing my shoes at the door.

When my mother-in-law asked me why I did that, I told her it was the custom in my native country. She did not seem to think it was a strange custom. As a matter of fact, she seemed to think actually it was a nice custom. On the other hand, my father-in-law never asked me the reason why I took my shoes off before entering the house. He seemed to have simply accepted that that's what I did.

Finally, we found an apartment that we could afford in a town about fifty miles north of Santa Barbara. When my in-laws visited us after we settled in, I asked my husband to ask them to remove their shoes at the door. My mother-in-law consented without a word. But my father-in-law! He stomped out of the apartment as soon as the request was made. He went to the car and stayed there. I did not know how to respond to that kind of extreme emotion, and I felt terrible embarrassment.

My mother-in-law commented, "This is Aki's home. She has a right to request of houseguests what she wants of them."

Those were such comforting words that I felt like crying.

The only thing I could do to amend the mistake I had made was to apologize to my father-in-law. So I went to the car and apologized profusely. I suppose he understood

that I was sincere and eventually regained his humor. He lectured me, though, saying, "This is America, Aki. We do things the American way, not the Japanese way."

When he came back to the apartment, he still had his shoes on. I tried to avoid looking in the direction of his shoes, so that I would not think about the germs.

§

My culture had taught me that women obey their in-laws, that no matter how much we want to argue our points, we just keep our mouths closed. In fact, it was my home he came into, so he should have consented to my wish. Yet it was I who compromised in order to keep our relationship intact. He was a stubborn Irishman. Where he had come from, once they put on their shoes in the morning they did not take them off until bedtime. So it was his way or nobody's way.

This experience taught me that if you live where your culture differs from someone else's, there may be a conflict, because the values you put on your cultural beliefs may be different from theirs. Although it is wrong to push your own culture on to someone with a different cultural background, it is wrong to devalue others' beliefs. In a country like the United States, which consists of many diverse people, we have to respect and understand each other's cultural backgrounds in order to exist in harmony. ♦

A Rude Awakening

Donna S. Olayan

When a recent 6.6 magnitude earthquake occurred, the headlines read, "Residents of California Receive a Rude Awakening." I too, have experienced a rude awakening. It happened the day I got arrested for drunk driving and became a criminal. That day I realized I was playing a dangerous game because I was playing with people's lives.

I can vividly recall that early Sunday morning back in April 1988. I was young, barely 19 years old. I grew up in a dysfunctional family, so I didn't care much about my life. Although I did go to school, it was a lie. I would like to think I was doing it for me, but it was a front to keep my friends and family off my back. I did care about one thing; unfortunately, it was alcohol. My life revolved around it because it made all my problems disappear.

On the night before the incident, I did what I always did. I drank. I had just gotten off work, and I wanted to get buzzed. It seems that whenever I worked, I would get an urge to get intoxicated, or was this an alcoholic's excuse? I picked up my two friends, Willie and Steve, and we went to our friend Pono's house because his parents were out of town.

As the night progressed into morning, we continued to drink, talk, and laugh. My vision started to blur and my voice started to slur; nevertheless, I continued to gulp my beer

down. I drank less than my normal amount because it was nearing five in the morning, and I had to take Steve and Willie home. On the way out, I grabbed a can of beer. I took Steve home first because he lived five minutes away.

§

I remember the fogginess of the road. It was like driving up the Pali Highway at night when the clouds are low and the car headlights shining on them creates a dream effect, much like a halo forming around a streetlight.

I vaguely remember that I was weaving when I drove Steve home. However, I remember playing Pac-Man with the road. My tires gobbled the road dividers, making "pac, pac, pac" noises. I must have been weaving tremendously because Willie offered to drive us home. I am a very stubborn person, especially when I drink. I blurted, "No I can handle! I didn't drink that much."

Willie knew how hardheaded I could get and didn't bother replying. He didn't want to tell me that I was drunk and could not drive, for he feared that I would erupt like a volcano.

Beyond this point, I don't have any recollection of how or why I ended up where I did. All I remember was being struck as if a lightning bolt had jolted me. Someone or

something had sucked the life out of me, bounced me up and down, slapped me a couple of times, and woke me up. When I focused into the real world, a police officer stood at the door of my automobile. He asked me if I had been drinking and I croaked out, "Just a few ... umm ... officer." He then ordered me out of the car so I could take a sobriety test. I remember how funny I always had thought it was when someone else got pulled over for a drunk driving test. It wasn't funny anymore. Instead, I was humiliated.

The alcohol must still have been affecting me because I was playing around as I did the tests. I joked to the officers, "Oh wait, wait, I wasn't ready. Can I do it again?" I was hopping on one foot trying to keep my balance as Willie stood on the side with discomfort and bewilderment. He was watching me make a fool out of myself. I failed all three tests. The officer told me that he was arresting me for driving under the influence.

§

When I arrived at the station, the officer made me blow into a breathalyzer machine. The officer sat me down and asked me loads of questions, while he typed the report that would give me a criminal record. I sat there in disbelief, while officers walked by me with disgust. I could tell by the look on their faces that they were thinking, "What is a sweet and innocent girl like her doing here?" I was asking the same question.

After my interrogation, the officer allowed me one phone call. Although I really wanted to get out of there, I was reluctant to dial. I was hesitating because I had to talk to my boyfriend, Kevin, who all along told me that I had a problem with alcohol. How was I supposed to tell him that maybe he was right? How the hell was I supposed to tell him I had gotten arrested for drunk driving?

When I was through talking with Kevin, the police officer locked me in a cell. It was a small room, about nine feet by twelve feet, with benches along the walls. I sat on one side and stared at the plain white walls, whose paint was cracking and peeling from old age. In the background the "tack, tack, tack" sounds of a typewriter echoed in my ears. The coldness of the room made the hair on my arms stand straight up, giving me goose bumps from head to toe. My nose twitched as it detected a noticeable odor emanating from the corner. The malodorous smell of urine stung my eyes.

I was alone, and I felt like crying, but I held back. I could not stand the isolation. So all I could do was sleep and wear the alcohol off. What seemed like an eternity was only 50 minutes. As I walked out of that station, I thought to myself, "I will never forget that sound of the cell door closing behind me, 'eeeeerrrrjjjjjuuuuukkkkk!'"

When I walked out of the station, I refused to talk to Kevin because I was ashamed and embarrassed. I starved myself for two days, and I didn't touch a drop of alcohol for a month. I lost my license for three years, attended alcoholic anonymous classes, and took a defensive driving class.

§

Back then, I would never have thought in a million years that alcohol would almost kill me. Although I may not be dead, drinking has altered my life completely. It has been a constant battle, but I have been able to control it. I have also been doing well in school, and I have become a better person inside. Is drinking and driving worth what I went through? Is it worth your life? If you're going to drink and drive, remember that you're playing with death. ♦

Miscarriage

Yumiko Sayama

I will never forget the day that I had a miscarriage, almost two and a half months ago. However, through the experience I not only learned a lot of things, I also became a woman who will be stable-minded as a mother.

I remember clearly that when I became pregnant my husband Mike and I felt happy and delighted. We have been married for two and a half years. Last April, we decided to start a family. Ever since we had made the decision, I had been paying attention to my health, avoiding alcohol, coffee, and junk foods. Fortunately, I became pregnant soon. In addition, on my second prenatal visit, the doctor told me that I was carrying twins. Can you imagine how Mike and I were happily surprised by the news? However, on my third prenatal visit I had a miscarriage.

I remember it was a very hot day. I visited my gynecologist with Mike, because he wanted to see the twins' ultrasound picture. When the doctor checked my babies, he told Mike that the babies didn't have a heart beat. Then he showed me the picture. The babies looked like two beans, but they didn't move. When he poked one baby, which was only one and a half inches long, it floated very slowly in the uterine fluid. It was just a lump. I couldn't see any life in the picture; nevertheless, I still couldn't

understand my situation, even when the doctor told me, "I'm so sorry."

The doctor talked to Mike a little while, and then he left the room. I felt that something was wrong, and I was afraid of what would happen to me next. My husband took my hand and explained to me in Japanese that I had to have an abortion because the babies had died in my uterus. I couldn't believe it because I had never had any symptoms of miscarriage, like pains and bleeding, so I couldn't understand why it was a miscarriage and why I had to have the abortion.

When Mike asked me about the abortion again, my eyes suddenly filled with tears and my throat burned with sobs. While I was crying, I still couldn't follow the fact, but my emotion exploded against the feeling. I couldn't control my emotion by myself. I cried and

cried. Mike also couldn't do anything except hold my hands, but he suggested to me that I should have the abortion now. I couldn't think of anything, so I followed his suggestion.

I don't remember details of the surgery because while I had the surgery my mind was empty. I only remember that it was very painful, but I couldn't think of anything except the question, "Why did I have to have a miscarriage? Why did I have a miscarriage?"

**I couldn't get away
from the sorrow.
Nobody could help me.**

These words repeated themselves in my head all the time after I had the abortion. I couldn't sleep because I was struggling with the question all the time. I couldn't get away from the sorrow. Nobody could help me. After I had the abortion, my body still retained some symptoms of pregnancy, such as breast fullness and an enlarged abdomen. Whenever anybody gave me a word of condolence, I intentionally told him or her that I was fine and that I had recovered from the grief. Otherwise, I was trapped in bottomless sorrow and couldn't get out.

I read and studied a lot of books about pregnant women and miscarriage to find the reasons for miscarriage. As I studied, I realized that having a miscarriage is very

common. In fact, when I had been grieving about the miscarriage, many women who had had a miscarriage helped me and shared their feelings about how they accepted it, and overcome and recovered from their sorrow.

Through the experience, I learned that women who have experienced a miscarriage have powerful, generous minds, and deep grief over their miscarriages. I feel that there are a lot of people who are enduring different sorrow and distress. They can not remove it from their minds, but they don't complain about it and live strongly and have forward-looking policies. Now I feel that I am getting close to these people. ♦

Extreme Limit

Ludovic Sebag

Since my childhood, I have always dreamed about flying. Therefore, my parents offered me a one-week parachuting training course to congratulate me for succeeding in getting my high school diploma. It was in the summer of 1991. I was eighteen. Macon, a town in southeast France, is where I had an experience that brought me closer to understanding my own limits.

On the last day of the training, July 22, we were ready for the first and unique jump of the training. Although the instructors prepared us physically for the free falling, I was anxious that I was not ready mentally.

§

The plane took off around 2 p.m., and then the fear began. The expectation was terrible, so I didn't even look at my training mates. I simply wanted to be alone, trying to calm down all my emotions, but I was quite unsuccessful. My stomach was hurting me out of fear, and it was like my entire body was on fire. I couldn't control myself, and I heard the instructor talking to us, but I was unable to understand anything. My mind was stuck with this fear. That really was a strange feeling because we had been waiting for this moment for one week, but now I was suddenly terrified and no longer excited.

Then a stage-mate tapped me on the

shoulder and shouted at me, "It's pretty soon our turn!"

At this moment, something triggered in my mind. I came back from my mental trip, and I stood up. In fact, it was surprising to me to control my body again. During my panic period, some people had already jumped, so now my turn came very fast. I went near the exit door. I had almost no time to see the emptiness as I just decided to jump very fast in order to avoid any other feeling of panic. Then the great moment that I so much feared and so much desired at the same time arrived: the jump.

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I remember very well what sensation happened. First, it was a huge acceleration, as if I were in an elevator going down very fast. My heart went in every direction, I didn't feel the ground anymore and, therefore, I felt as if I were in a void. Secondly, the air was beating my face, and it was creating such a big noise that one hour after the jump I could still hear it.

Finally, the greatest sensation was the one like flying. I just felt happy and free to go wherever I wanted, and I was thinking about nothing except the present moment.

At the same time, I felt big, like a living god, and yet so little, compared to the

elements. My heart was beating really fast. It was pure adrenaline. Never in my life have I experienced feelings like those.

But everything has an end, and I was approaching the ground really fast: I had to land very soon.

§

So I pulled out the string and the parachute opened. It was a big shock and everything slowed down: even my fall and my emotions. I came back to reality. I had to concentrate on my landing, and at this moment tensions and fears reappeared in my mind, but this time I knew I was able to control them. Consequently, my landing was without problems. I fell to the ground: that was a hard and quick return to the restricted world of gravity. After all these emotions came to me really fast, I felt so much emptiness inside me

that I was laughing alone and I even cried from happiness.

§

I have never jumped again since that day, but I am convinced that one day or another, I will do it again without hesitation. Afterwards, I realized that I had a great experience because today I know that I'm able to control my fears. In fact, I learned that if you overcome your fears, you can have great experiences and you can better succeed in life.

This lesson helped me especially in coming to Hawaii, because I didn't know anything about the Islands before leaving France. I wasn't registered at the university and all my French friends considered me crazy to come over here by myself. However, I said to myself that I just had just to do it, and today I regret absolutely nothing. ♦

The Day the Eggs Broke and the Muffler Fell Off

Debra Simmons

Three or four years ago, after my best friend Renee and I had been drinking Kahlua and Milk earlier in the day, we decided to take our daughters and go shopping for food.

Our first stop was Hamada's, where we bought several boxes of canned food, and then we went to Kapalama Meats. It was at Kapalama Meats that we purchased, among other things, three trays of large eggs. Our final stop was Love's Bakery on Middle Street. Finally finished shopping at Love's, we were now ready to go home, approximately seven to ten blocks away.

I was driving the car. Renee was carrying the eggs on her lap. Tia, my daughter, and Jasmine and Celeste, who are Renee's daughters, were all in the back seat sitting on top of and beside boxes of canned food. I turned left out of Love's driveway toward the highway on Middle Street. I moved over into the left lane, and after doing so I stopped because the traffic light ahead had turned red.

Renee and I still had our big plastic cup of Kahlua and Milk with us. We were talking and laughing, having a good time, when all of a sudden WHAM! CABANG! EEERRRKCH-KCH! BOOM!

§

Out of nowhere cans went flying. Kids also went flying. Renee was thrown forward. Then, CRUNCH! CRACK! OOZE! Her chest and stomach, up to her neck, smashed on top of the eggs in her lap. When she sat back up, YUK!, she was yellow slippery slime from head to toe. Eggs were everywhere. There were eggs on the floor and on the seat of the car.

Canned food was also everywhere. We had to dig the girls out from under piles of cans and boxes. None of them was hurt, thank God!

I had been jolted forward, then back again, hitting the back of my head on the headrest of my seat. I had hit my head so hard that I actually saw the proverbial stars! My arms felt numb with that tingly sensation that you get when you are about to faint, or when your foot goes to sleep and is trying to wake up, that needily sensation. All I could do was sit there until my head cleared.

The jerk who had rammed into the rear end of my car was driving a very expensive and beautiful light-blue Mercedes sports car. It was the type of car that I had always dreamed of owning someday — that is until

that day. The entire front end of his car was now sitting where he should have been: in the driver's seat. It appeared as though someone had put the car into a trash compactor and switched it on. It was now a "compact (or should I say compacted) car."

I was sure grateful to have been driving my Plymouth because there was no damage whatsoever to the body of my car — visible damage, that is. I used to call my car a "big green tank," and she sure lived up to her name that day.

Renee was the first person able to get out of the car, so with all that gooey slime dripping off her, out of the car she went; meanwhile, the idiot who had hit us was also walking toward Renee.

The first thing Renee said was, "You owe my friend three trays of eggs!"

I never laughed so hard in my life. I mean, really! Of all the things to worry about, but then I guess because she was eggs from head to toe, that was all she could think of.

The police finally arrived, by which time I was able to get out of the car. The officer asked, "What happened here?"

After listening to my side of the story, and looking at the now not-so-beautiful sports car, he wrote the other guy a ticket. Meanwhile, he had told us to exchange all the necessary information, such as driver's license numbers, insurance company names and addresses, and vehicle registration numbers.

§

Then I noticed that the muffler of my car was lying on the ground underneath the

car. I asked the officer to make the guy fix it right then and there so that I could drive home. The jerk was highly upset, but the officer made him fix it anyway.

After exchanging the pertinent information, we went home, at which time we attempted to clean the eggs out of my car. That was like trying to stop a semi-truck going eighty miles an hour by standing in front of it and holding your arms out in front of you — absolutely useless. No matter how or what we tried, we could not get those dried up, crusty, rotten-smelling eggs out of my car. The stench was terrible!

I went through bottle after bottle of perfume trying to cover up the stench just long enough to drive from one place to another. Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer, so I got rid of the car.

§

The moral of the story might be, don't drink Kahlua and Milk if you are going shopping with Renee. If you do, however, don't let her carry the eggs. But if she does, make her stay in the car.

Seriously, I learned that if you buy that many eggs, it is best to have the clerk wrap them in paper and tape them before you leave the store.

Most importantly, it is not really a good idea to drink and drive, especially with kids in the car. ♦

Unbelievable Journey

Mindy Vuong

The purpose of settling in America is to be free from suffocation, make money for a better living, and to send children to school.

In the summer of 1979, my family prepared packages of dried foods and paraphernalia to bring on a journey. Vietnam, Qui Nhon, town was silent, and the road was empty as our family sneaked out of town into the boat with other families. The terrifying emotion of escape overpowered my feelings. I was scared of being captured by the police and sentenced to prison.

The small fishing boat that I rode on could hold about 50 people. There was a small kitchen, a toilet behind the kitchen, which was a small hole to place the buttocks, and a wooden deck on which 50 people packed together at night.

When the sun set, the sky became spooky and dark. I heard the wind howling in the sky, I saw the seagulls fly by, smelled the salt water fade away, and listened to the silent waves. It was a beautiful night to stay on the boat.

Initially, I began to miss my homeland and the friends I had left behind without saying good-bye. I started to cry and wanted to go home. I begged my mother to take me home. At that moment, I could see the tears dripping down my mother's cheek. Mother said, "We

have a few miles to go, so don't cry my child." She drew me close to her breast and her hand caressed my back. Also, she sang a Vietnamese song while patting the baby to stop its crying. But the cool wind shook me to sleep.

After a few days on the Pacific Ocean, I began to be seasick. I could not eat or walk around the boat because I was ill. I was unconscious and lay on the floor for days and days. Father cooked rice soup combined with soy sauce to feed me. I couldn't swallow a bit. My body was tired and my bones ached. I wished to return home again. I regretted running away from home and did not know what life was like in America. Nevertheless, I wondered whether I would survive to view the United States of America before I died.

After five days on the Pacific Ocean, there was nowhere to run and no America in sight.

The captain was unable to find the direction to America. The boat lay on the ocean waiting for the strong current to lead the way.

My skin began to develop rashes and disease. There was not a bathtub to take a bath. Eventually, no one on the boat showered in salt water because salt water is sticky to bathe in. Then, I placed my long nails on my skin toward the itchy area. I noticed that my skin was peeling and the dirt had filled my nails.

**When the captain saw
that it was a pirate
boat, it was too late
to turn around.**

I felt weaker and weaker as the days went by. I still could not digest my food. I was lying like a dead corpse waiting to be thrown into the ocean. I was only fed by medication. Mother began to worry that I would not survive. She held me tightly in her arms and placed food into my mouth. The rice soup spilled everywhere.

On the seventh day, I had the ability to take a walk on the boat. At this moment, I had a chance to adventure the Pacific Ocean again. Then, I saw a boat approach us. I yelled to the adults. Everyone was surprised. We thought the gods had sent us life savers. The captain steered toward the boat.

When the captain saw that it was a pirate boat, it was too late to turn around. The pirates carried swords in their hands and rocked our boat. They stole the fine jewelry from each family. Anyone who refused to give jewelry was killed. Eventually, ladies and girls were raped by the pirates.

As I was hiding behind a can, I saw an Asian man rape a 15-year-old girl. He was hitting her like a dog. She was struggling, scratching her nails on his body and pushing his body off her body. Continually, the Asian man abused the child. No one dared to save that child, not even her own parents. After the pirate left, she held a knife and stabbed herself.

On the tenth day on the Pacific ocean, a huge boat came into view. Everyone saw a flag of 13 stripes and 50 stars. The captain was terrified to come opposite the boat as it approached. Our boat was short of food because we had been out in the ocean too long. These American men were not like the pirates; they gave us boxes of oranges and canned foods.

Also, the American captain guided our boat to Hong Kong. The captain turned the boat around and headed to the east.

By noon, the boat arrived at the docks of Hong Kong. We were sent into the refugee camp with thousands of others. Three months in a refugee camp is like life in prison. At each meal, the head family carried a container and stood in line for food. The food that I ate was worse than what is fed to pigs. Because of hunger and starvation, I ate to survive to reach America. At night, the refugee camp was populated by a strong odor of urine and stool combined.

At the end of the summer of 1984, we landed on the island of Oahu. My parents were confused. So were the children. Because my parents were unable to speak English and they did not have American money, the family stayed at the airport like a homeless family who was waiting to meet someone who will help them. Abruptly, a woman wearing a white suit, who was a welfare worker, helped my family fill out an application form that included financial aid, food stamps, and medical aid. Also, she rented a home for us which we still live in today.

The first year in America was difficult and uncomfortable. I was afraid to leave the house to go shopping or to take a walk on the street. Our family did not apply for a phone or buy a television until two years after our arrival. I did not enjoy life in America!

Today, I am proud to be an American citizen. Everyday, I make new friends and meet new people. I have an opportunity to be educated and free from suffocation. I encountered this experience as a girl on the ocean. ♦

Lunch with President Clinton

Eric M. Wong

It was a Friday, and going to work on this day felt like any normal day to me. But who was to know what was in store for me at the Rainbow Lanai Restaurant?

Walking from the locker room towards the restaurant, I could see police everywhere; limousines were parked outside the restaurant, and men dressed in suits holding walkie-talkies were everywhere around the hotel property. I knew then that someone very important was staying at the hotel, and I was curious to know who it could be.

As I walked through the restaurant doors, my manager, the chef, co-workers, customers, spectators, police men, and secret service agents were all looking at me. I thought to myself "Oh, Oh, there is something going on in here that I have no clue about."

My manager approached me with a gentleman and introduced him as the head of security in charge of the safety of the President. Then my manager broke the news to me saying, "Eric, President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary are here for lunch. They are sitting in your section. The orders have been taken by the President's man. He is having the roasted Hawaiian chicken, and she is having the club sandwich. Eric, make sure you really take good care of them."

**... I was a part of
history: I served the
42nd President of the
United States....**

I looked towards my table section and there they were, The President, dressed in a floral aloha shirt, and Hillary, in a floral muumuu dress. I thought to myself, "How tacky. If I didn't know who they were, I would have thought they were just more tourists."

As I kept staring at them with disbelief, I said to myself, "Of all the customers in the restaurant, I have to wait on the most important person in the United States of America, and of all the places to eat in Hawaii he chose the Rainbow Lanai Restaurant."

This made me feel really nervous. Anxiety hit me. I thought to myself, "What if I accidentally spill something on them, or if they do not like the food or my service? Then will this be the last time I serve anyone at the Rainbow Lanai?"

I took a deep breath, psyched myself up, and said to myself, "Well, I get paid for doing this. This is my profession. Just treat them like anyone else."

I approached the table and said, "Hi, Mr. President. Ma'am."

He replied, "Hi, how are you?" And she just smiled.

My first impression of them was that they were friendly and responsive to my presence at the table. This sure helped break the ice, and it

helped relieve my anxiety. I poured water for them and asked if they would care for more bread and butter. They said, "No, thanks."

I departed from their table thinking to myself how polite they were.

As I returned to the kitchen, the chef handed me the food to deliver. I noticed the secret service man examined the items by watching how they were prepared. I thought, "This has got to be the most important chicken sandwich in Hawaii!"

As I delivered the food to them and asked if they would care for anything else, they said they were fine and started eating. While they were eating, I stood about forty feet away from their table and kept an eye on them. They seemed to be enjoying their meal and the scenery around them. They also smiled at the spectators on the beach and waved "Hi" to them.

Although the restaurant atmosphere seemed very exciting, the presence of the secret service men and the police everywhere — on the roof top, at the entrance, at the exits, around the tables, and in the kitchen — made the place intense as well. Even the tables around the president were empty for security reasons.

Being in the middle of all this made me very nervous. I wondered, "What would happen if an assassination took place just like what we see in the movies?"

Well, these fears were relieved when the President and his wife were done eating. They got up and headed towards the exit.

On their way out, they were escorted by

their bodyguards. I walked calmly towards them, making sure that I did not make a scene and stir up the bodyguards, thanked them, and gave a Shaka sign. They smiled and headed toward the crowd of people by the door, all of whom wanted a look or a handshake from the President and his wife.

Seeing the crowds outside and knowing how close I had been to the President and his wife gave me an excited feeling. As a waiter, I realized how fortunate I was to have served the most important person in the United States of America.

I was very proud of myself for not committing any mistakes while serving the President and his wife. I had felt poised while I served them at their table, even though I felt pressure because of everyone staring at me. This incident boosted my esteem as a professional waiter. I know that if I can serve the President, I can serve any other important customer or stranger.

I will always remember that day as one of my fondest experiences as a waiter. Also when my daughters grow up, I will be able to tell them that I was a part of history: I served the 42nd President of the United States of America, President Bill Clinton, and First Lady Hillary Clinton, when they made their visit to Hawaii in 1993.

Finally, their presence in the Rainbow Lanai Restaurant made the place special to work in, and the fond memory that the experience has given me makes me feel privileged. ♦



English 100

The Great Adventurer

Tamara Chilcott

I first met my great-uncle Claude when I was seven years old. My family and I were staying at my grandmother's house in southern California. He came down from Nevada to visit my grandmother and also to see us.

I was in the back of my grandmother's house when my uncle Claude arrived. It was mid-morning. I knew he had arrived by the loud booming voice I could hear coming from the living room. I walked hesitantly into the room to see who was there.

I saw him standing in the middle of the room, an older man about six feet tall, with wide shoulders and an arm that bore the tattoo of a fierce looking tiger. He was neither skinny nor plump, but medium built, with steel gray hair slicked to the side.

His facial features were poignant and sharp, his nose long and thin, his cheek bones finely chiseled. The middle of his cheeks were red and rosy. Through his blacked-framed glasses, his eyes peered at me. They were steel blue with a dancing sparkle in them. Had there been no sparkle in his eyes, I might have been afraid of him. His exterior was gruff, but the sparkle in his eyes revealed a kind heart.

"Hello there," he said. "You must be Tammy."

"Yes," I answered. I thought the volume of his voice would knock me over. I was pulled from his glance at that moment by the

sound of my younger sister's shrieking scream.

"Look, mommy," she exclaimed. "There's a big camper in grandma's driveway. Whose is it?"

"That's mine," said Uncle Claude.

I quickly moved to the door to take a peek. There it stood, a big truck with a huge camper shell on the back. Wow! I thought. "Can we go inside? Can we go for a ride?" I asked, running both questions together, unable to hold back my excitement.

"Sure," boomed Uncle Claude. "How about we have a picnic lunch inside, and then I'll take you for a ride?"

"Okay!" I said.

At twelve-o'clock that afternoon my mother packed us a lunch, and we were on our way. We ran out to the camper. Uncle Claude helped us inside. It was a little house on wheels. I looked around with amazement. "Where do you go in this?" I asked.

With a chuckle in his voice, Uncle Claude said, "Oh, just about anywhere you would want to go in the country. I've been all over in this camper."

"Really?" I asked.

"Yep," he answered. "See this map on the wall?" Above the little kitchen table was a map of the country. On the map were little pins and lines outlining the places Uncle Claude had traveled to. I looked in awe — he

had been to almost every state!

“What’s it like in Texas?” I asked.

“Big and barren,” he said. “You can drive for miles and not see anything in sight.” I sat and listened eagerly that afternoon while Uncle Claude told us many stories of his journeys through the states. I remember thinking what a great adventurer he was. Aside from his many adventures in the states, he, like my father, had traveled to many different countries while in the Navy. (This accounted for the tattoo on his arm.) I regarded my uncle as the great wanderer sort, as a gypsy in a way.

§

Through the years, my uncle visited frequently, bringing his stories of great adventures. During one of his visits, I awoke very early to the sound of kitchen clatter and the smell of freshly brewed coffee. I looked at my clock, and it was five o’clock in the morning. In my house no one awoke so early. I went downstairs to the kitchen to see who was up this early. I was surprised to see my Uncle Claude standing there in the kitchen. He was wearing a sweat suit and tennis shoes. He said, “Good morning, Tammy. Did I wake you up?”

“Well, yeah, Uncle Claude. What are you doing up so early?”

“I get up this early every morning, you see,” he said. “I walk five miles every day, and when I get back I make myself some coffee and a hot bowl of oatmeal. Keeps me young and on my toes,” he bellowed. “I hope to be walking like this until I’m ninety.”

And this I believed. I remember thinking, “He’s a strong man, very disciplined.” Uncle Claude was in his sixties at this time, and I was amazed by his stamina. At my young age, I thought anyone over thirty was old. And it amazed me that someone in his sixties walked

five miles a day. I wanted to be strong and adventuresome just like him.

§

For the next three to four years, we saw Uncle Claude at least once a year. He remained to me the same through those years: strong, adventurous, never aging.

When I was a freshman in high school, we moved to southern California. So I did not see Uncle Claude for three years.

Then on the day I graduated, when I came home from school I saw a truck in our driveway. It had a small camper shell on the back. Nothing as grand as the huge camper my Uncle Claude had. I wondered whose it could be.

When I entered the house and saw my mother I asked, “Mom, whose camper is in the driveway?”

“Oh, that’s Uncle Claude’s.”

I was shocked that he had gotten rid of his home on wheels. When I saw my uncle that day he had changed. He was thinner than before and not as quick and agile. But for a man of his age, now in his seventies, he still appeared younger. That evening I asked him why he had sold his large camper for a smaller one. He told me he wanted something smaller for just him. “Better gas mileage,” he said. He also told me he did not do as much traveling as before. This struck me as odd. Not the great adventurer? I thought.

The next day my mother asked me to go down to the store to pick up some groceries for her. “Hey, Tammy,” my uncle said, “I need a few things. Mind if I go with you?”

“No, not at all.”

“Okay, let’s go. I’ll drive,” he said.

The store was not far from our house, only about a mile-an-a-half. It would take me about five minutes to reach the store. But that day it took Uncle Claude about twenty, or at

least it seemed that long. As we sat in the truck, I remember thinking, "We will never make it there." He was driving about five to ten miles an hour. He was so slow that cars were passing us, honking their horns. Uncle Claude would just yell, "Hey, what's your hurry?"

It struck me at that moment, "Now I know the reason for the smaller camper." He was barely able to handle it as it was. "My uncle," I thought with much sadness, "is growing older and weaker. In his mind he is still capable of moving large buildings, so to speak, but his body is physically incapable."

I pondered quietly the anguish he must be feeling. I realized that he was struggling with his pride. He and I both knew that soon he

would have to give up the things he enjoyed the most: traveling and strenuous exercise. He wanted to remain young and was hanging onto youth as tightly as possible.

I felt sad. I realized I would not see a spry, ninety-year-old man. At that moment I realized the agony of growing old. Gone was the great adventurer, the five-mile walker. When I looked over at him, what I saw that day was a weak, seventy-year-old man, with the sparkle in his eyes fading. I remained silent the rest of the way to the store, mourning the loss of the great adventurer.

I learned that day that youth is not everlasting. Through watching my uncle grow old, I also learned to have patience and understanding of our elderly. ♦

The Accidental Meeting

Ryvette C. Gazmen

As I sit here happy and content, I remember a time when I thought I'd never be this fortunate. Four years ago, I succeeded in getting out of a 10-year relationship, during which I was physically and mentally abused. Getting into another relationship was definitely not on my agenda, but little did I know ...

I was working as a secretary for three military brokers. Working for three people sounds hectic, but they were mostly out at the military bases, so I was usually alone in the office.

I had gotten very close to one of them. Sylvia was happily married, in her late 20's, and a very outgoing, Hawaiian lady with two lovely daughters. She had helped me through that rough relationship, and ever since I had gotten out of it, she had been trying to set me up with guys, but with no success.

Our office building, which was three stories high, was being renovated, and, always on the lookout, Sylvia told me about a good-looking painter who was working on the first floor. I listened to her with little enthusiasm as she told me that I should check him out.

A couple of days later, I saw him painting the first floor hallway. Sylvia was right: he was gorgeous. The first thing I noticed about him was his thick, black eyebrows. He was a local boy with a handsome, kind face. I was instantly attracted, but thought to myself, "A

guy who looks this good may already have a girlfriend or even be married with kids." Deep inside, though, I hoped I was wrong.

§

For the next two months, I looked forward to going to work. Whenever I would see him, we would exchange smiles and glances, so I knew he was interested in me, too. I also discovered that he drove a light-blue Toyota truck and his one-half hour lunch break began at 11 a.m.

When the renovations finally began on the third floor, I saw more of him. From my desk I could look out a window located by our front door and see out into the hallway to the stairway door.

For a couple of days, while he was painting the stairway door, I would constantly watch him work, and he would often catch me watching him. Sometimes, I would even catch him looking at me. During this whole time, Sylvia would keep insisting that I introduce myself to him, but I kept telling her that I wasn't ready.

When he had completed painting the stairway door and was working in another area, I decided that I had to meet him, but I couldn't see myself going directly to him and starting a conversation.

A week had passed, and I missed

watching him from my desk. I had been so happy since I started watching him paint the stairway door that I was craving for that a plan: an accidental meeting in the elevator.

§

The next day I prepared to carry out my plan, but with some reservations, so I really had to psych myself up. My plan was to catch the elevator with him just after his lunch break. I knew his lunch break began at 11 a.m. and lasted a half-hour, so I knew I needed to be downstairs ahead of time.

When the time came for me to go downstairs, I felt a sense of excitement as well as apprehension.

When I arrived on the first floor, I had to position myself in the hallway and look inconspicuous. I could not see the front doors from the hallway, so I had to rely on my hearing and listen for the doors to open.

As I waited, I realized I could hear my heart beating, and my hands were cold and sweaty. Then I heard the door open, and as I started walking toward the elevator, I noticed that he was not one of the people who had come into the building.

Disappointed, I turned around and walked back to the hallway. Then hearing the door open again, I walked to the elevator. Again, he was not there. Ten minutes had passed, so I concluded that he either had a late lunch, or I had missed him earlier.

As I walked to the elevator and pressed the button, I still hoped that he would suddenly come through the doors, but I was disappointed again. Feeling depressed and frustrated, I entered the elevator. I was wondering whether I could go through with this again, when I turned around and saw him in the elevator with me.

§

I was caught by surprise, but it took me only a second to compose myself. He had on a red flannel, long-sleeved shirt over a white shirt and white pants. White paint was spattered on his hair and hands. We looked at each other. His sweet smile and big, brown eyes instantly mesmerized me. We greeted each other for the first time.

“Hi!” he said at last. “My name’s Pat.”

“Hi, my name’s Ryvette,” I replied. I smiled and thanked my lucky stars.

A flicker of confusion passed his eyes. “Yvette?”

“No,” I laughed. He leaned a little closer to me as I said, “It’s Ryvette, Yvette with an ‘R’ at the beginning.” Repeating my name to people I meet always happens to me, and usually I don’t mind. But this one time, I wished my parents had given me a common name, considering how nervous I was.

“Ryvette,” he repeated slowly. The sound of his voice saying my name sent a shudder of delight through me. “What a pretty name.”

“Thank you,” I replied, breathless.

“I just got off from lunch. You, too?” he asked.

“Oh. . .” I had to clear my throat, “I had to run an errand.” If only he knew.

The elevator door opened.

As we stepped out of the elevator, he asked, “What year did you grad?”

“Eighty-six. How about you?”

“Hey, me, too. What school did you grad from?” He was walking beside me toward my office.

“I graduated from Baldwin High. On Maui. Came to Oahu right after I graduated to attend Cannon’s. I’ve been over here ever since.” I was so nervous that I would have gone on and on, but I quickly caught myself.

“So you’re a Maui girl.”

I smiled and nodded as excitement continued to build up in me.

“Well, I went to Moanalua High for

awhile.” He paused. “Then I ended up at Kalaheo during my senior year, because I moved in with my father.” As he mentioned the move, I sensed a note of unhappiness.

We had reached my office. I calmly reached for the doorknob and turned to him. “Well, it was nice meeting you, Pat. I guess I’ll see you around.”

“Yeah. It was nice meeting you, too, Ryvette.” He just stood there. “Uh, would you like to have lunch with me tomorrow?”

My hand was still on the doorknob and my grip tightened.

“Tomorrow?” I deliberately hesitated so that I wouldn’t sound too eager. “Oh, okay.”

“How does eleven sound?” he asked.

“Sounds good,” I replied.

“Okay, I’ll come by at eleven. See you then.” He turned, walked down the hallway, and waved.

“O—kay,” I sighed.

§

I calmly entered my office and slowly closed the door. I could not contain myself any longer. I literally jumped for joy. No one else was in the office, but it would not have mattered. I couldn’t wait to tell Sylvia what had happened, because she had no idea how interested in Patrick I was. Also, I had not wanted to give Sylvia any indication about my

feelings because I thought talking about them would be a “jinx.”

For the next hour, I was in a daze. I kept telling myself, “I can’t believe it, I can’t believe it!”

I was still so jazzed up when Sylvia finally came in that I blurted everything out to her. She understood some of what I said, but I had to repeat it. As excited as I was, I told her what had happened. My cheeks were quivering, my hands were sweating, and my eyes were tearing, but I finally told her the whole story.

“Oh, Ryvette, I’m so happy for you!” she exclaimed as she gave me a hug. “I knew you had it in you,” she laughed, “and did you ever!”

“Wow!” I exclaimed. “I can’t believe it, Sylvia!”

“Well, girl, I’ve never seen you this happy,” She smiled, placed her hands on her hips, and shook her head. “You look absolutely radiant!” she said.

It’s been almost four years since my “accidental meeting” with Patrick. I never imagined my life would be so full of happiness, especially after my previous relationship. A new chapter of my life started the day I met Patrick. I felt that day like the luckiest woman in the world. To this day, I still do. ♦

Too Much Thinking Can Be Hazardous to Your Health?

Mike Hasemann

Tudduh ... tudduh ... tudduhtudduhtuh: my moped is started. It's going to be a long, long, long day: I have a Chemistry class at 8 a.m., then I need to get back so I'll be there when the guy comes to hook up my phone. I have to study for my Math 140 test, finish my project for ICS 115, and buy my Christmas gifts. Plus finals are in less than two weeks, AND I'm moving today!

Right now, what I need to do is finish moving the rest of these "little" things, but I only have about 30 minutes before I need to leave to go to class. I'm just glad I got most of my stuff moved over last night, because it looks like it's going to rain.

Dang. Where's my jacket and Bears hat? True rain-gear for mopeders: just pull the top of the hat's bill way down to keep the rain from hitting the eyes, and I'm on my way. Luckily, I'm only moving eight blocks away.

Five minutes later, and just beating the rain, I'm here. I open the door, put my stuff down, and lie down on the bed, looking at all my things neatly stacked together in the back of the room, thinking that the room looks bigger and also very clean, but knowing that once the newness wears off, things will go back to normal and there'll be the usual "eternal" little messes that I never seem to make

time to pick up, like the usual, Oscar-Madison style, four or five (or seven or eight) shirts piled on the back of a chair.

Now, though, I'm too tired to think about unpacking, cleaning or anything else. One more trip and I'm done. But I only have about ten minutes. There's no way I can get there and back and make it to Chem class that fast.

Hmmm. Ah, I can skip today's Chem class. Now it's raining, and I really think I'll need to make two trips to finish. Plus, I have to be here when the phone guy comes; otherwise, it'll be another, what, 3 weeks before he'll come again, and I'll be gone by then. OK, got my hat, pull it down, let's go.

Tudduh, tudduh, tudduhtudduhtuh. Check both ways before I pull out — moped riders can never be too careful — and I'm off, in what has now become a light drizzle. I really feel much better now that I don't have to go to Chemistry. You know I think today will be

!! !!

The next thing I hear is "Are you OK?" Then "Are you OK?" repeats the voice.

"Don't move," says another. Everything is blank. I can't open my eyes, and I don't know why. Is it because I can't open my eyes, or because I just don't want to? I am completely numb.

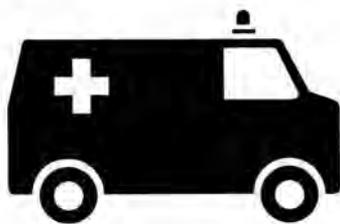
“Do this. Do this, yea, and do this,” these faceless voices say to each other as I start to come to a little. “Rirrrr, rirrr ... rirrr, rirrr ... rirrr, rirrrr,” go the sirens. “Wow, what’s going on?” I think. “How bad is it?” No one is saying anything except for telling me to keep still, and I think I am in a kind of shock. I am shaking from head to toe — like cold shivers without the chill. Then, out of a haze of these people talking, “He looks like he’ll be OK, but his leg looks pretty bad.”

I am starting to come to my senses a little bit. The next voice I hear is a policeman’s. “Where are you hurt? What’s your name? Do you know where you are? Where do you live?” Without opening my eyes, I answer, mumbling and a little incoherent, especially when trying to tell him where I live.

Feeling begins to return. Now I know exactly what they meant by my leg. The pain is unbearable, and no matter how much I want, I can not stop shaking, which makes it worse with the cardboard “splint” that someone has put underneath my leg. “We’re going to put you in the ambulance. Don’t move. Which hospital do you want to go to?”

Don’t move? I can’t stop shaking, and they tell me not to move. They want to know which hospital I’d like to go to? What do I care? Just get me to ANY ONE! My leg is killing me! I still haven’t opened my eyes, and I honestly can’t think of one single hospital.

§



As I ride in the ambulance, what is going through my mind is that I just never thought something like this would happen to me. Whenever the ambu-

lance sirens had gone whirling by before, it was just get-to-the-side-of-the-road time. Almost never had I thought about who was in there and why. As the ambulance is nearing the hospital, I ask whoever it is that is riding in the back with me, “Just tell me, how bad is it? Is it bleeding? Is it broken?”

“Well, the good thing is it’s not bleeding, and the bone hasn’t broken through the skin. But I think some damage was done to the ankle area. You’ll have to wait until the doctors see you to find out more, though.”

The pain seems to be lessening now, but I have an intense feeling of anxiety, almost a panic. I don’t think I’d ever get to the hospital. Finally, though, I am there.

§

My stretcher rolls out of the ambulance, its legs snap out and away I go. I feel myself almost waiting, hoping, yet still shaking, and still my eyes are closed. I must be waiting for it to all be over and OK before I open them.

Now I’m in the emergency waiting room. “We need to run some tests,” says a female voice. Away I go again, being wheeled by who-knows-who to who-knows-where. Everything is so dark. Not being able to open my eyes is starting to worry me a little now. I need to see something ... anything, just to know that I can still open them. Fighting myself a little at first — apparently my eyes aren’t just closed, I think I have been literally “squeezing” them as hard as I can to keep them shut — I am able to open my eyes. Everything is blurred, but I am relieved. At least I can still see. CHINK. “Sorry,” says my who-knows-who driver, as we take a corner a little too tightly, scraping a wall.

Now I’m in a room and the cart has stopped. “OK, we need to move you onto the table for a CAT-scan. There’s a little bit of

blood on the back of your head, and a chunk of hair that's been clipped off. We need to check to see if there was any brain damage."

This is not what I want to hear, especially since I am feeling a little better after my mini-victory with the opening of my eyes. As I am being moved onto the table, I start to realize just how badly my leg is hurting. It is an intense, throbbing pain, it feels like a nail has been hammered into it. After two more "rooms" for more X-rays, and a throbbing pain that is getting more intense with every minute, I stop thinking about anything else except the pain. I just want someone to take the "nail" out. I can't stand it anymore.

Instead, I find myself being taken back to the Emergency Room — two rows of beds of the "new and critical" patients (not a group I want to be in) — when a nurse says to me, "We have to wait for your X-rays, but we'll give you something for the pain."

"You will?" I think. "What can you possibly give me to make this go away?" By now, the fear and the anxiety are giving way to the intense pain I am feeling. I become increasingly irritable. Where is the doctor? How long am I going to be here? Can't anyone do anything? Will this day ever end?

At about 2 p.m. (almost 6 ½ hours after the accident) a doctor comes to my bed, folding his arms and telling me, "Well, the good news is that everything but the ankle appears to be OK. The ankle, I'm afraid will need surgery." Putting my X-ray onto a lighted screen, he points to and names the bones in the X-ray, telling me that they have been broken into so many number of pieces and that he will be inserting a plate and screws to do whatever, and finishing by saying, "but considering you were on a moped



and not wearing a helmet, you're extremely lucky that your ankle is the only thing we need to fix."

It isn't until 9 p.m. that I go into surgery, without question the longest wait of my entire life, and lucky is not a word that comes out of my mouth once in that time, believe me.



That week in the hospital, and the two or three weeks after, are, without question, the worst time of my life. The pain was so bad that I couldn't sleep for more than 2 to 3 hours at a time. I am not likely to forget seeing thick metal staples stuck in my leg to hold the incision closed and having to wrap gauze and swabs around my ankle every night to soak up the blood and other liquids that would seep out.

Looking back now, though, I do see how lucky I was. If the car had hit me a little harder, or if I had landed a little bit differently, anything could have happened. Anything. "Live each day of your life like it's your last," takes on a little more importance once you've gone through something like that, and you'd think that I might have the sudden urge to become a painter, or writer, or maybe even a movie star (Well, if Tom Arnold can co-star with Arnold S. ...).

But what I've found is that I haven't, in any way, changed the way I live or what I want to do with my life. Ironically, I still ride a moped. I guess I haven't changed because I think I already was living my life in the way that I thought was best for me, so why should I change just for the sake of change? Some things you just have to take at face value — such as ACCIDENTS HAPPEN — and move on. I hope, however, that the next accident will "happen" a lot less painfully. ♦

The Mission

Eric M. Lee

Jim was a born-again Christian, who loved to debate. Is there a God? Is there a devil? Is there a heaven and hell? Finally, where are you headed?

Every time we worked together, somehow he would skillfully work in these questions and try to convince me that I needed to be saved. After six months of debating with him, I was convinced that I was going to hell. I was terrified.

"The only way into heaven is to come to church on Sunday and be baptized in water," Jim instructed.

"It's only Tuesday! You mean I have to wait five days to escape eternal damnation? What if I don't survive until then?"

"Don't worry. As long as you have the intent in your heart, God knows, so you are safe." Nevertheless, I started reading the Bible and driving below the speed limit. I had five days of surviving to do.

§

Sunday came and I was ready for the baptism. There was a blue bathtub behind the pew that was big enough to fit a coffin. The pastor and I walked fully clothed into the half-filled tub. The cold tap water came up to our waists, and the powerful spotlights from the back of the church lighted the tub like a movie set.

He put one hand on my back and the other on my head and started a short prayer. After blessing me for seeing the truth, he drove me backwards into the cold water. I was submerged for a second and then quickly raised. Loud cheers and praises came from a crowd that I couldn't see through the blinding spotlights.

"Now you're pure and without sin like when you were first born" the pastor's gentle voice chimed in my head through the "Hallelujah!" and "Praise God!" of the congregation.

The rest of the summer was spent going to church and consuming the Bible with an insatiable appetite. I was now guaranteed a place in heaven, and I wanted to know everything about it. I was looking forward to starting my first year of high school in the fall, but not for the same reasons thousands of other kids were. I had a mission.

§

I started passing out Christian booklets that I bought in packets with my own money. Money served a different purpose now. A soul was priceless, and I was willing to give every cent I had to save even one.

I isolated myself from the other kids (the non-believers) according to my Church's beliefs. I had to keep my thoughts and spirit

pure because I wasn't a part of this world anymore.

Surprisingly, rather than being rejected, I was respected by most of them. Many asked about God, and I always had an answer. I had read the entire Bible twice, and I could recall any passage with the chapter and verse.

§

One day, during my junior year, a Catholic girl in one of my classes approached me. Lisa was the prettiest cheerleader and very popular in school.

"Can I talk to you after class?" she asked. This caught the attention of everybody within ear shot and eventually the entire class.

"She'll probably ask questions about God and the Bible," I told myself. She didn't ask them.

"I'm always fighting with my parents. Why don't they understand me?"

Suddenly, she started crying. I searched my brain to come up with something to say to comfort her. Waves of scriptures from different places in the Bible flooded my mind, but nothing seemed appropriate. So I remained silent.

She continued talking about her family problems as she cried, and I just stood there with a lump in my throat. All I could think about was that this beautiful girl, who was well liked by everyone, was going to burn in hell because she was Catholic. Could God be so unfair? Then, just as suddenly, she composed herself and wiped her tears. She thanked me and walked away as I stood silently.

§

After that incident, I started to scrutinize my beliefs and myself. Was my belief the right one? What about all the genuinely

devoted people of other religions? Were they going to burn for all eternity because they were too blind to convert? I couldn't accept that.

One Sunday during a sermon, several things struck me. The wooden benches were worn and scratched. One of the Bibles in a space behind the bench had a rip on the cover. A rainbow of light coming through a stained glass window revealed dust on the sill. There were chips and scratches on the wooden frame of the House of God. I realized then that I wasn't scared to die anymore, and I wondered, "If I'm safe, why am I here shutting myself off from the rest of the world?"

After two years of walking the straight and narrow path, I could see that I was missing it all. It was like being on a freeway watching buildings, parks, boats, and planes in the distance slowly passing by, wishing I was there and wanting to be a part of it — all of it. But according to my Church, it wasn't allowed. I was supposed to be just passing through.

It didn't matter to me anymore whether people were Jewish, Islamic, or Catholic. I had faith that Lisa would live a full life despite her religion and her problems. We were all experiencing God in His many glorious ways, and this revelation was uplifting as well as comforting. Fear as a motivation was replaced by courage and adventure, knowing that God is everywhere.

§

After two years of dutifully serving my God and my Church, I stopped going to Church. I wanted to take a detour and see the sights for a while. Summer ended, and I looked forward to my senior year of high school. I had a new mission. ♦

Ambidextrous Via Hitler

Deborah Ho'okano Nishijo

I remember kindergarten writing lessons. We all had the writing books, officially called penmanship tablets. You had to lift the page up and away from you to use it. On the flip-side of the cover was the alphabet in bold black letters with direction arrows on the sides of each letter. If you followed the arrows, your letter was supposed to look exactly like the sample letter in the tablet.

One afternoon, Mrs. Ito said, in her short, stout she-man voice, "Children, now we are going to learn our alphabets." This will be easy, I thought. I already know my alphabet. I even know my numbers. I reached into my desk and took out my pencil and book, ready to show off. While the rest of the kids were getting their writing supplies, I watched my thick metallic red pencil turn from dark red to orange red with each back and forth movement of my wrist.

"Okay, class, watch the chalkboard. This is how you write the letter A." When Mrs. Ito wrote each line on the board, she moved to the opposite side of the line so we could all see this miracle. When the miracle A was finished, some of the kids looked at her like she had just unearthed the secrets of the universe. "Now, children, you try." We all held our "chalk" fingers out in front of us, ready to write on our imaginary chalkboards. "Okay, start here at the top." We all pointed to where we believed the top to be. "Now,

come down in an angle on this side, the side you write with."

Left. Teach us the word.

"Now, go down on the opposite side. Form an upside-down V."

How are we supposed to know what a V is if we're learning the alphabet now?

"Last line. Go to about halfway of the upside-down V and draw a line across so that it touches the end of the two lines." She waited, giving our tiny hands time to write. "And that's an A. Okay, class, you try."

I wrote my first A, my second, then third and kept writing until the first line was filled.

Huh! This writing stuff is easy.

I looked around at the other kids. Some were engrossed in their books, writing like their lives depended on it. I started to laugh, on the inside. That was how we had to laugh at things in Mrs. Ito's class. Rule number two: No teasing other children. Laughing then would have been teasing, and I did not want to face the consequence.

§

Consequence came to us in twelve inches. That twelve inches of wood whose purpose in life was to measure or help me draw straight lines was now used as a scare tactic to keep us five-year-olds in line. We all feared the consequence, also known as the ruler.

Every school day Mrs. Ito wore a ten-inch jet-black beehive wig, cat woman eye glasses, black eyeliner on the creases of both eyelids, which gave a more than natural slant to her oriental-shaped eyes, sleeveless polyester mini-dress with pseudo-hippie designs, and three-inch acrylic slip-on heels. She over-compensated for her height, about four and a half feet, with her hairdo and heels.

She was spooky looking. When she held the ruler in her hand, she was evil. She would grasp the ruler so tightly in her right hand that her fist would turn white around the ruler's edge. She marched around the classroom like one of Hitler's sergeants patrolling the concentration camp for violators. She would often hit the ruler against the inside of her left palm to remind us that the ruler was near.

§

I went back to writing my A's, hearing the usual classroom noises. The ticking of the industrial-sized black clock that hung above the chalkboard next to the flag. The swooshes of eraser pieces when other kids made a mistake. The squeaking of wooden chairs when kids repositioned themselves. The klonk of Mrs. Ito's heels as she walked around the classroom checking our work, always with the ruler in her hand. I knew how far away from me Mrs. Ito was by the volume of the klonks.

Klonk, klonk, klonk ... sounds too close for comfort. I looked side-eye. Sure enough, two seats to my left, poor Darin. She stood over him for only a few seconds, but I could see him gripping his pencil tighter. As she walked away, I could hear his relieved sigh.

Next was Denise. Her body tensed even more than Darin's. I was getting anxious. I was next. Klonk, klonk, my body tensed. I wiggled around in my chair trying to sit erect. Like a cat being frightened by something, the hair on my neck stood up. I could just feel her

breathing on me.

She stood behind me looking down at my writing.

Go away! I know how to do this. I don't need your help or that ruler!

As I wrote the first slant, she asked, "Why are you using that hand?"

Okay ... be cool. "My left hand?"

"Yes, why are you using your left hand?"

"This is the hand I write with, Mrs. Ito." Trying to make points by adding "Mrs. Ito" did not work.

"Well, you're using the wrong hand. You have to use the other hand!"

"I can't. I don't write with my right hand."

"Well, I'm going to stand here until you do!" I was terrified. Even when I got lost in the store, could not find my family, and I thought I was going to be left behind pales in comparison. I put the pencil, whose color didn't interest me now, in my right hand.

"Hold it correctly!" she barked out to me as my thumb, middle, and pointer fingers danced around the pencil trying to get the correct writing grasp.

Just draw the first line. You can do it.

I drew the first line, then the second, and third. My A looked horrible. The lines were all squiggly, like someone had been shaking me when I wrote it.

"See how easy it is when you use the correct hand?"

It would be easier if you weren't standing behind me with that ruler.

Klonk, klonk, klonk.

That evil woman is gone.

I continued to use my right hand for the rest of the lesson, struggling like the others who were just learning to write the alphabet.

Pretty close. Lucky, no ruler for me today.

I went home confused and felt unintelligent.

§

A week later, Mrs. Ito taught us the letter B. She used the same teaching procedures as for the letter A. Being a creature of habit, I automatically started to write with my left hand. Klonk, klonk, right behind me. Before my hand could comprehend what my brain was saying (*Wrong hand! Wrong hand!*), smack came twelve inches of anger full force on my left wrist.

“What did I tell you?” she yelled at me. “Which is the correct hand to use when you write?”

Don't cry. Be tough. “My right hand.”

“Then you better use it before I give you another smack!”

Fine, you evil woman! “Yes, Mrs. Ito.”

My parents do not hit me. Why should Mrs. Ito?

I lost all respect for Mrs. Ito that day. She made me hate being in kindergarten. The school I was so anxious to be a part of when I was four I no longer wanted. I became afraid to learn, afraid to make a mistake.

§

One day, while reaching for the top window, Mrs. Ito lost her balance. She began falling in what seemed to be slow motion. She fell back, hitting her head on her desk, her body twisting as she fell towards the floor. She tried to brace herself with her hands and ended the fall lying flat on her back on the floor, crying like a wounded animal.

I started to laugh, breaking rule number two. The other kids joined in, causing a laughing wave in the classroom. She begged one of us to run and get the principal. We all hesitated. Why should we help this woman who continually hit us when we did not conform to her ideals? Finally, I was the one who

got the principal.

Mrs. Ito was taken away in an ambulance. We all cheered in our own way. *See? If you treat people mean, something bad's going to happen to you.*

The next week, Mrs. Ito returned to class with a cast on her right hand from her elbow to her knuckles. The very hand she used to exert her power now made her an invalid. I was relieved. That meant weeks without the ruler.

When the cast was removed, she continued her scare tactics. I used my left hand a few times, out of habit, but never got caught. I was surprised to see an “E” next to “Writing” on my report card. I had expected an “S—.”

The last time I saw Mrs. Ito, I was in the fifth grade. I had no feelings for her. I just looked through her trying to determine how many others she had terrorized.

§

Mrs. Ito should not have been a child's first school experience. She was my personal Hitler. At first, she traumatized me with fear and could have caused irreparable damage to my young, learning mind. However, my literacy history changed forever when Mrs. Ito returned to class after her fall. Seeing her as an invalid validated my self-worth, and without her ruler, her power was gone.

I never again took what teachers said as fact. I always questioned instructions that made no sense. Mostly, I realized that intelligence does not come from the hand you write with, but how you choose to take the lessons you are taught. By the way, Mrs. Ito, thanks to you and your ideals, I am now ambidextrous. ♦

The Ritual

Jamie Ornellas

When I was growing up, I spent a lot of time at my grandma and grandpa's house. I have many cherished memories of my time spent with them. These memories are with me always.

Grandma always let me help her in the kitchen. It was our special time together. We'd spend our afternoons preparing dinner for grandpa. If I did something wrong, she'd gently take my hand and show me what she wanted me to do. I enjoyed my time in the kitchen with grandma, but the best was yet to come.

At about ten minutes until five p.m., grandma would turn to me. "You'd better get ready, it's almost time," she'd say. My heart would skip a beat. Grandpa's coming! Quickly, I'd hurry to the cupboard and pull out two glasses: Grandpa's favorite tall blue one and the little jigger for me. Next, I'd hurry over to the pantry for the precious opai (dried shrimp). Grandpa kept them in an old jelly jar closed so tightly that only he could open it. I placed the opai on the table next to the glasses. Then, I'd hurry into the living room to turn on the TV and check to make sure it was on the right channel. There, everything was ready. Now all I had to do was wait.

I'd go out to the porch and sit on the top step, waiting, watching and worrying. Is he going to make it in time? When is he going to

be here? Grandma would watch me from the window and tell me not to worry, he'd be here.

§

Then, just like always, I'd spot the familiar old DeSoto seemingly floating down the street, getting larger and larger, until it was turning into the driveway. He's here! He made it! Grandpa would jump out of the car and scoop me up in his arms. I'd give him a hug and bury my face in his neck. I loved the way my grandpa smelled of Old Spice.

"Did it start yet? Did I miss anything?" he'd ask.

I'd shake my head no, and we'd hurry into the kitchen. Grandpa would see the glasses and the bottle of opai on the table and give me a wink. Then he'd go over to the refrigerator and pull out the familiar clear bottle of Miller High Life. He'd pour his glass full of the amber colored brew, and just when I thought there might not be any left for me, he'd pour the last little bit into the empty jigger. Now we were ready.

We'd hurry into the living room, and Grandpa would settle himself into the old worn recliner. I'd pull my footstool close and anticipation would wash over me. This was the moment I had been waiting for. The opai!

Grandpa would open the bottle and pour

out a handful of the delicacy. Then, as if they were priceless jewels, he would carefully count them out. Five for him and three for me. No more, because they were expensive, he'd say. I felt so special. Grandpa didn't share his opai with anyone, not even Grandma. He would always say there was only enough for the two of us. We'd turn our attention to the TV and, just like every other day, we'd hear the familiar whistle blow and Fred would yell "Yabba dabba doo!"

We'd sit there, Grandpa and I, sipping our beer, watching the Flintstones, and munching on the precious opai. I'd take the tiniest bites, wanting to make the moment last forever.

When the show was over, I'd wash and put away the glasses. Grandma would smile as she watched me carefully put the opai jar back in its place on the pantry shelf.

§

Grandpa is gone now, but Grandma still keeps a jar full of the opai in the pantry and a few bottles of beer in the refrigerator. Every once in a while, I'll get a yearning for the opai and grandma will join me for a beer. Only now, I count out the shrimp. Three for grandma, and two for me. Grandpa would have been proud. ♦

Penguins and Bears at School

Ken Reed

The ten year old has just completed her homework. Despite the chunk of time homework takes away from TV, she likes school. I know this because, having just been liberated from her own tortures, she is setting up a schoolhouse for her toys.

I hear her walking down the hallway from her bedroom to the dining room. She walks past me carrying an armful of stuffed penguins, bears, Barbie dolls, and miscellaneous characters. Her long legs stride across the room, and her light brown hair grazes the tabletop as she gently places the toys on the mahogany surface.

I should tell her not to play on the "good" table, but I am too interested in her actions to interrupt.

Four armfuls of toys later, she is ready to begin. The students are in their assigned seats: boys on the left and girls on the right. Some of the dolls are glassy-eyed beauties. Perfect porcelain faces peek from beneath hats of velvet and lace. Their dresses are endless layers of shiny cloth. Other females are easy to identify: the stuffed animals have bright bows, ruffled skirts or flowered shirts testifying to their sex.

Recognizing the males is a more difficult task for the adult male mind. I can understand why the large white bear in the red and green Christmas scarf is a boy; his size alone makes that reasonable. But what logic determined

that the monkey wearing only a straw hat and pacifier is male? Why is the red dinosaur male and the yellow one female?

There are too many students for the number of chairs. Both carved maple chairs are filled to capacity. Barbie dolls are held in the arms of pastel rabbits, leftover keepsakes of a time when she still believed in the nocturnal visits of the Easter Bunny. The four other chairs, because they lack arms, are filled with larger students.

The tiniest toys stand and sit on the perimeter of the table. I recognize these small pupils as the original inhabitants of a Kid's Meal bag. This is their ultimate fate, not to be kicked under the back seat of the van and forgotten, but to be teacher's pets in the front of class.

Unusual school books fill the table. The Honolulu yellow pages, my paralegal school books, even her mom's mystery novels lay open for the students to review.

§

Teacher clears her throat and raises her hands to call the class to order. The skirt to her green plaid jumper rises and falls with each movement, showing her long skinny legs beneath. She surveys the seated class, looking down at the tops of their heads, a duplication of real school where she towers over most of

her fourth-grade classmates. Her voice changes as she speaks for each character: her normal tone for teacher, high for the girls, low for the boys, and an unbelievable squeak for the penguin wearing the frilly slip.

Today she is instructing the class on good manners. She seriously tells the alligator it is not polite to call someone fat. Her class in “white gloves and party manners” is bearing fruit.

§

I watch and marvel at the universal ability of children to befriend inanimate objects. If we are born with this wonderful creative ability to converse with toys, how do adults lose their naivete? Perhaps it is hormonal, and at the

onset of puberty we misplace our innocence. Or possibly it is less biological and more social. Society teaches us to obey authority, and as our submission increases, our creativity decreases. Maybe that is why artists are said to “march to the beat of a different drummer.” They never learn to conform and consequently retain their imagination.

Do we intentionally force our children to conform? Or does it occur unnoticed, hidden in our daily routine, obscured by ritual, and camouflaged by love?

My thoughts are interrupted as the clock chimes eight times, and her mother calls for the child to go take a shower. The girl skips down the hall towards the bathroom, leaving her class at their desks waiting for the recess bell to ring. ♦

Dark Clouds: A Literary Tale

Penny Rohrer

My literary history remained fairly uneventful until I started junior high. It was then that the winds whipped up and blew in some black, stormy clouds. The clouds started to form over Kaimuki Intermediate as soon as I entered my seventh grade English class.

The first assignment was an autobiography about my whole life — all 12 years of it. I poured out my soul in ten pages. I meticulously taped to my book pictures of my best friend, my family, and our pets. I made an elaborate sketch of my home on the handmade cover. I was so proud of my work and thought of how I would hand it down to the children I would have someday. I tied a ribbon through the holes on the side and turned it in.

A week later, my autobiography was returned to me endowed with the most red ink I had ever seen in my life. It was covered with big “R.O.’s” (run-on sentences) and spelling corrections on every page. I felt the shame, as evidenced by red ink on white paper, of someone out of her element.

§

Particularly ominous dark clouds blew in next. They took the form of spelling bees. Spelling bees were a far cry from a fun game for me. I was a terrible speller, and still am. I remember the day well. The second-floor

classroom had off-white walls with the standard number of desks and louvered windows. There wasn’t much of a breeze that day, and it was hot, humid and sticky — typical weather for September in Hawaii.

The teacher stood in front and announced that it was time for a spelling bee. Gulp! My heart sank, and my hands started to get clammy. She asked us to stand single file in a circle around the room. We did what we were told, but we formed more of a horseshoe shape with the teacher at the top of the U. My pulse raced as I waited my turn; I was fourth in line. One by one the kids in front of me bravely, and correctly, spelled their words. Successfully, they stood waiting for the second round.

Now it was my turn. Slowly I started to spell my word, hesitating between each letter until I reached the end. Then came a blast from the front of the room, “WRONG! SIT DOWN!” said the teacher. To me the decibel level of her voice was equal to that of the civil defense sirens tested at noon each month.

I felt the whole school could hear her voice. I took a momentary sigh of relief and sat down. Then I realized I was the only one sitting. There were row among row of empty desks, except for mine. I felt the heat of the other kids’ eyes staring at me. They had little else to do as they waited for their next turn. I felt enormously inept.

§

I concluded with these two experiences that writing was a natural gift, one I hadn't received. I had an idea. I would enlist the help of my step-sister, Joy. Joy was good at writing. She also happened to be in the same grade, and therefore she could write my papers. In return, I would do her math. So we had this deal, equally balanced, a brilliant plan, or so our 12-year-old minds thought. We each provided a crutch the other needed. Our plan went unchecked through junior high, although I'm not sure how lucky that was.

I continued to avoid writing as much as possible during my high school years. My step-sister went to live with her mom, so I

had to strike out on my own. I did manage to write a few less than perfect, but passable papers and boxes of love letters to my boyfriend, now my husband, Reed. My guess is that Reed was an easy grader.

§

Back in college now, I'm dressed in blue jeans and a t-shirt, sitting at my computer. The foundation to avoid English was formed early; however, it was not be set in concrete. Since those days, I haven't seen any dark clouds. If some should gather overhead, I am sure that they will not look as ominous to me now. Besides, it is good luck in Hawaii to have a little rain. ♦

His Name Is Blue!

Charlotte N. Sakata

When I was nine years old, I was an unwilling witness to a tragic event. The worst part is that it was all my fault. I was so ashamed of myself that I never told anyone about it, and I still haven't gotten over it.

I've heard it said that "talking" about it helps to ease the pain, but since I can better express myself through writing, I will allow this paper to serve as my Father-Confessor. May old wounds begin to heal.

During the summer of 74', my family and I lived on a little street in central Kalihi. One of our neighbors was a young boy named Quan. He was a typical seven-year-old; he liked ice cream, puppies, cartoons, and the most popular super-hero of those days, Kikaida.

However, there was one thing about Quan that perplexed me: he owned a dog that was both enormous and grotesque. The dog so repulsed me that I just couldn't understand what Quan saw in him, or how he could come to love him so. Secretly, I called the dog "Ugly Mutt," but Quan called him "Blue." He said that he chose that name for the color of the dog's eyes. I was content to take his word on it, for I wasn't about to get close enough to find out for myself!

Ugly Mutt was a German Shepherd (so I was told), though you couldn't guess it by looking at him. He was plagued with deformities that held his breed in question,

such as an acute case of mange, a concave back, floppy ears, a crooked tail, and most unusual of all, long, skinny legs that made his body appear as if it sat on stilts. It gave me the creeps just to look at him! Picture in your mind a mangy moose, and you'll get an idea of what he looked like. Fortunately, Quan preferred to play over at my house, so I didn't have to see much of Ugly Mutt.

§

As summer reached its end, I was filled with anticipation as Mom and I shopped for new clothes and school supplies. This year, Mom said that she would give me twenty bucks for every positive report card that I brought home. She also said that I was old enough now to catch the bus to school all by myself! It was, I thought, the start of a wonderful school year.

On the first day of school, I walked toward the bus stop, wearing my new clothes and carrying my new school supplies. I was aware of nothing else but the smell of it all. My nostrils twitched with delight at the distinct aroma of unused writing paper and utensils, and my heart beat faster at the thought of using them for the first time. My bus fare nearly slipped out of my hand as a result of my sweating palms. I couldn't wait to show the other kids that I no longer needed

my mom as a chaperone.

I glanced at my watch and found that I had little time to spare, so I kicked up my heels and ran. I didn't get very far when someone — or something — jumped me from behind, and knocked me to the ground. I was pinned, so that all I could do was to kick and flail about like a capsized cockroach. In a blind panic, I opened my mouth to scream, but was stopped short by the lick of a sopping-wet tongue. I opened my eyes to see my assailant, and was taken aback by what I saw.

§

It was Ugly Mutt! He stood grinning over me, allowing drool to drip onto my face. I screamed at him, "GET-OFF-OF-ME!" He reluctantly backed away. I hastened to my feet and began to wipe the spittle off my face, when I noticed that a bunch of kids had gathered to watch the spectacle. Their wide-eyed stares inevitably turned to hysterics, and I suddenly wished that I was dead. It seemed to me then that unlike being chaperoned to school, this was something that I would never live down. Thoroughly humiliated, I turned and ran to the bus stop.

I dared not look back, for I was afraid that Ugly Mutt might follow me, but by the time I reached the intersection, I had completely forgotten about him. I was about half-way across the street when I was startled by a nudge to the back of my leg. It was you-know-who.

"Great! Dis is jus' what I need," I murmured. Turning to him, with my finger pointing the way, I shouted, "Go home!" Of course, he just stood there, making me feel as dumb as he looked.

"Well, I no can jus' leave you here fo' get run ovah by one car," I said. Being careful not to risk touching him in any way, I

coaxed him to the bus stop. "Now what I goin' do wit' you?" I didn't have enough time to ponder over this question, as the bus was nearby and about to pull-up to the stop.

I was torn between seeing Ugly Mutt safely home and boarding, but visions of my Mom's wrath at my being late to school danced through my head. I hesitated no longer, and got on. I can't even begin to convey how much I regret that decision.

§

When Ugly Mutt saw that I had gone, he decided to go back home. In his attempt to go back across the street, he unwittingly stepped right in front of the bus. I heard a sickening thud as the bus jarred at the impact. The driver brought the bus to a screeching halt and stepped out to investigate. I was close behind.

Ugly Mutt was fading fast. His breath came in quick, shallow gasps as foamy blood trickled out of his nose. I saw that one of his legs was severely broken and had been grotesquely twisted towards his back. Those very legs that had once seemed a repulsive oddity to me were now oh so beautiful.

I reached out and stroked his muzzle, this time not caring about the mange. I struggled in vain to keep down my breakfast and hold back the tears. As he raised his head and wagged his tail in response to my touch, I lost my cool and bawled like a baby.

It was his eyes that did it — those magnificent blue eyes! It's been said that the eyes are the windows to the soul, and I believe it, for in his eyes I saw such a generous amount of intelligence and compassion that I had to turn away. I felt that he could see right through me, and I wasn't certain that he'd like what he found.

I had been so hung-up on his deformities that I had failed to see his true nature, thus

cheating him — and myself as well — out of the respect he deserved. I no longer wondered what Quan saw in him.

I bent over his him and whispered, “I’m sorry.” But it just didn’t seem to be enough. I owed him much more than that ... but what?

Just then, a kid stepped off the bus and walked over to where the dog lay. He peered over my shoulder, and said, “Oh it’s jus’ da ugly dog dat lives down our street.” I felt as if I had been punched in the gut.

I was furious. Standing to my full height with my fists clenched at my sides, I looked him straight in the eye and shouted, “Dis ‘ugly dog’ get one name! His name is Blue!”

Upon hearing me profess his name, Blue tried to wag his tail and raise his head. His feeble attempts were such a pitiful sight that it

made even that ignorant kid feel bad.

§

Blue died moments later. I didn’t realize it back then, but I had paid my debt to Blue. I couldn’t give him back his life, but I had unwittingly given him back his dignity by the simple act of uttering his true name.

I had never truly understood the phrase, “Never judge a book by its cover,” until I met Blue. Since then, I have always been careful to get to know someone — be it beauty or beast — before deciding whether or not I like her or him. It is a shame that Blue (and I) had to pay such a high price just so that I could learn this priceless truth. ♦

A New Definition

Darla J. Sutcliffe

One night during the fall of 1977, when I was twelve years old, I went hunting with my dad. The Iowa night was cool and the leaves crunched under my boots as I walked outside towards the pickup truck. I threw an extra jacket in the cab while Dad let the dogs loose. The moon was bright, but not full, as we rode in the pickup down a familiar gravel road near Grandma's house. The dogs were in the back and seemed anxious and agitated. We had three dogs, which Dad always referred to as 'coon hounds.

Sheba, the lead dog, was a black and tan and was one of the most trusting dogs I've ever known. I remember Mom's disbelief when Dad brought home a three-hundred dollar dog. She couldn't understand how a 'coon dog was worth a month's rent and groceries, but then Mom never could understand Dad. Sheba was also the most vicious dog I've ever known — vicious to everyone except Dad and me. Dad said that was because I went right up to her the night he brought her home. I didn't know that she was a mean dog, so I wasn't afraid of her.

When we stopped the truck, Sheba jumped out immediately. Dad didn't bother calling after her. I walked around to the back of the truck and lowered the creaking tailgate. I watched the two other dogs, Mitzi and Brandy, as they ran after Sheba, who had already disappeared into the trees.

Now that the dogs were gone, Dad and I began slowly walking after them. They might change direction four or five times during the night, so it didn't really matter which way we walked.

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It was usually quiet on these nights, and hunting with Dad mostly meant long walks and talking. I had to pay close attention to where we were going, as it was my job to shine the light the right distance in front of us. Even on a moonlit night, the obscure clumps of a cow-grazed meadow made for unsure walking.

Dad used a special kind of light that he had discovered as a miner. It was called a carbide light. It burned brighter than a flashlight and with a more precise beam. The chemicals used in this light have a peculiar odor like the smell of spent sparklers on the Fourth of July.

I carried the light, and Dad carried the gun. As we walked, there was a swishing sound from the chaps Dad had given me to wear. Sometimes on those quiet evenings that's the only sound there was. The chaps, besides being fun to wear, were extremely practical. They were unequaled in aiding a walk through brambles, thorns, sand burrs, and something Dad called porcupine bushes.

Dad stopped abruptly. I had been talking, but I quickly came to a halt behind him. I knew that something was happening. We both stood still, listening. I heard a few barks in the distance but was unsure whether they were our dogs or just some farmer's dogs barking. I held my breath in an effort to concentrate on listening.

"Do you hear that?" Dad asked.

"Yeah," I said exhaling slowly. "Who do you think it is?"

"Well, that's Sheba. I can hear Mitzi too." Dad tilted his head as if to hear better.

Now I could hear the dogs barking. They were chasing something. The barking came first from the south and then circled around to the east of where we were standing.

Dad lit a cigarette and we waited. I turned off the light to save carbide and watched the orange glow from the cigarette bobbing in the darkness. Dad and I stood there for maybe ten minutes, and then we began walking in the general direction of the barking.

"Do you hear that?" he asked, stopping again. I listened intently, this time concentrating on any barking sound that might be different from the others I'd heard.

"What?" I asked.

"They've got him treed!"

With that Dad began walking much faster. I knew then that the dogs had caught a raccoon's scent and had been chasing it for miles. Now they had the animal trapped up in a tree. The raccoon had nowhere to go unless the tree was hollow.

Raccoons are very intelligent animals and are undoubtedly smarter than dogs. Many nights proved uneventful because, as Dad explained, the raccoon would simply outsmart the dogs. The raccoon was familiar with his surroundings and would sometimes run up a tree and then jump to another tree, thereby

leaving the dogs howling at empty branches. A raccoon might also find a hollow tree and just bed down for the night. Absolutely nothing could be done if he escaped into a hollow tree trunk. On those nights it was hard to pull the dogs away; they never understood why we were leaving without a fight.

Dad and I finally arrived at the noisy scene with the dogs restlessly circling the tree. Dad took the light and began searching the branches with it. He found what he was looking for when two yellow eyes became locked in the spotlight about halfway up the tree. Dad handed me the light again, and I tried hard to keep it in the same spot. The raccoon's eyes stared back at me. He looked confused. I could see the brown fur and the striped tail curving around the branch.

"Do you want to shoot it?" asked Dad.

I turned towards him in the darkness. This question meant a lot to me. I was only twelve years old and Dad was offering me the reward of our whole trip. I looked up again at the raccoon and I thought about how I'd feel later if I did kill it. I thought about aiming and pulling the trigger and I thought about how Dad would be skinning it in about ten minutes anyway. Even now I could see the heat rising from the newly dead carcass as Dad pulled the fur down and away from the muscle and bone.

Did I want to shoot it? I thought of my two brothers and how they must have faced this decision once. I knew, though, that they hadn't hesitated.

"No thanks, Dad," I said.

Dad understood my decision, and he was okay with it. I looked up at the raccoon again and noticed its blank stare. Then there were two shots. I was still holding the light in the same spot, but suddenly there were only leaves where the raccoon had been. I heard

him fall through the branches and rustling leaves. If the bullets hadn't killed him, the fall had. He hit hard on the lowest branch, and I heard a thump as he fell to the ground. The dogs, who had never been quiet, were on him, tearing into flesh and growling. Dad had to retrieve the limp body before the dogs damaged the skin too much.

He tied it up onto the nearest tree and began cutting away the fur, starting at the paws. That night we carried home a pelt worth about thirty-five dollars. Dad left the meat hanging for anything that cared to eat it.

§

My respect for life was defined that night. The eyes that I had seen in that tree were frightened and helpless eyes looking into a cold, bright light. It was then that I knew I would never intentionally kill anything. I would never purposely rob a living thing of its

right to live because no life is more precious than any other.

Years later, another thought came to me. As an impressionable twelve year old hesitating in the darkness, I could just as easily have said yes to Dad's question. In fact sometimes I'm surprised that I didn't react by taking aim and pulling the trigger just as my brothers had before me. I'm sure that Dad would have been pleased with that response. He may even have been proud.

But that night Dad gave me the opportunity to make an important decision. He allowed me to be me with no judgment involved, no strings attached. One night, a twelve-year-old chose life, and later, a twenty-four-year-old realized her father gave her permission to do so. A big part of who I am today is a function of that night, eighteen years ago, with the moon, three dogs and my dad. ♦

A New Year's Gift

loi Tang Vu

I was sitting on an old chair placed outside the office of my vice principal. My heart was beating fast, and my breathing was almost stopped by the strong, cold wind that was cutting my face. In fact, I was extremely afraid, since I was waiting for the answer which determined whether I could still stay in school or be expelled.

"Will I be expelled? If I am really out of school, what should I do? How can I confront my family with this shameful notice? I was so stupid, I shouldn't have fought with John ...," I said to myself.

The door of the office suddenly opened while I was still talking to myself. The vice principal was the first to step out, followed by my father. I could tell what the answer was as I glanced at my father's angry face. There was a dead silence among the three of us. Finally, the vice principal broke the silence.

"Tang, I am sorry, we have decided that we have to let you go. As I've just told your dad, fighting is definitely unacceptable in our school, and you've certainly broken this rule. So, I really can't do anything, you know."

"That's all right, sir," my father said. "It was actually my son's fault. Thank you for your excellent teaching in the past years, and I will look for another school for him. Let's go, Tang."

I followed without saying a word.

As we stepped out of the school, I felt not

only cold but miserable. Yes, what the vice principal had announced to me was cruel since it was extremely difficult for a kicked-out elementary school student to enroll at any campus in Macao during winter time.

As we walked through a market, it reminded me that a festival was coming next day. It was the New Year, a festival that brings happiness to almost everybody. People in the market were busy purchasing food and decorations for the New Year. Although they looked exhausted, their warm and joyful conversations were still floating around. However, I did not feel any joy from the mood of this New Year's eve; instead, I felt miserable, as if God had given me up and allowed me to go my own way.

There was a dead silence once again as we passed the crowd. In fact, my father and I had not been conversing since we walked out of the school. We finally reached an intersection when my father stopped and spoke up.

"Why did you fight with John? Wasn't there any other way to solve the problem between the two of you? Do you know it is almost impossible to place you at any school during this time?" His voice got louder and louder.

"I'm sorry, dad. I didn't think of this when I fought. Now I know. I ... I'm very sorry," I said sadly.

“Just get back home and wait for me! I will be back in half an hour!” He shouted and left.

Besides the expression “I’m sorry,” I really could not compose any other answer to reply to my father. I stood in the intersection for a minute, and then continued on my way home.

§

I suddenly had an idea that I needed to do something, so I turned around and rushed to a bus stop. Instead of returning home, I waited for a bus in order to reach other elementary schools. The bus was extremely crowded, and there was almost no space for me to stand. The people in the bus were cheerful, as they were ready for the significant event tomorrow. However, I was neither in a joyful mood nor ready to participate with anybody but myself for the coming festival.

As I got off the bus, the strong and cruel wind cut my face once again. It was an evening, a New Year’s eve evening. People were gradually returning home for their dinners. The only person who was running back and forth in the street was me. I knocked on the door of almost every elementary school that I knew, but nobody answered. Since I had eaten nothing that day, I began feeling hungry. In addition, as the sky was turning darker, the wind became stronger. As a result, I immediately caught a chill.

Hunger, cold and sickness did not stop my determination in looking for a new school. I finally arrived at a campus that was much smaller than the others.

“Is anybody here?” I asked.

The door slowly opened.

“Yes, what is the matter?” replied a man’s voice.

A short man came out.

“Do you know if this school will allow

students to enroll in the coming spring semester?” I asked.

“No, I don’t think so,” he answered.

“Please, I was kicked out of another school, and I do need to go to your school. Please, Please!” I requested.

“A kicked out student! I don’t think you will be accepted. Why don’t you just find a job and give up your school life, since it is impossible for you to get into any campus? Get out of here, kid,” he said and shut the door.

I stared at the door and I began to cry. After a while, I left and I stopped crying.

“Should I really get a job instead? No, I’m only twelve years old. What should I do? Should I be a construction worker? No, I’m not strong enough to carry two bricks. Should I be an office clerk? No, I’m not even educated enough to either write or type office papers.” I was struggling with myself.

I was exhausted and tired. The feeling of hunger warned me that I must have something to eat. However, as I searched my pocket, I found only thirty cents. It was neither enough to buy a loaf of bread nor enough to purchase bus fare.

“Bus fare!” I shouted.

How can I go home with only thirty cents? I had used almost all the money for taking buses, and I knew that walking home was my only choice. I did walk home, and it took me one and half hours.

§

I felt like dying when I returned home. The warmth suddenly seemed to come back to me. All I saw was an abundant feast on the table. I was so famished that I could have eaten all of it. However, I did not touch the food. Instead, I waited for the violent scolding from my parents.

“Tang, where did you go? We have been

waiting for you for almost four hours,” my mother said gently.

“Mom, I ... I was kicked out of school, and I went to look for other schools, but they said that they would not accept a kicked out student,” I said with fear.

“That’s okay. Your father told me everything. He has found a school for you,” she said.

“Really, dad?” I was surprised.

“Yes, I know the principal. He said that he wanted to offer you an opportunity, but you have to promise me that you will not fight again,” he answered.

“Of course, I won’t. I promise, dad,” I said honestly.

“Today is New Year’s eve. Let’s sit down and enjoy our feast,” my mother stated.

“Yes, mom.” I quickly sat down and began to satisfy my appetite.

§

I really could not understand why I never received any scolding from my parents, and I was also surprised that I could still continue my school life. I felt sorry not only for myself, but also for my parents, and I swore that I would never fight again.

Perhaps it might not be considered a significant matter for some people. However, it was not only a miracle to me, but it was also the largest present I received that New Year’s eve. Until today, this event is still clearly in my mind, and it is one of the most unforgettable experiences in my life. ♦

The First Time

Leonie Yokogawa

I sit on the brown, unstable piano bench in the Kalani High School band room, plinking away at the yellowed keys of a tattered old piano. I'm bouncing my foot on the hard carpet, which is as coarse as an emery board.

I hear a constant buzz of people talking, and a sigh comes out of the tired old air conditioner. Thumps from people running up and down the stairs catch my attention. As I glance up, I get a glimpse of a guy standing in the doorway talking to a friend.

My heart starts beating rapidly, and I quickly shift my eyes back to the piano keys before he notices me gawking at him. I casually look up again, avoiding his eyes, but by some mysterious force, our eyes lock, and I give him a huge, shaky smile. He turns his head and gives me a teasing grin.

His name is Kalani. He is a junior, I am a freshman. He plays basketball and is on the school track team. He is a nice height, about five feet ten, and of average weight (stocky but not fat). His face is in desperate need of a shave, and he looks like he could use a shower. He is wearing an old t-shirt, athletic-type shorts that don't match the t-shirt, and a beat-up Miami Heat cap. Dark brown hair peaks out of his cap, and his dark brown eyes have a humorous way about them. His smile reflects a lighthearted, easy-going nature. Just looking at him makes me giggle inside. Something about him is overwhelmingly attractive to me:

the sparkle in his dark brown eyes, or maybe it's what I feel is inside him.

One of my friends walks by.

"What do you think of that guy over there?" I ask her.

"Kalani?" she asks.

I nod vigorously.

"He's okay. Why?"

"I think he's cute!"

She raises her eyebrows, smiles, and nods. He is acceptable.

§

For at least a few weeks, everyday after lunch I take the long way to fifth period so that I can walk past his class. He always stands outside the door. We have the same conversation everyday. It goes like this:

I give him a big smile and ask, "Are you going to track practice today?"

He gives me a look that says, "Why do you always ask me this?" Then he says, "Yeah. Are you?"

I give him another giant smile and nod. The bell then rings. He says, "Bye, Smiley!"

I day-dream about him constantly. I know it's more than infatuation. After school I see him down at the field goofing off with his friends at track practice. During practice, he gives me little grins, and I give him smiles. I smile so much around him that he begins to

call me Smiley all the time. He must think I'm a very happy person.

§

Within the next few weeks, my little secret, that my heart is set on Kalani, becomes common knowledge. As I walk into the school cafeteria to eat lunch, I am confronted by one of his friends. He says, "Eh, do you like Kalani?"

My heart begins pumping at top speed, my hands start getting clammy, and I start trembling. All I can do is stand there and smile like an idiot.

He throws his head back and laughs like a hyena. He yells Kalani's name at the top of his lungs. I'm standing in the middle of the cafeteria, and I know that everyone has heard because there is a dead silence. Everyone's head turns to us in unison. I want to dig a hole in the cafeteria floor, lie in it, and die.

I see Kalani's head pop up from somewhere in the back of the cafeteria. His friends who are sitting around him look up with curious expressions on their faces. Kalani casually jogs over to us. I stand there frozen, unable to breathe, my face as red as a ripened tomato.

He reaches us. His friend announces to us, and to the rest of the cafeteria, that I "like" him. He asks Kalani whether he'd go out with me. I stand there watching, completely humiliated. I can't move. I think I'm going to pass out. Everything becomes blurred. I put my head down on the cold table wishing I could die, or become invisible.

That night Kalani calls me. We talk for a long time. He laughs about the cafeteria "incident." He seems to see a lot of humor in the traumatization of my life.

§

For the next month, we talk on the phone every night. We hang out in school. He also visits me at my house on weekends. One night as we talk on the phone, he asks me to his junior prom. I have never felt such complete, pure happiness. I'm floating on air.

A few days after the prom, on May 1, 1992, he pays me a visit at my first period class. He motions for me to come outside. He has something important to ask me. My teacher won't let me out of class. I beg, and finally she allows me out for exactly one minute.

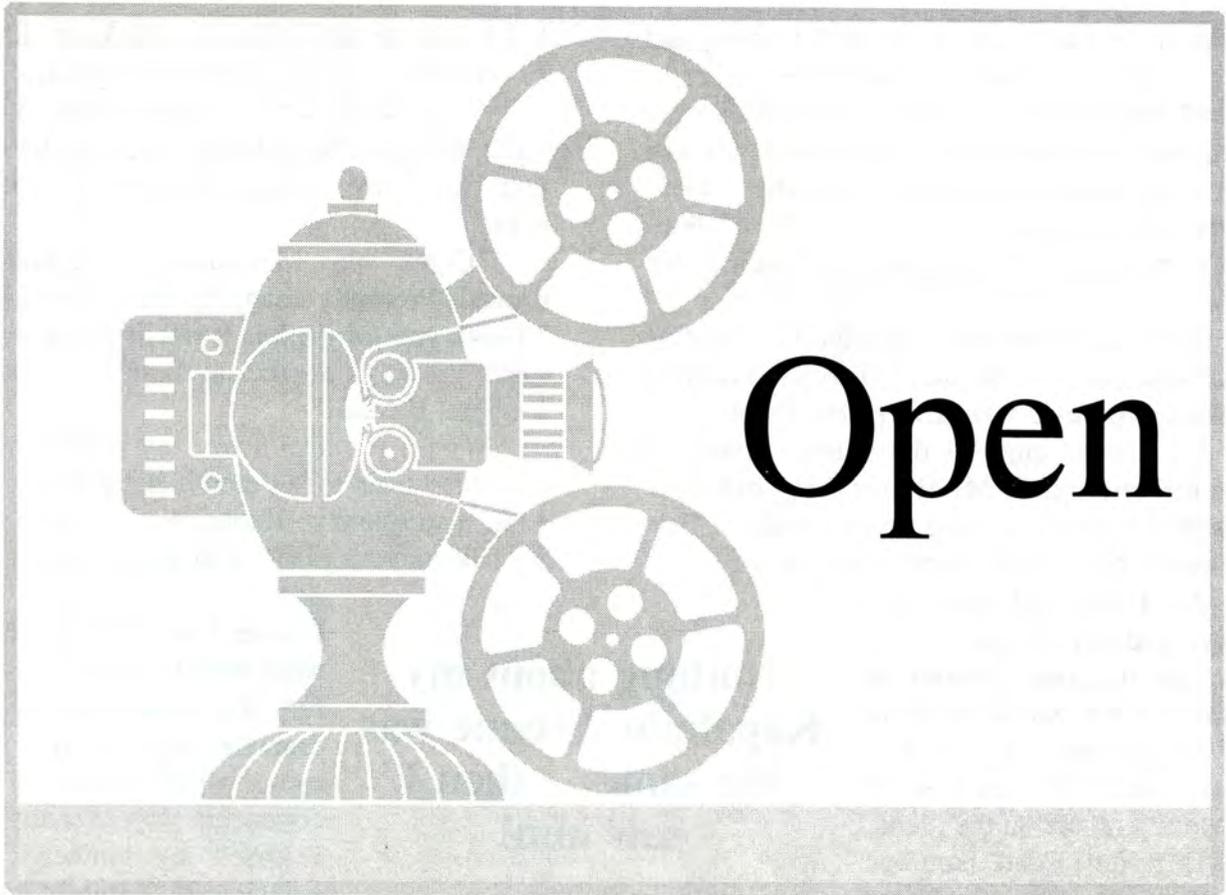
Seconds feel like hours as I stand there waiting for him to speak. I tell him to hurry up. He becomes frustrated and begins lightly punching a locker. My teacher calls me into the classroom. Just as I turn to go, Kalani blurts out, "Do you want to go with me?"

He has officially asked me to be his "steady" girlfriend! My heart stops beating, I feel dizzy, I don't know what has hit me.

I teasingly say, "Let me think about it." He looks shocked and becomes flustered because of my answer. He shakes his head in disbelief. Before he says anything, I give him a big smile, giggle, and say, "Yes!" Then I run into the classroom.



Even though this first experience with "love" happened over four years ago, I remember it as clearly as if it were happening now. I will never forget the way my heart fluttered, the way my whole body tingled, and the excitement I felt. Kalani and I aren't together anymore, but he is one of my best friends. I still love him, but it's a different love, and compared to four years ago, it's very different. When you fall in love, especially for the "first time," you won't know what hit you, but you will know it is something extremely wonderful. ♦



Open

home? Maybe we can go shopping,” my mother suggested as she eyed my faded jeans. Then she asked, “Maybe you like eat someplace special, yeah?”

“How about Zippy’s?” I answered.

“Zippy’s? Lisa, what you like eat dea fo? There’s a great Italian place on Beretania with the best homemade pasta and Maranara sauce”

“You mean spaghetti?” I queried.

“No, *lo-lo*, dey call it pasta now. Dey say it’s mo betta for you den rice, you know. Plenty carbohydrates. You mean to tell me Saipan no more pasta places?” she asserted, as if chiding me for being oblivious to finer food. Saipan had hot-humid days and sensational sunsets, but no pasta joints.

“Carbohydrates, huh? Sounds good Ma.”

After lunch we headed for home. Home was Kapahulu Avenue. Childhood memories surfaced like lucid bubbles, only to be burst by what I actually saw. A Chinese Fast Food Emporium had displaced Alex’s Drive-Inn. The Crane Park basketball court was fenced in, and the old gas station had become a Burger King Restaurant. Stepping out of the car, my nose instinctively searched for the smell of baking bread. Instead, I found an abandoned lot. An “Available for Lease” sign jeered as I mourned for the aroma of Love’s Bakery.

In seven short years Kapahulu Avenue had become a fast-food, convenience-store mecca. Caravans of cars filed in and out of drive-through lanes as the comfort of my past drowned in Big Gulps and Cheap Meal Deals. Nothing about my Kapahulu Avenue was the same ... then I saw him!

“I don’t believe it! Look, Ma, it’s the radio guy. My god! He hasn’t aged at all,” I cried, pointing him out, as if he weren’t noticeable enough.

“Yeah, dat guy, he no change. You tink dat radio of his work or what?” my Mother asked.

“I don’t think it really matters, Mom. He’s obviously crazy.”

Radio Guy always wore a threadbare, puka T-shirt that had armpits the color of mold. His bermuda cut-offs, frayed at his knees, revealed dirty shins. Black-tipped fingernails pressed a transistor radio to his ear. When I was little I, used to mimic his walk. *Long right step, press heel-toe, long left step, press heel-toe*. Radio Guy flashed the same lunatic grin as he stopped to stare at the sky. Perhaps he saw the radio airwaves as well as heard them.

“Ma, would you mind if I went for a walk? I need to work off all of the carbohydrates I ate,” I explained. I wasn’t about to tell her who I wanted to follow. I caught up with the radio guy, being careful to remain in his wake, when I noticed the birthday cakes in the Leonard’s Bakery window.

From the smell of deep-fried dough rose memories of hot malasadas sold at spring carnivals. I remembered those drizzly evenings. Plodding around in rubber-slippers caked with muddy sawdust, I shopped for the scariest ride. As I climbed a set of wobbly metal stairs, I looked for my father’s face in the crowd. He stood by the ticket booth beaming because his daughter thought she was so brave. “I’m a big girl now. I want to ride by myself,” I insisted.

I buckled myself in and the motor purred. My rocket soared above the carnival noise, then spiraled down to the ground. I was terrified. It was fun to scream without getting smacked. The motor coughed and my rocket wound down. Then a huge, greasy hand reached into my rocket and yanked at my seat belt. I looked up and screeched, “Daddy, help me! — Hurry up!”

My father rushed towards my rocket and carried me away. “Was sa matta honey?” he asked, wiping the tears from my cheeks. “Daddy, da carnival man — he look like one *crin-minal*, yeah?”

“*Gun-funnet*, Lisa, you mean to tell me dat guy scared you more den da ride?” Thinking about it made me snicker.

I followed Radio Guy as he passed Mrs.

Himuro's store. Every day after school I had scampered into the *mama-san* sundry. I pictured Mrs. Himuro's shriveled hands exchanging Dixie cups of frozen juice for five cents. "*Himuro-san, one ice-cakie prease,*" I used to say.

"*Hai. Whattah cara you likey? I gettu stlawbelly and or-ren-gee, soo desu,*" she always answered.

"SLAW BELLY? WHAT'S A SLAW-BELLY?", I teased.

"*Nani? Was dat' ... I no know dis word; Sraw stomach. Jusa' minute, you likey' Stlawbelly flavor soo desu ka?*" She looked annoyed. I handed her my nickel and romped out of the store like a happy puppy, wagging my strawberry-colored tongue.

Jet lag caught up with me, and Radio Guy paused under a plumeria tree. I sat on a stone wall and started twiddling with my wilted lei. The scent of Hawaiian jasmine swept me back to a night when necklaces of Pikake graced my teenage shoulders.

I remembered the slink of my polyester prom gown as it veiled my blossoming figure from a young boy's awkward stares. Slow dancing for the first time, our leis pressed close as we swayed to the music. The song ended.

"Eh, our leis stay tangled. Try stay still so I can fix em," the boy said.

The band's *wah-wah* pedal blasted the opening of a Doobie Brothers song. In a panic I begged, "Hurry up, but please don't break my lei."

"Only if you promise you not going break my heart," he replied. We worked out the tangle and giggled with relief. That night I offered my affection to a boy whose name I could no longer remember.

Radio Guy turned around, and for a moment I thought he had caught me following him. Instead, he started lip-singing to the sky like a mute maniac, shook his curls, and walked away. In grateful silence, I watched Radio Guy melt into a backdrop of normality.

Up above me the canopy of the ole' Crane Park banyan trees sheltered the peopled park benches below. Scrawny banyan keikis poked their way through a carpet of dead leaves, reaching for adult trees, whose thick roots pulsed with growth and wisdom. As the evening tradewinds whooshed through the branches, the leaves seemed to whisper, "*Ho'omana'o ... remember.*" Or was it just airwaves I heard relaying the timeless essence of home? ♦

Eyes

Albert Mahoy

It's like looking into eyes that cannot see, but even a blind man has a soul. It's the eyes that have no soul, that give you the frightening sight of death.

In my current career as a firefighter, I have learned to deal with death in a different way than most people do. In my previous experiences with death, I really didn't understand it fully because I was always told that the deceased was sleeping and going to Heaven. But in an occupation in which I see death practically everyday, death is not just a ceremony to say good-bye, but death has now become an incident that needs to be fixed and handled in a different manner. Now we have to try to bring someone back to life, a situation that is beyond our control, but yet very possible to do. Through this process I have since changed my views on death.

I have been to many funerals and seen pictures of the deceased surrounded by flowers and the body itself displayed before me. Not once have I ever gone to a funeral where the eyes of the body were open. They were always closed. But as a first responder to trauma incidents, I have had the odd experience of seeing death through the open eyes of the deceased. It is a different feeling that one gets when death can be clearly seen through the eyes.

One thing that really affects me when I see death ... is the eyes of the victims....

It was about six years ago when I first saw the open eyes of a dead person. I was thoroughly trained in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, but no one taught me how to deal with death as it lay there before me. This incident occurred on the beach at Ala Moana beach park, at dusk. A Japanese tourist had drowned and had been underwater for quite some time. At first I watched a few feet away as the lifeguards tried their best to resuscitate the victim.

Then all of a sudden it was my turn to do chest compressions on the victim. I thought it would be easy because I've done it dozens of times before on the manikin in training class, but this was not so. When I first looked into the eyes of the dead man as he peered up at me, I could tell the man was dead by the feeling that I got looking into his eyes. It was a weird feeling that I cannot explain, but it threw my concentration off and the rhythm of my compressions started to stutter. My performance was not precise, and it was evident that this incident had shocked me. I never knew this man, nor his name or where he came from, but I will always remember his death.

Since then I have seen death many times and I've gotten somewhat used to it on the job. But another incident that stands out in my mind

occurred a few years after the first one. An elderly woman had fallen down on the sidewalk near the fire station, and a passerby had alerted us about the woman, so I ran out the door to see what had happened. I was the first to arrive on the scene, and I found an elderly woman in a dress and a pair of sunglasses lying on the sidewalk. As I knelt before her to check her vital signs, I lifted her sunglasses from her face. To my surprise, I looked straight into a pair of eyes that were sightless. A strange feeling quickly overcome my body as I instantly could sense that this woman was not with me in soul. I checked for a pulse, and there was none. She wasn't breathing, so I immediately began to assemble my oxygen equipment. By then, other firefighters from the fire station arrived on the scene to assist me. We began our resuscitation efforts feverishly, until an ambulance arrived to take the woman to a hospital.

But as we put away our equipment, I could not forget the eyes that I had just seen: a pair of eyes that were motionless, lifeless, and ones that had no soul. Since then I try not to look into the face of the victims that I encounter. But most of the time it's not that easy to avoid. I'm still confronted by having to look into the eyes of the dead.

There was one instance, though, when I was with a civilian who had attended to a car accident victim before our fire trucks arrived at the scene. It was a very crucial situation because the victim was trapped in the car and was desperately clinging to life. We had to work fast to try and free the victim before she went into shock, while the civilian tried to comfort the victim in the car. As I was trying to position my tools to remove some of the wreckage around the victim, I had a feeling that I wasn't moving

fast enough because the victim had stopped talking to me and the civilian. Her eyes were still open and looking out into nowhere as she began to fade away into unconsciousness. Her face had lost all expression of pain, when just a few minutes earlier she had been complaining about her legs being stuck.

At that point, the civilian who was in the car trying to comfort the victim began to inform me that the woman was no longer breathing. I looked at the victim and knew that she was no longer with us and she would be in no pain if I just yanked her out of the car. That was my only option left because now she had become an immediate rescue victim for life itself and not injury. But as I pulled her out of the car, her head was very close to mine, and I could not help but look at her face and notice her open eyes. At this point, I noticed the civilian woman who was helping me also looking at the eyes of the victim. Then I realized that I was not the only one who experienced the eyes of this woman who had just died before us. Both of us were deeply moved as we watched the victim's life pass out of her and then found ourselves looking into eyes that possess no soul.

I have seen a lot of death in my lifetime, as a child and in my current adult career as a firefighter. My views of death have had many angles, and I've had many ways of trying to deal with the loss of those who have passed on, whether I knew them or not.

The one thing that really affects me when I see death out in the field in my line of work is the eyes of the victims that I come across. I try not to look into the eyes of the dead, but sometimes I can't avoid looking at them and experiencing again that wondering feeling, seeing eyes that peer at me, but have no soul. ♦

Las Vegas Grandma

Chika Matsuura

My grandma, Lorraine Mizokami, is retired from her City and County secretarial job and now works full-time at Jackie's Travel, a tour company that specializes in tours to Las Vegas. Besides handling the reservations, she also takes tours up to Vegas once, or sometimes even twice, a month. It is during these frequent trips that I realize how much she is a part of my everyday life.

My grandma and her third husband, whom I call Uncle, live downstairs from me. From the inside of our house, there are no stairs connecting the top and bottom floors. If I want to go downstairs, I have to use the outside stairs. I wear these flat slippers that make a tapping sound when I walk on the wooden stairs and whenever it is quiet, which it usually is in Nu'uano, my grandma can hear me coming and going.

When I reach the bottom of the stairs on my way out, she is always standing at her door waiting for me. As we walk to my car every morning, she starts up a conversation by asking me routine questions like, "What time did you come home last night?" Or "Where are you going now?" Then, in her so innocent and caring grandmotherly way, she'll ask me to come home earlier and to drive safely, since I usually arrive home in the wee hours of the morning. The last part of her morning ritual with me is to check my car out as I am

starting it up. She checks the gas, which she always scolds me about because it is too close to empty, and then my tires that always look flat to her. As I am backing out of the driveway, she waves goodbye to me until I can no longer see her small figure in my rear-view mirror.

When my grandma is on her Las Vegas trips, I find that I am usually about ten minutes early everywhere. I also have to double check myself to make sure that my collar is on straight and that my labels are tucked in nicely. My grandma was always making sure that I looked presentable as I was growing up. Sometimes even now she'll bring out a brush to fix my hair.

My grandma, who is only four-feet ten-inches tall, has always looked immaculate to me. Most of the time, like for work and church, she is wearing rayon blouses with the nicest prints in bright colors or black and white. They make her look so pretty and alive. She also doesn't look her age, which I am not exactly sure of. There are many people who cannot believe that she is my grandmother. I've asked her age, but she usually tells me that that is rude and changes the subject. Another reason why my grandma looks so perfect is because her nails are manicured and painted at least once a week. She is health conscious (partly because my grandpa has diabetes) and really takes care of

herself. She exercises nightly and moisturizes her skin twice a day. She is not vain, though. I've never seen her staring at herself in the mirror. It is just the style that she has that puts everything together. I want to be just like her when I reach my grandmotherly age. I want to have the feminine and graceful ways that she has.

My grandma has always controlled her temper and behaved like a lady. She has never gotten upset or angry in front of me. She takes care of our family like only a Japanese grandma can. This motherly side of her protects us when we are scared and cares for us when we are sick. My grandma has always been a positive force in my life. She is my role model because she makes ample time for her family while holding a career.

I also feel close to my grandma because she has never pressured me about school or my future plans. She treats me like an adult by letting me make my own decisions, but always offering me insightful advice. I think that she knows I will eventually become someone who she'll be very proud of. For all my life, she's shown me that hard work never hurt anyone, especially her little petite self. My grandma even taught me to clean our toilets with my hands. Well, actually I had no choice because she let me in on a little secret: if I clean the toilets with my hands, I'll have a nice complexion. I don't regret it, though, when some people find out and cringe because I have nice clean bathrooms and pretty good skin!

Another thing I wouldn't be doing now without my grandma's help is the laundry. Not my own, though, she still does that, but my boyfriend's. He really loves my grandma. When my boyfriend lived in his old house, he didn't have a laundry machine and dryer. I went with him to the laundromat and didn't like waiting around to use the machines or

waiting for the clothes to finish, so I took his laundry home and left it by my washer, which I planned to come back and learn how use. Well, I should've known that my grandma was going to do it because she doesn't like for things to sit around undone. She folded it and everything! Anyway, she did it all the time, until he moved and bought his own washer. Now I have to do it at his house. When she noticed that I wasn't bringing over his clothes anymore, she told me some tips on how she gets his working clothes clean. I couldn't believe that she washed his clothes with so much care.

My grandma just never stops giving or caring. I wish I could do something for her that would make up for all the things that she has done for me and taught me, but there is nothing as special and important that can equal it all. Maybe I'll let her read this paper, if I get a good grade. Nah, she'll love it even if I do a bad job. All that would matter to her is that I could write so many nice things about her.

My grandma gave me a very belated eighteenth birthday present and graduation present combined. It was about two years late, but I never even remembered. She gave me a pair of Mikimoto pearl earrings. She told me that she wanted to buy me something special, to remember her by. They are two beautiful, large pearls connected together by a small gold flower with a diamond inside. One pearl dangles down, and I thought that this was like me hanging on to my grandma. These earrings are very important to me. I have not worn them yet, though, because they are too beautiful for me right now, and, anyway, I have nowhere to wear them. I told my grandma that now she has to take me out to a fancy dinner (She is probably making reservations now!). ♦

The Flower of the Other Shore

Kayo Ko Norton

Higan-bana, “the flower of the other shore,” is carmine red with a tint of blue. They bloom twice a year, during spring and fall Higan days, when the other shore appears and meets this shore.

“All of our ancestors are beyond the other shore,” my grandfather told me. “Your mother should be there, with your great-grandparents and many others who have already lost their names.”

It was the middle of Higan days. The flowers were red on both sides of me, along a little path that ran through green rice fields. I was coming home from my aunt’s house. A short spring day was almost over. The sun was setting at my back, throwing in front of me the long shadow of a 10-year-old girl on her bicycle. I pushed the pedals of my bicycle harder. I knew it was getting late. Grandpa would be waiting at the gate, smoking.

“You are late,” he would say with a little puff of cigarette smoke.

When the cigarette smoke disappeared in my mind, the sun set. The tint of blue started spilling out into the red flowers. That was the time I noticed that Higan-banas were hiding blue in their red. It was a very special blue: the color of veins. I was going home, but I squeezed my brakes. I looked back at the

western sky and saw it was merging into the color of the flowers. That was the color of the other shore.

§

My mother was in a tuberculosis sanatorium for many years. My grandfather was afraid of our catching the disease and didn’t allow us children to visit her, not even once. But one winter day, when my sister and I were at Grandma Kiyoko’s house, she told us that we were going to the sanatorium.

“But Grandpa told us we can’t go there,” we hesitated.

“I respect your grandfather’s concern, but I am your grandmother and your mother’s mother. Don’t say anything. Get in the car.”

So we got into Uncle Shigeru’s car and drove off. Grandma Kiyoko was standing on the street for a long time, staring at us with her strong eyes. When we looked back, her small figure nodded to us.

We drove on a long winding mountain road to the sanatorium. After we turned the last curve, I saw the small sanatorium, surrounded by thousands of skinny bare trees. Near the building, a couple of ducks were

swimming in a half-frozen pond. The winter was soundless just as any other winter.

Mother's room was at the end of the white hallway. Uncle Shigeru opened the door for us and left. We stepped in. There she was in her bed, sitting up. After so many years, she was still the exact Mother I knew. I was glad to see her sitting up, for I was expecting to see a gaunt woman lying flat on her back. She looked much better than I had thought. She looked so well that I thought she might be able to come home soon. In the pale winter light, she was clean and beautiful to my eyes.

"Mama, your hair ..." I said, walking toward her. She had a long braid reaching down to her thigh. It was the only proof of time that had slipped away between us.

"I haven't cut it since I came here."

When I heard her voice, I felt something warm puff up and gradually expand inside my stomach. It reached up to my throat and came out in an unexpected way. I started weeping.

"Why is she crying?" my little sister asked.

"You will know when you get to her age," Mother replied, though I wasn't sure myself why I was crying. I might have been crying for the time we lost. Or for what I forced myself to ignore. Until then, I didn't notice how much I had missed Mother.

I wept through our visit, until our uncle came in and told us that it was time to go. I looked up at her to say good-bye, and I saw a blue tube coming out from her nose. Actually, it was an oxygen tube going into her nose, but for me it was coming out from her. It looked like an extension of her blue vein. Her life was spilling out through the tube. I was scared, and for a long time, I couldn't take my eyes off the tube.

She noticed what I was looking at. She touched the tube on her cheek and said, "This is annoying. I wish I could take it off."

The warm thing in my stomach shrunk

and disappeared. She was not coming home, after all, though she looked rather well. Now I know that is how tuberculosis is. The life spills so gradually that you can't tell how empty the life is from outside.

At the moment the door shut behind us, I shut another door to Mother. My eyes were dried. My face was stiff like a mask. I thought to myself, "I won't miss her. And I won't be lonely." Uncle Shigeru's car shook its body once and started driving back to the town where we lived.

When we returned to Grandma's house, Grandma was standing in the same spot at the roadside. Maybe Uncle Shigeru called her before we left the sanatorium. Maybe she was standing there the whole time while I had been weeping in Mother's room. She didn't say anything. We did not talk about our visit with anybody else either. Even my little sister kept the secret tight in her winter coat. Five days later, Mother died.

§

I didn't cry at Mother's funeral. I heard a man say, "She is not crying, is she?" He was right. I wasn't crying, except when I touched Mother's cheek. She was laid flat in her coffin, surrounded by flowers. There was a small petal on her cheek, where the blue tube had been, where her life spilled out — like the last drop of her life had dried up there.

Grandma Kiyoko told me to remove the petal. And I did. I felt her cheek as cold as the petal. When I pulled back my arm, I saw that Mother had the slightest smile on her lips, an archaic smile as on an ancient statue of Buddha. That was when I cried a little. I almost let the warm thing puff up again, but I was quicker this time.

Grandma was the only one who saw me crying. "I shouldn't be crying. I shut the door

to her," I told myself over and over, until I really didn't feel anything. It was just like seeing a thing deliberately out of focus.

Every time I remember Mother's smile, I wonder what would have happened if we had not gone to see her that day. She might have lived for one more year or so, though it would have been another painful year. Some people say that only God decides when we die. I think what they say is right, in a way. If it wasn't her time to go, no matter how hard she wished, she couldn't go. She was allowed to go, and she knew that. That was why we went to the sanatorium. To help her. Mother did a good job to let go of her life. Doctors didn't

know exactly what killed her. Her tuberculosis was not bad enough. Doctors were looking at her body, but didn't check how empty her life was.

There is supposed to be a river between this shore and the other shore that separates death and life. Mother went across the river that winter. My sister and I were the ones who pushed Mother's boat off from this shore, where Higan-banas bloom with a tint of blue, like a reminder of deceased ones.

It took her five days to pump out the rest of her life through the tube. Five days to cross the river. ♦

Wonderful Days Gone

Hai-Lam Ton

Have you ever had a best friend with whom you share everything? Chuong has been my best friend from childhood. We shared everything: our childish plays, studying math together, or the first-love secret that boys experience during middle-life school crisis.

I knew Chuong when we were in the 5th grade at Nguyen Tri Phuong Intermediate School. At the beginning of school, my teacher brought him into the class and introduced him as a new student. He was a short and skinny guy with curling hair. His big eyes always stared at an imaginary enemy in front of him. There was nothing special about him except the way he walked. When he walked, his back was erect, and his arms swinging back and forth into the air like a soldier on parade.

I didn't want to play with him during the first couple weeks because he was like a sheep in our class. He was quiet and shy. However, my attitude about him changed after an incident. One day, thinking that Chuong was easy to bully, a big guy in my class asked him for money. Chuong refused, and there was a fight. My classmates and I felt pity for Chuong, who dared to fight with our class's "fighting machine." Surprisingly, the big guy tried to crush Chuong with his strong punches, but Chuong dodged easily. Suddenly, Chuong threw a swift and strong side-kick, which

decorated the big guy's face with a black eye and knocked him down, and the fight ended. I began to admire him and made friends with Chuong after that incident. Later, Chuong told me that he had studied karate for two years.

§

As time went on, our friendship became tighter. I found out that Chuong wasn't as shy as I had thought and that we both shared a common interest: we both liked to take risks. Our school vice-principal lived inside the school. She had a small garden with mango trees full of sweet fruit. To discourage "wicked" students from stealing fruits, she had set up a heavy fence around the garden. Our classroom was near her garden, so the sweet odor of these ripened mangoes got into our noses and subconsciously repeated over and over again, "Eat me." So one day Chuong and I decided to sample these mangoes.

Chuong and I waited until the vice-principal went out, and we went into action. Chuong climbed into her garden and mounted the mango tree that was nearest to the fence as quickly as a monkey. I stood outside the garden watching for her. Unfortunately, while I was paying attention to catching mangoes from Chuong, she came home. Seeing two "small evils" picking her mangoes, she called

the school security. The security guard came very quickly. Chuong didn't have time to climb out of her garden, so like a real Tarzan, he jumped from the tree to the ground outside the garden. Luckily, he didn't break his ankles. Then we ran as fast as we could. The security guard was a fat guy with a big belly, so after five minutes of chasing us, he gave up, and we escaped. From that incident, we promised ourselves never to take any risks again.

However, we never kept our promise. After a few months, the incident disappeared from our minds, and we began to take other risks. Then, we promised not to take new risks all over again. The repetition of risk-takings and promises seemed not to end until we got into 8th grade.

§

Chuong began to get interested in math. He spent most of his time solving math problems. I, in contrast, spent more time on natural sciences like, biology, geography, and so on. Although I did fairly well in the natural sciences, they became more and more boring. I began to get involved with and spent more time in math. However, my math grades didn't go up to what I expected. I only got B's or C's on math quizzes and exams. It was Chuong who found out my math problem and helped me go beyond what I expected.

I went to his house to study math and other subjects with him. After solving math problems with me, he realized that I only studied math formulas and the ways that the author solved problems in our textbook by memorizing them without understanding. He began to show his technique which he called the logical method. His technique went through four steps. First, understand formulas and their relationship with each other. Second, understand the ways the author explained math

samples in the textbook. Third, do easy problems. Finally, start to solve harder problems.

After I studied with him for months, my math began to improve dramatically. I usually got A's for my math exams. After 9th grade, we moved to Nguyen An Ninh High School. There, Chuong and I were separated and studied in different classes. Yet, we both joined the school's ten selective students to prepare for our district's math exam. After a couple weeks of studying with our school's math headman, all of us had to take a math test to choose the best one to compete with other schools in our district. Chuong proved that he was the best among us, so he represented our school for the district's math exam and passed. Then, he went on to take the city's math exam. At that point, he got 27 points and failed (the passing point to continue for the National math exam was 30 points). Although his math was better than mine, he was never proud in front of me, and we continued to spend time studying together.

§

As we enjoyed solving math problems, we felt that math was the most important thing to us. However, when we entered into the middle-school-life crisis, we began to feel something more important than math. We began to experience "the disorderly heartbeat symptom." First, I began to fall in love with a girl in my class. Although Chuong didn't have any experience about love, he eagerly took on his new job as my love counsellor. Chuong found a book about how to attract girls. After class, we went to a deserted place, and he told me to practice.

"According to this book, you have to smile attractively when you meet her. Now, let's try," he solemnly said, as if he were a real love counsellor.

As I gave a broad smile, baring my 32 teeth, Chuong wrinkled his face and said, "You smile like a monkey."

After the first week of practice, I, in turn, became his love counsellor when he began to fall in love with a girl in his class.

"This book says that you have to walk with strong steps like a real man to attract her," I proclaimed one day.

"Ha! Ha! Are you going to beat her up?" I burst out laughing as I saw him walking with his hands swinging strongly forward.

Sadly, both of us studied the same book and failed to get our girls because neither of us dared to invite them to go out.

§

Time went on. Chuong and I finished high school. At that point, fate began to separate us. My family and I received permission to enter America, and Chuong was ready for the Polytechnic Institute's admission test. A couple days before I left Vietnam, Chuong and I took a trip around Saigon city.

During the trip, we fell into silence. Both of us were pursuing our own thinking. I was very sad that I had to say good-bye to Chuong, and I was sure that Chuong was having the same feeling as mine. On the way home, Chuong broke the silence with a sad voice,

"When you go to America, remember to send me many letters and tell me about what you will do over there?"

"I promise," I answered.

"I hope we will meet again in the future," said Chuong

"If I come back to Vietnam, you will be the first person I visit," I said.

We fell into silence again, and this is the last conversation we had.

I have had many friends, but Chuong is the best friend I have ever had. Whenever I think of him, the memory of our restless childish days, full of interesting things, always comes back to me. Furthermore, I always appreciate his technique in math. Because of the technique, I find math a very interesting subject today. ♦

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