diamond journal
fall 1998 & spring 1999
Contained within are true-life tales from the lives of the students at Kapiolani Community College.
like a spider spins its web, Fate spins her own tales for us. she spins paths for all of us to take. some of them good, some of them bad. all of them real. we live our lives almost at the total mercy of her weaving. here, in this journal, we have collected these stories straight from the people who lived them. Linka Corbin-Mullikin saw to this, that the lives of the students at kapi'olani community college would be remembered and their tales heard. these are the people you see pass you by as you go on your own journeys. these are their tales they wish to share with you. and as you read this, your web will have touched theirs. and your paths have crossed. Fate’s web is intricately tangled, encompassing us all. sit back, enjoy and learn, for these could’ve been yours too.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daughter I Am Proud of You</td>
<td>Ikehami Yuko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Guess I Should Learn to Eat Bacon</td>
<td>El-Zoheiry Magdy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Dream is a Social Worker</td>
<td>Han Ok Soon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Day I Became a Mother</td>
<td>Kuroda Junko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Hamada Yolanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>Zeng Ai Yun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting off the Bus</td>
<td>Nguyen Thu Huong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Scary Life Experience -- On My Toes</td>
<td>Han Eun Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Experience with Racism</td>
<td>Zhou Na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Scary Life Experience -- On My Toes</td>
<td>Kutsuna Janet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter I Am Proud of You</td>
<td>Freitas Michelle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Waste Food</td>
<td>Goo Ju Ying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrifying, Yet Unforgettable</td>
<td>Yuen Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Other Side</td>
<td>Kaneshiro Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Mouse Named Harry</td>
<td>Carbonell Sharlyn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color Red</td>
<td>Kogimoto Minako</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How I Ruined My First Blind Date</td>
<td>Kang Vallerie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Passion to Help</td>
<td>Guzman Ilima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rock</td>
<td>Ricketts Dj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Quite Heaven</td>
<td>Shigekane Kino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which Way?</td>
<td>Thomas Doreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nightmare</td>
<td>Thomas Sean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table of Contents Page 46
english 22

18eighten
twenty

im babalcon
a unforgettable hurricane
costa

12welve

perfect vision
domingo

14OURTEEN

ocean of memories
kau

15ifteen

my first kiss
ovieda

English 100

26wenty

six

skull's cave
dickson

28wenty

eight

my finest teacher
fournier

caged

30hirty

natural, supernatural
johnson

22wenty
two

purer like gold
bartett

32hirty

two

in the dawn's early
light

34hirty

four

shigetkane

36hirty

six

not quite
heaven

38hirty

eight

trashed potatoes
nakashima

untitled
freitas

40brty

two

fall

42brty

two

the nightmare
thomas

44brty

two

which way

45brty

two

the

shigetkane

d thomas

the worst
ozkki

fournier

finally, goodbye
fourrier

fall

the night of september
hopfe

27 1997

my first kiss
ovieda

my finest teacher
fournier

caged

natural, supernatural
johnson

22wenty
two

purer like gold
bartett

in the dawn's early
light

34hirty

four

shigetkane

36hirty

six

not quite
heaven

38hirty

eight

trashed potatoes
nakashima

untitled
freitas

40brty

two

fall

42brty

two

the nightmare
thomas

44brty

two

which way

45brty

two

the

shigetkane

d thomas

the worst
ozkki

fournier

finally, goodbye
fourrier

caged

natural, supernatural
johnson

22wenty
two

purer like gold
bartett

in the dawn's early
light

34hirty

four

shigetkane

36hirty

six

not quite
heaven

38hirty

eight

trashed potatoes
nakashima

untitled
freitas

40brty

two

fall

42brty

two

the nightmare
thomas

44brty

two

which way

45brty

two

the

shigetkane

d thomas
Kim Bab

“Wow, a school excursion. How exciting,” I thought. This Friday we are going to Mok Dong Reserve. “Let’s see, today is Monday, so one, two, three, four more days to go,” I thought while counting my little fingers. It is my first excursion, which makes me six years old.

I can’t wait to go home and tell my Daddy. Why Daddy? Because my mom’s not home anymore. She had moved out of our house... mmm... I don’t remember when. That’s why I must tell my Daddy. Then he will give money to our Onni (house keeper) so she can buy all kinds of goodies for me. I know there should be candy and juice along with my yummy Kim Bab.

Kim Bab is Korean sushi. It has “Bul go gi,” which is B. B. Q. meat, pieces of ham, seasoned spinach, julienne carrots, fluffy egg and daikon (pickled turnip) neatly placed on hot steamed rice. Then it’s wrapped with crispy kim (seaweed) and thinly sliced for us to eat. Kim Bab is a rare treat for us. It is mostly made for special occasions, and a school excursion is one such special occasion. Every mom will be busy making Kim Bab for her child this Friday. Kim Bab takes much effort and time to make, but most of all, it is simply too expensive to have often. Most of us are poor. We grow up with few toys, and most of my clothes are handed down from my sisters or someone else. I want to have pretty dolls and heaps of toys, but most of all I want my mommy. If only she was here to make my Kim Bab.

Friday is finally here. I wake up early in the morning, so early that it is still dark outside. I want to hear noise from the kitchen telling me that my Onni has gotten up and is preparing my lunch. I wait for a long time. It isn’t dark anymore, but she hasn’t woken up yet. It isn’t dark anymore, but I still can’t hear any noise. I become anxious and nervous, and I want to wake her up. Finally she gets up and goes into the kitchen. She hands me my lunch box. I know she couldn’t have made my Kim Bab in that short time. Then it occurs to me, I know, I know, silly me, she made it last night, that’s why she didn’t have to get up early, but I was still nervous. I take my lunch box which is wrapped in a plastic bag. No one tells me to have a good time; no one tells me good-bye. All the way to school I wonder about my lunch. I want to open the bag to see if any candy is in there.

It is a sunny day. I see mothers holding hands with their children in the schoolyard; they are all ready for the excursion. My friends look very happy. “If only my mommy was here,” I thought. I start to feel sad and lonely. I don’t remember Mok Dong well, only the grassy hills and the endless Evergreen trees. The teacher explains the history of Mok Dong to everyone. I am too worried about my lunch to hear anything.

It is time to have lunch. Everyone sets up his or her mat for food. I hope my best friend invites me to have lunch with her. Her mom is busy preparing their lunches, taking food from the containers of layered trays. The first layer has the most colorful Kim Bab I’ve ever seen; the second layer has meat and the third layer has all kinds of vegetables. I have always been envious of my friend
because she has such a caring mother. I walk away so no one can see my lunch box. I take out my water bottle, looking for my candy. Finally, I take out my old brown lunch box, and decide to see what is inside. I want to open it and show everyone that I have Kim Bab too, but instead I peel back one corner of my lunch box. My little hand shakes as I open it up. Inside my lunch box I find my plain white rice which is soaked with kimchee sauce. I close my lunch box quickly, before anyone can see it.

"We have plenty of food here, please help us." My friend’s mom is talking to me from a distance. I wonder if she can see through my lunch box. I try to sit with them, but my legs are locked. Then I see my best friend’s mom throwing the first Kim Bab to the ants. "They have to eat too. Besides, it'll bring us good luck," she says with a smile. I was envious of those ants; I want to have that Kim Bab too. I start to walk holding my dented lunch box, not knowing where I am going. I stop when I can no longer see or hear anyone. I hug that Evergreen tree and start to cry. I cry loudly like a baby. I feel my shoulders heaving up and down.

Lunch is over. I can hear my teacher calling everyone for the treasure hunt. My eyes are swollen for me to participate. I come home late that afternoon feeling hungry and tired. No one asks me if I had a good time or why my eyes are swollen. I feel as if I am asleep. When I wake up, everyone is getting ready for bed. I quietly take my lunch box into the kitchen. I feel no tears this time, but my heart aches for what I do not have: my mom, my self-esteem, and my Kim Bab.

It was such a weird day. The past week had been windy and rainy, the usual weather we experience on Kaua‘i. But there was something very different about the day that wasn’t familiar to me at all. The day was so still as if the entire earth was in a motionless stage. The wind couldn’t be felt, and not a single cloud could be seen or used for shade. I felt the world being depleted of its oxygen. However, it was awkward that the idea what to expect within the next twenty-four hours.

I woke up at around six o’clock the morning the following day, the usual time I awake for school, but it wasn’t my alarm clock that woke me: the sound of a warning siren echoed in the mountains that constantly rung in my ears. My dad came in my room to tell me that I wasn’t going to school. I thought to myself, "What’s going on?" My dad quickly answered that question of mine. He said, "There’s a hurricane warning for Kaua‘i. It was headed for 0‘ahu, but it took a sudden turn and is headed straight to—"
ward us." By then I was starting to get a little "freaked out." I've never experienced being in a hurricane. I thought I'd never have to, and the last thing I'd ever thought of was the preparation involved.

That day, hurricane 'Iniki was sure to capture Kaua'i within the next few hours, which gave us just enough time to prepare. The first thing I did was pack. I was only in the seventh grade and didn't have the understanding of the effects of a natural disaster. I started packing clothes and other valuables and wondered whether or not all of my belongings would be here for me when I returned home. After packing, I helped my mom and dad prepare the house. We taped the windows, placed all fragile and perishable items in a place where they hopefully wouldn't break, while my dad boarded up the windows to prevent flying objects from crashing through. After our house was prepared, there was more work to do at my grandparents' house. My dad's family met at my grandparents' house to finish the work that needed to be done there. My cousins and I helped my grandmother fill all sorts of containers with water. After a hurricane is finished, there usually isn't any running water for at least a few days. We filled trashcans, coolers, water jugs, and plastic containers with water and then packed as many canned foods as possible. When everything was packed and prepared, our family decided to head for a safer place. My dad's brother works as a wood shop teacher at a nearby high school, so we had the privilege of residing in his classroom for the duration of the hurricane. We were very fortunate to have stayed in this one story building because it was completely made of concrete and seemed to be very sturdy. Soon enough, after we were situated, 'Iniki's winds had arrived.

At first, the winds were noticeable but not enough for my cousins and me to want to take cover. We decided to go on the side of the building and test the wind's strength. Each of us took turns leaning towards the wind and seeing how well it would support us. Luckily, we didn't get hurt by any object that could have been caught in the wind's path or by falling flat on our faces if suddenly the wind decided to rest. About a half an hour later, we noticed that the winds were telling us to go inside and wait. Wait ... that's all we could do, besides pray God would have mercy on our family and loved ones.

As time passed fear grew. We could hear the wind as if it had a voice, taunting and teasing us because we were so afraid and with to secure our safety. One of the steel doors of the building was open, and we were so amazed at 'Iniki's destruction taking place. The wind was so strong that we were seeing cars rocking back and forth; we actually witnessed part of a roof being carried away. Plants were restlessly tossed around, and the wind looked as if it came from all directions possible. There was no specific pattern to where it came from or where it was going. The wind was 'Iniki's power, and nothing could seize its force except time.

What seemed as an hour later, the storm strong enough to lift up the entire block of a building that we were in and carry us to another world. There were various rattlings against the steel door of the building, so we hid in a tiny caged section of the room. My dad and uncles pushed the wood-working machinery against the steel doors, which scared me even more to think that five heavy duty machines might not withstand the force against the other side of the door. It was terrifying to even think about death at the age of twelve. The terror finally left us, and we were at once relieved by the sound of quieting winds. Thinking that this could only be the eye of the storm passing and that there was more terror and worry to come, we took our chances at walking in the calmness of the night to see the damage that 'Iniki brought. Almost every glass window was shattered leaving glass everywhere. Pieces of wood, roofing, nails, and other pieces of the school buildings were left lying on the ground. Fortunately this marked the end of 'Iniki's visit to Kaua'i, but unfortunately, it left a disaster of a gift for Kaua'i to deal with. We finally packed up and headed for home. I was amazed. Kaua'i was un-
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recognizable. Telephone poles covered roads, roofs disappeared, buildings that sat for at least ten years had vanished and of stores had been destroyed. 'Iniki was a nightmare that no one wanted to believe had come true. Once we reached home, it was such a blessing to see our house standing where it should be, but we found that half of our roof had been taken by 'Iniki's winds also, and other various findings covered our yard: a roof, our street sign, glass, trees, branches, nails, wood, and other pieces were found. The only thing left in Kaua'i was many willing hearts to restore her. The people of Kaua'i were so caring and willing to help one another. They realized that everyone had some loss and no one tried to take advantage of that. Instead of trying to steal food from stores because they lost the security that they once had, residents who once had telephones covered roofs, walls, and buildings that had disappeared that someone else's loss, but indeed held on to their possessions in a life without seeing a person very happy. Living without having perfect vision isn't all that great, but having a little could make it much better. I lived that truth for a short time. When I was nine years old, I woke up one day and couldn't see anything out of my right eye. It was completely dark. I still didn't know why this was happening. I went to my auntie first because she was a nurse and thought that my vision was slowly going away. My auntie did not know why this was happening, so she told my mom even though I told her it was nothing at all. My mom didn't find out that I couldn't see anything out of my right eye. When I woke up the next morning, I couldn't see anything out of my right eye. I went to the optometrist the next day and he told me to see an ophthalmologist. He told my mom that I needed an appointment for me to see an ophthalmologist. The next day, I woke up one day not knowing that today would be the last time I would see anything out of my right eye. I was sitting in my room, and my mom told me to see three other specialists in the hospital. Altogether I spent thousands of tests, hundreds of x-rays were taken, and my doctor sent me to see three other specialists in the hospital. Altogether I spent perfect vision isn't all that great, but having a little could make it much better. I lived that truth for a short time. When I was nine years old, I woke up one day and couldn't see anything out of my right eye. It was completely dark. I still didn't know why this was happening. I went to my auntie first because she was a nurse and thought that my vision was slowly going away. My auntie did not know why this was happening, so she told my mom even though I told her it was nothing at all. My mom didn't find out that I couldn't see anything out of my right eye. When I woke up the next morning, I couldn't see anything out of my right eye. I went to the optometrist the next day and he told me to see an ophthalmologist. He told my mom that I needed an appointment for me to see an ophthalmologist. The next day, I woke up one day not knowing that today would be the last time I would see anything out of my right eye. I was sitting in my room, and my mom told me to see three other specialists in the hospital. Altogether I spent thousands of tests, hundreds of x-rays were taken, and my doctor sent me to see three other specialists in the hospital. Altogether I spent
almost nine hours in several rooms in the hospital. By the end I was so exhausted, I just wanted to go home. By six o’clock in the evening, my mom went to call my dad and my home to tell them what happened was going to stay in the hospital.

We got to Kapalani Medical Center in the hospital, my mom stayed with me, but this night worse night I had ever had. When in, there were nurses coming in my room to take my temperature, my blood pressure and samples my blood, while injecting IV’s into both sides of my arms and giving of medication. Before this experience, I hated the sight of a needle, and I just seeing one. Then, when I it was all over, I went to sleep. Not what time it was, I was awakened with a wheelchair. He took me to the hospital, my mom went to call my dad and my home to tell them what happened was going to stay in the hospital. The next morning my doctor came to see me, to check my eye to go home. Every day that she came, she brought other doctors or medical students in while she checked me. The following night was the worse night. Before dinner, a nurse came in the room to get me, so I went with her. She took me into a room that was behind the nurse’s station, where there were other nurses and doctors. They told me to lie down on the table, so I did. Then told me to lie on my side, bring my knees up to my chest, put my head down and roll into a ball. I could see a man in front of me take out a box that he opened and took out a syringe with a needle that was approximately two or three inches long. When I saw it, I started to get nervous and scared, because I still didn’t know what they were going to do. Then, after the man gave the syringe to the person in the back of me; without any warning, the minute the cold needle touched my back I got scared and moved, which made them inject me in the wrong place. I started crying, yelling, and kicking because it hurt really bad and I was scared. A lot of them had to hold me down. Every time they would inject the syringe I screamed louder because it hurt every time. They had to inject me about three or four times before they got to the right spot. They injected a liquid substance into my spinal cord. After all of this was over, the nurse told me back to my room, which wasn’t more than three rooms down from where we were. As soon as I walked in, my brother was staring and asked me what had happened because he said that he had heard me screaming and yelling. After that day, I hated hospital. It had been a week since I was admitted in the hospital before I could a least get some fresh air, even though it was only for a few hours. I had to go to get some x-rays of my head, but it was somewhere out of the hospital. That was the only time I got some fresh air while I was there. Almost a week and a half after I had checked in, I woke up one morning, and it wasn’t dark anymore. I still couldn’t see anything, but at least I could tell whether the light was on or not, whether it was night or day. It was really bright and gave me a headache. But it wasn’t dark any more!
As soon as the doctor came that day, I told her, and she checked out just how much my vision I had, which wasn’t much. The next day when I was still sleeping, so she woke me up. When I woke up, I couldn’t see really clear, but I could see little objects when they moved around. My doctor had other doctors come in to check out the recovery. By the end of this same day, my doctor came back to the hospital to tell me that if the progress kept going the way it had been, I would be able to go home the next day. I was so happy; I couldn’t wait for the day to come. I prayed that every thing would be fine, and I would be able to go home. The next morning I was so excited, because my vision was still the same; at least it didn’t become worse. The doctor came in bright and early and asked the nurse to do a few more tests, which she did. By the end of the day, she told me that I could go home, and I told my mom to call my dad to pick us up. I still couldn’t see everything, and I didn’t have my full vision back, so I had to keep taking medication, and I had to go to see the doctors every week.

It was still a long time before I recovered my full vision. I continued to take medication, went to the doctors every week, and missed school for a month. When all of this came to an end, I found out that something behind my right eye was pushing against a nerve and was not getting enough blood circulation. That is what caused my temporary blindness. Although I said earlier that I hated hospitals, experience helped me to find a goal in life. I have been interested in helping others who need it and enjoy minute. I enjoy working with sick elderly, as this experience has helped me to find that I would like to find a career in the medical field. 

Why does daddy hit me?

What am I doing to make him mad?

When will it stop?

These are just a few questions that Quentin asks himself every day.

This is a kindergarten group, and to him abuse is a part of life, not just physical abuse but verbal too. It’s not right for a five-year old to have such a negative outlook on life.
or even an abusive step-father as a role model. Quentin's behavior and his attitude toward other children are my concern for him. It all started on Tuesday August 25, 1998, when I went to go do my routine pick-up. Every day, right at 2:15 P.M., a bell rings, and along with two other kindergarten leaders, I go and pick up groups in front of their classes. As I took roll one afternoon, I waited to hear their little high pitched voices and look at their little round faces, but for some reason I didn't get any response that day as I shouted, "Quentin!" I repeated his name, only to have his sad puppy dog eyes look up at me along with a freshly bruised cut on his cheek, and he replied in a whisper, "Here, Ms. Rayna, here I am." It was then that I knew something was wrong.

During snack time I pulled him on the side and talked to him. He told me everything: from how his "dad" hit him to the reason why he hit him. Soon after that, I went to notify my supervisor about what Quentin had told me about his father. When Quentin saw me revealing some of the information that I had just found out, he looked at me with fear in his eyes, as to tell me that it was supposed to be our little secret. His behavior was as if he had been in a cage with a man-eating tiger, afraid to move or say anything. When "dad" came to pick him up each day, I could see the nervousness in him, the paranoia, the fear.

It's not right for a grown man to take his anger out on a helpless five-year old. Is that how he proves his manhood, by beating up a little kid? I am so furious that I want to hit him a couple of times as if he were the punching bag, letting him know how it is to be treated like that. Every day as Quentin is being signed out, I think to myself, Will he get "lickens" tonight? Will he come tomorrow with another bruise? Or will he even come at all?

Now that I know certain things about this little boy, I am scared for him. I am scared when he doesn't show up for A+, or when his father signs him out early. But most of all, I'm afraid of opening a newspaper and reading about him on the front page.

As of now, I have done all that I can do. I have written a letter concerning this little boy, and my supervisors have called Child Protective Services (CPS). Although I've talked about this little boy's behavior, his attitude towards abuse, and my concern in regards to him, I have learned that hitting someone, especially a five-year old, does not make a person into a man. There is no way that I can explain to a kindergartner why such things are happening to him. For him to be feeling the way he does is not right, but if something needs to be done, Quentin and his mother will have to make the first move on their own.

a little boy's secret

Rayna Hopfe
It was the evening of September 27, 1997, and I remember getting called into work. On this day I had a high fever, and I was really sick. Being the man I am, I got off my butt and drove myself to work. I got to work around 4:30 P.M., and my condition was getting worse. As I was working through the night, all I could think of was getting off. At around 8:45 P.M. my sickness just totally got to me, so I asked my supervisor to let me go for the night. He okayed the idea, so I called my girlfriend up and told her that I was going to come over since nobody else could take care of me at the time. Who would have known that this night was going to turn out even worse?

I left work around 9:20 P.M., and I was on my way to 'Aiea School Street where my girlfriend lives. I drove up right next to the nearest on-ramp for the H-1 freeway and was headed west around the Likelike cut-off where a pick-up pulled me on my right-first the truck and pretty suddenly pulled up right in front of me and made a complete stop. I pushed down hard on my brakes, but I had no choice but to hit the truck in the rear. I knew it already; the hood of my car was smashed all the way up to my windshield. Fifteen seconds later another full-size pickup, which was white, hit the rear of my car hard. The white truck was practically inside my trunk. Soon the truck reversed, pulled over on the right side of my car, and took out the whole side. The two trucks then both swerved hard to the right and took the Likelike cut-off. I quickly pulled onto the shoulder of the freeway and could not believe what had just happened.

I was sitting in my car for at least fifteen minutes just thinking; I was shocked; I thought it was not a dream, so I picked up my cellular phone and called 911 for help.

After calling 911, I got out of my car, and my silver 1997 Honda Civic, which only had 7,000 miles, was totaled out. It looked like a tin can that had been stepped on by a fat man. All I could do was stare at my car, and ten minutes later two police cars arrived at the scene. The officers came out of their cars and started to ask me questions. Their main concern was if I got the license plate numbers. Unfortunately I was too busy getting smashed up, so I did not get the plates.

After all the questioning, a tow truck came. I jumped inside the truck, and my car was towed down to a towing company at Sand Island. From there I called my girlfriend who was really angry from waiting for me. She did not believe a word I told her, but finally I persuaded her to come and get me. My girlfriend took me home, and from there I called my insurance company. The appraisers went to the towing company the following day, and they estimated the damages of the car. The car was not repairable, and that is the last day I ever saw my Civic.

A month down the road, I received a phone call from the detective who was...
handling my case. He told me that one man was arrested and was going to jail. Unfortunately there were four other men involved, and none of them were to be found. Up until this day the other men are still nowhere to be found. I always wondered why the men in the trucks hit my car, so I asked the detective. He told me that the reason was because the trucks were stolen, and the five men were jealous of my car. Ever since the night of September 27, 1997, every time I drive, I find myself looking at the rearview mirror. I guess it is a habit now because I am just scared of getting smashed again. I can tell you this much: driving will never be how it used to be. That incident just really messed me up in the head. Sometimes I think about how I could have died, and I just thank God every day for letting me be where I am now.

Professional Student
Eme Kau

"Study hard now, then you can play" was something my father said throughout my life. "Yes, Dad, I know!" was my response as my eyes would roll around. If I ignored my father, he would lecture me on his experience of being a "PROFESSIONAL STUDENT." My father spent twelve years in college, and that's something I didn't plan on doing.

It was the summer of August 1990 when I first moved into a dorm called Lokelani, which is on the U.H. Manoa campus. I had butterflies in my stomach, this being the first time living away from my parents. On our way to the dormitory, my father kept saying, "Concentrate on school, and please study hard!"

"Yes, Dad!" I said as I stared out the window. My mind was on getting my dad out of the dorm as soon as possible so that my friends could come over and start our party.

As we entered the parking lot, there were many people coming in and out of the dormitory. "Gee, this place looks like a bunch of ants," my father said, as we waited for a parking space. There were a lot of people going in and out of the parking area descending on the dormitory like an ant hill.

"Damn kid! You better not drive your moped like that, before you end up in the hospital," my father said, as a guy on a moped cut in front of our car.

"I'm always careful when I ride my moped," I said as my dad parked the car.

My room was on the third floor, so we decided to walk up the stairs, since the elevator was busy. The dormitory is round, shaped like a piece of pie, and all the rooms have the same pie shape on every floor: the beds are against both sides of the cream-colored wall, and the desks by the windows. My friend Melveen, who was my roommate, was already there unpacking her bags as I walked in the door.

"Hey, you. Are you ready for tonight?" I asked.

"Sure! As soon as our parents leave," Mel said.

Our parents stayed for a few more minutes before leaving. "Remember what I told you," my dad warned.

"I'll see you at home this weekend. Okay, Dad?" I said as I kissed him goodbye.

I went to class during the second week, but by the third week we were having dorm parties again. I again skipped classes. I was playing so hard that by the time it was final exam week, it was too late to study because I didn't know what to study for. The only class that I attended for that semester was Party 101.

For a year and a half, I played hard, only attending classes that grabbed my interest. I had a friend that made fake report cards for me, so that I could show my
father. My father thought I was doing so well in school; little did he know that I was not listening to him. But he got disappointed when I got pregnant during my second year attending school. I tried to redeem myself by going back to school, but my morning sickness was so bad that I dropped out of school, and I haven't gone back, until now.

It's been six years since I've been in school. Previously, I attended school but dropped out because I wasn't ready to go back. Now I am taking my father's advice to heart. I've learned the hard way, and if I had followed his advice, I would have graduated with my bachelor's degree four years ago. I am starting over again; this time I am taking it seriously. I guess I am becoming what I said I did not want to become, "A PROFESSIONAL DENT."
I believe he saved me from the depths of the sea. I look back now, and realize that there wasn’t a chance that I would have drowned that day. When I arrived at the pool, I knew that he wouldn’t have anything happen to me. This experience was still enough to scare my dad and me half to death. He constantly tells me now that I almost gave him a heart attack that day, and I don’t doubt him. This incident scared my dad and mom enough so that from that day on, they enrolled me in swimming classes. Every weekend, instead of going to the pier, my dad and I were at the pool. It was humorous because the first thing he taught me at the pool was to float; he taught me how to swim so that I was never scared of the water again.

Until this day, my dad won’t ever let me forget that fateful day at the pier. He still tells everyone this story, and I mean everyone! These days, my dad and I can actually look back and laugh about the whole incident. Overall, I never will forget how cold the water was and the clarity of the water from above, but from below it was dark and murky. It seemed almost as if it was like two different worlds. From this experience, I believe that the things we remember as adults are things from the past that one can’t let themselves forget. I can’t ever forget this incident because it was the most terrifying moment in my life. At the same time, though, it was the proudest moment because I still admire my dad for saving me. My advice to others is, Hold on to the memories whether they be the saddest, scariest, or unhappiest times in one’s life because we learn the most from them. This whole experience made me realize and learn that there is something special between my dad and me.

Summer had just begun, and I was 17 when I began thinking about getting seriously involved in relationships. I had just awakened from a two-hour nap that June day when I remembered that I needed food for school the following day. My father and I headed off to Foodland to look for some snacks to lunch on. That night, when we went grocery shopping, I was on a lookout for anyone I could possibly run into.

As I entered the store, I spotted a tall, average-looking guy. I didn’t think he’d notice me, but as soon as I stepped in, it seemed as if he were staring at me too. Unfortunately, my self-esteem was not high enough to believe my own instincts, so I walked on and pretended that I didn’t see him. As I shopped, I kept running into him. There was no use in making a big deal out of this; all this running into each other, I thought, was just a minor coincidence. I decided to make one last stop at the stationary section before my father and I would head out to the cashier.

As I stood in the stationary section staring at the items, this tall and average-looking guy happened to show up at the same section and headed towards me. As I turned my head to acknowledge his presence, he looked right at me, smiled, and said, “Hello.” I smiled back and said, “Hi,” in return. He asked me a few questions, and I bashfully answered. Before I had left that night, I found myself giving him my pager number so we could keep in touch.

That same night, he paged me, and I called him. I thought I’d be too shy to talk, but I actually did converse with him. I really thought he was all right, but time I knew I had to be very cautious.
of him. At the end of our conversation, we both had agreed to keep in touch with each other the following day.

The following day was an extremely long one. His page eventually turned up later in the afternoon. Once again, I returned his paging, and we conversed, getting to know each other a little more. He asked me if I wanted to step out of the house for the night and cruise. Since I knew a little more about him, I figured in doing so. I agreed, and he planned it out. He picked me up at about 7 P.M. in an old Mercedes Benz. We really didn't know where to go, so I suggested that we walk around a mall.

"Walk around?" he responded.

“Yes, walk around,” I repeated.

His reaction seemed unusual, but I figured he was a little tired to know a little more about him. He told me about his school, his family, a little about his past. We talked about relationships and about his past experiences. I couldn’t share any real experience with him; I thought he meant it in a friendly kind of way.

We ended up parking in the back of a toy store parking lot, and I thought it was rather weird to park all the way in the back, but I ignored my doubts. There was no more. We continued talking about relationships. He ended up talking about yet prepared to commit to a relationship. I told him I was ready and that I was someone right to show. We remained in the car for about a half hour just talking. I was getting extremely bored and kept asking him if we were going to go into the store. At one point, I actually opened the door as a hint, and he gave me this toothy smile. I smiled back at him. He continued to stare at me, and next thing I knew I felt a touch on my hand.

He grabbed my hand and started holding it. At the moment, I thought it was OK; I thought this would be the start of something I’ve been waiting for. At the same time, I knew it didn’t feel right. I hesitated and blurted out, “Aren’t we moving too fast?” He just looked straight into my eyes with a smile.

I looked right back at him, and I noticed his face was getting closer to mine. I wasn’t sure what was happening, so I kept watching.

All of a sudden, he had his lips against mine. I was in such complete shock. I didn’t know what to do. I turned away, but he used his hands to turn my lips towards him, and mine completely froze. I had never kissed anyone in my life. He continued kissing my lips, then explored more by slipping his tongue inside my mouth. Oh, my gosh! I couldn’t believe what was happening to me. I was in complete shock. I didn’t know what to do. It felt so uncomfortable that it made me think about how he had just ruined my first kiss. I played along hoping he wouldn’t notice how inexperienced I was. I kept stopping and turning my head to look out the window. All he could do was turn my head towards his and continue. I wanted to stop and run out, but I couldn’t move. I finally built up the courage to stop and say, “Did you want to go to the store now?”

He must’ve taken the hint because he started getting out of the car. I got out, and he came up beside me and took my hand while we walked towards the toy store. We stopped in the middle of the parking lot, where he hugged me saying, “Just don’t take this too seriously.” I wasn’t quite sure what he meant by that, but I responded by saying, “I am taking this seriously.” He just smiled and repeated himself again. After
walking around first kiss was ruined, and how I might even lose something even more precious. I had faith in God, and I knew He would see me out of this, but he just went on kissing me. I played along thinking about how disgusting it felt to have his tongue in my mouth. I couldn’t believe what was happening.

Finally, after all the kissing and refusing to be touched, he finally stopped and started his car. We were heading out for home. YES! I thought to myself. Thank you Lord! I said in my heart. I was saved. Nothing quite serious happened. The kissing was bad. I felt so uncomfortable, but at least he didn’t push it any further.

That night I went home devastated. I had always thought and fantasized how fulfilling my first kiss should be. Unfortunately, I had made a mistake and found someone who took my fantasies away. I felt more depressed than ever. I told myself that being lonely is one thing, but having to sink myself so low was not worth it. The feeling of guilt, regret, anger, hatred, and loneliness remained with me for the next few days, for I had lost something I could never regain back, my first kiss. I looked over my loneliness and concluded even if I’m lonely, jumping on the first guy who seemed interested in me wouldn’t be quite worth it, especially if we didn’t take the time to actually get to know each other. I ended my boy hunting and decided to wait until the right one would come along.

The thought of this tall and average-looking guy comes to mind once in a great while. I will never forget how I lost my first kiss to someone I had no interest in.
I'm not sure exactly what compelled me to undertake the excursion to Molokai Mule Rides in August of 1997. Perhaps I was trying to prove something to the world, or perhaps just to myself. As I do suffer a fear of heights, maybe I needed to see if I could muster the courage to overcome this flaw. I do know, however, that I did want to see Kalaupapa and learn more of its history.

I awoke the morning of the journey, excited and a bit fearful. It was my big day. I had planned this trip only a short while before, but I had been apprehensive ever since a Molokai resident had commented to me that I was a braver person than he was. A mule ride down a 1600 foot vertical mountainside didn't seem like that big a deal, but now I have a different perspective.

I dressed quickly, ate a hurried breakfast, and was on my way in the rental car. Molokai is kind of barren, as most of you are probably aware, so the ride was not as spectacular as it was purposeful.

It was impossible to miss the building, a drab, brown, barn-like structure with the large letters, "Molokai mule rides," painted in white on the side in very plain view. I went inside and was immediately struck by the pungent scent of mules living in close company. The room had a water cooler against the left-hand wall and a counter straight ahead. Beyond the wall was the barn. There was a small window through which I could see the mules being prepared for the day. Also, the occasional sound of a mule braying and the scuffling of a mule having a difference of opinion with a muleskinner could be heard. To the right were windows looking out over the yard where we would mount our steeds for the grueling ride down.

After the paperwork was done (mainly consisting of a waiver against injury or death), I could only wait for all the other fools to arrive. We were later taken into the yard as the mules were brought around and given a lecture on how to treat the mules, their disposition, and the rules to go by (don't get off the mule for any reason on the way down). The yard we were in was a kind of corral with wooden fences leading the way out to the road. A small set of wooden steps that seemed as if they had grown there, helped us mount up easily. Before I mounted, one of the muleskinners informed me that anyone falling on a mount or dismount would have to donate a case of beer. It was interesting watching the different adventurers attempt to gracefully get back in the saddle again. An elderly lady needed plenty of assistance from the muleskinners to
get up. We watched as one pushed from behind and another held the mule in place. For myself, even though it had been many years since I was on a horse, the mounting was smooth. The saddle was hard on my 'okole and became increasingly so as time went on, but I persevered.

The journey began going left down a road with thick forest on either side. At one point, about a quarter mile down the road, we parted the relative safety of the road for the woods. We went through a metal fence and started down a dirt road which eventually petered out into a single track. The woods pressed in on both sides, and we seemed to enter another world.

The next interesting part of the trail was when our troop came around a bend to the right with a chest-high stone fence to our left. We were now on the edge of a sheer 1600-foot drop. The muleskinner in the lead declared this a Kodak moment, but unfortunately we were in a cloud and couldn't see anything of the drop.

We could all feel a mist that was cool and quite welcoming. From here the trail became increasingly more treacherous. It was a sheer mountainside three feet wide covered in muck, mud, and stone. There was foliage for only much of the path, but there were also times when we were on the edge of a terrifying drop. More than once I looked over my left leg and saw nothing but leading to a crashing surf hundreds of feet below. Though frightened by the height, I believed that it was a what sound, for good would it do? If I were on a suicidal mule, it would be all over for both of us. The aforementioned lady, however, did in fact give vent to her fears with a bloodcurdling scream that the mule was going to take her over. I didn't think it very intelligent to spook a mule on a small ledge very high up, but she had other ideas. After she had calmed down, the muleskinner behind me replied stoically that the mules do get close to the edge sometimes.

We rode on, going through alternating patches of sunlight and shadow, and the humidity we felt came from brief showers that occasionally fell. For almost the entire way down, there was a wall of rock on one side and pretty much open air on the other, that alternated because of the 26 switchbacks in the trail. Most of these switchbacks were nearly 180 degrees. There were a few times when the trail was level and safely surrounded by foliage and one could relax and listen to the clip-clops of the mule's hooves as they stepped on the rocks.

It took approximately an hour, and it was such a relief to be fully descended. Here, at sea level, it was a fairly straight ride on a hard track, with the booming surf off to the left and a small sandy beach intervening.

We finally reached a small enclosed clearing where we were to dismount and begin our bus tour of Kalaupapa. We were all exhausted because of hanging on for dear life to both the pommel and reins, and our legs and 'okoles were sore from constantly trying to stay in the saddle. My final act before boarding the bus, however, was falling flat on my back and making the muleskinner happy. The beers we shared later were much appreciated!
That is something I discovered from an accident that altered my entire outlook on life. In my adolescence, I had to learn how to walk and move about all over again.

In 1991, I was a happy-go-lucky twelve year old who wanted more than anything to be a gymnast. I had the lithe figure, flexibility, balance, and the ambition to succeed. There existed just one small problem: my excessive independence and stubbornness.

I was an exceptionally headstrong child, always wanting to do things my way, thinking that I knew everything, due to the fact that I was the oldest sibling in my family. I figured I was pretty good with my gymnastic acrobats, and I did not need my instructor beside me to supervise a back-flip, an acrobat I was trying to master. I ended up landing the wrong way, with my legs critically bent in an unnatural position. It felt like I had damaged my entire body when I hit the ground. After I slowly unfolded my legs and stood up, I found that I was able to limp around, although my body was in enormous pain and limited.

After my unfortunate fall, I continued my normal athletic activities with tremendous difficulty. I walked on a dislocated hip for three months before it was determined. Initially physicians told me the pain was merely some muscles I had strained from overuse in gymnastics, and they suggested that I stay off my feet for a week and the discomfort would disappear. By the time the doctors figured out what the problem was, my muscles were severely injured. Recovery was not as simple as putting the hip back in place and allowing it to heal. The plaster that enveloped me was like a brace that covered almost my entire body. I could not even sit upright, much less stand. Instead, I had to live in an awkward 140 degree angle for three months.

Having been an athletic person and now having to be confined to a wheelchair and cast was pure agony. The incident occurred during the summer, so it was tough being bed-ridden when all my friends and family were enjoying the outdoors and having a good time. The hardest part, though, was that I had to
rely on an attendant to assist me with necessary chores, such as showering, bathing, and dressing. It was a very humiliating period in my life. Like that old proverb says, "You never know how good you have it till it's gone." That is how I felt when my strength was taken from me.

"Oh, to be able to climb a tree or jump a fence, or better yet, beat everybody at a soccer game," I often sighed to myself. I used to sit beside the bedroom window and watch the world go by, and imagine I was taking part in everyday life. Time seemed so slow, as I spent my time doing indoor activities, such as reading, sewing, and watching television. I might have well been Bill Murray in the movie "Groundhog Day," living a monotonous life, doing the same things day after day.

Six months passed. Finally the big moment came when I was released from the heavy cast. It seemed strange to be able to see the lower half of my body again, although I still had to stay off my feet for a substantial amount of time to give my bones a chance to heal.

"Life is not fair," I used to say to myself. "Why did it have to be me." I thought it was a terrible injustice I was so young, in the prime of my life, too young to go through this agony.

About half a year passed before my doctor instructed me to start the physical therapy training to regain my strength and ability to walk. However, by this time I had gotten very lethargic and lazy because it was so easy to get comfortable doing virtually nothing all day except complain about my physical state. My muscles had deteriorated; my legs were that of a baby's who has not yet taken her first step. All the willpower and confidence I once had were gone, so instead of trying, by my own choice I remained an invalid. After awhile of lying down in a continuous helpless state, I decided to take the opportunity to think my attitude over. I realized that I was feeling sorry for myself, and if I kept in that frame of mind, I would be the same way forever. I finally convinced myself that changes do not develop by themselves, and I had to make an exertion if I wanted to get back on my feet.

Once I made my decision, I became very focused. Now I had a goal, and I was resolved I was going to be an athlete again. My vision was a little out of reach, since my hip would never be normal again; however, I knew I had to set my goals high so I would have an objective to strive for. At first I was hesitant, since I had been so long in a wheelchair. Soon, though, physical therapy gave me the exact feeling I had experienced when I attempted a flip in the air for the first time in gymnastic class: excitement and apprehensiveness at the same time.

There were times during therapy when I felt discouraged and desired to give up. Getting strong enough to be able to stand up on my own was such a lengthy, slow process. Gradually, after weeks of exercising and training every day, my effort paid off. Slowly, but surely, I was able to resume a normal life of walking, running, and dancing.

Since my accident, I never take the simple pleasures in life for granted. I have learned to appreciate the benefits most people tend to believe are owed to us, like good health and freedom. Nothing happens by chance. God let this tribulation befall me to make me stronger, and also to teach me that I can not depend on my own natural strength and reasoning, instead I need to stay close to Him. Just as the Bible says, "All things work together for good." I gained so much from my struggle with my physical, emotional, and spiritual self. People who hear what I went through automatically feel pity for me, but I always tell them I have never regretted my experience. My ordeal made me feel that I can conquer anything I put my mind to. It is as if I went through the fire and came out purer, like gold. Behind every storm cloud there is a silver lining; my newfound strengths have given me the determination to tackle any obstacle that stands in the way from succeeding in life.

Every morning I wake up, feeling so grateful to be capable to move about freely; and, yes, life is meant to be savoured.
The skin on my face and shoulders had turned a bright pink from the summer sun. After a full day of fishing down at Laparouse bay, several of my friends and I decided to explore a nearby cave. The experience that awaited me would change the way I look at life and death.

The fading light in the sky suggested that it was near five o'clock. The road we walked on was a blend of rust-colored dirt and obsidian-like cinder that made a sound like ice being crushed between your teeth. The muscles in our legs ached as we crossed through three miles of barren landscape littered with scrub brush, lava rock, and sandalwood trees that resembled dry bones in the desert. The lava flow we walked along side was a result of the volcano’s most recent discharge before going dormant. In the distance we could see the cinder cone that stretched high over head and resembled a large wound on the face of the mountain.

We crossed over the rocky landscape until we reached the base of the cinder cone. Then we climbed along the steep and forbidding edge until we reached the opening created by the weight of the lava spilling out onto the land. There in front of the collapsed wall of the cone we climbed over loose rocks and cinder to discover the entrance of the cave.

Skull’s Cave

David Dickson

The entrance to the cave was a large crevice that appeared shallow. Musty air slowly breathed out of the cracked opening as my group of friends and I descended into the cool darkness. A century old lava tube disappeared before us like a snake into the earth. The stone walls felt cold and moist as if water was stored within them. There was an electric surge of energy among us as we slowly left the light of day behind.

My eyes took a few moments to adjust to the low level of light. Inside the cave our flashlights beamed through the dark. I followed our leader down a steep bank to the bottom of the cavern and watched as he disappeared behind a low hanging rock formation. I followed and crouched under the overhang to find that
there was a much bigger cavern ahead. As we walked farther along the path I discovered very old 'opihhi shells and fragments of bone scattered on the ground. I pointed out the bones to the others before realizing that they were human remains. There was no doubt about it. I was looking at leg bones, rib bones, and a variety of other human remains.

It took nearly fifteen minutes of walking to reach our destination, and when we got there it was quite a surprise. The shadows created deep voids in the texture of the rock that surrounded us. There was an opening that led into a large room. We all took seats on the rock shelves and lit several candles that we spread around the room. The flashlights were turned off. There in the room with us was a pile of human skulls. They were carefully stacked in the shape of a pyramid on a shelf above us. The skulls invocation a humbling sensation. My eyes fell from the empty gaze of the skulls. We put out the candles, and everyone fell silent.

The silence was hollow and my ears felt numb by it. I sat motionless on a hard rock and stared deep into the darkness. Someone lit a cigarette and for a moment tore a hole in the dark. The lit cigarette made tracers as the smoker raised it to his lips to take another drag. The smell of burning tobacco filled my nostrils and the air in the stone room.

After a few moments of quiet meditation we broke the silence with conversation, and the flashlights were turned back on. We each took a closer look at the skulls. To me they looked very old, and each one appeared to have its own unique features. The bones looked a ghostly white in color, and the size and shape of each skull differed from one another. One was so small it must have belonged to a child. It felt as if spirits were there with us in that cave, and no one dared to move the skulls from their resting place.

We soon realized it was time to leave the cave and return to the bay. We took a different route in leaving the cave that led us to another large cavern. This opening was very deep, and at the top there was a hole that lead to the surface. Each step we took while climbing out turned as if we were on a spiral staircase.

When we reached the surface, it was darker than any of us realized. The sun had set and the moon was well above the mountain behind us. As we walked down the lava flow, most of us thought only about reaching the bay. For me I was still thinking about the cave and the skulls that were in it.

That's when I noticed a single cloud around the moon and the precarious shape that it had formed. The cloud had taken the distinctive shape of a skull. I was shaken by what I was seeing and I called to everyone's attention. They looked up and the next, each shape represented exactly each skull from the cave. The face to face experience with the skull left me with a much greater appreciation for this life and the next.
I was in need of French tutorials and had asked my best friend if she knew anyone who gave private classes, and she mentioned Mrs. Labour to me. The first time I met her, my friend and I had literally barged into her classroom, mistaking a nod to her students as an answer to our knock on the glass doors. Her eyes steadily followed us as we walked towards her desk. I felt very small under her severe gaze and wished to be anywhere else but under it. Meanwhile, her students had picked this golden interruption to talk among themselves and fidget in their chairs. She listened to us, never smiling and finally gave us the hours and directions to her house. When we left her classroom, my only thought was that this first encounter was not very promising.

Most students who met Mrs. Labour for the first time were usually held in awe and wariness. She was not physically impressive, being of average height and built, but her facial features always made an impression even on fifteen-year-olds. She had pinched lips, and her straight eyebrows tilted at an upward angle thus giving the effect of a perpetual scowl. Behind her glasses her gaze was serious and steady. They always seemed to be evaluating the person they were laid upon. The masculine haircut that she favored only added austerity to her air of dignity. And so it was every Friday afternoons after school, friends to her owned a white house. The lush lawn of garden and the colorful flowerbeds under the windows gave the place a homey and country atmosphere. Everything was always clean, well-cared for and reflected the organized and neat character of the owner. The heavy wooden doors of the garage were usually left open for us since we had our classes in there. The garage was small and did not go very deep. Lining the back wall were stools and folding tables. We would set them up, being very careful not to scrape them on the floor. At four o’clock sharp, we would see her coming from the house.

She was always simply and comfortably dressed in plain classic knee-length skirts or pants with matching
blouses and tailored sweaters. The only evidence of make-up was her lipstick. Sometimes, we would smell a whiff of her light, floral perfume. Once she started the class everyone would grow very quiet. The only means of communication between each other were silent, discreet hand gestures or lip movements. The only occasional interruptions would be the sound of a car passing, the faint whisper of people talking in the distance or the ringing of the telephone. Her voice was deep but still very feminine, and she always spoke clearly.

She never raised her voice at us, but whenever the need arose she would discipline us. For instance, when our homework was not completed, she would calmly listen to our excuses, but the message in her following comments clearly stated that homework should be done or we should stop losing everybody’s time. "You are old enough to decide for yourselves what is or will to be worthwhile for you," she would politely say. But the tone of her voice was then sharper, sounding more like a general issuing out orders. Needless to say, every homework from that point on was always completed, though grudgingly at times. During the classes, she would have us read out loud whole passages from the literature and poetry textbooks insisting that we show the proper emotions with voice intonations. And when occasionally we came across a funny part, she would make a small joke. Her smile was a slight pull of her lips to the side, but her eyes expressed vividly her emotions.

They would shine with an unmistakable mischievous gleam.

She taught her classes with passion, always going thoroughly over the materials and imparting to us her perspectives and encouraging ours. Once the student/teacher relationship built and I started to learn her ways, the strict discipline with which she conducted her classes was soon more easily and readily accepted. It taught me a better sense of order that was perpetuated in other classes. Her assignments became challenges and not an overload of homework. I started to look forward to Friday afternoons instead of dreading them and eventually, admiration replaced the initial feelings of awe and wariness.

Through her teachings, she shared the finer points of life with us. She would often draw parallels between the stories we read and real life situations, thereby making new concepts easier to grasp and consolidating the old ones. I would come out of her classes enriched with knowledge and with a better understanding of the world around me.

She did not only teach the merits of the French language and literature but also lessons of life and its values in general. The insights she shared were always wise and dependable. Today, I have fond memories of my years in high school, but I remember those Friday afternoons in a small immaculately white garage the most vividly. Her eyebrows may have perpetually seemed to form a scowl, but it only added to the formidable character of the greatest teacher I ever had.
finally, goodbye

Fournier

1995 had arrived along with the realization of my dreams. Spring greeted me with splendor. Fairy dust had sprinkled over my spirit and the land. An excitement grew in me even as new delicate buds sprouted on every tree and branch across the countryside. I was twenty-three years old. After twelve long years, I was returning to the farm where I had grown up. I spent the fifteen-hour drive from Florida to Pennsylvania reminiscing on my carefree days of country life. My heart beat a little faster as each turn of the dusty, red road brought me closer to Riverway Ranch.

Miles of hilly fields stretched out all around me. There were acres of newly planted vegetables: corn, squash and zucchini. There were fruit orchards, trees laid out in perfect rows. A house could be spotted, rarely, here and there amongst the trees or fields. Mountains silhouetted the horizon.

I now had only ten miles to go before that long-anticipated road I knew so well, pebbles and pot holes be the huge, old barn beside it and the parked here and there the thunderous moo of the cows and silos beside it. Welcoming me would be the huge, old barn with the enormous dozens of tractors nearby. I would hear the tremendous moo of the cows and newborn sheep. I was able to escape the vasive stench of the newborn teetering on learning to slick, damp coats causing to be caucious tongues arm, tickling me of wet sandpaper, joker in blue over with flirty eyes, the girls liked, over to see the cows' udder. In my gullibility as I leaned over to look, I would be rewarded with a sharp, wet stream of warm milk straight in my eye.

Farther along the road there would be men tilling the fields with the oxen, and women and children picking tomatoes and strawberries in the abundant garden. Here, the smell of the warm ripe strawberries would sit heavy in the air, reminding me of the time I went strawberry picking with twenty of my girlfriends. The next thing we knew were bombing each other with splats of rotten strawberries and laughing glorious. Every once in a while would not be shiny, blood red one into our mouths and savor the exploding flavor of sun-filled juicy sweetness.

Straight ahead, about a mile down a wind-swept road, canopied by trees, I would drive through dust storms to the school house—the stark old schoolhouse that smelled of pencil lead, erasers, and chalk. In the backyard I would find the mound of moist clay which had always been the kitchen and pies and other sorts of confectionery delights. Just beyond that, in the woods, sat the small pond where I would call me over to see the deer with splashes of gold on their fur. On the road I knew so well, a road mottled with curvy, and scrapes of dry mud flaking on the floor and walls. Entering the front door I would find the welcoming smell of从 the air, reminding me of the time I went strawberry picking with twenty of my girlfriends. The next thing we knew were bombing each other with splats of rotten strawberries and laughing glorious. Every once in a while would not be shiny, blood red one into our mouths and savor the exploding flavor of sun-filled juicy sweetness.

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I now had only ten miles to go before that long-anticipated road I knew so well, pebbles and pot holes be the huge, old barn beside it and the parked here and there the thunderous moo of the cows and silos beside it. Welcoming me would be the huge, old barn with the enormous dozens of tractors nearby. I would hear the tremendous moo of the cows and newborn sheep. I was able to escape the vasive stench of the newborn teetering on learning to slick, damp coats causing to be caucious tongues arm, tickling me of wet sandpaper, joker in blue over with flirty eyes, the girls liked, over to see the cows' udder. In my gullibility as I leaned over to look, I would be rewarded with a sharp, wet stream of warm milk straight in my eye.

Farther along the road there would be men tilling the fields with the oxen, and women and children picking tomatoes and strawberries in the abundant garden. Here, the smell of the warm ripe strawberries would sit heavy in the air, reminding me of the time I went strawberry picking with twenty of my girlfriends. The next thing we knew were bombing each other with splats of rotten strawberries and laughing glorious. Every once in a while would not be shiny, blood red one into our mouths and savor the exploding flavor of sun-filled juicy sweetness.

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line. In that cozy little room, I had lived with fourteen other girls. The other rooms along the hall housed girls of other age groups. We were nine and ten years old, the prestigious "older girls."

The day would begin at 3:30 every morning when we would roll up our sleeping bags, rush down the hall, fight to be first on the toilet, and then race shoulder to shoulder to the sink to brush our teeth. The grand finale was the jump in and out of an ice cold shower as we shrieked invigoratedly and ran to grab our towels off the hook under our name tag. Then we would rush back to our room, put on our matching dresses and eyelet aprons and line up to have our long hair done in braids and ribbon clips. The sharp brush through the knots in our hair produced pain that pierced the eyes. We would tie scarves, and there we were, impeccably adorable, country already for our days of unending

Now all I had to do was right. My stomach got buttery. My head was soaring as though it was filled with helium. My heart was beating so loudly through my body was deafening.

I rounded the bend as the skies grew dark. My emotions settled in my chest like a lead weight. There was the barn, but the silos, the tractors, the harvesting fields—they were all gone! There was a dreadful silence, and then a blast of thunder and a sudden torrent of rain wiped my cheek, but the warm trickle was constant. The people—no one was anywhere in sight. I drove along the ever-so-familiar road; the gardens were a tangle of weeds. I reached the school house. My throat was tight, choking me. The woods were closing in on the house. My once favorite tree was gray, cracking, leafless and covered by a prosperous vine of poison ivy. Inside there were stacks of dusty old school books and a very definite smell of mold. I shuffled through one stack of books and found my name. My hand ran thoughtlessly across the cover. Maybe there were still people at the boarding house?

I ran to the house. The shoe porch looked dirtier and felt colder than ever. No shoes. Inside the house, the scent of incense faintly lingered. The prayer room that had once struck me with a mood of reverence at its grandness now looked almost minute. The ceiling felt five feet lower and the room was empty and drab. With a sinking heart I slumped my way up the stairs to my room in the attic. The door was locked; I was almost glad. I stood drenched in memories, hearing the constant onslaught of rain and the threatening thunder booms. We used to love storms like this one. The electricity would go out for hours and we would be running around banging into each other and giggling. Now, there was only the sound of emptiness roaring at me.

I ran from it, tripping down the stairs, bolting out the door, frantically chasing my
"Oh, did you see that man’s tattoos? Stay away from him; he looks mean." First impressions can be misleading, stopping one from getting to know another. If I went with my first impressions about my husband, Dan, I would have let the most wonderful man be nothing but a bad impression in my life. My husband’s physical appearance is intimidating and his past is horrifying, but he is the most kind-hearted person I have ever met.

Dan’s is six feet tall and is 220 pounds of pure toughness. Well, there’s no wonder: he is of strong Hawaiian, dominant German, and thickheaded Irish decent. His wavy, shoulder-length hair is brown with natural red highlights streaking through it like flames from a fire. It flows around his striking brown eyes. These eyes, which bare his soul, deep and dark, with a twinge of madness peering through, make him all the more threatening. If you get close enough, you can see the remnants of childhood freckles across his nose and cheeks, which blend into the faded tan of his skin. His lips are like marshmallows, soft, plump, and wonderfully delicious. You can see the marks of age in the graying beard that lines his square jaw. His 19-inch arms are so powerful, they almost crush me as he wraps them around me and pulls me close. His skin smells of mild perspiration and light cologne. His voice is so low it almost doesn’t sound human.

Sometimes I wonder if he is human. I wonder because Dan has been through experiences that should have killed him. It all started when he was seven, when his father walked out on him, telling Dan that he wasn’t his son. He made an effort to avoid Dan. If he saw Dan walking down the street, he would cross to the other side. Dan said that he felt angry and betrayed. The only person he had left...
was his mother. Seven years later, Dan lost his mother, too, in a car accident. With Dan sitting next to her, his mother lost control and drove over a cliff. Dan told me that it was storming hard that morning in Hilo, and the roads were slick. His mother lost control while making a sharp turn. She was still alive after the initial crash, but a steel rod went through the driver side window after the crash, killing his mother instantly. Amazingly, Dan suffered only minor physical injuries, but he suffered the painful loss of his mother. Dan said that it felt like his heart was ripped out of his chest. He felt abandoned, alone.

Unfortunately, his pain didn't end there. The next scar occurred when he was drafted into the Army's 101st Airborne, long-range recon unit to fight in the Vietnam War. He did two tours in Vietnam. During the first tour, he was shot five times. Three times in his left leg, once in his right arm, and once in his left buttock. During his second tour, he got blown up by a mine that a fellow soldier behind him had stepped on. This blast destroyed the right side of his face, and if this wasn't enough, he had to wait three long, agonizing days in a foxhole occupied by a dead soldier before the Medivac arrived. This entire ordeal put him in the hospital for 16 months where he went through reconstructive surgery. At first, Dan didn't want to share his feelings with me about Vietnam. He said that it was bad enough that he had to be there, let alone relive it. The scars continued. Dan also did some hard time in prison for shooting his second lieutenant in the leg. The officer was beating and kicking a harmless soldier. Dan asked him to stop, but he continued to pulverize the soldier. Dan shot him in the leg to stop the beating. I guess in Dan's eyes this was justified. After the Vietnam nightmare, Dan became a longshoreman, working months at a time on a fishing boat. This is where he wanted to be, away from society, in an ocean of suffering. On his off-time, he hung out with the Hell's Angels. Dan is a biker, but he doesn't belong to a motorcycle club; he is independent.

Despite his horrible past and all the pain and suffering he has been through, Dan's heart is full of warmth and kindness. A past like his would probably harden the hearts of most people, or most people would be on prescription drugs prescribed by the VA. Not Dan. His strength to overcome, trust, and forgive has pulled him through. Dan has good morals and values that he teaches to our two-year-old son, Miles. For example, he is calm and patient with Miles; he takes the time to listen and understand. When I watch the two of them playing together, it brings tears to my eyes. I see a man whose childhood was stripped away become complete as he plays with his son. He now can enjoy a family. He can give Miles what he didn't have as a child, and this is the beauty I am talking about. I also see Dan hurt when he has to discipline Miles.
He hates to do it, but when he follows up by giving reasons why he was disciplined.

The moment happened on a gloomy Sunday morning. Dan had just returned from a business trip to Australia. The business deal fell through so he was quite disappointed. I could see the dismay all over his face. Dan was slouching in his chair when Miles looked at him from across the room. Miles then put down his Power Rangers and walked over to his daddy. He climbed onto the chair and looked into his face. Miles took his soft tiny hands and placed them on either side of his daddy's sad face. Then he placed his tiny button nose up against his daddy's freckled nose and said, "I love you, daddy." Dan's eyes watered as he wrapped his arms around Miles and embraced him. It was at this moment that I realized Dan's family values and his beautiful inner being was showing through our son, Miles.

Dan has a great sense of humor. He is usually smiling, telling a joke, or poking fun at me. His smile just lights up his face, and sometimes I can catch a sparkle in his eyes. This is what I think is so beautiful about Dan: he has been through so much and so much has been taken away from him, yet he has an enormous amount of love to give and to share. He enjoys helping people. Dan has a Vietnam buddy. This friend calls Dan up for advice or if he's just having a bad day. Dan will take the time to talk to him even if it means evoking horrifying details of Vietnam. Another thing he will do for his friends is pick them up if they are too drunk to drive, or he will lend a friend one of his Harleys if his bike is in the shop. He also lets the mail carrier, Geraldine, borrow money when she can't make ends meet. These are only a few of the things that Dan does for people. The list goes on and on.

If I had gone with my first impression of Dan, I would have thrown away the chance to really see and feel the beauty that this man has inside of him. There is more to beauty than physical appearance; perhaps the most powerful of all is inner beauty.
I took the $50 out of my pocket and put it down as I had just won. “Ring!” I won again! Ecstasy filled my heart! I figured, “If I put the $100 back, I could win $200!” With my heart still beating, the number came out, and the worker quickly swept my money away. I stared blankly, “Should I continue?” I comforted myself, “One more chance, I didn’t lose my own money.” My heart was still beating, the number came out, and the worker quickly swept my money away. I stared blankly, “Should I continue?” I comforted myself, “One more chance, I didn’t lose my own money. If this time I win, I will definitely leave.”

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I concealed the truth. As I moved out with disquieted feelings, Mei slightly bumped my elbow, “Look, all these sexy girls and nicely dressed guys.” I raised my head. A whole bunch of loudly dressed girls with blood red lipstick, panda face eyes, and plaster thick face powder were buttering up and luring gamblers. To the side of the steps was a group of guys with dark sunglasses, immaculate suits, and stuffed leather bags seeking their prey. “If you won plenty or lost plenty, you would be their next target.” Mei’s words made my skin suddenly turned to chicken skin. Like a defeated fighter, I escaped the suffocating place.

When I stepped out of the glass door, a gust of nippy wind blow into my face. I was completely awakened by it. The delicate fragrance, the free orange juice, the luxurious chandeliers, the condensed towers of chips, the pretty and charming girls, and the dark sunglassed guys were focusing a clear picture of a huge cage. I shivered.

I didn’t know for what reason I looked at my watch at that time. It was 10:00 P.M., the coldest Sunday in February 1994, one month after I had settled in Macau for my new job. Facing the cage-shaped building once again, I rejoiced that I was able to return to reality before I was sucked in. With this bitter lesson, I never stepped into that cage again. I knew that was a real challenge to a person’s humanity.

by Ju Ying Goo
I felt like I was home again, home sweet home. I felt whole and grounded; an overwhelming sense of peace and focus. There was this uncanny sense of familiarity; I knew I was from this area before—Kalaupapa.

The air smelled and felt heavy with salt, as if salt was microscopically collecting on my body. I would look up and see the majestic mountain cliffs hanging over the town’s peninsula. The cliffs had deep green ridges that looked so ancient and wise.

As we drove into the gated town, I felt like I was being pulled into an invisible energy vortex. It seemed to take me back in time to another place, another dimension that was so familiar, yet ancient. The roads were made of gravel, neatly paved and kept. On each side of the road, there were hundreds of graves, toppled over each other. The graves were slowly corroding, covered with the white salt of the ocean. On the right side of the road, there were rows of graves that led down to the ocean; it seemed as if the ocean was slowly engulfing this tiny town.

Kalaupapa seemed like a ghost town. It was so quiet; no human noises, not even car noises, no one person walking could hear was the A breath of real country life. I pure, light, and town was made up small, corrobaging, small, corroding, It looked like the 1960’s. Our in a simple was no furniture, beds with clean small hospital simple, yet so
evening, after our performance, our small privilege to mix and

Later that short vocal group had the privilege to mingle with some of the townspeople. Everybody I met had a way of being that was so kind, gentle, and loving. It seemed as if there were no separations between us; what was theirs was mine. Beautiful faces, bright faces, welcoming faces...so calm and serene. I sensed that the townspeople knew something that I didn’t know. There were deep secrets that they kept, perhaps wise secrets of another unseen dimension.

As I was comfortably socializing, I noticed an elderly woman and was immediately drawn to walk towards her and introduce myself. I just remember her as Auntie. Auntie was in a wheel chair: sunken face, thick lens glasses, sunken mouth with cracks in her puckered lips. She had just a few teeth left, but boy could she talk! I don’t remember exactly what we talked about, but she had a way of keeping her mouth busy saying something. She wore a simple house mu’umu’u; it looked like something I’d wear to bed. She had with toes that were of her fingers were broken off at the into her eyes and we chatted. Her rough to my youth—remember feeling love for this woman she must have been tremendous spunk and years; it was quite

After our post chatting, our vocal group (no group name) headed back to our guesthouse for bedtime. The full moon was out and shining at its full capacity. It lit up the magnificently majestic cliffs so that the ridges seemed to pop out in 3-D effect. I felt wide awake and spiritually high from all of the night’s activities. The moon seemed to magnify not only the ambiance of the town, but the way I felt about Kalaupapa from the first time I landed there.

I decided to take a walk before retiring to bed. I walked along the semi-cliffs behind the guesthouse. The ocean was sparkling from the light of the moon. I was guided to a spot along the rocks and took a comfortable seat at the edge of the cliff. I was openly absorbing all of the power and energy I felt from the hovering cliffs and surrounding ocean. As I was praising the surrounding beauty, I saw, from the corner of my eye, a faint mist dissipate from a nearby rock. I thought I must have been imagining this, so I courageously looked directly at the rock to see if the mist was real. After a few minutes, the mist did reappear from the rock and gently dissipated into the ocean air. After further investigation, I confirmed this phenomena to be quite real and independent from any external source. This confirmation quickened my heartbeat a bit, yet I chose to stay and experience the sight of this phenomenon. I noticed, unexpectedly, that the mist passed awfully
close to where I was sitting. All of a sudden a great force hit me from behind. Such heaviness fell upon me that I was momentarily blinded. I blindly grasped the rocks until my eyesight slowly came back into focus. It was an invisible force that hit me. I felt its presence try to invade my invisible bubble. Strangely enough, I knew it was a man, a Hawaiian man, big and tall. I was quite frightened and disoriented at first, but with my will, I gradually strengthened my focus by enforcing my invisible bubble of light and protection. Big Man, as I'll call him, sensed this unique frequency and immediately softened his tone. Big Man overwhelmed me with questions. How can I explain a conversation that had no words, physical words? It was just an instant knowing of what was trying to be communicated. It was a faster type of communication than speaking; it was an instant recognition. Big Man asked repeating questions, "Who are you?" "Why are you here?" "What are you about?" I was an alien to him, somebody he had never seen or experienced. He didn't know what love was or even peace. All he knew was sadness, melancholy, fear, ugliness, torment, and sorrow. By the tone of his questions, I knew he was a primitive soul, not yet healed from his horrible experience in Kalaupapa. My answers to his questions were all the same consistent frequency: "Who are you?" "Peace, unconditional love, nonjudgement." "What are you doing here?" "Sharing love, joy, peace, and nurture to the people of Kalaupapa." "What are you about?" "I'm about unconditional love and I send it your way so that you may understand and heal your unfinished business on this physical plane, so you may move on." Really, I wasn't saying these words in my mind, but I was more conveying them by will from a source within. The more I conveyed unconditional love and acceptance of his presence, the more I could feel his attachment and curiosity arise, like an innocent child, soft and impressionable. I wasn't as calm as I appeared to be. Inside, my heart was racing, my blood was pumping, I was nervous and alert, yet somehow I maintained my focus and ground by deep breathing, in and out, in and out. I hung on to this vision of protection and light surrounding me, knowing that ultimately no harm could be done to me.

Only my own crazy emotional, frightened thoughts could kill me. I convinced myself. Thoughts aren't real, they're illusions! O.K., Joelle, calm those crazy illusionary thoughts; they're only conceived and believed in by those scary movies you watch on T.V. Big Man is just like you, except he's in another dimension and you can't see him, just like aliens are real and they live on other planets and you can't see them, but they exist, just like you exist. We're all one big family on different dimensions and planets...

I was jibber-jabberishly trying to convince myself not to be too overwhelmed by this weird experience. When I felt the time was appropriate, I left the scene as calmly and quietly as I could. It was terribly dark so I was trying to stay as aware and present without reacting out of blind fear.

When I got back to the guesthouse, I got ready for bed. I did a little prayer, self-reflection, and meditation before retiring. Somehow I could feel the spirit of Big Man near my window. I felt him summon me to come back out to talk, but with agitated will, I told him to leave me at peace and sleep.

I experienced many more supernatural experiences during the rest of my stay. Somehow the supernatural became natural to me. Experiencing the naturalness of the people and land was in a sense supernatural (coming from the experience of living in an unnatural city environment.). I realize now there is no difference between the two: natural, supernatural.

Somehow all possible forces were aligned in such a way that the whole trip seemed magical and perfect; like a special gift from the heavens. When it was time to leave back to Honolulu, I felt as if I didn't have enough time to absorb this wonderful experience. I knew, though, deep down inside, that it was actually perfect and enough, enough to be framed and deeply cherished in my special memories.
In the Dawn's Early Light

Kamilla Ma‘i‘i

They call themselves the Dawn Patrol: a handful of babyboomers and a senior citizen. Donuts and weathered grins, they are the faithful, as dawn conversing on Kuhio Beach with their firmly planted under one arm eager to greet the Queen’s Break. In the predawn hours, dark hazy shadows and cool calm breezes. The sand feels moist and cold, the ocean’s lullaby is a kiss in the morning, a new day as transform into pastel. The birds sapphire and tangerine. I no longer wait in solitude. Tranquil streets yield to busy commuters as sidewalks invite jogging feet. Fair-skinned visitors capture nature’s watercolor painting on film as the rushing water lap at their toes. In the distance white water breaks over the reef, coaxing the Dawn Patrol down her glassy face. Doing their dance, they ride high on the waves touching the sky and rush toward the shore, romancing their ocean ladylove. The morning light casts jeweled shades of blue and fills the sky’s reflection on the waters below. I notice the warmth of the sun beginning to draw sleepy faces out into the fragrant air; some are tourists, the others are city maintenance workers going about their morning duties. It’s peaceful here, perhaps even spiritual. Quietly I drink in the beauty of this place and marvel at God’s artistic handiwork. I can only imagine the thrill of racing on top of the water, wind in my face, the sun reflecting in my eyes. How invigorating it must be, what a sense of freedom.

I’m awakened out of my trance by the sounds of the homeless foraging through trashcans for their morning meal. Disheveled in appearance, their clothes are filthy rags. I can imagine how foul they must smell and turn away as not to stare, such a contrast to the splendor around me. Across the street Japanese tourists dine on saimin at an outdoor cafe. Next door, Mass has just released a gathering of early morning parishioners. They stroll along greeting each other with a smile and a handshake. Every morning at the same time a Hawaiian man wearing a plaited coconut hat arrives by moped toting his freshly cut coconut fronds. He quickly sets up an area near the sea wall to weave the fronds into hats and trinkets for paying tourists. He’s quite friendly and always draws a crowd of curious onlookers, sharing his aloha with all who stop by.

Near him is a spacious cemented area where loud music pours from a boom box as aerobic enthusiasts bounce to and fro to the pulsing beat. The safety patrol arrives and prepares for a hot day in the sun. He’s deeply tanned and hides his face behind dark glasses and a wide-brimmed hat. I look about me and notice that the benches are starting to fill with the oiled bodies of brightly clad tourists. The sun is climbing higher overhead, and enthusiastic surfers are gathering in number now. It’s time for the Dawn Patrol to bid farewell. They break formation and take turns riding their final wave toward the shore. In the bright sunlight I can see their faces clearly as they emerge from the water. Contentment is in their eyes; they seem quite satisfied with their day’s beginning.

After a quick rinse in the fresh cold shower, they turn and are lost in the crowd. My task is completed here. Smiling, I gather my belongings and turn to scan the horizon one final time. Before retreating, I close my eyes and inhale deeply, reflecting on the secrets of the dawn’s early light.
Vegetables, fish, dill pickles, and mashed potatoes are examples of such food that bring forth the perils of dinner for a seven-year-old. As children, we all get the urge to simply throw away any undesirable foods but as a result are force-fed the phrase, “No! Don’t you know that there are thousands of starving children in Ethiopia?” Wasting food is not a favorable trait in people, and granted, this is an important lesson to learn. In fact, my family found it extremely important to impose such a rule on me, and it left such an impact that to this day I practically lick my platter after each meal. It all began with dinner at my grandma’s house.

Dan Rather, green peas, and mashed potatoes were three things that could all but arouse my appetite at the age of seven. Every night as my sisters and I waited for our mom to pick us up from grandma’s house, the monotone voice of Dan Rather droned in my child ears about news I could absolutely care less about. I stared at the green peas and played with the mashed potatoes on the plate in front of me with my spoon. The green peas I could manage to stomach if I held my breath and swallowed quickly and hard enough, but earlier I had begged my grandmother not to serve me so much mashed potatoes. I couldn’t stand mashed potatoes. Every night I would sit there and stare at them: watching, waiting, as if the plate would soak them up if I could just concentrate hard enough. Unfortunately, it never happened. I would end up throwing salt, pepper, butter and whatever else I could find to make the nightly ritual a little easier on my mouth.

It was not just the blandness of the mashed potatoes; it was also the texture, so soft and musky. While eating them, I could only imagine eating a spoonful of plaque. It was disgusting. I would ask my sisters if they would eat it for me, or at least part of it, but my grandmother would quickly intercept and tell me that I would sit there until I had eaten everything on my plate.

Every night at dinner I was miserable. Then there was a ray of light, a window of opportunity. One night, while my grandmother was washing dishes, my older sister stood up, walked over to the waste basket, and quietly scraped green peas in it. Absolutely brilliant! Just throw it away.

Wasting was a big “No-No” in my family, but this was Grandma. She was the only person in this world that was obligated to let me break a rule every once in a while.

Now it was my turn. Following the example of my older sister I walked over to the waste basket and dumped my mashed potatoes. It felt so good that, if I were allowed, I would help myself to another serving of mashed potatoes just to throw them away. I thought I was clever. I thought I got off clean. Then, I turned around only to find my grandmother’s towering figure behind me with a very disapproving expression on her face.

There are the common stereotypes that all grandmothers absolutely adore all that their grandchildren do; that grandmothers are the purest, wisest, most gentle beings on the planet; and that they would never harm a soul. Forget those ste-
The Worst Night of My Life
by Nicholas Ozaki

It started off as another party night in
Hilo town, just a few months ago. I planned for
everyone to meet at my house before we went out.
My friend Jeremy came first and he waited around
patiently as I took a shower and got dressed.
One by one I could hear my friends pulling up my
driveway. I tried to rush as I hear them yell,
"Hurry up, Nick! We go already." We waited
around for one more person though, since he was
the straggler. As I heard the thump of his
sounds from down the street, I knew it had to be
him.

We headed to the store so we could pick
up some liquor, because you couldn't have a
party without that. By this time we were all anticipating going to the room wanting to drink our beers and just relax, but the cashier in the store took forever to ring up our things. Finally we got out and began packing up the beer in the coolers; you could hear the clanging of the bottles and the rustle of the ice as it began to chill the beer. We all jumped into the cars and headed toward my hotel room. The drive seemed to take forever because the thought of being at Naniloa Hotel partying with our close friends and having some beers sounded terrific.

As we entered the room you could smell the typical scent that all hotel rooms seem to have. It smelled like a mixture of stale smoke and air conditioner and the starch on the newly washed sheets.Seconds after we walked in, everyone started opening their beers. You could hear the popping of the bottles and people yelling from each direction, “Pass me the lighter so I can open this shit.” The taste of the satisfying, icy cold beer was refreshing. The cool beer running down our throats felt as if we were having a drink of water after a long game of baseball, an all-familiar thing for all of us because we all played on the same team. As time passed the mood began to change because the alcohol seemed to have kicked in and the noise level began to rise. Everyone was having a good time, talking, laughing, and basically just enjoying each other’s company. Then the noise came to a halt when we heard someone pounding on the door. A security guard was standing behind that door, warning us to keep the noise down. It didn’t phase us much though: we just closed the door and kept on partying.

Keeping quiet by this time didn’t seem possible. We were all teasing each other, making jokes, edging each other on to take shots, etc., the typical party scene. We’ve known each other for years and partying with each other could be thought of as routine. Some got so drunk that they could barely keep themselves up, but it didn’t matter because we were all close friends. Then there were those who drank moderately and did not yet reached the drunken stage. Everyone regardless of the condition they were in found their own way to have a good time. My friend Jeremy sat beside me drinking his beer and our girlfriends were trying to get us to take shots. I denied them because I wasn’t a hard liquior drinker, but Jeremy couldn’t refuse. I looked at him as he took the shot of Vodka without a flinch in his face.

One of my friends got extremely drunk, and because I had had little to drink and was responsible for the place I decided that I would take her home. I left to take her home, and on the way I stopped at the 7-11 to pick up cigarettes; as I got back into the car I could smell the stench of regurgitated food, saliva and alcohol. I didn’t need to ask; I just knew she had barfed just by the look on her face. I dropped her off and started to drive back to the hotel.

As I approached the hotel, flashing lights caught my eye at a distance; it was relatively close to the hotel that we were partying at. I thought nothing of it and headed up to the room. As I approached the room, I could hear everyone talking and laughing from all the way down the hallway; the noise intensified as I got closer. When I got back we continued to party and I noticed that a few of my friends had left and others had arrive. I didn’t really take notice of who left because there were quite a few people there. We were not even drinking for 10 minutes when I heard a ring, ring, and ring. Having a phone call now occurred to me as somewhat strange considering we were in a hotel room and it was 2:30 in the morning. I thought maybe it was one of my friends who forgot the room number or something and wanted to come up.

It wasn’t any friend; it was my mom. The sound and tone of her voice made my stomach drop to my feet, not to mention I could tell she was crying. I can still remember her exact words, even though it echoed through my head like a bad dream all the while she was saying it. She asked me, “Are you guys partying?” and of course I told her, “Yes.” My very answer made her cry even more, and when I heard the crack in her voice I knew that something was definitely wrong. What she said next would echo through my mind like a pounding migraine headache. “Jeremy got into an accident and he’s dead” is all she said, and she said it in the most compassionate way that she possibly could, trying herself to hold back the tears, trying to be strong for me.

These words made my body freeze up like a lake in the winter and it seemed like all the world was coming to a light. The noise died down and the normal partying suddenly became quiet. Everyone was all of his friends standing around me, and in a split second I didn’t know how I could tell them. I hung up the phone and looked around, and by this time everyone knew something was wrong. My eyes filled with tears, and I had the blankest look across my face. I knew what I had to do, and it was just a matter of figuring out how to say it. All these thoughts raced through my mind, and finally I said it in the only way I knew how, “Brah, you guys, Jeremy got into an accident and he died.” As soon as these words left my lips, tears started streaming down my face, and a rage of anger entered my entire body. Everyone started losing it, hitting the walls, yelling, crying, yet all the while trying to console each other to help make the pain go away. I felt like I was trapped in a cell, with no way out, wanting to be anywhere but here. I wanted to see Jeremy; I couldn’t make myself believe that it could possibly be true. He was here with us just moments ago; it seemed impossible and like a bad dream.

I waited for my alarm to ring so I could wake up, but it didn’t. I can’t really describe the feeling that I had at a time like this; it was basically the worst pain, guilt, regret, and anger I ever had, all mixed together, traveling through my body. The realization of Jeremy being gone hit me harder than anything I ever felt before, and it’s something that I will always hold near to my heart.
The Rock  by D.J. Ricketts

A simple round rock. Not just any rock, my rock. This small round earthly object can assist me in conjuring up any moment between June 92-Oct93. This time period has had more impact on my life than the rest of my years combined. During this time I served military duty in North Africa and the Middle East. I consider this my "age of enlightenment," a time when I began to experience and accept other cultures and people uniquely different from any I had ever known. This was the most difficult, strenuous, and painful time of my life. In the same breath, it was the most eye-opening, liberating, and happy time I have ever experienced. Feeling my rock's cold, smooth surface transports me back to MY time, to the time I wish could last forever.

Saudi Arabia,  June 1992

"We're here, time to get off the plane!" a voice, sounding like that of a pilot, breathed over the passenger area intercoms. The trip from Germany lasted longer than expected. Everyone, including myself, was lethargic to the bone. My first steps out of the aircraft and onto the tarmac brought an initial feeling of "foreign." I mean the whole feel of the surrounding area felt very alien. It was pitch dark, we were all following each other in single file, and even though I couldn't see anything, I felt an ever-present air of complete difference. We were led into an abandoned aircraft hanger where clothing, identification, and housing assignments were handed out. We were then driven to Khobar Towers, our "Home away from home," as we jokingly called it. Although we would spend a fraction of our time at Khobar Towers while in country, the running water and electricity would be incentive enough to return from weeks spent in the field with the Saudi Army. After unpacking, we all settled in for a good nights sleep.

The very next morning I was the first one up. Not that I wanted to be up, but with Islamic morning prayer being broadcasted over loudspeakers placed all throughout the city, I really didn't have any choice. Instead of being annoyed by the disturbance, I was completely elated. This was my first experience with something totally different than anything I was used to. After hurriedly getting dressed, I rushed to the living room window, pulling it open in a gesture not unlike that of Moses parting the Red Sea. The air that came through the window and assaulted my senses can only be described as that which smells, tastes, and feels like desert. After the rest of the team had showered and dressed, we all set out for the chow hall. Along the way I started kicking a small rock. I kicked this rock, soccer fashion, all the way to the chow hall. I was about to go for a full powered kick on the rock when something came over me. Or was it that general paying particular attention to what I was about to do? Anyway, I decided against a full blown kick and placed the rock in my pocket. After chow we headed back to our apartment, to prepare for the next days field exercise.

At the end of the day, when all necessary tasks had been completed, I hopped into bed for a little rest, when something fell out of my pocket. It was the rock I had picked up earlier in the day. Picking the rock up for closer inspection, I could feel its rough surface. Although not a particularly beautiful or unique rock, it held importance in being at the right place at the right time, so I kept it.
Violent encounters between American soldiers and warlords’ armies are ever increasing. The team that I am assigned to has been placed on immediate mobilization from Egypt to Somalia. I remember being bored waiting for our chartered aircraft, so I headed over to the hospital for a game of cards with whoever might have been on duty. Usually the hospital is one of the quietest tents on base, but this night it was springing with activity. “Hey, we’ve got a nineteen-year-old Marine in critical condition enroute by medevac, could ya help set up the O.R.?” asked one of the nurses I had been dating. I told her it would be no problem and proceeded in assisting to set up the O.R. All at once the front flaps of the hospital tent violently parted, revealing two medics pushing a gurney with, what appeared to be, a soldier lacking fingers. I was ordered out of the tent so as to allow more room for the surgeons to perform. About two hours later the highly sedated, fingerless soldier was wheeled out of the hospital tent enroute to an awaiting plane ride home. Having no more time to spare, I headed back to the tarmac where my team was still waiting.

Somalia Jan ’93

Only four weeks in the country and we are on our way back to Egypt. This first trip to Somalia, a very uneventful one, had been short but sweet. The plane ride was fairly smooth and quiet, everyone daydreaming of sipping cold beers on the shores of the Nile, when I struck up a conversation with a Marine sitting next to me. Our talk ranged in topic from the war in Somalia, to friends already stationed back home stateside. He started talking about a buddy of his that had been involved in an incident where all fingers had been blown off. Instantly, I remembered the soldier wheeled into the hospital tent four weeks ago in Egypt. The Marine sitting beside me told of how the incident occurred and what developed afterward. Apparently a round had “cooked-off” in the chamber of a fifty caliber cannon the soldier had been manning, causing an explosion that blew apart both of the soldier’s hands. Surgeons in Egypt had no choice but to amputate all the way to about the beginning of his wrists. Only nineteen-years old, with no hands. The reality of it hit me with excruciating force. At the time I was only twenty, possessing a complete lack of combat reality. I thought to myself, What if that had been me? How would I live without the use of hands? Then a feeling of serenity washed over me. I felt what as enlightenment to my own abilities. waste time feeling sorry for myself. fingers, toes, arms, legs, eyes, and body parts. Through emotional pain I motivation.

After landing, I headed over to the chow tent for some supper, when I realized something was in my hand. My rock! I hadn’t even noticed I had been clutching the thing, like a child does a blanket, almost my entire four weeks in Somalia. Gently rubbing its surface brought back images of the past month. Although these images displayed horrors that caused involuntary shivering, the lessons learned brought about a new-found appreciation of life...my life.

Experiences like these occurred all throughout my tour of duty in the military. My rock is smooth and shiny now, no longer rough and pale like when I first discovered it. I don’t necessarily need the rock to remember, but it helps. I’m sure if I rub the rock enough, I could wear it down to nothing. The number of memories it contains is in accordance with its durability. How many more times can I rub the rock till the memories no longer seem real? I don’t know or care...I’m to busy living life, with both hands.
Such a perfect day with the sun shining and the sky cloudless. The soft winds carrying ocean sprays onto my body combined with brilliant sunlight beating on my shoulders felt as I could be. This was life. No work, no school, no homework. Just me, the boat, and a perfectly expansive ocean waiting to be explored.

“So, Kino, do you see any birds out there?” My father cut into my little daydream. I temporarily forgot that he had taken me to go fishing. As much as I hated to, I pulled myself out of the wonderful carefree world that I created in my mind and tried to look intent on finding bird-piles.

Having bad vision to begin with, which seemed to be getting worse all the time, I knew I wasn’t much help. But I looked anyway. My father had brought along three of his friends, all doing the same thing as me. It wasn’t long before someone shouted, “Bird-pile, three o’clock!” I turned and looked, but no matter how hard I tried, I just couldn’t see anything.

My father steered the boat to the right, towards the bird-pile and sped up a little. “Hey Kino, come drive the boat,” yelled my father. I went into the cabin and took the wheel. I liked driving the boat. I could relax with really nothing to worry about. There were no “lines,” no speeding tickets, and no traffic.

I held a steady course while my father and his friends checked the fishing lines, making sure the lures were out far enough. This would ensure no tangles in the lines. Soon enough, I started to see little black dots on the horizon. Okay, I thought...now we’re getting somewhere. At least I could see something now! My hands gripped the wheel a little harder as the familiar tremble of excitement ran through me.

As we got closer, I could see the birds diving. At least 50 of them were going crazy, flying around in big circles and diving left and right trying to get to the little fish they fed on. Looking at the size of the pile, I just knew it had to be a huge school of fish. Almost there and itching to go out on deck to be at the poles when the fish hit, I got excited. I forced myself to stay calm and hold the course steady. As my father and his friends made last-minute adjustments, steering steady was very crucial.

As soon as the lines where out and the deck was cleared, my father took over the trols and I ran to the boat. I down in the middle deck hoping, praying something would happen. I didn’t know what I hoped for, but I hoped for a large fish. My dad was a great troller, and I heard a “Whapack,” as the band on the pole broke. The line with a “buzz,” as I yelled, “Hanapa’a!”

My father’s friend—a pretty experienced fisherman and also closest to the outrigger, immediately grabbed the pole and brought it in the boat, so it would be easier to fight the fish. Everyone had previously agreed that the little miss should prove her strength and see if she could bring in the fish by herself. So I positioned myself in a way that I could easily reel in the fish. At the same time, I had to try not to fall into the water, as one foot dangled over the edge. My father stopped the boat and positioned it downwind, so the water was splashing all over me, but I didn’t care.

As soon as the fish stopped taking the line, I flipped the drag and started reeling the line in. The fish, strong as it was, made me feel like I was playing a tug-of-war with God. I kept reeling. I felt like I was being tested by God. I kept cranking. I was really excited. I was playing against nature. I kept reeling. I felt like I was winning.

As soon as the line was cleared, my father took over the trols and I ran to the boat. I down in the middle deck hoping, praying something would happen. I didn’t know what I hoped for, but I hoped for a large fish. My dad was a great troller, and I heard a “Whapack,” as the band on the pole broke. The line with a “buzz,” as I yelled, “Hanapa’a!”

Not Quite Heaven

Kino Shigekani
A couple of slow hours passed with no action, as we trolled through some small piles here and there. Nothing bit, and the weather really didn’t help. Such a nice day, and everything crystal clear: I’m sure those fish could even see the 300 lb. test line that my father used.

After a while, the beautiful day got to us, and we partially forgot about catching fish. Soon, everyone was lounging around, with my father steering the boat. One of his friends decided to go out on the bow and lay there. I wanted to go to the front of the boat too. The front of the boat, always enjoyable to a free spirit though very slippery and dangerous, was the best place in the world to be. When the weather permits, the water is weird, just a natural reaction to the sequence of events.

Back on the boat, I started to calm down and catch my breath. All concerned eyes were on me, especially after I threw up, but I told them I felt fine, and they seemed to be relieved. Then, the joking started. My father’s friends started teasing me about the panic-stricken look on my face as the boat got farther and farther away, and how comical it would have been if I had broken one of my father’s outriggers.

I laughed along with them the best I could. As I looked up at my father, it seemed as if I had seen him for the first time. He smiled at me, asked me if I was okay, and told me we were heading into the harbor. I don’t ever remember being so glad to see my father in my whole life. It was so simple: he didn’t have to touch me or hug me, I knew he cared about me, and I felt safe again.

My father used his phone on the boat to call his wife (my stepmother) to come and meet us at the harbor so that we could go straight to the hospital. Thinking to myself I felt fine and about to tell my father how unnecessary that was. I looked down at my hand. I had grabbed the outrigger with my left hand and as a result, a severe looking rope-burn cut
across all of my fingers, not including my thumb. It looked pretty bad even though I couldn’t feel it. My skin tore completely off and I stared at my pink and white flesh.

We docked the boat and went straight to the hospital. My burns didn’t turn out to be very serious; the salt water cleaned them out pretty well. The doctors applied some antiseptic and bandaged me up. Everyone kept telling me how lucky that I wasn’t hurt very seriously, and when I think about how close those lures were to me, I have to agree.

Now, every time I see the scars on my hand, I think back to that day on the boat when I thought I was in heaven. Then I realized that even heaven could be dangerous.

Late one warm August evening in Honolulu while sleeping on my living room couch, I awoke to the sound of a friend’s voice asking me about a noise she heard coming from the hallway outside of my apartment. My friend Karla had been studying on the outside lanai when a ringing sound drifted through the apartment and captured her attention. Being a sound sleeper, I was undisturbed by the bell-like sound. Karla’s voice inquired again, “What is that sound?” I was very groggy and tired and only about getting back to sleep. “It’s a fire drill,” I murmured. “Some jerk alarm. Stupid idiot.”

I attempted to go back to sleep, but Karla persisted, claiming to smell something burning. Reluctantly to satisfy curiosity and assituation, I got up to satisfy curiosity and assituation. I walked over to the front door and opened it. Nothing but did observe many of my neighbors exiting their apartments and walking down the hall. When I asked one of my neighbors if he knew what was going on, his response was, “No, but I’m going downstairs anyway.” I began to think that this must be a routine fire drill conducted to practice high-rise fire safety.
I went back into the apartment and woke up my roommate, Sonja. We informed her about the fire drill underway and told her that we needed to exit down nineteen flights of stairs to the lobby. I kept thinking how stupid it was to have a fire drill in the middle of the night. Then I began to estimate how long it would take to complete this when I would be able to get back to sleep. Being so tired I didn't bother changing my clothes. Dragging myself closet, I threw sleeved plaid over my pajamas and walked out the door. I didn't even bother putting my contact lenses.

The three of us headed straight for the stairwell and were horrified as we opened the door to discover the warm smell of hazy smoke whirling around in there as well as swarms of people rushing down the stairs. Immediately I felt a rush of adrenaline shoot through my veins. My heartbeat quickened and my muscles tensed. My eyes grew wider with the sudden realization of what was happening. This was a real fire in the building, this was not a drill, and I was terrified. This thought enveloped my whole brain and left room for no other. We headed down the stairs with the other tenants who all appeared to be as scared as I was. As we descended, the smoke became thicker and thicker. I did not know what to do. People were yelling and grabbing on to one another as not to get lost in the heavy gray smoke. I had only reached the sixteenth floor when the smoke became unbearably dense. Someone below me yelled, "Go back up! We can't make it down in this!" There was a moment of confusion as this statement was processed in our minds. We then began to head back up the stairs. Within a matter of seconds, someone above yelled, "Go back down! We can't get stuck in this burning building! We must get out!" At this point I didn't know where I was going, what I was doing, or what I was going to do. I looked wildly around at the others for a sign. Everyone's faces expressed the same confusion and anxiety that I felt.

My hands shook, my eyes began to tear, and my heart pounded so loudly that I could hear it in my ears. My limbs were numb with fear. I could not understand why the stairwell was filling up with smoke and was bewildered as to how to handle a situation like this. After an extremely brief discussion with the others caught in this dilemma, we decided to try the descent one more time. I looked over at my two friends. Karla was the strong, reassuring one who put on that stern mask in the face of eminent danger. With dry eyes and a steady voice, she appeared to be somewhat calm compared to the others. Sonja's expression sent a scare down my spine. Her face was pale with fear, and the look in her teary eyes expressed the thoughts of death on her mind.

I spit on the sleeves of my jacket and used it to cover my
nose and mouth, of some of the descent steping smoke with the stranger was wide was unable to sound of as the smoke who had closed heaviness squeezed burned my taste of it was almost electrical.

Then, a feeling of desperation and utter hopelessness arose in me. I began to wonder if these moments might be my last. I thought of all the things I had left to experience in this world but never got around to doing and all the children I was yet to bear. I tried to recall the last words I told my parents and my closest friends, but I couldn't. How could this be happening to me? This is not the way my life was supposed to go.

Someone from the steps below made the determination that we could not endure this smoke down the pending sixteen flights of stairs and barked out the order to go back up. I was not at all sure whether or not this was the right thing to do but I once again began to ascend the stairs. I headed back up and continued on to the twenty-third floor. Luckily the door leading to the roof had been left unlocked so we were able to escape the smoke filled stairwell on to the open roof.

A light gust of wind brushed my hair across my face as I exited the smoke trap leaving behind the char-scented stairwell. That first invigorating breath of cool air must have been the best I ever tasted. It was weightless, fresh, silky and delicate all at the same time. It flowed through my nostrils effortlessly and felt as if it were cleansing out the impurities within me. Breathing no longer seemed a punishment but a pleasure. My body trembled and my eyes were wet from both the smoke irritation and the terror I felt inside. I clung to my friends and squeezed tight. I told them over and over how scared I was and hoped they would assure me that everything would be all right. Although Karla told me the words I had wanted to hear, I did not believe her. I wanted so desperately for a helicopter to fly in and pick me up and carry me away from this horrible place. I prayed for this whole ordeal to end and become a distant memory.

Looking over the edge of the roof, I could see the flames contained in one apartment. The smoke billowed out and up from a single unit on the seventh floor. The relief of knowing that the building was not about to collapse under my feet was of great comfort. Although the half an hour during which we waited for the firemen to come and bring us down seemed to take forever, it was not as horrifying as the three minutes spent in the smoke-filled stairwell. During those three terrifying minutes, I understood myself more then ever before. I saw clearly the things that really meant the most to me—my family (present and future), my friends and the passion I have for new experiences in life. I gained a new perspective on my life and the experiences I choose to explore. I can't say this experience was worth going through, but I appreciate having learned from it and am thankful to be able to tell about it.
The Nightmare

Sean Thomas

When I first started diving, I learned a rhyme to live by. “When the Turtles play, the Tigers are away.” “If no Turtles are out, beware, there are Tigers about.” The strange part was, these turtles weren’t playing. They were hiding. I should have known something was awry. Two hours and a bag full of speared fish later, we started to head for shore. I dove down to check one last cave. As I turned around to surface, my light exposed the nemesis. It was only a split second, yet I recognized every horrific detail: the snub dorsal fin, ugly brown-sandpaper skin, and its elongated whip tail—which was tremendously large.

Now, if the tail was large, I could just imagine the rest of the body, not to mention its jaws. I only caught sight of the midsection on down. The monster was so big; I didn’t even get to glimpse the head. Then in a blink of an eye it was gone, vanishing into the darkness. This was the most dangerous part of all because now it could come at me from any side without warning. I told the other guys that we weren’t alone out here. They knew what I meant. Here I was, a hundred yards from shore, with a bag full of bleeding fish, feeling very helpless.

We were about fifty yards from the shore when the first attack happened. All I remember was hearing a bunch of splashing. Then I looked over to see Nate back-stroking for his life. The shark had gotten hold of the catch-bag and was dragging Nate under. It all happened so fast. I barely had time to react. I grabbed Nate and started to help him swim back towards shore. Even then, with the two of us kicking together, it was a struggle. Milliseconds seemed like hours. Then suddenly the shark let go of the bag. Without a second thought, we swam as fast as we could for the beach. The shark hit Nate’s bag two more times on the way in. Both times were repeats of the drama; my other friend had made it to shore already. We did not want to stop swimming and cut the line: partly because of fear; the other, because a moving target was harder to hit.

When we were about fifteen feet from the sand, the water was shallow enough to stand up. Normally, I would have taken my fins off and walked in, but I really didn’t want to be the last one out. Nate had the same thought in mind, so we both paddled onto dry land. My friend helped us up and then started to pull the catch-bag in.

Just as we pulled the bag out of the water, the shark came charging into the shallow! This was incredible, a shark chasing us all the way up to dry land. I stayed there swimming back and forth for a good ten minutes. Suddenly, with a flick of its tail, the relentless predator was gone, disappearing back into the deep. But not before we got a good look at the size of the beast. It was well over 6 feet long and the black bars on its back confirmed it was a Tiger.

Till this day my friend Nate won’t dive. He always makes up some kind of excuse. My other friend continues to dive with me on a regular basis. On more than one occasion, I could swear to have seen a large shadow in the distance, just out of my light’s illumination, out of the corner of my eye. Probably my mind playing tricks? Still, silly shadows will not stop me from diving. Rather, now, I am truly convinced there is no such thing as safe waters. No matter how perfect the dive conditions are, the Nightmare is still out there. And it’s probably grown since....
ESL 100

daughter i am proud of you  yuko ikegami
i guess i should learn to eat bacon
magdy el-zoheiry
my dream is a social worker  ok soon han
the day i became a mother  junko kuroda
untitled  yolanda hamada
lesson from my grandma -- don't waste food
ai yun zeng
getting off the bus  thu huong nguye
my dreams came true  eun young han
my experience with racism  na zhou

ENGLISH 22

a scary life experience -- on my toes
janet matsuzaki
terrifying, yet unforgettable
paul yuen

ENGLISH 100

the other side  shelley kavin
a mouse named harry  lee kaneshiro
kamuela, here i come  sharlyn carbonel
color red  minako kojimoto
how i ruined my first blind date  vallerie kang
my passion to help  ilima guzman
Daughter I Am Proud of You

by Yuko Ikegami

My daughter is 8 years old and in the 3rd grade in elementary school. She moved to Hawaii when she was 6 years old. Before moving here, she had watched English TV programs for children, but she could not understand English at all. I can remember, when we just moved here, she had to go to the doctor for the health record needed for the school. It was the first time for both of us to go to the doctor here. At that time, my friend took us to the doctor. He could not understand Japanese, and there was no Japanese-speaking people in his office. My daughter had to take a vision test. We had a problem. She did not even know the alphabet. She could not tell the nurse what alphabet she could recognize. After all, she told them what she recognized in the vision-testing machine by drawing not writing. My friend told me that I should have taught my daughter the alphabet at least before coming here. I had known about them, but my daughter had not wanted to learn them, so I did not want to force her to do so. She was so stubborn, that she never accepted what she did not want to do. I did not want to struggle with her about it. I took it for granted that children could learn language easily. Now, I found that I was so reckless at that time. She started her school life here without any English knowledge because of her reckless mother.

On her first day of the school, the first day of the entire school year, I brought her to the classroom. She sat on her seat which I found. I told her I was leaving and waved to her. I had been afraid for her while she was in school that day. When I went to the classroom to pick her up, she was sitting in her seat smiling. After the bell rung, I asked her feelings. She said to me, "Tanoshikatta." ("I could enjoy very much." ) I remember that my tears were about to come out. She told me in Japanese about her first day in the school. There were some students who helped her. They were asked by their teacher. Some could understand both English and Japanese, some could understand only English. They helped my daughter very much. One student always helped my daughter. She could not speak Japanese, but she tried to communicate with my daughter slowly and using gestures. She is still one of my daughter's best friends. My daughter had to attend ESL class from 9:00 to 9:45 AM every day. She was able to have wonderful teachers there. She enjoyed learning English, reading the short picture books, drawing, singing, and writing. She was also able to have a nice teacher in her class. The teacher gave some special homework to my daughter. She often brought her magazines and advised me how to develop my daughter's English vocabulary by cutting out pictures from those magazines. My daughter picked up English rapidly. She seemed to enjoy her school life very much, but lately she told me she sometimes had a hard time because of her lack of English and the differences of culture.

When my daughter finished the first grade, she also finished her ESL class. She got the award for her improvement in English. In the second grade, she was asked to help a new student from Japan. It was her turn to help someone. I was very happy to hear that. Now, she has been here for almost three years, and I am now worried about her Japanese. I always tell her to speak in Japanese. I am afraid of it; however, I am happy that she enjoys being in school every day. I deeply appreciate all those people who helped my daughter. And I also proud of my daughter that she had tried her best without any complaint.
One evening, while I was watching TV, I felt hungry so I went to the kitchen to look for something to eat. I opened the refrigerator but did not find anything, so I decided to go to the nearest fast food place to get a sandwich. I had only a little money, so I hoped I would find a place that had a sandwich on sale. I found this place that had a double cheeseburger with bacon on sale for 99 cents. I decided to buy two of those.

I waited in line till I reached the counter and asked the person for two of the sandwiches on special. I ordered it without bacon because I don't like bacon. The person behind the counter — who happened to be the manager — said to me, "No, I cannot give you the special sandwich without the bacon." I asked him why, and he said, "Because it will be a different sandwich and I would have to charge you the regular price." I told him to just save the bacon instead of my throwing it away. He said, "No, sir, if you want the double cheeseburger without bacon I will have to charge you the regular price."

I felt embarrassed so I took a look in my wallet and found that I had $6.00. I said, "OK, give me two double cheeseburgers." He took the money and gave me the two sandwiches. As I walked back home, I decided to put in a complaint with the main office. As soon as I reached my apartment, I looked in the yellow pages and found the number for customer service. I called the number and got an answering machine, so I left my name, my phone number and a brief message saying that I had a complaint.

The next day no one called me back so I decided to call again. I spoke with a person who was very nice to me and explained to her the whole situation. She sounded like she had no time to listen to my story because she asked me, "So the problem is two double cheeseburgers with bacon, is that right?" I answered, "Yes, but the point is I don't eat bacon." She said, "OK, OK, we are really sorry about what happened to you and we will investigate what happened. Can I get your name, home phone number and address please?" I gave her all of the information that she asked for.

Two days later I received a letter from this fast food company. Inside the envelope was a very nice letter of apology and two coupons for — A DOUBLE CHEESEBURGER WITH BACON!!

In 1985, while I was in college, I decided that I wanted to be a social worker. I majored in social work at a university in Korea. When I was a sophomore, I trained at several welfare facilities for the physically and mentally disabled children. The first day of the first semester, I was in total shock. It was the first time I had met handicapped children. Some of the children could not even move because they were severely handicapped, so they just lay there all day long. Other children were mentally handicapped, which rendered them feeble-
minded. Some were 15 years of age with diapers; this left a dramatic impact on my mind. Being the first time, I was so afraid of them. I did not even want to touch them or do anything for them, but I had to. I had to feed them, change their clothes, bathe them and wash their laundry.

Caring for these children made me so sick at first. I could not put my whole heart into it. I could barely do what was required of me as a social worker.

However, there was a special little boy that I grew to love later. He was the only child that had parents come to visit. I think he had polio, and his hands were severely deformed. But he was very intelligent.

When his parents would come once a week to visit him, my heart would break because he would be so sad every time when his parents left him in the shelter. Sometimes we would spend time talking and laughing, and I would try to tell him about the outside world.

Day by day, I slowly got to know these precious children, and I realized something about them through spending my time with them. I realized they were so pure and lovely. They needed special attention and affection that they so much deserved. As they were handicapped, many were abandoned by their parents. Some were even abused because of being handicapped.

There are lots of handicapped people in this world who need lots of special care. Even though I have relocated to the U.S., I still want to continue my work as a social worker. That is why I must continue my education here at KCC, so one day I can fulfill my dream and be a social worker here in Hawai‘i.
The Day I Became a Mother

by junko kuroda

I am a Gospel hula dancer in Hawai‘i, and my son is a nine-year-old active boy. We went back to Japan last summer vacation after being away for a long time. We walked around our hometown, and then I stopped when I saw a familiar building with a poster with a familiar looking lady on it. I said to my boy, “Look! Do you remember this clinic building? And do you know who this lady on the poster is?” My son didn’t care who she was. But the poster reminded me of the day when I became a mother.

It was a hot summer day in Tokyo back in 1989, and I remembered my doctor yelling, “Wow! He is such a spirited boy!” after struggling with labor pains for ten hours. I thought to myself, Oh, yeah, I’m sure my baby is fine, and he is more good looking than I had imagined a newborn baby would look. Then I felt a sharp pain again, but my heart was full of happiness for the baby, and the pain gave me a kind of exciting feeling. To tell the truth, I had been dancing aerobics only two days before my son was born in the clinic because my immediate doctor who was the chief aerobics instructor strongly believed doing aerobics during pregnancy would have a positive effect on baby developing inside me, I felt an obligation not to harm the new life to myself I would be a good mother. I stopped drinking alcohol that day, and I changed 100 percent. I also changed my job to an easier position. My attitude changed 100 percent. I was listening to smoothing, pleasant music instead of loud pop music. I read nursery books instead of business magazines. I eagerly made yoga and became very thirsty, but amazingly I had no temptation to drink Oolong tea. In the first few months of my pregnancy, I often danced on TV with my maternity buddies because at that time Maternitybics became popular and contributed to the success of the clinic. Finally when I was ten months pregnant the instructor chose me as a maternity model for an advertisement poster for the clinic. Probably my body shape was exactly what the doctor recommended. I wore a colorful leotard with black tights as usual, and I posed like a healthy, pregnant dancer while the photographer shot nice pictures for the poster.

“Mom! Mom! I know, it’s you! And I was in your stomach, right?”

“Oh, that’s right. Let’s go back to grandma’s house, precious boy.”
Life goes on, but we just don’t know that someday it will change the direction of the flow, like in my own experience. At 20 years of age, I’d never thought that there would be quick changes in my life, but there would be: changes to my surroundings, work, friends, way of living and personal status. But most of all, there was a big change in my life when I became a hero. All of these changes in my life happened in one finger snap. These changes in my life have a big connection with my sister.

One day, when I was in the Philippines, my sister phoned home asking for her immediate family to come to Hawai‘i right away because she needed a bone marrow donor. She said that she had leukemia, and the doctor had given her a short time to live. He said she would live for a long time if she could get a bone marrow transplant. Since I was the eldest girl in the family, I was the first one to be asked as a donor. So I went to Manila for a blood test, then I sent the blood test result to my sister in Hawai‘i. Furthermore, everybody knows that to get a bone marrow donor is hard because to find a marrow match is like finding a needle in a mountain of hay. But luckily, my sister and I had a perfect match of bone marrow, according to the Hawai‘i doctor.

On my way to Hawai‘i, despite my worries about my sister, I couldn’t help feel excitement because I was about to see what they called America — the land of the rich and famous, the land of the free and the brave. But when I saw my sister at the airport that excitement was eclipsed by sadness because the usually healthy and fat sister had become so skinny, pale in skin color and weak looking. We hugged each other, and our eyes filled with tears of happiness and sadness. We were happy to see each other after eight years. She was also happy to see me because it meant she had a chance to prolong her life. Right after the day of my arrival, we went to the hospital for the doctors to double check or test to prove our perfect match. Then, after a month, the doctor proceeded to the transplant procedure.

The day after the operation I was in pain, especially in my bones, but this pain was eclipsed by my worries about my sister. I was also eager to know about the result of the transplant. Fortunately, after the transplant and a week of observation, my sister’s body had accepted my bone marrow. Then, after three months of what she described as unexplainable pain, she recovered and was discharged from the hospital and continued her maintenance treatment at home. With the help of prayers and the help of gifted doctors, she incredibly overcame all the crises that once threatened her life. So now, after eight years, she is completely cured and living happily with her two healthy children.

The other change in my life was the changes in my personal status. Before I came here to Hawai‘i, I was single. But I met my penpal here. This penpal was my penfriend when I was in Philippines. We were attracted to each other and compatible in all things, so we decided to settle down. Later, after the marriage, I found a job where I am still currently employed and also have found new friends. No matter what pain or danger you are facing, you must gamble to save your loved one or family from death. In addition, no matter how far away from the other half of your heart, there is always the chance that the two of you will cross paths and meet together. Also, no matter who he is or what he is, what race he comes from, even though something will impede the relationship, as long as you were meant for each other you still can be together. Many changes happen in life, but bear in mind that a person herself is the one creating her future.
Lesson From My Grandma -- Don’t Waste Food
by Ai Yun Zeng

This happened in the summer of 1987. At that time, I had many different bad habits in my daily activities. The worst one was that I always left some food in my bowl after each meal. Whenever I saw the food that I liked, I would take it in front of me and serve all of it into my bowl. I would not leave anything for the others.

One day, I went to grandma’s house around noon. She looked very happy about my visit and made a lot of wonderful food for my lunch. When I saw the dishes, I was drawn to every one of them. So when I began to eat, I took a lot of food into my bowl. But I was only ten years old, so I couldn’t have eaten all of it. After eating my fill, I told my grandma that I was full, leaving a half of the food in my bowl. Grandma smiled. But when she saw my face, she was surprised.

It was summer, the season of gathering crops for farmers. Grandma and grandpa had to work hard in the fields. So after finishing all the work, they had to help gather the crops. After lunch, it was the time for me to go home. When I picked up my bag and went out the gate, my grandma called me back into the house and asked me to help her gather the crops. This surprised me, her asking me to help, but I didn’t dare refuse what my grandma asked me to do. When we arrived at the fields, I saw my grandpa standing with a lot of sweat on his face. Grandma gave me a knife and taught me how to cut the rice plant. The heat from the sun was so strong. Just after a little while, my whole body was covered in sweat. Also, my back began to hurt. The rice straw cut into my hand like a thousand knives. Blood began to bleed from the cuts. So many times I wanted to tell grandma that I didn’t want to do this any more. Finally, I couldn’t put up with the pain, so I started to leave. My grandma, who was paying close attention to me, noticed my action and asked, “Do you feel very tired in this work? Do you know people do a lot of hard work to make everything that you eat? Did you know what faults you have and why I called you to help me with the work on the farm?” Even then, she was very kind, but I was very regretful about wasting food. I found that grandma was teaching me a lesson about the origin of food. She was telling me not to waste food any more.

Grandma died about eight years ago, and though this event that I have described happened so many years ago, her instruction has always remained with me. Whenever I eat something, I can see not only her kindness but also her strict face and the expression in her eyes at that moment. I never wasted food after I got her lesson.
I was eight. After a four-day summer trip at grandmother’s hometown, Thuong Tin, we had to catch a bus home. Her hometown is in the countryside, about 20 miles from Hanoi. It was in the middle of a sunny day. We stood on the side of the road waiting for the bus. This was the first time we had to take the bus instead of having my older cousins take us home by bicycles.

Behind us was an old crooked tent that had four bamboo poles and a coconut-leaf roof. People sold fruits and beverages under it for long trip travelers. Grandmother, who was 60 years old, went to sit under the tent for shade. My quiet older sister, Minh, joined grandmother after she got tired of playing with me. I walked around and observed the surroundings. In front of us was a railroad which travels from the south to the north of Vietnam. Farther behind the railroad were rice fields full of ripe yellow plants. On both sides of the road, there were fish and lotus ponds, as well as cabbage and lettuce gardens.

After 30 minutes of waiting, I saw a bus coming our way. I ran to grandmother and Minh. “Grandma, there is a bus coming,” I said.

Grandmother jumped to her feet and grasped our hands, and we ran to the road. She waved her right hand in the air to get the driver’s attention. The bus slowed down and came to a complete stop in front of us. Since Minh and I were short (she was about four feet tall, half a foot taller than me), the driver’s assistant jumped down and lifted us onto the bus, instead of having us climb up ourselves.

As I got on the bus, I noticed how crowded it was. All the seats were taken. Many of the passengers had to sit on the floor. We walked through the crowd and settled in the middle of the bus. Most of the passengers were sellers. They were taking their hometowns’ products to Hanoi to sell. They talked to one another about their experiences so loudly that it was like a flea market. Some of the other passengers were carsick, so they were asleep.

The bus was hot because of the summer weather and the large number of people. This bus didn’t have air conditioning. In fact, at that time, most of us didn’t know what air conditioning was. Even though all of the windows and doors were open, they didn’t help to cool the temperature down.

The bus slowed down every ten minutes or so to pick up more passengers, even though there was hardly any space left. I think the driver didn’t by bout his passengers’ comfort. He just wanted to make extra money. Likewise, passengers didn’t mind riding on a crowded bus. They just wanted to get to their destinations because there were very few buses, and every one of them was the same.

After an hour on the bus, it was our turn to get off. Grandmother yelled out to tell the driver to let us get off. She held our hands and hurried through the crowds. “Excuse us, we have to get off,” she said.

When we got to the back door, she politely asked a young man dressed in a brown factory uniform and sitting on the doorsteps, “I have two small kids with me. Can you please help me carrying them down?”

He nodded. As the bus stopped, he jumped off and helped grandma get off first. After grandma, it was Minh’s turn. He reached out with his arms and carried her down. Suddenly, the bus started moving while I was leaning forward so that he could reach me. I lost my balance, but I swung my arms in the air and fortunately grasped the handrail in time. I was stunned.

Grandmother and Minh were shocked. They ran after the bus, screaming my name. I looked helplessly at them. The houses on the side of the road in front of me seemed to run backward. I looked down on the road just to see it pass behind me.

I was afraid that I was going to get lost, so I started to cry. I screamed, “Grandmother! Help!”

The factory worker ran after the bus and a moment later jumped back on. He pounded on the side of the bus twice to signal to the driver. A lady shouted, “There is a little girl who wants to get off!”

As soon as she finished, the bus slowed down, and the man who had helped us earlier jumped back down and lifted me off the bus. I stopped crying and softly said, “Thank you.”
He didn’t say anything and jumped back onto the bus. Then he pounded twice on the side of the bus, and it sped back into the traffic.

I turned around and saw that grandmother and Minh were running toward me. “Are you OK? Are you hurt?” Grandmother asked nervously.

I shook my head but noticed that my whole body was shaken by the incident. Minh didn’t say anything, but I knew she was terrified. I could read it on her pale face. After grandmother examined my body and found no injuries, she exhaled with relief.

Then she held our hands as we crossed the street, and we started walking to our house, which was about a mile away. As I walked home that day, I remember thinking how lucky I was to have that man help me get safely off the bus.

It was in the 1960s when I was in high school in the Philippines, coming from high school and going college was always my dream. I never expected that my dream would come true. For one thing, after graduating from high school, a young man who liked me very much tried to arrange with my parents to marry me. They liked him very much and promised to put me through college if I agreed to marry him. But I was very young. I was only seventeen years old. I did not like this man, and I did not want to get married. I wanted to go to college and come to the U.S. For this reason, I ran away to another town to live with my older, married sister who agreed with me. During my stay with my sister, I met a young man that I fell in love with and decided to spend my life with him. We soon had a family with two lovely daughters, Melissa and Lynette. My dreams of coming to the U.S. were gone.

However, years went by, and it was in October 1979 when my father came to the U.S. to live with my sister. After a few months, my father filed a petition for me and my youngest brother to come to the U.S. I was so excited, happy, and hopeful that my dreams to come to the U.S. would come true. However, my excitement vanished because I had to wait so long for my papers. Meanwhile, I forgot about my dream. I focused on the future of my children. I said I will do my best, and I will exert all my efforts to put my children through college.

Then, seven years later when Melissa was seventeen years old and Lynette was twelve years old, I received a letter from the immigration. They wanted to see all my papers. They set an appointment for me for an interview. After my interview, I finally got my visa to the U.S. It was October 1986 when I first came to the
could not describe my feelings. I was full of happiness because this opportunity was not only for me but also for my children. As soon as I got my Social Security number, I did not waste my time. I started to work. Then I started to process my children's papers. After a year, when their papers were ready, I went back to the Philippines to bring them and their father to the U.S., but their father did not want to leave the Philippines.

It was December 1987 when my children and I came to the U.S. Melissa was eighteen and Lynette was thirteen. Thus, I began to play the role of father and mother to my children. During those days, it was really hard. I had to work two jobs in order to support them. However, no matter how hard our life was, we were happy being together. After a few months, Melissa went to work full-time and went to school part-time. Lynette went to an elementary school. Years went by, and they were very busy working and studying at the same time, and I was very busy supporting them. Now, they are grown. Melissa is graduating this semester from U.H. with a Bachelor’s degree in accounting and was on the Dean’s list. Lynette is a medical assistant but is still pursuing a career as a R.N., hoping to graduate by the year 2000 from H.P.U. Finally, now that they are grown and after thirty years, I am back to college pursuing a career in culinary arts. I am very happy and I did not expect that my dream of coming to U.S. and going to college would come true.

My Experience With Racism
by Na Zhou

I worked as a cashier at a Chinese restaurant. My boss was from Hong Kong. He did not like people who came from Mainland China because he thought Mainland Chinese people were stupid, undereducated, poor, and unable to speak English. He only liked people from Taiwan, Malaysia, and Singapore because they had a good education, money, and good
English skills. There were four girls working together as cashiers. One girl and I were from Mainland China; the other two were from Malaysia and Singapore. I remember one thing that happened which proved that my boss liked Malaysians more than he liked Chinese.

One morning, the Malaysian girl answered the phone and wrote down a reservation for 10-11 people. At about 7 o'clock in the evening, a customer came to me and told me, "I made a reservation this morning around 12:30. The girl who answered the phone told me that I have to choose the menu before my party." The customer told me the name of the party, and I found the reservation in the notebook.

"We have two kinds of table," I told him. "One sits 10 people and the other sits 12 people. If you want more space you can choose the one that sits 12 people even though you only have 10-11 people."

The customer got really angry and said, "I made the reservation for 10-11 tables, not 11 tables, not 10-11 people! Where is your boss? I want to talk to your boss."

My boss walked in just saying this to the customer. First, he looked in the notebook, then he said, "I am so sorry. She made a mistake because she does not speak English well. Is there something I can do to make it up to you?"

The customer said, "I just want to choose my party's menu before my party."
A Scary Life Experience -- On My Toes

by Janet Matsuzaki

One of my most frightening childhood experiences was when I was about eight years old and had just finished the second grade. During my second grade summer, I attended "Summer Fun" at a recreation center near my school. "Summer Fun" included many types of outdoor field trips, including water activities, but sometimes excursions turned out very differently from what was expected. It was one of these that gave me my most frightening experiences.

On most excursions we usually had a partner, so many of the children on the excursions couldn't go off alone and get lost or left behind, where the youth leaders could not find them. On this particular excursion, our group was told to stay with our partners at all times because the area we were headed for was huge with many other people using it. My partner was a girl younger than me and who liked to talk, so she was very sociable and comfortable to be with. I don't recall her name, but I think it might've been Michelle.

When we reached the destination for swimming, the youth leaders set a long net sectioning off the area where we were allowed to swim. In the water, we had to stay with our partners all the time and keep an eye on each other. If we were found by ourselves, both of us would be punished, and we would be put out of the water for time out in a section called "jail." I was one of the kids who could not swim at all, and when I went to the beach, I was one of the kids chasing the waves back and forth and didn't go into the water deeper than my shoulders. However, my partner could not swim either, but she was wearing floats on her arms.

At first when my buddy and I went into the water, we were in the shallow area. However, my buddy started pulling me slowly toward the deeper part of the waters, and because she was wearing
floats, she did not realize how deep the water was. As time passed, she found a person she knew in the deeper part of the water and started for that person. I told her, "I don't want to go to them. It's deep." She couldn't hear me because she continued to pull me toward the deeper side.

Soon the water was above my shoulders and started to creep up to my chin. I began to feel scared because the water was becoming a bal­lerina jumping up and down, but the water was near my mouth. I was starting to swallow water and finding it hard to breathe with­out water going up my nose. Fear gripped distance between me and other people seemed very far. I didn't want to go on to anything because others in the group were swimming back and forth, making more waves causing more water to go into my mouth. I didn't care if I had to spend the rest of the excursion on the sand or if my partner was alone; I didn't want to die drowning or swallowing anymore water. Furthermore, I couldn't call out to anyone because if I did, I would be drinking the water without breathing.

All the images that flashed before my eyes were total darkness and a world without life. I finally hollered in my mind: "Stop, I'm not going!" I pulled my partner back toward me letting her go on my arm. Then I started back to the shore jumping on my toes into the shallow waters. The distance back seemed farther and farther because each step I took felt as though, at any moment, I could trip on something or drown right there. All I could think about was getting back, but I couldn't tell how deep the water was because if I wasn't on my toes, the water would cover my eyes.

Then I felt the sand on my heels, and I went straight for the sand. I breathed a sigh of relief finding myself away from the water. I had never felt so scared in all my life. I thought that I would die without anyone realizing that I was about to drown swallowing all the water.

Now, as I think back ten years after this incident, it hasn't seemed very scary at all. A lot of people might think it was even silly and funny, but when I came to a point in life where all I could see was darkness and felt fear grip me with panic, I started to see the most important things in my life. The little things in life seemed like the most important big things in life. The images that came to my mind were eating breakfast that morning with my family and doing things that were planned for the weekend that week. It was very scary to know that I could be gone without saying goodbye. The things people see as normal seemed so much more important than I could ever know them to be. I still think that in any trying situation when life is about to take over and suffocate me, the little things are the things that matter most because they build to the bigger things in life.
Terrifying, Yet Unforgettable

by Paul Yuen

"What you're participating in is an experimental program." These are the words spoken by the United States Surgeon General himself, as I intensely watch with diligence at the legal waiver video for skydiving. The video in detail explains all the risks involved in "Tandem Skydiving." Although I am slightly concerned from viewing previous statistics, I'm still very eager to experience a freefall from 10,000 feet, or maybe even higher. As I step out of the briefing room, I'm greeted by my good friend Randy. Randy is a professional skydiver who has logged over 1000 jumps, and is my inspiration for this whole episode.

I had been introduced to Randy from another acquaintance whom I went flying with frequently. We had flown up to Dillingham Airport two months prior, and that's when I was introduced to Randy. I had always been curious about the sport of skydiving, yet I had known no one in the field, until now.

Randy and I got along fairly well, as we had similar interests and hobbies. I still recall his exuberance in describing his experiences as a skydiver. In the few occasions that Randy joined me on my cross-country flights, he frequently remarked as he glanced out of the window, "This would be an excellent place to jump!" I usually looked back at him with a puzzled expression and replied, "Why would you want to jump out of a perfectly fine airplane?" He only answered back with a mischievous grin stretching from ear to ear. When I asked what it was like to experience such a thrill, he described it like a combination of flying, bodysurfing, and sex: Flying for the altitude, bodysurfing for the exhilaration of his body sliding down a huge wave, and sex for the mental climax of the freefall experience. Finally, after a few weeks of acquaintance, Randy asked if I would like to try a tandem jump. Of course I said yes, and so here I am today.

Randy tells me it's time to suit up for a jump briefing. We walk south on Dillingham Airport as we exit the jumpers clubhouse, and down the quiet runway. Approaching the airplane, we are greeted by two of Randy's skydiving comrades. He introduces me to Chuck and Mike and tells me I will be jumping with Chuck on the tandem while Randy will be videotaping us with his helmet-cam. Mike will be our safetyman in case something goes wrong. They direct me to step inside the sky jump Cessna for a practice procedure. I notice the large door on the aircraft, specially modified for sky jumping as I step inside, anxious yet slightly shaky. They explain where everybody will be positioned when we reach our target altitude of 10,000 feet. I practice the technique of crawling out onto the strut waiting for Chuck's signal to release. Everything must be synchronized in order for a safe, successful jump. Listening to every detail of their lesson, I ask a few simple questions. After 20 minutes of rehearsal, they tell me I should be ready for the real deal. "Should be?" I say; everyone gives a chuckle and reassures me that everything will be fine.

Inhaling the last drag of my cigarette, I wait for my ten-minute thrill. More anxious, yet petrified than ever, I step aboard the air-
craft fully suited and ready to go. I laugh at the sight of Randy with his robotic-looking helmet camera strapped onto his helmet with primitive duct tape, as he steps inside with the look of a child in a toy store during Christmas time.

With Randy, Chuck, Mike, and I aboard the plane, we shut the door as the pilot starts the engine and prepares for takeoff. The plane ride seems quite long; maybe it was because the aircraft, at its maximum weight, makes our ascent slower than usual. My anxiety doesn’t help either, and life seems to be in slow motion. Finally reaching 10,000 feet, Chuck glances out the window to find a clearing for the landing spot. He looks towards me and gives me the thumbs up. I position next to the door and brace myself for what was coming next. Whoosh!!! The door flies open, wind rushes inside the plane like a hurricane, but worst of all is looking down exposing a bird’s eye view of North Shore O‘ahu. Even though I have had countless hours of flight time and training, nothing could prepare me for the fear I get looking down to the ground from 2 miles high with my bare eyes. At this point, I am stricken with an overwhelming fear. I am terrified, not to the fact of skydiving, but to the reality of death that could come soon. Randy puts his hand on my shoulder and shouts over the rushing wind, “Just like we practiced!” Nodding my head, I suppress my terror whirling through my thoughts; I know I can’t turn back now...

Chuck straps the tandem harness to my back as I start to crawl out the airplane grabbing onto the wing strut. The wind was extremely strong as my body is exposed to a head wind of 100+ miles per hour. Barely able to hold on, Chuck yells, “On Three! One! Two! Three!!” I release my grasp and tumble backwards with Chuck strapped to my back. After two seconds, our tumbling bodies stabilize as gravitational acceleration hits maximum velocity1. At this point, we spread out our arms for stability and directional control as I am amazed by the joyous feeling, being free as a bird. It truly feels like flying. Nothing is below as I kick my legs and wave my arms in utter ecstasy.

Randy and Mike soon catch up as they zoom through the sky downwards straightening their arms along their waist diving head first. Randy throws out his arms to slow down until we’re eye level. Chuck and I both give a gracious smile to the camera giving “shakas” with our hands. The feeling of such freedom is purely breathtaking. The view of North O‘ahu is crystal clear as the temperature fell to a refreshing 60 degrees from the extreme altitude. A few minutes into our free fall, I notice a layer of clouds approaching rapidly up from down under. We fall through the scattered layer as I realize the speed of our drop and a reminder to me that: We’re still falling!!! I hold my arms across my chest as instructed and brace for the parachute. A swift tug pulls wraps my chest as everything goes quiet. POOF!!! I look up to see the most beautiful parachute I have ever seen. I think to myself: All right, it opened! Life is great and I forget all my worries. The descent is spectacular as Chuck maneuvers in for a perfect landing. I cannot stop grinning as I am unstrapped from the harness. This is a day I will never forget...
by Shelley Kavin

Anxiously, she peered out of the window, again. The house 'was dark, eerie silent. She was absolutely certain though, that somehow, someone was watching her, waiting out there in the trembling darkness to make their move.

It wasn’t really fear she felt, but something deeper and more ominous. It coated her skin, slick and cold.

The cold clamminess actually seemed to permeate her, to soak in through her pores. She was hot though, burning up. Her eyes were burning, itching - she thought that maybe her eyeballs would begin to sizzle in her head.

Her hair was wet, plastered to her skull. Dirty. She felt dirty. Slick with sweat, smelly. The jeans she wore, were, of course, way too big for her - all her clothes hung from her.

Body fat long gone, her body seemed to feed off of itself, metabolizing muscle. Her hair came out in big handfuls when she brushed it.

Once getting out of the shower, an Auschwitz survivor had stared back at her from her mirror: eyes a million years old, her ribs sharp, emaciated almost to the point of death. Can you believe, the mirror BROKE?

Ah well, just silver shards, now at her feet. She told herself that she liked the way her body looked. Lean. She was lean and in control.

Her breasts were all but gone. Her period was. Gone, I mean. She knew that happened if you got too thin.

It didn’t matter though; it was one less thing for her to worry over.

Her mind had long since disconnected, freed itself from the prison called her body.

Sometimes, when she went down into the place she called “The Lonely,” she said that she heard the wind.

It whistled and howled, she said, right through the canyons of her soul.

It reminded her, she said, of the howling of a solitary wolf; eerie, alone, desolate, its cry a rising crescendo of unspoken loss and pain.

It was then, she said, that she would lie, curled in a fetal position, her skin cold and gray and sticking to the cold tile floor.

She would wait it out: despair, disgust, in terror, until at last she would make it back to the shores
of sanity once more.
She swore she would be more careful next time.

Somehow though, the trips she took over to the “Happy Hut,” “The Red Roof Inn,” began to come more frequently.

Ah, the “Happy Hut,” “The Red Roof Inn.”
Such funny names she gave those places of despair.
The hospitals, the institutions so full of human wreckage, of people thrown away it seemed, by their families, by society itself.

THOSE places scared her; at least, she told herself, SHE wasn't really crazy like THEY were...
She hated going, but she did. She had to despite all the being careful that she did. Even wiping down the toilet seat more carefully had not helped - she knew she had caught their craziness anyway.

How well she would hide, once there.
Covers pulled up and over everything; she thought she was invisible. She would listen carefully though for when the nurse would come. The nurse’s shoes would make little squeaking, sucking noises when she went into the bathroom.

Oh, hypocrite! And up she'd sit, so eager and polite, she'd smile so nicely, thank you, yes, and reaching for her meds with shaking hands she would spill the water in the little tiny cup; in desperation down she'd gulp the pill to take away the craziness. Relief.
At last.
But through the mists and haze of craziness, she knew. She knew enough to look, to find the thing, common denominator that sent her there, oh time and time again. Crystal Methamphetamine.

Ice.

Batou.
The drug. The awful ugly thing that once had seemed so harmless, before her drug addiction blossomed, and became, dear God, full blown.

Greedy cannibal that it was, it tied to her. It told her that it was her friend; and didn't she DESERVE to have some fun?

She said that she could quit - that she could quit at any time. She knew she really couldn’t, no not alone, but hey, it sounded good. How many times, she wondered, had she tried, really, really tried?
She remembered then the pain. The crying, screaming ugliness. It tore through her, its fangs like razors, wicked sharp, it tore her open, right down, she said, down to her bones.
The money, oh, all gone. God help me, she cried, just one more, one more time, oh please.

Withdrawal sauntered off, smiling, smirking, laughing, laughing all the while. Yes, he’d had his fill.

And then.

Judas Escariot, the tears that slid down her wretched face, as once again, she would feed the beast, the monster called Addiction.

And oh, how he would smile...
He'd stretch, awakening. He'd coil and roll, roll over on himself and then he'd roar, "Now feed me, feed me NOW goddammit!"
Voracious appetite, insatiable, just hungry for her life, he was her monster, her own pete for self-destruction.

She cried. The slow and silent tears with hands that shook - it took a while, you see, to anesthetize her conscience, her soul and knowing right from wrong.
She said it didn’t matter, but it did.

But miracles do happen, for you see, she still believed in God.

She couldn't kill the monster, and so she never tried.
She had to trick him, lure him into a cage you see...

A great big thing of steel, no, reinforced steel, to cage this monstrous beast. So night and day this woman toiled, and oh, magnificent, the cage was built.
One day, still in pain from his hunger and his awful bloody rage, she talked so softly and so sweet: she stroked his ugly face and said, "I know you are a part of me, I do, I feel the same you." These words, of course, were just the bait...

He grumbled and he roared, he whimpered and he wept, but look, he followed her, he came closer, closer still, to feel her touch, to be caressed...

Oh quick, she ran away and slammed that bloody door. His screams of rage, they shook her, she felt as if she was a doll, held fast there in the belly of the beast...

But weaker now, he was so famished and so starved, the woman leapt, and broke his grip. He still wafted there for her, there, in the dark comers of her mind.

She learned to close her ears, to harden up her heart, to avoid him at any cost. She walked far around his cage. He slept, in hibernation, all alone.

She barely ventured in with morbid curiosity, to peek - the beast you see, pumped iron, getting stronger, to overthrow, to drag her down.

She tiptoed past, sometimes she ran, she knew he was so cunning and so strong... but she, well, she went on, now living, on the other side.

**A Mouse Named Harry**

by Lee Kaneshiro

Thirteen-year-old Richard Smith had a large collection of mice. He raised mice to sell to pet stores and to the Department of Education. Richard would sell hundreds of mice every month.

Richard's favorite mouse was Clair. Clair was an excellent breeder. Every 6 weeks Clair would produce a litter with at least 5 mice. Almost all of Clair's offspring were born in excellent health. This was very important to Richard because the pet stores and the Department of Education wouldn't buy mice with imperfections.

Clair's third litter of her second year of breeding was extremely large. This litter of 12 mice was very healthy. Each of these mice were mostly white, with brown and black patches. Richard thought these mice would make great pets because they looked so cute. But the pet stores told Richard that they had enough mice, and they wouldn't be able to buy anymore for at least a month. Reluctantly, Richard sold the entire litter to the Department of Education. It was Richard's hope that some of these mice would find homes as classroom pets.

Mrs. Choy worked for the Department of Education as a traveling science teacher. It was her job to teach biology to 5th and 6th graders attending schools in the East Honolulu district. Mrs. Choy would visit each of her classes for 2 hours, once a week, for a whole semester. (Mr. Brown would teach physical science during the other semester). Mrs. Choy would bring films and animals to her classes to help her students to learn. She tried to make her classes as interesting as possible because 2 hours was a long time to concentrate for 5th and 6th graders.

One of Mrs. Choy's lessons involved the digestion of animals. Mrs. Choy felt that seeing a digestion would excite her students.
students and encourage them to dissect their own animals. (She even offered to provide the ether alcohol.) Frogs weren't available so she decided to use mice. She put in a request for mice to the Department of Education. The Department of Education sent Mrs. Choy a cage of a dozen mice that were mostly white with brown and black patches. The cage was labeled "R. Smith; Clair." Mrs. Choy was very pleased to receive these mice because she worked with mice from the Department of Education many times before, and the healthiest mice seemed to come from the cages labeled "R. Smith."

Mrs. Choy hated feeding and cleaning-up after the mice. She disliked it so much that she would place them out of her care as soon as she could. In each of the classes where she planned to do a dissection, she left a mouse in a cage so that she didn't have to feed or clean up after it. One of these mice she left at Mr. Kawamoto's 5th grade class at Palolo Elementary School. As she left the class she warned the kids to not give the mouse a name because she didn't want them to form an attachment to it.

However, Wendy, the prettiest girl in the class, and Cathy, the toughest girl in the class, decided to name the mouse "Harry." These two girls took it upon themselves to feed and take care of Harry. Mr. Kawamoto warned the girls to not become attached to Harry because if they did, they wouldn't be able to watch Harry being dissected. Wendy and Cathy didn't listen to Mr. Kawamoto's warning. Instead, these two girls would bring special treats for Harry and sometimes take Harry out of his cage to be petted.

As the day of the dissection drew nearer, Wendy and Cathy knew that Harry had only a couple of days to live if they didn't do something about it. They decided to pass around a petition to save Harry's life. Wendy asked David, the toughest boy in the class, to help her get the other kids to sign the petition. David had a big crush on Wendy so he readily agreed to help. Cathy got the most popular boy in the class, Greg, to help by threatening to beat him up if he didn't cooperate. With subtle threats and intimidations, these four kids managed to get most of their classmates to sign the petition. The only kid who refused to sign the petition was Bobby. He didn't like being threatened and he didn't want to see the mouse being dissected. The other kids were cold and heartless, the Bobby. Many kids were worried about the knife, knife, and the Bobby. Many kids were not able to sign the petition after the Bobby's refusal was an indication of stubbornness, kids of being popular kids own. After an argument, Mr. Kawamoto declared, "Bobby has a right to his own opinion and we should respect it."

The next day, Mrs. Choy arrived at her usual time. As she got prepared to dissect Harry, Wendy approached her with the petition to save Harry's life. A disgusted look crossed over Mrs. Choy's face because she had dealt with this situation many times before. Mrs. Choy looked directly at Wendy and admonished, "I told you not to give that mouse a name because I didn't want you to become attached to it."

Wendy cried and pleaded, "I know, I know, Mrs. Choy, but no can help, Harry's so cute. Please no kill um, I think of Harry like one pet."

Mrs. Choy knew that if she gave in to Wendy, she will never be able to dissect another mouse, because nearly all the students in her other classes had signed petitions to save their mouse. Mrs. Choy also knew it was important for her students to realize that scientists use animals for their experiments. Furthermore, she knew that if any of her students went into the medical or biological fields, they would have to do dissections. Mrs. Choy explained all these things to her students as she dropped Harry in a bottle that had a paper towel soaked with ether alcohol in it.

As Mrs. Choy prepared Harry for the dissection, Wendy and Cathy quietly cried in the back of the classroom. Bobby felt empathy for the girls but he also thought they were being bratty. Bobby also knew that Wendy and Cathy were very angry with him, and nothing he could say would comfort them. Bobby tried to harden his heart by thinking, "Stupid girls, dey nevah should have
given that stupid mouse one name.*

Harry's listless body was pinned down to his clay deathbed. Bobby felt a little uneasy because he thought Harry looked like Jesus Christ nailed to the cross. Mrs. Choy started to cut open Harry's body the way a camper would cut open one of those single serving cereal boxes. As she did this Mrs. Choy would point out Harry's vital organs. While she did the dissection, the students started to become fascinated. All the kids, except Wendy and Cathy, began to crowd around Mrs. Choy for a better look. Mrs. Choy then announced, "It we're lucky the mouse's heart will still be beating." Just as soon as she said that, she removed Harry's rib cage to reveal his beating heart.

All the kids around Mrs. Choy tried to get a better look, except for Bobby, who suddenly disappeared. A lot of the kids remarked how neat it looked to see Harry's heart beating. All the kids were so engrossed with Harry's beating heart, that nobody noticed Bobby throwing-up in the sink.

Bobby felt lucky that nobody noticed him throwing-up. He also felt weird because he was the only one not to sign the petition, yet he was the only one to throw-up. Just when Bobby started to think he didn't want to witness something like that again, he felt a nudge at his side - it was Wendy.

Bobby thought Wendy was going to accuse him of killing Harry. Instead, she smiled at Bobby and said, "En, you wen puke hah."
"Not I Nevah," protested Bobby "No lie, I saw you puke."
"Please no say nothing, bum-bai everybody going tease me."
"Aah no worry, I not going tell nobody. You the only guy that wen feel sorry for Harry."

Bobby felt grateful to Wendy for not telling anyone that he threw-up. Bobby also thought that people were nice to Wendy not only because she was pretty, but also because she was a nice person. Although Bobby and Wendy never really became friends because they moved in different social circles, they sometimes helped each other with their schoolwork.

David and Greg got so excited after seeing the dissection that they went to Palolo stream and caught a frog so they could dissect it. When Cathy found out what David and Greg did, she became so angry that she punched Greg on his nose and whacked David on his head with a rock. Both boys had to go to the emergency room, while Cathy went unpunished because David and Greg were too embarrassed to tell anybody what really happened to them.

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Kamuela, Here I Come

Sharlyn Carbonel

Every August right before school started up again, my family, consisting of my father, mother, and sister, would go to Kamuela. We would go to watch our annual family branding of cows at my grandpa and grandma's (by respect) ranch. It was so exciting for me, and I looked forward to it every year. Since my family was always so busy doing their own things, this would be our time together. Too bad it only occurred once a year.

Packing up my things for the trip was the most exciting part of the trip for me. I just could not wait to go onto the airplane for a ride and to go to a new place I saw only once a year. While packing, I made sure that I remembered everything. I always took with me warm clothes because I knew it would be cold
I especially could not forget my special cowboy hat, cowboy boots, red bandanna, and red Kamuela Ranch tee shirt. I wanted to be a true cowgirl!

We would always go to the airport after my mom was done with work because she would be the last to pick us up on the way to the airport. My sister and I would always bug my mom, "Come on, mom! We have to get on the airplane!" I think we bugged her so much, she would want to say that we were not going to go anymore. My sister and I were always so excited that waiting for the plane was pure torture. My mom is the kind of person that believes in checking in a whole hour early. To cure the anxiousness, my parents always bought my sister and me a snack from the nearby snack bar while we waited.

It was finally time to get onto the airplane. We would have to be first in line all the time to make sure that we got our special seats near the wing. I enjoyed the ride and the scenery of the other islands. Soon, the plane ride was over, and we landed at the Kona airport.

My mom would always get the rental car while my dad got the luggage. Once the rental car came to pick us up, my sister and I would always fight over the radio while my dad helped my mom figure out how the car worked. It was pure havoc. After a while, we were on our way to Kamuela.

The drive to Kamuela was about an hour to an hour and a half long so everyone would fall asleep, except for my mom who was driving. The first stop would be at my grandpa and grandma's ranch. When we got out of the car, it was freezing, but you could always smell the clean crisp country air blowing through the tall pine trees. It felt so good to go into the warm house.

When we walked into the house, everyone was cooking for the big party the next day. We would say "hello" then leave to my auntie's house a few miles down the road to drop our luggage off. Then we were on our way to eat some dinner. After dinner, we would go to sleep early for the branding the next day.

When I awoke, I put on my special clothes, and we were on our way back to our grandpa and grandma's ranch. We would wait on the fence for my grandpa and uncles to bring the herd of cows down from the mountain. When the cows were a little settled, they got lassoed one at a time and tied down by one of my uncles. Another uncle shot a white paste-like substance into the cow's mouth. All of this happened while another uncle would cut the cow's testicles off to control the population of cows on the ranch. When it was all over, you would think the cow had gone through enough pain. However, they branded the cows' rear end with two hot irons that have our ranch symbol and family symbol on them. I always felt sorry for the cows because they went through so much torture. I sat there hearing all the cows cry out for mercy.

After all of the cows were branded, we all ate the delicious food that was cooked on the previous night. After we ate, the kids rode horses and played while the adults sat and talked. We all partied till early the next morning.

The next day came so quickly because it was time for us to go home. It was back to the airport while I felt so sad to go home. I would miss everyone and did not want to leave. However, we would be back again next year.

Unfortunately, we no longer go to Kamuela to see our annual branding. Both my grandpa and grandma have passed on, and I guess no one sees any reason to do it anymore. We have all gone our separate ways. The memories stay with me always, and I guess that is all I can have, then that is what I will keep to cherish.
Life is precious; we all sort of know that. But often we take things for granted and don't actually realize how precious it is. Sometimes people have a brush with death and then realize it. I was one of them.

My husband Vince and I had a chance to vacation in Jamaica in March 1987. We picked Jamaica because we both loved Bob Marley and his reggae music, and, at the time, we were experiencing the end of a cold Upstate New York winter, so the trip to a tropical island seemed a great idea.

We flew into Montego Bay and from there traveled coast to coast by local buses. I got hooked on snorkeling, and one day I found Jamaican dollar notes stuck to sea urchins. Every time I dove back I would find more. Vince was laughing so hard because it was such a strange place to find money, but I thought this was a lucky omen, which indicated a fun-filled trip.

We met a lot of nice people along the way. One man whom we asked which restaurant was a good place to eat turned out to be a cook at a local restaurant. He invited us over there and took us around, and we became friends.

After ten days of swimming, drinking daiquiris and eating delicious local cuisine, we decided to go to Blue Mountain Peak, the highest mountain in the country. This area is world famous for its high quality coffee, and the coffee carries its name.

From Kingston we took local buses to a town called Mavis Bank. A man thought we had a map, we weren't sure how to get to the main trail. An old man on the bus directed us, and we tried to find the way. We were not sure how to get there, and we became friends.

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ning."

No way! This couldn’t be happening! I thought, and saw the
attacker’s face. Then I realized, This is real. I felt adrenaline shooting up
through my whole body; I was flying and clearly on the trail with each step I took.
On one side of the trail was a cliff, and we couldn’t afford to trip or fall. Meanwhile,
the attacker was throwing more rocks at us, and we kept running faster and faster.

Then after awhile we didn’t hear him around so we thought we had outrun
him. By this time I was out of breath. I asked Vince if it was OK to stop run-
ning, but he advised me to slow down a little but keep running.

The switchback trail ended, and I was feeling a sigh of relief. “He is not
coming after us anymore. We are safe.” Then all of the sudden, out of nowhere, he
showed up and grabbed me. I screamed so loud my whole body went numb. Luckily the
attacker released me right away because he saw Vince right behind me advancing. He
picked up a rock, and Vince did the same. Then he pulled a knife out from his pocket.
Vince tried to persuade him to put the knife away. He toyed with it for awhile
but hesitantly put it away.

He was about five feet ten and very slim, his face reddish brown, and he looked
like a Rasta man, curled dreadlocks draped on the side of his cheeks. His light gray
T-shirt was torn in a couple of places. He was barefoot and had very wide feet. He
had maniacal eyes, which moved constantly.

“What do you want?” Vince asked him. “You have my passport,” the attacker an-
swered. “What do you mean? I don’t have your passport.”

We were so puzzled by his reply and we started to wonder what was going on. Then he re-
peted, “You took my passport, white man. You have my passport.”

Now we both knew that we were dealing with a madman. I remembered Vince was
carrying an expired passport. Americans were able to enter with just a driver’s
license, but Vince had also brought along an old passport. We showed it to
him and asked if it was his and he said, “Yes.”

Then he proposed that we together go to the police station in Ma-
vis Bank, so he could report that we had taken his passport. The situation
was getting weird. The madman had attacked us, and now he wanted to go to the
police with us. Vince anticipated trouble ahead, so he gave me his small backpack and
told me if anything happened to run as fast as I could and find help.

The three of us walked very slowly, the madman in the front, Vince in the middle
and I was in the back. We tried to have some safe distance between him and us.

He came upon a little stream and stopped, squatted and washed his hands very
thoroughly, twining his long fingers, then
he said we should walk in front of him. We didn’t want him behind us, unable to an-
ticipate his next move, but this time he insisted.

So we did what he said, and our senses became intensely alert because we could feel his aggression and hatred. Right away he shouted, “You killed my girlfriend, now
I’m gonna kill you man!” I could feel my hair standing on end like a cat’s. Now
Vince and the madman were fighting. I took off immediately to get help. I ran and
ran—tried not to think about Vince in a physical fight—tried to focus on running.

Then I heard an excruciating scream by Vince, “Help!”

My heart froze. I started to cry and wanted to go back and see Vince. But I
knew I couldn’t so I kept running and hoping to find someone who could help
us. Then I heard Vince calling me from behind. What a relief that was! The
shout that I heard was a call for help. Vince told me he had knocked the man down
and escaped, but the madman was still coming after us.

We crossed a small river at the bottom of the
mountain. I remembered from the day before that this spot was near a plantation village. The end was near.
When we saw the houses, we called for help. People began to gather and asked what had happened. We told
them everything, and one woman asked what he looked like—his facial color, his hair color and style and
how tall he was and so on. When we described him, they all said, “That’s Color Red. He’s crazy.” Ap-
parently, everybody knew Color Red and his insanity.
They were very caring and helpful. Meanwhile, we heard Color Red calling right until the end.

The police came from Mavis Bank divided the police district, so they were taken to a clinic. Vince was killed. A nurse treated us very kindly. Then we went to the police station to bring the police.

We were taken to a clinic. Vince was with us the day before. He had followed us of the shop where we had taken a rest.

Three months later, both of my sergeant saying they had not caught Color Red but hoped we would visit them again sometime. A long time had passed, and we could afford to laugh.

There for awhile. But who knows, maybe someday I will, because that end.

How I Ruined My First Blind Date

by Vallerie Kang

I was feeling moody on the morning of my 21st birthday. No one had called me up to wish me happy birthday. And moreover, I had to work from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Then during my lunch break, Loo, my best friend, called me and said, "Happy birthday, sis! What are you doing tonight? Wanna go out? Ray has this cop friend who doesn’t have a girlfriend and wanna meet him?" So I said okay.

When I got home from work, Loo was waiting for me at the entrance of my apartment. Even though she was very petite (she was only 4’11” tall), she wore a black, one-piece flared skirt and high heels. She looked very tall and elegant. I did not have to wear that compared to her outfit. I guess she knew my situation and had brought with her a tight black, short dress for me. Then she started to put makeup on my face. Loo was very skillful when it came to putting makeup on someone. After the makeup, she helped me put on the dress, which fitted me perfectly.

After I was dressed, Ray, Loo’s boyfriend, came and picked us up for dinner. We headed for a Korean restaurant. But somehow my gloomy feeling hadn’t gone away. So I couldn’t eat that much; I only had a bowl of rice soup. Then Ray told me that my blind date would meet us at the karaoke bar called Yaesu at 8 o’clock because he finished his work at that time. He also told me that he was a police officer.

When 8 o’clock came around, we left the restaurant and
went to the karaoke bar. As soon as I entered the bar, I could feel the cold air-conditioning on my bare legs. I also smelled the cigarette smoke and alcohol. The bar was dark for a while. Then when someone started to sing, the stage became bright because of the big TV screen, which displayed the words of the songs. As soon as the stage became bright, I noticed that the whole room was filled with people about our age, chatting and drinking.

Then Ray noticed J, my blind date, in a corner and walked toward him. "Hey! Bradda! What's up! This is Val." Ray introduced me to J. J said, "Hi! My name is John Smith. You can call me J by my first name initial." When I saw J, I couldn’t stop laughing inside of me. Because he reminded me of the Hong Kong movie star Jackie Chan. J was about 6 feet tall and was very nicely built. He wore blue jeans and a white fitted T-shirt. I could see all of his muscles every time he moved. He had a very pleasant face and a very soft voice, for a police officer.

By the time we exchanged a few shots of liquor, Ray sneaked out of the bar and came back after about 10 minutes with the bottle of tequila in his jacket. And Loo began to fill my shot glass every time it was empty. After I finished about two thirds of the bottle, I felt very sick to my stomach. "Loo, I don’t feel good," I said, and my face collapsed onto the table. The next thing that I noticed was that J had jumped out of his chair and that there was white liquid flooding on the table. I had vomited on front of everyone. Then the waitress came and asked everyone, "Is she all right? Does she want to go to the ladies' room?"

I said, "I’m all right. I’m sorry about the mess." Then I went outside because I needed the fresh air. My head was swinging, and my legs were so limp that I couldn’t stand straight. Everyone was worried about me and followed me out ready to go home. Ray offered me a ride home. Then I think I fell asleep because I don’t remember what happened to J after I came out of the bar.

After Ray dropped Loo off, he asked me if I wanted to go home. At the sound of Ray’s voice, I woke up. I said, "No! I can’t let my mother see me like this!"

My wristwatch hands were pointing to 12 and 4. It was 4 o’clock in the morning. I was afraid that my mother would scold me if she saw me the way I was. I was wearing a very short tight dress, which showed my bare legs, and my face was smudged with cosmetics from crying. Then I fell asleep in the car.

Next morning when I woke up, I was in Ray’s car in the Magic Island parking lot. I had a severe headache and my throat was burning. Then I saw that Ray was sleeping in the driver’s scat. I woke Ray up and asked what had happened after I vomited. Ray said,
We didn’t want to go home and were talking to me all night about your life story.” Then I felt very embarrassed and couldn’t stop apologizing to him. I didn’t think I could ever face J, Loo, and Ray again.

From time to time, though, I still see J, Ray, and Loo. Loo and Ray are now happily married and have a son named Kali. And we still talk about the night. Every time this subject comes up, Ray says, “No more tequila for Val. I had my share of nightmares with her.” Then everyone laughs. But still, whenever the subject comes up, my face turns red from the embarrassment. I was very foolish to get so drunk that I became sick and passed out. Also, I gave J a very bad first impression of me. Since that night, although J doesn’t say much about it, I know from his expression that he thinks about the night that we met and laughs about it. I wish I could, too.

My Passion To Help
by Ilima Guzman

What is an appropriate thing for a nine year old to see? When I was nine, I danced to the tunes of Paula Abdul, Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson, and Salt ‘n’ Peppa. I loved to watch television cartoons such as Care Bears, Smurfs, and Jem and the Holograms. I wanted to be Drew Barrymore in E. T, the Extra-Terrestrial. I dreamed of riding a flying dragon in The Never-Ending Story. I also longed for a magical closet like the one in The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. I played in the ghetto streets of Waipahu with the other kids in our apartment building. As I look back, those were the days of my youth and my innocence. However, I remember, as if it were only yesterday, the day my innocence of the adult world was taken from me.

“Jerry, make sure they get to school safely and on time,” my mom’s groggy morning voice warned as she gave my brother Michael, my cousin Jessica, and me our good-bye kisses. My mother’s beautiful, short black hair was tousled in every direction. Her eyes were blood shot from lack of sleep; nevertheless, they were full of love and compassion. Warmth radiated from her smile as she stood in her pajamas behind the railing of our second-floor apartment building. As I looked up at her from my uncle’s car, her beautiful car-

[Image of a hand-drawn cartoon character]
ing face was now doubtful. "Be careful," she said just before the door slammed shut. I smiled and waved at her.

Driving to school on Farrington Highway, my uncle turned suddenly, jerking me onto my cousin's lap. Fear invaded my body. "This isn't the way to school," I whispered to my cousin.

"I'm taking you guys to McDonald's for breakfast," my uncle said as he looked at me in the rearview mirror. I looked at him and noticed that he looked like my mom, but more masculine of course! They had the same short, thick, black hair and big friendly eyes. However, my uncle was taller and darker, and he had a beer belly and a mustache, which my mother did not.

My cousin Jessica sensed that I was still scared and said, "Ilima, you are such a goody-goody worry wart. Chill out and enjoy!"

I looked at my cousin cross-eyed and stuck my tongue out at her. I was older than her by exactly nine months, and we were as different as vinegar and oil. Jessica had beautiful curly black hair, almond-shaped eyes, and a dark complexion. She was complimented on her looks, while I was complimented on my height. (Believe it or not, when I was younger, I was tall for my age. Honest!) She constantly got into trouble, while I always obeyed. You might think that we would be close because opposites attract; however, we constantly got into fights.

As we got out of the car, the cool morning air stung my cheeks. Filling my lungs with the morning's scent, I smelled the unpleasant stench of grease and garbage. "Jessica, you forgot to take a bath again this morning," I said jokingly to my cousin.

Before my cousin could say any-thing, my uncle said, "Hey, knock it off you two. You guys are always fighting. Hurry up! Let's get breakfast before you guys are late for school. By the way, don't tell your mom I brought you here. She would kill me!"

"I won't tell mom, but Jessica will with her big mouth!" my brother said. He was walking beside my uncle. I laughed at my cousin and then realized how much my brother looked like my uncle. My brother looked like a shorter, younger version of my uncle. Of course, my brother did not have a mustache or a beer belly, but they had the same physical features.

While my uncle and brother ordered our food, my cousin and I found a table and sat down. I began to look around. The sky was a faint blue as the sun spread its warmth across the beautiful Waipahu sky. A few birds were singing their morning songs in a nearby tree. I watched as they playfully swooped down to peck at crumbs on the table beside us.

My uncle and brother came back with our food, and soon we were engrossed in our breakfast. Michael, Jessica, and I continued to tease each other while my uncle sat back and listened to our nonstop chatter.

Suddenly, my attention turned to a small figure walking slowly toward a nearby table. It was an old man. His steps were carefully paced. He concentrated on steadying his tray, which he held in two trembling hands. I noticed that in the middle of his tray was a small cup of coffee. He finally reached his destination, and as he sat down a smile grew on his face, as if he had somehow won a battle. Carefully, he took the lid off of his coffee, and poured cream and sugar into the cup. "ILIMA!" My name brought me back to reality. "Stop staring and start eating! You are going to be
late for school,” my uncle scolded. I ignored my uncle and smiled back at the old man. His silver hair gleamed in the morning sun. His eyes were gentle and friendly. They looked like they could tell many stories of life. My smile grew as he grinned a toothless grin. I stared back at him unable to break the trance.

“OW!” I shrieked. An instant pain on my arm broke the trance between me and the old man. I knew that my uncle meant business when he grabbed the back of my arm and twisted the skin. “All right! OW! All right! I’ll eat. Just stop pinching me!” I winced from the pain.

A few minutes later, a light cool breeze brought a horrible stench over to our table. “Jessica, close your mouth,” my brother teased. I laughed as I glanced over at the old man. Then I received the shock of my life! I slapped my brother’s arm and looked at him with wide fearful eyes.

“What?” he demanded. I could not say anything. All I could do was point in the direction of the old man. The laughter and the teasing stopped as everyone stared in disbelief.

My uncle screamed, “Michael, go tell the lady at the counter to call 911! Tell her that an old man has collapsed! Quickly!”

I stared at the old man. I did not want to look at him anymore, but I could not take my eyes away from the body that was slouched lifeless over a puddle of vomit. I had never seen anyone in that condition before. After all, I was only a nine-year-old girl who loved Care Bears and Barbie dolls. I felt as if I were alone at McDonald’s with this grotesque scene in front of me. I wanted to cry, but I was afraid my cousin would tease me.

Jessica! I had forgotten about my cousin! I looked over at her and saw that she, too, was staring at the old man. Her almond-shaped eyes looked like full moons, and her dark complexion was as white as a sheet. I realized that she was just as scared as I was. I sat next to her and tried my best to comfort her. “Don’t worry,” I said as I tried to steady my trembling voice, “He’s going to be all right. He’s just tired and fell asleep.”

If only I could have trusted in my own words. Instead, my mind screamed, Oh, my God, he’s dead. Oh, my God, he’s dead. But I prayed for his safety. I forced myself to believe he was alive. There, I told myself, He’s alive! He’s moving! The old man started to shake uncontrollably. Then all of a sudden, he stopped shaking. For a few minutes, he shook, then he stopped. It seemed as if some malicious person had a switch that controlled the old man’s body tremors.

The sound of sirens comforted me like a mother’s arms comforted a quivering, frightened child. At that moment, I longed for my mother’s embrace. As the ambulance came to a jerky stop, two EMT’s jumped out, a man and a woman. The man had short brown hair that was neatly combed. His eyes were focused and concerned. The woman’s black hair was neatly pulled into a bun at the top of her head. Her face showed no emotion as she asked, “Sir, what is your name?” She put her ear next to the old man’s mouth as he mumbled his name.

“Sir, you need to stop moving,” the man EMT said as he took a device off his belt. “We are trying to help you. Stop fighting us.”

I noticed that the woman had on the same bulky belt. “Get my coffee...I want my coffee,” the old man in a weak, hoarse voice. “I’m sorry, sir, but we
can't. That is why you collapsed. Your heart can not take the potency of the coffee," the woman said patiently.

The old man grabbed the side rails of the stretcher and tried to lift himself up. The EMTs tried desperately to lay him back down. He continued to plead for his coffee. Frustrated, I wanted to yell at the old man, "Damn it! Don't you know they are trying to help you?" But I had lost my voice, and I stood there with my mouth open. My heart pounded as the EMTs struggled to lay the old man down. "Grab the cup already!" my mind began to scream.

The woman EMT grabbed the coffee cup and said, "All right! I have your coffee cup. Let's go now."

Relieved, the old man calmed down as they put him in the ambulance and raced towards the hospital.

As I watched the ambulance leave, I exhaled as if I had been holding my breath forever. In a few minutes, everything went back to normal. I watched as a worker disgustedly cleaned up the mess and put up a "Caution" sign next to the table. I thought to myself, Every customer that will sit down to eat today will not know what happened at that table. They will not know the significance of that 'Caution' sign, but I will know. I will always know what happened.

When I got home after a very long day at school, I rushed into my mother's open arms and gave her a big hug. "Mom," I said as I looked into her eyes, "I want to help sick people when I am a grown up."


What she did not know was that on my way to school that morning, my uncle had taken a turn that stole my childhood innocence but which gave me in return something much more valuable: a passion to help people who are unable to help themselves.
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