

bamboo ridge

THE HAWAII WRITERS'
QUARTERLY

Number One



December 1978



New Moon



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Bamboo Ridge Press

Bamboo Ridge Press is a non-profit corporation formed to foster the appreciation, understanding, and creation of literary, visual, audio-visual and performing arts by and about Hawaii's people.

Bamboo Ridge takes its name from the popular fishing spot on the southeastern coast of Oahu where fishermen cast their long poles and fish for ulua the slide-bait way. The fish are not as plentiful as in the old days when fish-stories were born, so the fishermen scan the ocean and wait ... sometimes for years ... for the fish with their name to come.

Submission of poetry, fiction, drama, and non-fiction with particular emphasis on "local" topics or settings is encouraged. Please accompany your manuscript with a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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Nowadays Not Like Before

Danny stretched his massive body along the wooden bench that he often used as a bed. It was a windy night and he covered himself with an old shower curtain, feeling the warm plastic cling to his sweaty arms. He really did not mind the cold weather. The black coffee and the tin roof over his head provided ample warmth and security. What bothered him the most was the windy sound that stirred his imagination, keeping him awake throughout the entire night. He closed his eyes and wondered if the other men had the same problem.

Suddenly the wind disappeared, as if someone had captured it in a bottle, and the once churning white water lay flat and cold like the palm of a hand. Danny could sense that something was awfully wrong, the way the night birds started heading back to the mountains as if the black clouds that lay along the horizon were scaring them away. The dim glow from the lantern began pulsating like a heart beat, casting distorted figures along the concrete floor of the shack. Slowly the other men were climbing out of their sleeping bags, focusing their eyes on the angry clouds that were now rumbling right above them. Junior suggested that everyone tie all their shower curtains together. That way the eight of them could hide under one large plastic tent. Everyone worked at a frantic pace, collecting their gear together, tying shower curtain to shower curtain, and glancing every so often at the gloomy sky. No one, however, seemed to notice the changing tide—as it slowly rose over the ridge and completely surrounded the entire shack.

Danny could not recall ever praying so hard in his life, but the waves were hitting them with such a tremendous force he could not think of anything else to do but mumble the Hail Mary over and over again. The shack was close to fifteen feet high, so he could imagine how huge the waves were, the way they kept pounding on the corrugated tin roof. It was like being locked inside of a car trunk while someone with an angry fist kept beating down on him. He was holding on to Junior, fingers grasping three of his belt loops, while both of Junior's arms were hugging one of the wooden beams that ran perpendicular to the roof. Somewhere in the distance the men could hear the booming sound of a cannon—waves hammering the side of the cliffs. Then immediately in front of him, he saw their gear slowly float away. First the lantern, then the wooden table, then he closed his eyes and prayed a little harder.

Throughout the storm Danny could hear Junior's bellowing voice telling everyone to hold on to their positions. Danny himself thought it would be easier to make a run for it, but deep inside a little voice kept reminding him to trust Junior's decision. Over the past thirty years Junior had been caught in a number of sea storms and Danny remembered Junior telling him about the tombstones that

lay scattered along the rugged cliffs. So many men had been swept to sea while trying to run away from the awesome waves. There was Gordon Pang in 1945, there was old man Harry in 1953, there was Walter Cobey in 1976 ... the list seemed endless. All of a sudden the tombstones meant more to Danny than ever before. It was a strange feeling, like being close to someone that he always took for granted. He held on to Junior and tried to hide his fear like the rest of the men, patiently waiting for the sea storm to pass them by.

In the early 1920's an old Portuguese pig farmer often lent his donkeys to a handful of young Japanese fishermen. The men would back-pack their way across the steep lava sea cliffs on Southeastern Oahu until they reached Halona Point—their favorite fishing ground. The next day they would return to the farmer and provide him with enough fish for a month.

This bartering system continued until the coastal road opened in 1931. Soon, fishermen from all over Oahu began casting at Halona, and on a good night a multitude of bamboo fishing poles would line the perimeter of the point, which was given the name "Bamboo Ridge." And even today—some fifty years later—the men at Bamboo Ridge continue to tell the story of the old Portuguese pig farmer and the young Japanese fishermen.

In 1929 a group of fishermen founded the former Honolulu Japanese Casting Club, the forerunner of today's many casting clubs. In spite of their caution in fishing off the rocky lava ledges that are found along O'ahu's coastline, every year a number of their members and fellow fishermen were swept away and lost in heavy surf. In 1935 members of the club began a community service project to erect concrete warning markers at dangerous spots around the island. Each marker had the Japanese character "abunai," or "danger," carved on two of its sides. The markers were usually placed at a spot where a fisherman had lost his life; they can still be seen along the coast in Nanakuli and Kaena as well as the Koko Head area.

In addition to setting up the warning markers, the members of the Honolulu Casting Club pooled their money and sent away to Japan for a carved statue of O-Jizosan, the guardian god for people at all dangerous waterways and coastlines. When the statue arrived it was placed on top of Halona Point, overlooking the ridge and cove below. With the outbreak of World War II, however, O-Jizosan's head was broken off, because he was the god of the "enemy," and eventually his body was demolished entirely. The post-war cost of replacing the statue was too prohibitive for the club members, so they decided to have his figure carved into a large stone. This was done, and today O-Jizosan stands again in place, watching over the fishermen and swimmers near Halona.¹

Freddy takes his fishing reel from his back-pack and attaches it on to his fiber-glass rod. Ricky does the same, mentioning something about the advantages of being first. It is a very hot afternoon: the type of day when none of the clouds in the sky seem to be moving. Normally, no one would be at the ridge as early as one thirty, but both men are construction workers participating in the iron worker's strike. That gives them time to assemble their gear and cast their lines, long before the rest of the men. Freddy and Ricky continue to work silently, stopping every so often to study the movement of the changing tides and the blowing trade winds. Meanwhile an elderly couple wearing straw hats slowly work their way down to the ridge.

They turn out to be two red-faced tourists. One of them is an old man in Bermuda shorts lugging a Nikon camera strapped around his neck. His wife, dressed in a bright red muu-muu, seems to have a constant habit of giggling for no reason. He picks up one of Freddy's fourteen-foot fishing poles with authority and begins to examine it from butt cap to tip. He lets out a frown and says that back in Canada he does a lot of trout fishing, but never has he seen anything so ridiculous as this. Freddy smiles, then shrugs his shoulder, mumbling something about never having met a person from Canada before. Then the old man walks into the shack and begins to examine all of the fishing gear on the wooden table. He lets out a gasp of air as he picks up an ulua hook as big as his palm. Attached to the hook is a wire leader made from piano wire. Back comes his frown and he asks Ricky if he could keep the hook as a souvenir, so he could show it to his trout-fishing buddies back home. Ricky nods, telling the old man that he and Freddy never tasted trout before. By now the old man is practically shouting his disbelief. He runs outside again and picks up Freddy's rod. He tells his wife that no one could cast a pole as heavy as this. She giggles. Then he examines the ring at the end of the wire leader and demands an explanation. Ricky demonstrates how the ring can be snapped on to someone's line, enabling a baited hook to slide all the way down to the sinker. The old man thinks it's the craziest idea he has ever heard. He takes out his camera and starts clicking away at the ocean, the shack, and especially Freddy and Ricky. He stares at the poles for the last time, then heads back up the trail, shaking his head all the way to his car.

It's called the slide-bait method and is one of the oldest ways of fishing in Hawaii. And yet even the most experienced fisherman may not be familiar with its technique. You won't find it being used at Honolulu Harbor, or any of the sandy beaches around Oahu. Slide-baiting calls for a rocky cliff and a lot of guts to withstand the angry waves that constantly threaten you.

1 John Clark, *The Beaches of Oahu*, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1977), p. 28

When fishing from a ledge, the slide-bait method will ease the physical difficulties that an ulua fisherman encounters. Enormous size baits—such as a whole octopus—make long distance casting with a fourteen foot rod quite difficult. The slide-baiter, however, avoids this problem by casting out a baitless line with only a sinker. Attached to the sinker is a wire hook which catches on to the nearest coral head. This enables the fisherman to keep his line in a taut position. When his line is finally set, he slides down a baited hook with a short leader. This is done by passing the line through a small connector, which is usually a split ring or a pigtail loop. There are several advantages to this type of fishing: a long distance cast may be made; with one cast several baited hooks can be sent down at intervals; the reeling in of the line to see whether the bait is still on is unnecessary; fewer sinkers are lost. And if you are a complete stranger to this type of fishing, like a trout fisherman from Canada, the usual response is that nothing short of a whale can ever be caught.

The sun is rapidly falling behind the mountains in Hawaii-Kai and Junior realizes that he does not have much time to work with. Standing on the edge of the ridge, he stares at the familiar blue water, patiently waiting for his body to relax. It is like watching a baseball pitcher. He takes a deep breath and waits; something is wrong with his footing and he knows he will lose control the moment he releases his line. He jerks his hip in a circular motion, then repositions his footing along the lava rocks. Once again he gazes at the horizon, timing his breath with the ebb and flow. Slowly he raises his left leg into the air until his entire body is balancing on his right leg. Then he takes a final dip to the right and his fourteen foot pole comes flying around his body in a powerful roundhouse fashion. It is a good cast, maybe eighty or ninety yards. But the rough current makes it difficult for his sinker to anchor itself onto the coral reef and he starts over.

The rest of the men are gathered around the wooden table, waiting for Junior to finish his casting. David glances at his watch for the second time in ten minutes and then mumbles something about not being able to wait any longer. A rumbling noise vibrates through his stomach but no one takes him seriously. David himself knows that he can really wait, even if Junior takes another hour; time is not important here. Their pot luck dinner has always been a tradition; a time of relaxation and the sharing of home cooked meals: Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Portuguese style.

The table is filled with a number of local delicacies. Junior provides enough Portuguese sausages and shoyu chicken for everyone, Howard brings a bottle of homemade kim-chee, and Allen opens a plastic container filled with fresh bamboo shoots that he picked in Tantalus. Everyone has something to contribute and for the time being the men forget about their daily problems, engrossed in the good food and warm conversation.

“Eh, David, you went Tamashiro Market? Man, that’s what I call scraping the bottom of the barrel.” Everyone laughs at Junior’s jeering remark but the cardboard container—filled with raw fish—is empty in no time.

“Da sashimi was on sale,” David replies. “And anyway, you guys all know—nowadays not like before.”

Almost twenty years ago, men like Junior and David could make a few dollars on the side by selling their daily catch to the fish markets around Honolulu. Today, however, they find themselves depending on the fish markets to provide them with their bait. Over the years, they have watched a number of Hawaii’s fishing grounds turn fallow. Yet, in spite of all the drawbacks of shore casting, they continue to fish, season after season.

Freddy seems to put everything in a nutshell when he talks about “finding his God at Bamboo Ridge.” Like the rest of the men, he realizes that the ulua is “very, very scarce.” But through the years he has learned to enjoy the simple things in life, like the sound of the blue ocean and the brown sea birds. “Besides,” he adds, “where else can you find a group of guys who can sit down together, every weekend, and still find something interesting to discuss? I mean, I can’t even do that with my wife ... I just run out of things to say to her.”

Allen nibbles on a piece of chicken and tries to visualize David’s favorite diving spot off Punaluu. The two men—sitting directly across from each other—exchange questions, then David draws a map with his finger on the wooden table. Allen studies the invisible map for awhile, then suddenly his face lights up with understanding. He nods his approval, then takes another bite from his chicken.

At the far side of the table, Ricky holds up his left arm to show Tiny a small gash under his elbow. Tiny lets out a roar of laughter and so do the other men who are familiar with the “peeping Tom” antics of construction workers. Ricky stands on the bench and pantomimes the entire event: how he hides his body behind a slab of dry wall then cuts two holes big enough for his binoculars. Feeling brave enough, he decides to move a little closer “to get a better look,” only to trip on a piece of scrap lumber. “A serious injury,” he jokes, “but all in a day’s work.”

Freddy tells the gang about the conflict he is having with his wife. How she cannot seem to appreciate his constant fishing habit. Allen pats Freddy on the back and stresses the importance of “wife training.” Ricky nods his approval, telling everyone that long before he got married he made an agreement with his wife-to-be: if she had any nights off from work he would stay home, other than that, nothing would interfere with his fishing. Ricky remembers getting married during the peak of the ulua season: “I wuz so excited I neva no what to do. So I figga, I get married, but I skip da reception. I went throw all da presents in da back of my jeep, and me and Val went spend our honeymoon right here at da

ridge.”

Howard picks up a dog-eared section of the Star Bulletin that someone has tossed on the concrete floor. He mutters something about the rivalry between Ariyoshi and Fasi and before you know it—it’s election time at Bamboo Ridge. Surprisingly, everyone seems concerned about Hawaii’s political future.

“Ariyoshi going lose,” says Freddy with authority, “I bet you any much.”

“How you know?” asks Danny, “You no like him cuz he Japanese right? Well dat not good enough.”

“I no care what nationality him,” Freddy replies, “I just know he not going get as many votes from the Japanese community cuz da obligation is over.”

Freddy explains the obligation the first generation of Japanese (issei) had for John Burns. “And that’s how Ariyoshi got in, but the obligation is over, and Ariyoshi is out!”

The friendly argument continues until Danny throws in his two cents which seems to touch home base with everyone. “I no like vote, because da state always jam up everything at da end. Dey always do dat.” Danny mentions the mongoose; how it was brought into the Islands to control the rat population in the cane fields. “Dat ting went eat everything but da bugga, and now we get one problem trying to control da mongoose!”

“And what about the Talapia and the Ta’ape?” shouts Howard. “That’s another mistake. I tell you, those two fish are eating everything in sight.” To his understanding, both fishes were brought in as a source of food. “But they’re disturbing the natural cycle, especially that Ta’ape. None of the other fishes have a chance to spawn anymore. I tell you, in five years Hawaii will be in big trouble, all because of that stupid fish.”

“And what about over population?” gripes Junior. “It’s just not fair to us shore casters.” He explains what the Ridge is like during the day. How the water is filled with weekend divers and commercial trappers. “My neighbors, they always ask me why I’m not catching any more ulua and I just shrug my shoulders. But I know why, it’s those trappers catching all of the small fish. And when you don’t have small fish, none of the bigger fish come around.”

“Dat’s right, and more worse, dey like fool around,” grumbles David. “Da other day I had one big strike, but when I pick up my pole I no feel nothing fight back, just something real heavy. So I figga I get one big eel and I all happy cuz dat good bait for ulua. But when I pick up my line, I find somebody went tie six beer cans to my hook. And den I see all the divers out there waving to me, like I suppose to wave back and laugh too. I tell you, if I wuz Governor, da first ting I do is make one restriction. Tell all those divers dey gotta stay two hundred yards from the shoreline. I mean, if dey get aqualungs dey get da whole ocean ... why dey gotta bother us?”

All night long, the conversation flows as smoothly as the waves. And in many ways it is an ideal society. No social ladder exists: the youngest man holds equal weight with the eldest, and everyone is entitled to his share of compliments as well as criticism. The men realize that the fishing will never be the same, and the future looks as bleak as ever. But still, they continue to fish and wish at Bamboo Ridge.

Tony Lee

The Lady And The Fisherman

Every ulua has someone's name on it
some day I'll find one with mine
but just as he cast his pole,
she folded the moon in half
and stuffed it in the back pocket
of her faded blue jeans
and walked away on a ridge wave

He would poke squid and speak to kumu
five days after the full moon
and she would sit in shadows
in corners of rooms
in wedding pictures

Gary Tachiyama

Someday, But For Now

I take my place among you
I sit in the back of a classroom
and talk to the TV repairman
fixing the set in a living room somewhere
He picks up a piece of metal
and says, “this is how the system works”

I take my place among you
sit in the shade under a breadfruit tree
on a green metal bench
I talk to the farmer somewhere in the hills
growing lettuce
He has a handful of chicken shit
He tells me, “it’s the salt of the earth”

I sit on the hood of a 68 Camaro
in a parking lot
it’s raining
the manager wants to know where my raincoat is
I say, “it alright, I don’t mind getting wet”
He say, “get the coat”
I take my place among you and get the coat.

Gary Tachiyama

Untitled

It was the house at the end of the School Street bridge where diverted waters of an unknown stream cascaded down concrete slabs into the Nuuanu. At night the man-made waterfall became a soft song of sheep jumping over the bridge, and in the day the surrounding rivers and fields became my playground.

I would go to the field in the back yard and wade in high grass, catching crickets and praying mantes. I would put them in cages or feed them to birds. Or I would dig out worms from the earth under the broken down green house and go fishing for tilapia and catfish in pools called, Waikahalulu and Ishii. Or I would walk on the wall from man-made waterfall to the monkeypod tree that grew where waters from the two separate pools met. I would jump to a branch of the tree and climb down to the water. I would hunt for frogs with red cloth and net moon fish or watch the wild watercress grow or macadamia nut or mango. Or I would build a raft of old plywood boards and sail to River Street. Or I would travel through tunnels or sewer ducts and climb out of manholes to the unfinished H-1 and steal boards to make rafts, or steal orchids for my mother from Foster Gardens or sell frogs at a dollar ninety-nine to Tamashiro Market. Or I would visit friends in Gordon's yard, or watch Mr. McGrew drink his beer and tell stories about how rich he was and how a lane was named after his father, or watch him scare kids away and not me, because he knew my parents.

Or I might be there when Donald hit Ronald in the head in a rock fight
Or be there when the floods came
Or be there when people drowned
Or be there when my brother came home from the army
Or be there where things were happening
And not be there when we moved.

In The Dark Ages

In the dark ages
many many years ago
when the earth was still a baby
about the size of a ping pong ball,
there was this guy in a pin-stripe suit
leaning against a wall
tossing a silver coin in the air
Every once in awhile a blue-haired old lady
would come up to him and ask
if he was George Raft
He would say, "No lady!
remember this is many many years ago,
George Raft ain't born yet
Don't go confusing people"

Well anyway, he would be leaning there
on the wall of the anthill
and would think sometimes,
Yeah, I am George Raft,
and would toss his silver coin
high into the air and for that moment
it would shine like a star in the sky

Gary Tachiyama

Dear Reiko: 1968 / 1978

I Kula

We buy books to keep our secrets:
mine, a leopard's skin,
yours, his wooden coffin.
Every page is lined
like your grandmother's field.
Quietly we begin to plant
among the rows of cabbages.
Soon they are covered with first growth,
aimless vines with no support.
Somewhere a leopard opens his eyes.

II Ofuro

Today I build the fire:
yellow newspaper,
too-green wood,
and everything is smoke!
Your auntie comforts me
with sweet potato dumplings.
There are new kittens
behind the bathhouse.
Soft as we are to each other.
We put them in our slippers
just inside the door;
they are that warm.
Tonight the bathwater
will smell of green fire,
and it will not matter.

III Graveyard

We carry water to your grandfather:
some of it spills
leaving withered footprints
that follow me

down the blank white steps.
We wash his stone carefully.
Solemn, we pull the weeds
that fill his bed.
We do not dig too deep.
We leave the roots.

IV Memorial

I am the proper kokeshi doll:
my wooden hands bend harmlessly
in my green lap,
a field of daisies
with dark pink centers.
The priest catches me—
“You don’t understand a word, do you?”
I hide in the grass.
I cannot find you anywhere.

V Omiyage

Your grandmother takes us
to her garden for the last time:
we squat among flat, wet leaves,
afraid of worms and centipedes
and potatoes that will not let go.
But she finds them easily—
her fingers emerge,
brown as the earth
she has taken them from.
We run to where the loquats dangle,
already the size of a man’s thumb.
We pluck them from the trees
and poke them into egg cartons
where each pale fruit glistens
in its own moist compartment,
waiting.

Reluctant to leave,
we race the length of the field,
the cabbages clumsy and mute around us—

our brothers' heads! No arms to hurt us!
So we kick them toward the dim lines
of the mountains.
And there I see
our grandmothers,
their backs bent,
carrying the sky.

Jody Masako Manabe

Legend

for Maxine Hong Kingston

They tell us she carved combs
from the ribs of her enemies.
Delicate things:
blossoms—the cheeks of children
who play in snow half their lives;
buds—the small sweet oranges
that hide among thorns.

At night she would remove each one
from her black eel braids
and polish the long teeth
along the veins in her neck.

Like dreams—
they guarded her
against sleep.

Jody Masako Manabe

Fever

They had burned my letters,
the ones from my brother,
and they had burned my wife's lacquer dresser,
and my daughter's porcelain dolls.
But that was the first time,
And it was I who smiled first at
the white-shadowed face of my son
against the curfew candlelight
that time.
And my younger sons squealed at this
game in the dark,
at the swords in the attic unscathed,
at the thick black paper on the windows.

Only my wife turning
away from the yellow/white light
did not see the glory of the moment.
They had captured the saboteurs,
held behind army green walls
conspirators and patriots,
kamikaze zealots
and traitors,
but we were mute, and they passed us.

My father's books of poems,
my mother's koto,
the family scrolls
still wrapped in red silk
holding their breath in the floorboards beneath me
were silent in the dark.

They had passed us;
they, with their green/white eyes
and purgation missions
that smelled of kerosene.
They were burning the temples,
the schools,

some houses too.
But we had expected that,
and we let the vengeance take its course,
And let them take what they wanted,
who they wanted,
until they were quelled.
We were safe this first time.
Perhaps they had seen the plaques on the walls,
and the books and the surgical tools
in white cabinets,
and the metal-framed beds that were draped
in white sheets
And so passed us,
thinking perhaps,
that we, that I
with a Stanford degree
Once donning the whites of their
surgical gowns
would deftly and surely
eviscerate
my seventeen summers in Nara.
Or perhaps they had simply known
this was the first time.

So I worked in my office,
In hospital wards,
In wailing half-empty
well-scrubbed houses of
wives without husbands,
mending and healing
the bodies of the jaundice-faced people.
Sometimes there were fevers,
And I'd go in the dark,
in my car, with black-covered headlights
that let only slits of yellow through
like cat's eyes.
I would go in the dark,
And knock at hidden doors
to find the sick blanched ones
with bodies on fire.
These were the ones who had been held,

the ones they had not passed,
And in their eyes, reflected
I saw the burnings of the shrines,
their pictures,
their tenuous links with homeland
forever charred.
So when they came that last time,
and shattered the floorboards
And the screams of my wife
that last time,
And scoured the attic
where my samurai swords
lay waiting, in white cloth,
that last time,
the faint upturnings
at the corners of my mouth
were not for glory
but comradeship.

They are burning my father's books of poems,
and the silk strings of my mother's koto
curl in the flames,
and the red wrapped scrolls
of my family dance
in yellow fire.

Jo Ann Uchida

The Luna Of The Landing

On a gusty afternoon, a lone mynah bird was startled out of a pine tree by the sound of footsteps rapidly approaching the edge of the cliff. He chattered angrily, then flew away as a youth with huge curious eyes stared up in his direction.

“Boy! Boy!” a voice called out hoarsely from the distance. The youth continued staring even after the bird had completely disappeared, until a wrinkled old man caught up to him.

“I tell you, no run away like that,” the old man scolded. “You like fall down and get hurt?”

A gigantic smile spread over the boy’s face. Then, without a word, he turned and immediately started down a winding trail which led across a sloped portion of the cliff wall. The old man started to voice a second warning but stopped because he knew that it would be of no avail. He hitched up an old knapsack, faded and frayed from years of constant use, and dropped out of sight after the youth.

The Hamakua coast on the island of Hawaii is a string of steep black lava cliffs dropping straight down into the sea. A man on shore can stand directly over the turbulent water and yet be hundreds of feet away from the surface, never being touched by the sea except for the salty mists which drift inland on days when the wind blows from the north.

Few are the coves which in past days allowed wary steamers to deliver supplies to the sugar cane plantations located at strategic spots along the coastline. Strong winches constructed at the top of the cliff wall stood ready to lift the cargo up to where mule trains waited. The job was long and difficult as well as hazardous because of the temperamental sea. Perhaps the ancient Hawaiian gods were alarmed at such intrusions upon their sacred burial grounds, for many hidden caves in the area contained the bones of kings and lords of old Hawaii. Whatever the reason for the turbulence, the ships had to approach the shore with extreme caution since there was no way of telling when the sea would belch forth a swell capable of hurling the ships against the rocks. Many men vanished under the raging sea to be lain in submerged crypts or carried away by predatory sharks.

But when those days passed, the coves were forgotten and tangled underbrush covered the mule trains leading to them. No one visited the landings except for fishermen who told stories about hearing the rusty winches being operated again on dark nights when the sea was in a less angry mood.

One of the coves was even more isolated than the rest because the sugar mill which it formerly served had been abandoned many years ago. A wide grove of mournful pine trees circled along the cliff rim high above the sea. It was through this grove of trees that the old man and the youth had just passed.

The old man shuffled cautiously down the trail, sometimes gaining leverage

by grabbing hold of the tough-stemmed grass growing on either side. He was still strong and healthy, his figure showing few of the physical impediments which usually accompany old age. But though his legs showed no signs of weariness, the old man was aware that his once-sharp reflexes were no longer suitable for the steep trail. Over places where the youth would have scampered heedlessly across, the man conveyed himself with all four limbs.

A length of manila rope was coiled around the old man's waist, serving to hold up an ancient pair of pants. Several holes in the seat were covered with crude patches while others remained exposed to provide ventilation. It was difficult to say whether his shirt was tan colored or just covered with dust, but it had the long sleeves which are common among the plantation laborers who work with the thorny leaves of the sugar cane. An obsolete safety helmet balanced precariously on his head. A piece of sheet metal was soldered around the side for added protection from the sun so that the helmet resembled a shiny metal bonnet. The metal bonnet completely hid the old man's white hairs but not the two huge ears which protruded from below it. The old man attributed his good health to his ears because of Japanese superstition which declared that large ears portended a long life.

At the bottom of the trail, the youth was waiting impatiently on an old concrete landing platform which was faded and covered with seaweed where it entered the water. In his stubby hands he grasped two bamboo fishing poles which he had retrieved from a crack in the cliff wall. As soon as the old man set foot on the landing, the boy ran to the water's edge where he laid the poles down and beckoned furiously with both of his hands. The old man smiled at the way the youth jumped up and down in gleeful anticipation while he attached hooks and lines to the poles.

When the old man had baited his hook, the boy dropped the line into the water and sat down on the edge of the landing. His face changed from one of anticipation to one of the most intense concentration. His huge eyes were focused deep into the water where he saw shadows gliding back and forth. When one of them approached the hook, he held his breath in expectation, his face frozen and his eyes piercing.

Suddenly, a small form moved where the water lapped against the slimy cement. The boy's attention was immediately directed to a black crab gathering seaweed with rapidly moving claws. How strange it looked with its eyes extended up into the air. The boy contorted his face into weird shapes, trying to extend his eyes into the air also. His face flushed and his eyes hurt but he could not get them to stand upright. A rage flashed through the boy. In anguish, he pulled at his hair and kicked his feet out wildly. He swung his pole viciously at the crab in bitter disappointment. With the crab's departure went the boy's rage. He turned his attention back to fishing and was soon hunched over with his former intense concentration, though he often paused to try to extend his eyes outward.

When the boy finally felt a twitch, he yanked the pole up hard enough for the fish to arch over him and land in back. With a triumphant cry, he jumped clumsily to his feet and fell on the fish as it squirmed furiously on the cement.

“Hooley,” the old man chorused the boy’s excitement. “As one nice size papio you catch, boy. Good eat, that one! We tell your mama cook‘um for you tonight.”

The youth danced a happy victory jig over the landing, trailing the fish behind him. When he tired, the old man unhooked the remains of the fish and placed it in the knapsack. After his hook was again baited, the boy hunched over his pole with the same intense concentration. Each time the boy caught a fish, he danced for joy. But after a while, the sea grew restless and he lost all interest in fishing. He wandered away to chase crabs on the rocks off to one side of the landing.

Taking out a bag of tobacco from the knapsack, the old man slowly and carefully rolled himself a cigarette. After running his wet tongue over the cigarette, he raised his head to see where the boy was, then lighted up and settled back to fish. But his mind was not on fishing as he sat there blowing out blue clouds from under his silver bonnet. He looked out toward the horizon where the dark sky was creeping landward. White-capped swells were already arriving at the cove, speeding heralds of the approaching storm. The old man watched the waves hurl themselves at the peninsula which protruded from the opposite side of the landing from where the boy had gone. Each wave hissed angrily as it rushed upon the rocks, exploding into white foam at the impact. How often the two of them had sat and examined the same scene from the top of the cliff. Under the wailing pine trees they sat, each enjoying the sea in his own way. Sometimes the boy screamed encouragement to the pounding waves, rising to his feet in his excitement. At other times he sat in a trance, open-mouthedly staring.

The waves brought different emotions for the old man. They brought memories of the days when he had been the luna of the landing. At those times, he explained to the boy how to judge the wind and the sea in order to determine whether or not it was safe for a ship to enter the cove. He had spent many cold nights on the landing waiting for tardy steamers to come in. Many times he had given the order to start the winches and many times had given the muleteers their instructions on where to deliver the supplies. The luna was in charge of all operations at the landing and few were more important than he.

Looking up once again, the old man saw that the boy was zealously pursuing crabs, hurling rocks away to his right and left as he attempted to corner the elusive creatures. He and the boy belonged together. They understood each other as no one else did. Or perhaps it was just he who understood, the boy only instinctively attaching himself to the old man. One thing was certain though, this little cove was their private world and no one had the right to disturb their bond with each other and with their friend, the sea. No, not even the boy’s parents should be allowed to interfere.

Deep within himself, the old man sensed (though he was unwilling to admit it) that he depended on the boy just as much as the boy depended on him. It would be so very lonely to have to visit the little cove by himself again. It never occurred to him to ask himself why he still came to the landing. If he had asked himself that question, he could not have given an answer. Or else he might have answered simply, "Me the luna of the landing."

No other explanation was needed. The old man's life had never been one of expanding horizons. When he first came to work at the landing, he had set only one goal for himself, to wear the shiny hat of the luna. After he became the luna, the little cove became his world. Everything had changed since then, but not the old man. He was still the luna. This was still his world though he was long retired and the landing was long outmoded. He was content with his memories, except that he could not speak to memories.

Long after the old man resolved himself to being the solitary sentinel of the cove, the boy had come. At first, he brought the boy only out of sympathy toward his parents. The youth was an intruder who feared the powers of the sea. But the boy's intense curiosity was too strong to keep him afraid for long and now the boy loved the cove almost as much as the old man.

More important, however, the cove itself had accepted the boy. It had befriended him and it had washed away the impurities. The youth was all right here, with a place where he belonged. Nowhere else would he find an environment which suited him more. If he was kept in a cage, the dynamo of emotion and energy inside the boy was sure to explode, while here at the old man's side, the cove could absorb all of the outbursts. None of the complications, the confusions, and the restrictions of society existed here to bewilder him. All the boy needed was freedom, freedom to explore the strange world that existed within his disproportional head. Both the man and the youth were useless to the world beyond the pine trees, and it was useless to them.

The shock of cold water splashing over his feet awakened the old man from his reverie. The tide was coming in as well as the storm. Glancing over his shoulder, he saw that the boy was nowhere in sight. After packing his knapsack and replacing the fishing poles in the crevice in the wall, the old man made his way over the moist rocks to the hidden spot where he knew he was most likely to find the boy. He walked until he came to the gaping mouth of an old lava tube which wormed its way into the cliff. Inside was the boy.

Lying very still on the floor, the youth was listening intensely to sounds coming out of a fissure. Apparently, the noises were produced by water rushing into a hollow chamber beneath the lava tube and somehow the fissure distorted the sound so that it resembled the clamor of distant voices. Whatever the voices were, they spoke intimate messages to the youth, for he never moved while he listened to them. They never spoke to the old man but it was obvious that the boy understood them so he was satisfied to sit and wait.

Having sat on the floor beside the boy, the old man said without looking at him, "Hey, boy. They sure making big noise today, hah? I think they talking about the big storm coming tonight."

The youth did not acknowledge the other's presence, which did not surprise the old man. He simply took out his tobacco and silently rolled himself another cigarette. His feet were folded under him and, with the boy close behind his back, he faced the entrance of the lava tube through which he watched the swells roll into the cove. The man and the youth sometimes spent hours here, the boy with his ear to the fissure and the man puffing on his hand-rolled cigarettes. For several minutes they continued as they were, man and boy together in comradeship, yet each engrossed in his own world. The old man knew that this was likely to be the last time he would ever share this silent bond with the boy. It marked the end of a phase of his life. As for the boy, perhaps occasionally a dim spark of remembrance would light in his mind, but for the most part, the old man and the voices would soon be forgotten.

Slowly, the old-timer turned toward his friend until he was staring directly at the prone figure, a great sadness shining in his eyes. He again spoke, more to himself than to the boy. "They telling you goodbye, boy. They know you not coming back no more. Your mama and papa sending you away to the city tomorrow." He had tried to convince them otherwise but they were sure of themselves and refused to be dissuaded. Each sentence was followed by a long pause, as though his words were intrusions within the silence. "You listen what they say and be good boy, okay?"

The youth still had his ear to the fissure, enthralled by the voices. "Get plenty nice things for see. You be real happy over there." He wished desperately that the boy could say, "No, I will not be happy." But the boy said nothing.

Tears trickled down the cracks on the old man's sunbaked cheeks. The fear and love poured out of his chest in one pleading sentence, "You no understand, boy?" The question was futile, merely a confirmation of fact. All self-control had left the old man. "How you can take care of yourself, boy? You almost one man but you no even talk yet. Nobody going to look out for you now."

Finally, the strange tone in the old man's voice caused the boy to look up at him. However, only curiosity appeared on the youth's face as he waited for his companion to give the usual sign that it was time to go. Two pairs of eyes met each other, one huge and waiting, the other moist and pitying. The old man looked deep into the other's eyes, trying to grab hold of just a little something inside the boy, but he could not see anything beyond the fog.

The eyes of the old man dropped first. He pushed himself to his feet and the youth quickly followed. From the landing, they watched the storm waves beating against the peninsula for the last time. One after another, as methodically as falling raindrops, the waves crashed onto the rocks. At regular intervals, an exceptionally large wave struck with such momentum that it hurled itself entirely

over the piece of land.

After studying the sea for awhile, the old man looked thoughtfully at the boy's innocent face. No, it was not right for the boy to leave this place. It was unfair. He looked again at the peninsula as it was submerged by a giant wave, then he motioned toward it with his arm and said, "Come. We go catch some more crabs."

And together they set off.

Marshall M. Doi

Hiking By Moonlight

We tired of the surf,
And the moonlight breaking,
And breaking again in its solitary attempt
To thread the broken waves together,
So we came to the mountain.

Asking for safe passage to the summit,
I folded a ti leaf across itself
To double the power of its blessing.
Then, you took the roundest stone
You could find on the trail
And placed it on the leaf
To keep the circle closed.

Taking each other's hands
To make a circle of our own lives
We looked back and saw
The surf has become the white feathers
Under a sandpiper's folded wings,
And the moon is the beacon
From a lighthouse of diamonds,
The one lighthouse in this world
Which flashes, "Danger and shipwreck,
But bring your boats here."

If we hike up the mountain far enough,
You and I will discover the shipwrecks,
The beautiful grottoes where orchids
Have grown in the boneyards.

Tino Ramirez

Blossom

“Ask for diamonds.”

At times my hands listen,
Search underground for something
That will outlast seasons,
But you send blossoms.
You give me spring's moon
Burning clouds off mountains,
Then trap me inside
With rose apples and rain.
You give me the laughter
Of going some place,
The silence of walking back.
So much rises in me,
So much goes away.

Tino Ramirez

Poem For The Egg Man

—on his birthday, January 23, 1976

I.

I can't write a limerick or
walk the doggerel
around the block for you, Logan.
OK muse, Chartreuse, or daemon,
where can I find the skill
to write a poem for John Logan?
I can't count syllable
by syllable, marry an 'a'
to a 'u', raise my head
and bay an audience to tears,
Logan-wise.

II. Trying

We couldn't hear each other, at first.
I in my angry house
and you tender, shelled in sound.
You're broken down.
Don't deny it. I see the sun break out of you
and I let go another
of my own handholds.

III. Giving Up

We talked, I think, about the circus
or the paths of planets, over
Chartreuse on the north shore.
Now, sometimes when I speak
you lift your head, surprised.
I hear another language, too.
I think an egg is singing.

It tells me that wings
are for the fearful.
It tells me that to break into one shape
is not enough.

Martha Webb

Mo'okini Heiau

—*for Kalani*

Many died at Mo'okini,
four hundred and four hundred and four hundred and on.
I walked through abandoned fields
and looked for you.
I wore the helmet of forty thousand mo'o,
four hundred and four hundred and on;
the sun was setting. I sat on the high walls
on the stone heaped for centuries.
I added the sunsets since the last death.
Where is power?
The sun falls into the sea,
the sea beats the stones
and the stones turn to crickets who
carry me away on the beat of their song,
and I am talking to you tonight.

We keep singing. The stones break beneath us.

Martha Webb

And If Your Mind Had Wings?

Would you streak like an eagle through the eye of a needle,
or glide in circles down a corridor of stone?

Would you zoom dive roll loop buzz around the moon,
or plunge like a meteor to the black hole's depths?

Would you hover like a dragonfly flirting with the sun,
or skim like a plover galactic seas of ice?

Would you flash past nebulae kicking up clouds of stars,
or float forever adrift on cosmic dust?

Would your voyage celestial be sweeping
or fleeting?

Would you escape to the point of no return
then bolt like lightning out of space-and-time?

Or would you bail-out, like some chicken over Africa,
Pluto, China or Mars?

Wayne Westlake

rain quietude

In sleep made of sleep and remembrance, a few raindrops
sound in the dark. Like a chieftain, the wind moves through leaves,
and then the raindrops fall. But I am deceived by other
nights and desires; these are only small hands
shaken from the sky. No rainfall follows the path through the woods,
the night is clear of its sounds, and I can hear the ocean open
like a palm among small rocks.

I think of days when some ghost undulation
moved through stillborn
rain on the ocean.

I have seen that same movement of rain in the changing tones of sea
seen from a great height on clear days; and in clouds paled by wind
on the pali; and in a woman's distraction
when love has carried her to awkward hours
and the light in the room is strange; when she is exhausted,
wet, suspirant with desire, and things are still moving,
but moving less, and she wonders what of love will remain
when she has handed it down to herself through the years
and her hands have changed it, when even now it is strangely unapproachable
like something in perfect balance, and, offhandedly, she says,
"I think it's going to rain."

Gary Kissick

The Anatomy Of Departure

Love, there is a presence when you are gone
that can not be explained.
I hear its breathing on the bed beside me.
I've conjured it in my dreams.

The flowers you picked two weeks ago
are still on your desk.
The petals are shrinking in the sun.
When will you return
to throw them out?
The leaves are curling
into brown arabesques.
I can not touch them,
There is a presence guarding them.

Your clock in the den needs to be wound daily
as a dog taken for its walk.
So I do it for you.
I assume your ritual
day by day.

Your towels hanging on the rack
like fishing nets
have long since dried.
And the empty chair on the deck
has comprehended the afternoon sun for itself.

I am growing into this loneliness
for the last time.
And I hear its voice in the plover's cry
over the dark fields at night.

Karl Ichida

This Is The Night

You cradle your face in one white palm
And lean toward me on an unsteady arm.
And the swarming wind gibbers in my ears
And your voice is fleshless, like the neon rose
That floats above the long bar. This is the night
Something redemptive was to have happened.
But around us in the cold is a sound like hosts
Of wings in a glass bell. There is no clock.
I sense some small object caught between
My finger and thumb, and roll it slowly,
Curiously in the padded flesh while you talk.
It becomes more important than even the buying back
I know you are trying to find words for,
And in the shadows of your face chips of white
Glint like teeth or broken gratings sparked
By artificial light. The round, dead seed of debris
Between my fingers falls like some remorseless
Crime into the invisible space between my feet.
You have been silent a long time, your face
Hanging in the air like the glow of a flower
That no amount of rain can ripen.

Frank Stewart

Chinatown

At every stroke of rain
The half-eaten, pre-war walls sag
Into becoming a pond of sticks and slag.
The roaches with their backs like battered
Thumbnails are everywhere; and they, like us,
Are concerned but systematic. They are used to rain
Falling through nights that are not black for them
But only wet. The sludge, after all, can be forded.
And if the retreat is made without panic, if there is
Some grace to be salvaged, they will find it
Shining deep in the lengthening cracks
Down which a woman might lose
Everything. Or a man press his tongue or eye
To the wood, and see skin like flecks of reddish
Mica in the dark, her disordered fingers
Grasp at the peeling walls. And all around
Their insect feet like lashes blink softly back.

Frank Stewart

Meditation Beneath The Trees

The trees look old,
as if they'd come from the time
when the elements of the earth
were braided to form living things.
Their strong, twisted branches find others
and together they weave a roof for us.

In this darkened air,
time waits with me.
Lightly you and I tap
the dry, soft ground,
and a fine scarf of grains rises.

You look at me with eyes
brown as the richest river
and play with me,
withholding your name.
You look at the white-gold pieces of light,
and then
beyond.

You rise to leave.
The shadows falling through the trees
cling to and call your body:
there is no more slender a name.
But you step outside the grove,
and are
released.

Pat Matsueda

Blue Hours

The trees are trying
to shake themselves free
of all the hours.

To beguile us
into stepping out
into the evening,
the sun provides us
with the last light
like someone offering a towel
to a tired swimmer.

This blue fall tempts us
beyond the familiar design
of our plans
with colors provoked into clarity
by the coolness.

The road swells
in the shadows of buildings.
It will be night
before we know
where we want to be.
We have left the light
woven about the door.

Pat Matsueda

The Foot Sutra

A certain monk of the Wu Chih-dao sect was very skillful in walking. He had mastered the art of sinking his mind into his feet. It happened one day as he was travelling on the coast that he came upon some bandits robbing a company of merchants. Having taken their goods and cash, the bandits were about to slay the men. The monk approached the bandits with this offer: "Take your swords and arrange them in rows in the sand with their blades upthrust. If I manage to pass through the blades without letting a drop of my blood, you'll let the travelers free." The bandits agreed, and they so arranged their swords that a cat would be hard pressed to pass unscathed. Yet the monk was able to do so. He did this by linking his mind with his body. This is known as: having your act together.

Earl Cooper

Road

This road
is my last friend
that drives up out of the dark
to meet me.

I've been over it
a hundred times,
its switchbacks
and sudden turns,

the flimsy guard-rails
hanging over the ocean
like old teeth about to fall.
This water under my eyes.

The secrets of this road
are open to me.
Even in this rain
that flies sideways down the wind,

I know every turn that cries out,
every shoulder that offers no support.
Even at this speed,
roadsigns blurred, edges of the highway gone,

my foot like a bucket of tears
pressing deeper and deeper
into the accelerator,
it leaps up to greet me—

this cliff,
my last friend.

Earl Cooper

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Just Wait And See

"My mother said we richer than you folks," Martin said. Tommy didn't answer; instead he backed his make-believe racer around five feet, shifted gears, and roared across the schoolyard to the swings near the kindergarten buildings. Parking it skillfully in a space very few drivers could have wedged into, he got out and walked to one of the swings, where Dickie was forlornly pushing Harry, the school bully.

"Hey, Dickie, you like one?" Tommy asked, as he brought out an almost empty package of Lifesavers.

"Thanks, eh." The lame boy's face lit up with gratitude.

"Why you gotta push Harry? He bigger than you ... why he no push you."

"Sh-h-h," Dickie said apprehensively. "He hit you if you no push. I gotta."

Harry started up, but sat down again when he saw Tommy slip the last Lifesaver into his own mouth. "Hurry up and push," he yelled belligerently at Dickie, glaring at Tommy. Martin, who had followed Tommy across the yard, said, "We get one whole box Hershey Kisses at our house. Sometime my mother buy gum by carton, and then I chew one pack one time."

Tommy ignored him. He circled his car, and kicked a rear tire contemplatively. Yep, there was enough air, all right. He got in, adjusted his racer's goggles, and drove off at jet speed, leaving a funnel of thick white smoke spiralling toward the sky. His stiff black hair, ruffled by the wind, stuck out like the tired but crafty eyes of a hunted animal. He circled the yard twice, then, anticipating the first bell, parked his racer in the shade of a banyan tree. Darn those mynah birds, he thought, as he ran his fingers over the shiny fenders of his just-polished car. The first bell rang.

The strains of *The Star-Spangled Banner* and the sight of the flag rising up smoothly into the blue sky always moved him deeply. He saw the JPO's marching proudly into the schoolyard. Once it had hurt him that he, a sixth grader, had been rejected as a JPO. They said he was too small and skinny and nervous. As a fifth grader, he had been so sure that next year he would be able to blow the police whistle. But now he didn't care. JPO was kid stuff. Someday he would be a hero, and the JPO captain would be sorry he hadn't picked him. He'd be sorry ... everyone would be sorry ... only Dickie would be able to say, "Tommy used to be my friend."

"Br-r-ring." The second bell signalled the march for the homerooms. Tommy began climbing the stairs when suddenly he spied the thief who had stolen the million dollars from the bank. The thousand-dollar reward glimmered in his mind, and he wondered what he should say to the thronging reporters. Quickly he drew his six-shooter, but then he saw the innocent people who crowded the thief,

and he knew he couldn't afford to hurt them accidentally. He had to depend on his strong, steel-like muscles to overpower the huge, hulking thief. He dodged the people on the stairs and burst into the room breathlessly, trying not to lose sight of the crafty thief.

"Tommy, how many times have I told you not to run up those stairs," Miss Lohr remonstrated, "Look, you're all hot and sticky from early in the morning." Tommy didn't mind Miss Lohr's scoldings, because Miss Lohr was wonderful. She understood everybody. She often gave lunch money to him and to the others who forgot theirs, only the others paid theirs back. He hesitated. He had found a gorgeous caterpillar, a green and purple one. Its back was like a brand-new re-capped tire, with spikey edges. Should he, or shouldn't he, give it to her now? But as his hand went timidly to his bag, Martin shoved him away from the desk and volunteered, "He went bang me coming up the stairs, and he went push Janet, and she went almost fall."

Damn that Martin! Tommy sat down, arranged the three telephones on his desk, and prepared for the business of the day. The phones all rang at the same time, insistently, for he was making money head over heels. Which should he answer first? Miss Lohr settled the question.

"Let's all sing the first three verses of *America, the Beautiful*, children," she said. Everyone rose, and the screeches of "Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain," echoed through the room. Tommy strode purposefully across the fruited plain.

"But General, you can't go. Why, what would we do without you?" protested the majors and captains. They wrung their hands in agony and fright, for they couldn't afford to lose such a leader. But General Thomas Doi, first Japanese ever to become a general in the U.S. Army, was firm.

"If I'm the only one who can do the job, I must do it, even if it means giving up my life. I'm sure ..."

"Tommy, do sit down," Miss Lohr sighed patiently. Tommy sat down amid titters from the girls and an exaggerated laugh from Martin. "Today, we are going to begin by talking about our earth as a sphere. Who knows what a sphere is?"

Several hands went up, but Tommy didn't bother raising his. He knew the answer, and he knew Miss Lohr knew he knew, for how many times had he heard Miss Lohr say to the other teachers, when she didn't know he was around, "Tommy's the most brilliant of my students. Too brilliant, I sometimes feel, for he seems to be a misfit. You wouldn't suspect it, listening to him talk, but he can write beautiful compositions ... things way beyond my other sixth graders. Too bad he can't seem to either grow or pick up weight. I wonder what his home life is like." Miss Lohr was continuing, her right hand spinning a world globe absently, "We shouldn't just say the earth is a sphere. We should prove it, and by several means if possible. Well, one way was by sailing around the earth, as was done by Magellan ..."

Tommy stared into the distance. The blue water hurt his eyes, and all he saw was water, water everywhere. There was food for only one day more, and the drinking water was going, too, even though he had secretly poured his own portions back into the barrel for the past three days. He shivered, for it was growing dark, and the cold night air bit into his bones. His overcoat, lined with the skin of the lion he had shot in Africa, helped, but his hands were stiff. He shook them vigorously, to start the blood circulating. He didn't dare go to his cabin below, for his men were inefficient, and besides, there was talk of mutiny among the cowards of his crew. He would have to reach land—he must reach land—within two days or—what was that? He blinked his unbelieving yet hopeful eyes. Was it?—it was, and Commodore Doi jumped up in elation as he cried hoarsely, “Land! Land! A light! At last, a light!”

Loud laughter brought Tommy back into the drab, brown schoolroom. Resentfully, he looked around at his classmates, his stupid classmates who seemed to think it funny if he was left out of their games. Worse, at class games, when Miss Lohr was around, the side that got him groaned, and the other side jeered. He knew he couldn't run very fast, or hit or catch a ball very well, but he wasn't that bad. When he wasn't nervous, he could catch a ball with one hand. They exaggerated it to make him feel bad, but heck! He could spell anyone of them down, and as for books, he had read more than ten or twelve of them combined, and adult books, too. Sometimes he wondered whether he wasn't smarter than Miss Lohr, even, for she made mistakes in spelling, such as writing ‘beginning’ with only one ‘n’. He was smart. They might as well admit that, and they did, for there they were, thousands and thousands of people, who had come to honor him. He heard a senator whisper to a governor beside him, “Did you know that Sir Doi has written fifteen books already? This last one of his is a best seller—sold two million copies already. I understand his father received the Nobel Prize once. Sir Doi may follow in his footsteps.”

“Is that right?” the governor was replying, as Sir Doi stood on the platform, acknowledging the applause that greeted his presence. “I hear his mother is a beautiful actress. One of the loveliest women in the world, I understand. He must be as proud of them as they are of him, undoubtedly. A very rare family, I must say ...”

“Br-r-ring.” Recess already? He hated recesses. But then he remembered. He had his racer downstairs. If they played football, he would ride around in his racer at a hundred miles an hour, to make sure they didn't cheat.

“Hey, no hang around me, eh,” he warned Martin, during recess. Martin was as usual following him around, watching his motions puzzledly. But Martin answered, “This free country. You no can hit me anyway. I'm bigger than you. Try hit me, see what happen.”

Tommy was almost tempted to hit him, win or lose, when he remembered the caterpillar. Slyly, he maneuvered his way up the stairs and to his seat. How

come his bag was on the floor? And someone had stepped on it. It had been on his seat when he had left the room; now there was a dusty footprint on the peeling black leatherette. Opening the bag hastily, he saw that the prized caterpillar was squashed to a greenish stringy mass in the carefully cut-out paper package. The injustice of the act smote him so intensely that for a few moments he stood staring blankly. Then he drew in a dry anguished sob, but he didn't cry. Craftily he wiped off the tell-tale footprint, replaced the bag on the seat, and sneaked back downstairs. He would act innocent, and whoever had done it would think that Miss Lohr had picked it up. That ought to spoil his fun! Damn son-of-a-bitch! His step-father's swear words came to him, but they didn't ease the hard knot of anger in his heart.

The day passed slowly. Several times he was in the midst of a sumptuous dinner given for him for his deeds as an outstanding Boy Scout, but always the infamy of the caterpillar cut into his thoughts, so that he could never quite get to the eating. First he was cold, and then he was hot, but always it was with frustration that he could not get immediate revenge.

At two o'clock it started raining. In the beginning it was only a drizzle, but then the drops began getting bigger and bigger, until soon the drops that spattered on the windowpanes were as large as half-dollars. At two-thirty, when the last bell rang, the rain was coming down in a downpour that folded the school building in its grey blanket. The children lingered in the room, on the stairs, and on the front porch. Tommy started down the stairs, and saw that the thief was still clinging to his million dollars. Tommy didn't rush this time. The thief might get suspicious. He always kept ahead of the crowd of people, for maybe he sensed that Chief of Detectives Doi was after him. Tommy had just reached the front porch with its milling crowd when he stopped, stunned! For there, just inside the hedge of the front schoolyard, stood his mother!

She stood alone, for the other mothers had not braved the rain to bring their children raincoats, although there were a few mothers in cars parked on the street. She carried a huge black umbrella, and under her arm, a neatly folded plastic raincoat. From this distance, he could hardly see her overworked hands, much too large for her wrists or arms. Neither could he see the dirty cracks in her heels as she sloshed around in her ragged slippers. But he could see her faded dress with its uneven hemline, and the straggling gray hair which never could be kept neat. He saw her turning her umbrella this way and that, peering first at this group of boys and then that. Seeing her arms made him recall this morning with bitterness. His step-father had hurled a cup of hot coffee at her because she had remonstrated against his tearing a page out of Tommy's book. She had wiped off the coffee patiently, but Tommy had been so infuriated then that it was all he could do to keep from getting a kitchen knife and slashing his stepfather with it. He had been grateful to his short, fat, clumsy mother then, but here, here in the schoolyard, among his stupid classmates, he was ashamed of her. He thought of dashing out

through the back entrance, when Martin called out loudly, "Eh, Tommy, there your mother." Everyone turned to look, and his mother smiled at them benignly, exposing her mouth without any upper front teeth. Mortified, Tommy ran to her, for she began coming to the porch. The cold raindrops splashing on his face mingled with his tears of shame and rolled into his faded, patched shirt as he made his way homeward.

Then he remembered why he was walking home today. "Tommy, darling, would you mind walking home from school today? It's the chauffeur's day off, and I have to attend a meeting, so I won't be able to pick you up," his mother had said, as she had poured more coffee for Dad from a silver coffeepot. Her long flowing gown had shimmered in the morning sunlight, and she had looked like the "Madonna" in his history book. Dad had patted him on the shoulder before he had left for work, for Dad was not the mushy type and did not kiss him except on special occasions. How lucky he was not having a stepfather who continually called him "bastard". His Dad didn't slap his mother everytime he got drunk or lost his job, and best of all, his Dad loved him, Tommy, more than anyone else in the whole world. Their house was not a broken-down shack with missing windowpanes or big cracks. His mother didn't have to take in washing and ironing, so her hands were not thick and calloused. How lucky he was, he thought again. And it was so much fun walking home. Sometimes he got bored, riding on the big black limousine, with the chaffeur so stiff and straight in the front seat. His parents protected him too much because they loved him so much!

As he climbed the stairs to his home, he glanced back. Farther down the street, he saw Martin, walking under a huge black umbrella with a short fat woman. There goes Martin with his mother, to their home in the slums. Dead End Alley, they lived in, and servicemen were not allowed there. Poor Martin! Tommy opened the front door to his home, and immediately went to his room with a library book, but somehow he couldn't read. He was on his skis, skimming down the dangerous mountain to save a dear friend who was trapped by a snowslide, when he heard an umbrella thump into its place on the porch, and the front door close. He was fighting his way up the cliff, inch by inch, when someone entered the room, carrying a glass of hot chocolate.

"Here, drink this. I no like you catch cold," she said. "Why you no hide your books when Papa stay? You know Papa no like you because you dream too much. Why you no shine shoes or sell newspaper after school?"

Tommy kept his eyes closed. Perhaps if he pretended to be asleep, she would go away.

"No act like you sleeping. Your eyelashes moving." She sat on the cot and took his bony hands in hers. "Tommy, if you like, Mama and you can run away from Papa, you know. Papa not bad all the time, only when he drunk or no more money, but I sorry for you. *Your* papa was a good papa." *Your* papa? Tommy had a Dad. Tommy's Dad was rich and kind and loved him. Tommy's Dad took

him fishing and to games and ... he opened his eyes stealthily. His mother was staring at a crack in the wall. Her dull brown eyes reflected misery and hopelessness; her half-open lips were a picture of dejection. But as he watched, her lips curved softly, almost coyly. Her eyes began twinkling impishly, and it seemed as if she grew ten years younger. He watched, astonished. What was going on in her mind? Suddenly he felt a warmth, a protective feeling, growing within him for her. He pulled his hand from hers and clasped one of her hands in his. He intended giving her comfort of some kind, but instead he found himself crying. Crying because he could never be a JPO, never be a football star, crying because someone had squashed his beautiful caterpillar. At the thought of the caterpillar, he hardened, and even the tears stopped coming. The core of anger had grown larger and larger, taking the place of his dreams, which he knew would never be enough.

“Mama, thank you for the raincoat. You the only mother who brought raincoat for the children. That means you kind. You the kindest mother in the whole world. Mama, I going grow up big and strong ... I going be rich ... I make you happy too ... you wait and see ... you wait and see ...”

Patsy Saiki

The Forgotten Flea Powder

Two blocks past Johnson's Five and Ten in the town of Kaimuki, Satoshi Ikehara, standing in the rear of a jam-packed Honolulu bus, woke up from his stupor with a start, looked outside, and nudged his little brother who stood beside him. "Hey, Yuki, we pass da store again."

"Huh?"

"We forget to get off by Johnson Store an' buy flea-powder—you know, for Blackie."

"Oh, yeah. How many times we goin' forget anyway? Four times already, no-o?"

"Yeah. We no can get off now—too late. We got to go home."

"At's okay. We can buy 'em tomorrow—Saturday."

"I know; but Blackie cry, you know. He get so many fleas. He feel itchy an' he cry, you know."

"Yeah, I know. Yesterday I saw him scratchin' up. He no can scratch da back part 'at's why he onny cry, so I been scratch his back for him. He *f-e-e-l* good. He no cry." An old Caucasian woman, sitting in a seat before them, looked up and smiled at them. The boys smiled shyly back and quickly turned their eyes away. They stopped talking.

The trolley slowed down to a halt at the end of the line in Waialae. They boarded a gasoline-engine bus, which crawled ponderously out of the terminal and roared down the tree-lined highway stretching toward Koko Head. Several minutes later in their front yard, which was also a part of the road going into the garage, a dog of mixed breed, not yet full grown, greeted them with yelps and leaps of exuberant affection.

"Hello, Blackie. Sit down, boy, sit down." Satoshi stooped down and patted the dog. "Atta boy, Blackie, good boy. Shake hand, Blackie. Come on, shake hand—" The dog began to offer its right paw, but withdrew it suddenly and began scratching its side vigorously. It scratched now under its belly, now behind its ears, now here, and there, scratching and biting and whining.

"Come on, Yuki, scratch his back for him. You no can see he sufferin'?" Yuki ran his little fingers through the animal's thick black coat as if with a comb. The dog complained no more.

"Come, we go in, Yuki." Satoshi opened the door and they entered. From inside, he saw, through the screen door, the dog scratching again. Then he saw it run toward the garage, stop abruptly, and resume scratching with painful, angry whines. An uncomfortable feeling of guilt swept over him and he said to himself that tomorrow, for sure, he was going to buy the box of flea-powder at Johnson's Five and Ten.

The following morning, having been awake earlier than usual to finish their chores on the farm, they were on their way to buy the box of flea-powder. The trolley stopped in front of Johnson's Five and Ten to take on more passengers. A clock within the store was visible from the trolley. "Hey, Yuki, onny about twelve o'clock," Satoshi said pointing to the clock. "What you say we go see movies first."

"Movies? Where? Downtown?"

"Yeah. We can buy da flea-powder when we comin' back."

"Uh-h, boy, we go quick!"

They had seen the movies and at three thirty were out of the theater, seated on a trolley homeward bound. The sun was warm. The song of the speeding tires was like a lullaby. A lazy, drowsy sensation crept over them. Satoshi slouched down in the soft seat and closed his eyes. Yuki stared in front of him, his eyes half-closed. Twenty minutes passed. Satoshi remained nestled in his seat. Yuki stared drowsily at the bright red and yellow hibiscus stuck in a woman's smooth blonde hair in front of him. Presently the woman's hand reached out and began scratching her head. A thought struck Yuki; he came to life.

"Fleas—," he said. The young woman's hand dropped down swiftly to her side. "Hey, Satoshi, wake up. We stay in Kaimuki already."

"Huh?"

"We got to buy flea-powder—for Blackie."

"Oh, yeah!" Satoshi glanced outside. "Pull da buzzer quick." Yuki yanked the cord. The trolley stopped just across from Johnson's Five and Ten. They rushed off the trolley, hurried across the street and into the store.

When they reached home about four their father stood waiting for them at the front door. "Put that truck in the garage before it gets dark," he said to Satoshi.

"Okay." Satoshi turned to his little brother. "Now at las'," he said, "we goin' put da flea-powder on Blackie. Here, take dis flea-powder an' wait for me by da garage. I goin' put da truck in."

Satoshi walked to the old truck parked up the road which ran beside and in front of their house and into the garage. He jumped on and as he pressed the clutch pedal and put the gear in neutral, Blackie crawled out from under the truck to his accustomed place in the front of the truck, intending to escort it to the entrance of the garage. Down the small incline the truck began to roll, slowly at first, then gradually gaining momentum. The dog romped merrily in front of the truck, pausing now and then to bite into his flesh or scratch behind his ears.

"Doggone crazy dog," Satoshi muttered as he nearly struck the dog once.

Suddenly, with an angry, painful whine, Blackie dropped his hind quarters to the ground and fiercely began to scratch the side of his ribs. The truck rolled on. "Look out, Satoshi, Blackie!" An agonizing cry. A sudden screeching of brakes. Satoshi jumped out of the truck. Yuki dashed over. A moment of speechless watching and silent suffering followed.

“Why you never tell me stop more quick, you,” Satoshi said bitterly.

“No can help. He been stop too quick in front da tire—was too late.”

“See, look now. Blackie dead. ’At’s your fault, you know.”

“’At’s not my fault. You been run over him.”

“Why you never tell me stop more quick, den? ’At’s your fault. If you been tell me stop more quick, I no was goin’ hit ’em.”

“I no care. ’At’s your fault you no like buy da flea-powder more quick ’at’s why.”

“Ah-h, shullup. You never buy ’em, too. ’At’s your fault, too.”

“’At’s not my fault. I never drive da truck.”

“You like get lickin’. I said ’at’s your fault.”

“I no care. I never—”

“*Shullup*, I said. You like get black eye. I said ’at’s your fault—you never tell me stop more quick.”

“I never drive da truck.”

“Hey, you! You get sassy some more, I goin’—ah, look! Blackie movin’. He no dead. He shakin’ his leg. Look!”

“’At’s right! Look. He sittin’ down now. He lookin’ at us.”

“Yeah, ’at’s right, Ah, look, he *scratchin’* again! *Queek*, Yuki, gimme da flea-powder—.”

Philip K. Ige

About The Contributors

BLACK DOG (Michael D. Among), according to close sources, is also **DANCING BEAR** **EARL COOPER** rides Black Bart up and down Kalanianaʻole Highway; the rest of the time he goes around saying, “I Ching!” **MARSHALL DOI** was born in Paauhau, Hawaii and graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1970 **KARL ICHIDA** was born in Sacramento, California and grew up in Honolulu, where he now practices law **PHIL IGE** is Provost of Leeward Community College **GARY KISSICK**, formerly gary kissick, is on the faculty of Hawaii Loa College **TONY LEE** runs his octopi through the washing machine to make them soft **JODY MANABE** was once a sequined strumpet **PATRICIA MATSUEDA**, editor of the *Hawaii Literary Arts Council Newsletter*, publishes local writing; she does not carry a gun **VALENTINO RAMIREZ** says that Rimbaud says, “Dress up, dance, laugh,” and he vows never to throw his loves out windows **PATSY SAIKI** is the author of *Sachie*, a novel **FRANK STEWART**, who prefers that no biographical information be given on him, would kill me if I said anything about him; so I won’t even mention **FRANK STEWART** **GARY TACHIYAMA** has the best avocados in Makiki **JO ANN UCHIDA** is tall **MUFFIE WEBB** was once a flamingo floozy **WAYNE WESTLAKE** would have thrown in the towel many times, were it not for “the power of papaya.”

ABOUT THE EDITORS

ERIC CHOCK is currently selling the celebrated ‘64 Valiant “Bamboo Ridge (metallic blue on rust white)” staff car. Let him take you for a ride!

DARRELL H.Y. LUM is the proud husband of **MAE A. LUM** who, on August 4, 1978, became the proud mother of **LISA TERUMI KWAI OI (TKO) LUM**. A knockout!

JODY MANABE absolutely refuses to reveal her source!

(Q & A)

“... to make a poem glisten with sunlight yet be unpretentious. Is that possible?”—**KI**

“Poetry is papaya—one must wait patiently for it to ripe.”—**WW**

Ten Thousand Wishes by Eric Chock

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