

DIAMOND JOURNAL



Fall 2003

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Editors

Cheri Scott
Dylan Little

Advisor

Mark Lawhorn

Table of Contents

“A Friend Loves At All Times, And A Brother Is Born for Adversity”	1
(Proverbs 17:17)	
<i>Anonymous</i>	
Ice	4
<i>David Bright</i>	
Shack Attack	8
<i>Arist de Wolff</i>	
Angel at Del Mar Lagoon	11
<i>Gina Evans</i>	
Faded Blue Levi Denim Fleece Jacket	16
<i>Anna Lisa B. Gacusan</i>	
Result: Failure	22
<i>Joann C.T. Galendez</i>	
Clear Enemy	25
<i>Lorene L. Glisson</i>	
Ending Up More like Blue Crushed	28
<i>Jennifer Hernandez</i>	
Jaded	34
<i>Kawehi Haug</i>	
Losing My Shadow	39
<i>Joli Kenny</i>	
It’s Kaukau Time	48
<i>Mary-Frances Kuulei Kuahine</i>	
The Bus Enlivened	50
<i>Dominique Martinez</i>	

Infidelity	53
<i>Lori Medeiros</i>	
Trapped	58
<i>Vanessa Morton</i>	
The Holocaust was Responsible for The Holocaust: Tales from a Lack-of-Sleep Veteran	61
<i>Candace Okamura</i>	
Flickering Memories	67
<i>Jason Ordenstein</i>	
A Walk Through A Dark Scene	70
<i>Danielle Reghi</i>	
An Unforgettable Beach Day	73
<i>Shauna Sanborn</i>	
Evolution of a Cyclist	76
<i>Cheri Scott</i>	
My Brush	83
<i>Yufei Rishelle Zhou</i>	

**“A Friend Loves at All Times,
and a Brother Is Born for Adversity”
(Proverbs 17:17)**

Anonymous

I am the third child in a family of six children. For over a decade, I have lived away from my family. I have grown distant from them and their day-to-day lifestyle. Before I left, I knew our home environment to be volatile and alcoholic. While I was away, I became numb to the outbursts that had occurred in the past. I was ignorant of the fighting that was going on, and I had forgotten the life I used to live. Two years ago, though, one summer night, I was reacquainted with the family feuds that ignited suddenly and for no reason.

In the past, my stepfather and my mother would argue and fight relentlessly into the night. Some nights you could hear the yelling, often with petty questions like, “Where were you?” “Why weren’t you home when I called?” You could hear objects smashing against the wall, dismantling as they would fall to the ground. On other nights, the sounds were worse. You could hear my mother being slapped, then eventually, punched. The fist’s impact against the body made a dull, morbid thud. At the end of my stepfather’s exercise, you might hear a moan or soft crying. The worst sound to hear was absolute silence. This summer’s fight, though, was between brother and sister.

When I left home, my younger brother and sister, Matt and Michele, were 13 and 10. They were impressionable, respectful, and still obedient to my parents. As they grew older, they grew more and more intolerant of each other because of a chaotic home life.

In their teen years, Matt was obviously and consistently favored by my mother. Michele, on the other hand, was regularly criticized by my mother, who almost never defended Michele against her brother, even when Michele was right. Matt was allotted privileges that Michele was later denied. If Mom was upset with Matt, her privileges were even more restricted. For example, if Mom was mad at Matt for breaking his curfew, then Michele could not go out with her friends. It was usual for Michele to receive the brunt of Mom’s frustrations and anger that were caused by Matt. In turn, this favoritism created a rivalry between brother and sister like that between Cain and Abel.

By their early twenties, both Matt and Michele had become parents. Their rivalry continued as their children were used as objects to compare and criticize each other. In

the case of this fight, Michele's son, Darryl, became the target of Matt's criticism. Most assuredly, Matt's criticisms were directed at Michele just out of spite.

Two years ago, Darryl was 5 years old. He was small and thin for his age. Matt's daughter, Heidi, was a rough and tumble tomboy, 3 years old. She was tall and husky for her age. As is common among children, they fussed over the possession of a toy. Matt jumped in and told Heidi to give Darryl the toy. He called Darryl a fag and a baby. Moderately intoxicated, Matt continued to declare, "Darryl is a fag. He's nothing but a fag. Just like his mother, Darryl is a big baby." Uncomfortable with this entire situation, I calmly said to Matt, "That's enough." But he was relentless, even provoked by my interference to make his declaration resounding, as if everyone in the house had not already heard.

Ironically, there were quite a few people in the house. Uncle Joe was visiting from Florida, son Joe was accompanying him. My stepfather, "Big Jack," was in the next room, sitting with Uncle Joe, but within earshot of Matt's parade. "Little Jack," my other brother, was on the patio. Michele was doing laundry and trying hard not to explode in front of our visiting relatives, as her child fell prey to a demoralizing uncle. I had come from the kitchen onto the patio, where Matt was now declaring, "Darryl is a fag."

Despite my requests for Matt to stop taunting the child, he would not stop. Michele made her demands for Matt to leave her son alone. He ignored her. He seemed almost delighted to have started a ruckus. His glare and stance seemed to be asking for a fight. The tension in the air that night was thick. The humidity was nothing in comparison.

Then, all of a sudden, my loud mouthed cousin, Joe, made a comment to Michele. He told her to leave Matt alone. Joe made a big mistake. In the blink of an eye, Michele dropped her basket of clothes, whirled around, and came charging down the steps right in front of Matt's face. She swung her fists at him a few times and would have connected with his jaw and chest had Joe not blocked the blows with his own body. "Little Jack" rushed in to hold Matt back from taking his shots at Michele. All the while, they were screaming profanities and hurling insults at each other. I was stunned at the explosion of emotions. I had forgotten the drama that used to take place there.

I don't recall how Joe and "Little Jack" got Michele to stop taking swings at Matt and go her separate way. I can recall that Matt was still looking for a fight. With Michele gone from the scene, I became the object of his contempt. He started to pick another fight.

"Just shut up, already," I said. His eyes grew larger. His face turned beet red. I could almost see his blood boiling beneath his skin.

“You, shut up,” he said. “If you don’t like it, you can get the hell out of here. Go back to California!” He was moving in on me as he spoke. His right arm was rising up to the side of his head as though he was going to thrust his fist into my face.

“Go ahead,” I said. “Hit me.” I could hardly believe what was happening in those few moments. I could hardly believe what was coming out of my mouth. I sized Matt up in my mind. He was more than twice my size and very powerful. I knew, if he hit me, I was going to hit the ground. But, I wasn’t afraid of him. I wasn’t afraid of the pain he could have inflicted on me. My nephew’s well being was more important than Matt’s antics.

I’m not sure what stopped him, but Matt did not hit me.

That night, I remembered this proverb. “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity” (Proverbs 17:17). My brother was certainly born for adversity. Adversity, just like my brother, was valuable to our lives. It allowed us to experience personal growth and become stronger individuals. Michele is living proof. She endured unfair treatment in her life, and she learned from it. She learned to stand up for herself. She learned to respect herself. She became self-sufficient, reliable, and responsible. She became a remarkable young mother.

Ice

David Bright

The National Drug Intelligence Center said in its assessment that methamphetamine, particularly high purity crystal methamphetamine also known as “ice,” poses the greatest drug threat to Hawaii. Doug Althaus, chemical coordinator at Kaiser Permanente Hawaii says that “ice is to methamphetamine what crack was to cocaine” (qtd. in Tighe 10). Smoking is the preferred method for using the drug, although some have been known to either shoot or snort it. This drug has many different names like battue, clear, ice, crystal, and speed; to name a few. Crystal adversely affects every part of a user’s life - physically, mentally, and spiritually, for the worst. **I believe the more knowledge people have of this terrible drug and the consequences of using it, the less likely they would be ever to try it.**

I grew up in Hawaii and remember the days before ice hit the streets. There were a lot of people that smoked pot, and a few that did harder drugs like cocaine, LSD and heroin. People in those days were a lot mellower. This is not to say that we did not have problems like any other state. Still, life seemed to be pretty good in the islands. But this would all change when the slow, laid back Hawaiian lifestyle was introduced to the fast paced destructive world of ice. Many people that at one time may have only smoked weed or grown it and sold it are now hooked on ice.

Lori Tighe of the Honolulu Star Bulletin says in her article, “Hawaii’s Habit,” “When isle pot smokers were introduced to ice, they latched onto a drug that would sear the nervous system, the heart and the brain, possibly irreparably” (8). She is right. I don’t think most people that try ice really know what they are in for, and by the time they realize what they have gotten into, it is too late or they’re in deep trouble. Today a person can find a gram of ice more easily than a gram of marijuana.

Ice can become a physical addiction after only one try. In Tighe’s Star Bulletin story she interviews a user, Rhonda, who said, “It’s addictive. It hooks you the first try” (5). The physical harm caused to the user is immense. An Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) report says, “Crystal methamphetamine, when taken with other drugs including alcohol, greatly increases the risk of overdose and death” (1). The poisonous chemicals used in making the drug, such as acetone, denatured alcohol, and red phosphorus are used to cook down the meth into the crystal form of the drug. Dr. Pablo Stewart, chief of psychiatry at the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic in San Francisco says, “The vapors enter the lungs, explode into the bloodstream and shoot to the brain in six seconds.”

When smoking ice, one's brain suffers terrible damage as the drug literally burns holes into the brain leaving it looking like a bombed out and torched landscape.

The drug is also very bad for the heart Stewart says, "Ice disrupts the body's ability to sleep and then forces the body to run on energy it doesn't have" (10). The human heart can only take so much. The relentless pace set by the drug and the lack of sleep pushes the heart to very dangerous limits and even heart failure.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that, "other effects of methamphetamine include respiratory problems, irregular heartbeat, and extreme anorexia" (1). The fact that users don't have an appetite when they smoke ice appeals to some users at first when they seem to be losing those pounds they could never take off. Althaus says, "Usage leads to premature aging of the body and skin, and malnutrition from not eating" (10). Then one day they look into the mirror and see a person that is starving to death with a bad heart, bad lungs, and a damaged brain that won't go to sleep. Mason Henderson of the Sand Island Treatment Center says, "Many ice users' teeth fall out at a younger age. Some users also experience asthma symptoms—difficulty breathing, sore throats and wheezing" (10).

One thing I have seen on users of methamphetamine is a rash of sores that break out all over the user's skin. Users often pick at their skin, causing sores that get infected, scarring the face forever. Ice users chance serious problems such as heart failure, stroke, and permanent brain damage every time they use ice. Even years after a user quits they still experience heart problems and have a lot of trouble breathing for the rest of their lives.

Ice puts more people on the streets and in jail than any other drug I know. I have seen so many good men and women turned into something less than human. The effects on a user's mental state are like night and day. Henderson also says, "It's the worst drug, because of its psychotic and violent effects" (9).

I have friends that smoke ice and now seem to live in a world of paranoia and say they see things that are not really there. Once in a while I see a person I grew up with on the streets screaming and violently throwing punches at something that does not really exist. This is the sad scene acted out over and over by users of ice that have become schizophrenic. Some never do recover. Even after quitting the drug, they later still suffer from serious mental illness. In a *Star Bulletin* article Stewart said, "Speed-induced psychosis lasts days, months, and years" (qtd. in Tighe 11).

Ice has a way of making everything seem possible. The user's mind is tricked into believing the chemical-induced visions of grandeur that one feels while using the

drug. This happens when the mind is flooded with a natural chemical in the brain called dopamine. Karl Taro Greenfeld of *Time* says, "Researchers now report that as much as 50% of the dopamine-producing cells in the brain can be damaged after prolonged exposure to relative low levels of methamphetamine" (32). Low levels of dopamine cause the user to feel just the opposite of the drug's chemical lie. Instead users can fall into very dangerous depression with the only escape being that which made the user depressed in the first place.

After a while the user becomes violent at times. Dr. Stewart says, "Ice is the No.1 drug among 90 percent of parents who abuse or neglect their children" (Tighe 11). I know some people that were mellow and generally good-hearted until they started using ice. Now they always seem to be in trouble with the law. A few of them have been put in jail for beating their wives. Dr. Stewart says, "Ice affects a part the brain responsible for impulse control, which causes violence" (10). People that use ice are very unpredictable. They seem to be living in a "Jekyll and Hyde" state of mind.

Crystal methamphetamine is so addicting that most users will sell everything they own to get another hit of ice. But this goes even further; the grip of addiction is so strong that people will resort to a life of crime. A user's desire to stay high leads them headlong into theft, prostitution, and they themselves becoming ice dealers. Every person I know that has gotten into ice has eventually turned to some kind of criminal activity. The Hawaii Drug Threat assessment says, "Honolulu had the highest percentage of adult male arrestees who tested positive for methamphetamine among cities reporting to the arrestee drug abuse monitoring program in 2000" (1).

When police raid ice dealers' houses, they usually find everything from movie passes, DVD's, to guns and motorcycles. Ice users will take anything that is not bolted down to the dealers, even if it only gets them one hit. Nothing is sacred to an ice addict. It so sad to see people be so desperately in need of more ice that a wife will sell her wedding ring or trade her whole china set for a few hits of ice. A father that has rent to pay and a wife and children to feed will not think twice about spending his whole check on ice after taking a hit.

Ice affects a person to the core of the innermost self. At first, ice preys on feelings that a lot of us have in everyday life. Where once a person had low self-esteem or insecurities such as being too shy or just not being able to keep up the pace of everyday life, now ice users feel they could do all these things. Ice plays on every weakness a person may have, and I don't know a person that does not have some sort of weakness. It's all part of being human. When a person takes a hit of ice for the first time, everything seems so clear. The problems of the world seem almost to be solved in the short time it takes to blow

out that first hit.

The trap of ice is filled with hope, happiness, and the promise that the answer to life is just one hit away. This is the sad lie that people sell their souls for. Crystal methamphetamine will rob a user of everything that is good in life: family, friends, and their happiness. Ice has a way of turning people into something less than human and robbing them of all that is good. A young man I know who now lives on the streets told me that all he needs is a hit and it's all good. But I have seen that good has nothing to do with it. In fact with ice it's all bad. And in the end it will rob the users of their love, happiness, and dignity.

I feel that the best way to help people stay away from ice is by educating the public. Especially in the schools, younger students could benefit from information on the harms that the use of ice would cause them and everyone around them. People need to know that ice will never make anything better, only worse. The only thing that a person will succeed in by doing crystal methamphetamine is the sad destruction of his or her own life.

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Shack Attack

Arist deWolff

Places don't usually leave lasting impressions on me. I have spent many times at school in the classroom, and I don't have any feelings of sorrow when I leave after class. I also work at a construction yard, and when I finish work at the end of the day, I don't wish I could go back to the yard and cruise. I don't hold any special feelings for that place. As for the shack where many of my younger days were spent, however, I have very strong feelings. The shack is part of my life, not just a little old run down shack in the heart of Palolo Valley; it is part of me and who I am.

The shack was not always the place my friends and I would go. My friend Damien and I would usually just venture off into the bushes and check out little red and green lizards and try to find the black and yellow colored bird who used to sing so sweetly to us all the time. Damien has been a good friend of mine ever since I met him at Kalani High School. He had an interesting mix of ethnicities; his father was a cool-headed full Korean and his mother a crazy, always energized, Danish woman. I think this mix is where Damien gets his complex personality. He was a good kindhearted kid, and everytime I saw his radiant smile, he brought a smile to my face. He was a physically fit kid, muscular and stronger than an ox. He had forearms that made Popeye look like a schoolgirl and a head that made the Homo Erectus fossil skulls look miniscule in comparison. He probably got in this peak condition from all the farm work he did for his family. If you ever saw Damien, you might think he was an old man already because of the intense scarring on his arms and hands and because his physical condition made him look a lot older than he was. Damien was extremely logical in the way he worked; he did things systematically. I always watched him work when I went to cruise with him. Sometimes I would help, and other times I would talk story while he picked Luau (Taro leaf). Watching him work made me think of the times I used to work for my uncle on Kauai Ranch and how hard I had to work. I always respected Damien for the hard work he did for his family, work that most other kids would not even dream of doing. What I liked best about Damien was his "don't worry, be happy" attitude towards life. He loved to laugh and have a good time. Damien and I spent most of our times during those earlier years roaming the jungle and cruising the shack without a care in the world.

Damien had often talked about a shack that his dad had built in the middle of the forest for a tenant to live in. I remember the first time we walked up to the shack nestled under a canopy of trees on a hillside. The vegetation was lush around the shack and Ti leaf trees cluttered my view. When we got closer, I noticed a lanai that connected to the shack

on the makai side that was directly adjacent to an old fire pit made from large and small lava rocks placed in a circular shape. The pit held remnants of old burnt Hau tree branches that Damien's father must have used for a previous fire. The shack was a single room house formed by plywood walls and tree trunk posts. Windows ranging from small to large let light in from all sides of the shack. There was usually not much light, however, because the canopy of trees offered so much shade. I could swear the temperature around the shack was ten degrees cooler. When no one lived there, mosquitoes ruled the shack. The wetness and lushness of the valley made a good mosquito breeding ground. When Damien and I could not take the buzzing around our ears and the bloodshed, we built a small fire in the fire pit to smoke out the mosquitoes and drive them away. After the fire was made, Damien and I looked at each other and wondered aloud how the shack would look with a makeover.

I was so excited I could hardly sleep that night, thinking about all the possible ways we could make the shack better. We started the next day. Meeting early in the morning, we made the five to ten minute walk off the main road into the jungle and headed up to the shack. We had brought with us large trash bags, brooms, hammer, and a stereo so we could listen while we worked. It's funny that this shack in the middle of the forest had running water and electricity. The electrical outlet was supplied by a long extension cord that spanned the valley and had its beginning at another shack on the other side of the valley. When we first got to the shack, the power did not work. So Damien went to find the dysfunctional spot. As he followed the extension cord through the very quiet valley, Damien would stop about every five minutes and yell, "Does it work yet?"

"No!" I would yell back. When he finally found the faulty spot in the cord, the stereo started playing full blast. I jumped because the loudness startled me. Then I heard Damien yell, "Fuck!" I wondered what he was swearing at. When he got back, he explained that he had been running his hand down the cord and found a spot where a rat had chewed through the cord. When he touched the bare wires, he got shocked. I looked at him in disbelief, and we both started to laugh hysterically. But Damien never said it hurt or that he thought he was going to die. He would just say, "Ho, that was crazy" and continue with the task at hand, never skipping a beat, the shock being just a little setback on his tasks for the day.

After we had fixed the extension cord, Damien and I started to deck out the interior of the shack. We started by sweeping out the plywood floors and dusting all the shelves. My mother and I had recarpeted the house and we had lots of extra carpet that Damien and I thought would be good to use in the shack. Soon we had an old dirty shack with white carpet in it. To help with the interior, we put Heineken and Budweiser girl posters over every wall. We would adjust the posters so that when you walked up the two stairs into the shack, you had a view, from right to left, of the best looking girl to the worst looking girl. We still

needed seats for the shack, however, and lucked out on a venture up to Tantalus when we noticed some passenger van bench seats that had been abandoned. We loaded them up in my truck and brought them to the shack. They were very comfortable and could seat four, so we had enough seats for people if they wanted to come over. We positioned them facing each other, one on the mauka side and one on the makai side of the shack. While Damien and I were cleaning and fixing the shack, we would occasionally take rips off a three-foot purple bong that we kept hidden behind the biggest poster of all, which was on the mauka side of the shack against the far right corner over a row of shelves that could not be seen even if you looked right at it. Those shelves served as a crucial hiding spot for things that Damien's father might not approve of. Taking rips of the bong as we cleaned was relaxing, and to be so stoned up in the valley deep in the lush forest was almost spiritual. Having no one around but animals and trees was one of the shack's best qualities.

After we had finished with the shack's renovations, we were free to invite people over for beers and barbecues, to talk story or just cruise. Damien got angry when people thought that, because we were in the valley, it didn't matter if they took their shoes off before walking on the white carpet. To let them know that it did matter, Damien would take the slippers of those who dirtied the carpet and give them a swift toss into the thick bushes where you'd be lucky to find them again.

Damien and I have many fond memories of the shack. After we had finished working on it and had people over to see our creation, we felt that we had accomplished something. We had turned an old rundown shack into a partying clubhouse that we could throw ragers (parties) in. The shack is something I will never forget, and the times spent in the deep forest around friends were priceless. Unlike a special rock or locket, the shack holds the memories of a thousand laughs and hundreds of hours of friendship within its plywood walls. It was an unforgettable place where the walls seemed almost to live through us when we visited the shack. I will always remember when we used to say, "Ehh, we go to the shack."

Angel at Del Mar Lagoon

Gina Evans

As a child I loved playing in water. Every summer since I was four years old my mom would take me to the Del Mar Lagoon in the Huntington Beach area. It was always just Mom and me, spending time together, until one summer I decided to invite a friend to come along with us. I knew that it was going to be a fun day, but I didn't know it was going to be a day that I would never forget.

It was a Sunday morning in Long Beach, California, and I woke up earlier than usual, partly because the sun was beaming through the window and warming my face like a heater used during wintertime. I was only in first grade and six years old, but I was very excited that I didn't have to go to school for the next couple of months. Summer was in and school was out! My mom and I had set up so many plans for that summer. One of our special outings was to head out to the Del Mar Lagoon and go swimming all day. For the first day of summer break, that's what we did.

I had invited Yara, a girl my mom had been babysitting since the beginning of the year. We both were going to Sutter Elementary School together. She was a year younger than I was, but we got along fairly well. I told her about Del Mar Lagoon and she was just as excited about going as I was.

From my bedroom I heard "Unforgettable" by Nat King Cole playing on the record player in the living room. I got out of bed to see if anyone was there, but I saw no one. I heard voices coming from the kitchen, so I passed the living room and walked straight into the kitchen. I saw my mom, already dressed in her blue swim shorts and white T-shirt, standing at the kitchen counter, making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Yara and me. My dad was sitting at the dining table in his pajamas, keeping my mom company. He had a tired look to his face, probably from staying up late again and playing with that silly chess board game of his. "Gina, why don't you go get your mom her ice cooler," he said, pointing towards the kitchen door.

Without thinking twice, I stepped outside, away from the shade of the house and into the sunlight. I faced the sun with my eyes closed and felt its warmth sink into my skin. A feeling of peace came over me as I stood there. Then I reached down and grabbed the cooler that was at the end of the steps and brought it into the kitchen. My mom took it from me and as she filled it with sandwiches and Coca-Colas, she asked me, "Aren't you going to go get ready?" My heart pounding with excitement, I replied enthusiastically, "Yes, yes

I am.”

I raced to my room and closed the door. I opened a drawer and dug through my clothes looking for my bathing suit, but didn't see it in there. Then I opened another drawer and another and dug through them like I was shoveling dirt. I was down to the last drawer. I kneeled down in front of it and opened it carefully. A feeling of desperation started to build.

I began going through some clothes again. Only this time I took my time and went through my clothes calmly. As I moved my Mickey Mouse pajamas to the side, I found it. I changed into it as fast as I could, and with my bathing suit tags still sticking out, I opened the door and went into the living room to call Yara.

I picked up the phone and dialed Yara's number. After the first ring, her mom answered. "Hello," she said.

"Hi, Mrs. Rodriguez. Is Yara ready?" I asked excitedly.

"Yes, Gina. She's been waiting since 7:30 this morning," she said calmly.

"O.k., my mom and I will be picking her up soon. We'll just honk the horn when we get there," I said.

My mom and I had everything ready. I had my change of clothing in my bag. My mom had the beach towels and the cooler filled with yummy sandwiches and sodas. Yes, sir we were all set. Dad went outside and put our things in the truck while mom checked her list to see if we'd forgotten anything. I gave daddy a kiss and hopped into the truck. Mom got into the driver's side and we waved good-bye to dad as we drove off and joined the other vehicles on the road. We rolled up the windows and turned up the a/c, and in a few minutes the whole truck was filled with the aroma of Banana Boat Lotion.

When we got to Yara's house, my mom honked her horn once, and that's all it took to see her excited face. She ran out with a plastic bag filled with clothes in one hand and a big opened bag of cheese Doritos in the other. Her braided pixie tails with ribbons at the ends bounced as she came towards us. Her face was round like a pancake. Her mouth covered in the orange cheese powder of the Doritos. I opened the door and welcomed her.

"My mom says I should share my Doritos with you. So, do you want some?" she said.

“Cool!” I replied, while reaching into the bag of chips.

Yara closed the door on her side with her Doritos fingers and left orange-like marks on the handle. My mom noticed the stains and didn’t say anything except, “Are you girls ready?”

We screamed “Yes!” with excitement, and with that we were back on the road.

While my mom drove us to the beach, Yara and I played patty cake and sang “Where is Thumpkin.” It was such a perfect day, perfect as any summer day can get. Time went by pretty quickly, and before we knew it, we were looking for a place to park at the lagoon parking lot.

“We’re here, girls,” my mom said enthusiastically.

“Yippee!” I added.

We found a parking spot under a tree. As soon as my mom finished parking, Yara and I jumped out of the truck and headed towards the lagoon. When our feet reached the warm sand, we stopped to wait for my mom.

It was still early when we got there, and yet the sun was strong. My mom trailed behind us with the ice cooler and our bags of clothes. Once her sandals touched the sand where we were waiting, she stopped and put the cooler down for a second. With her hands on her waist, she took a long deep breath. A smile formed on her delicate pale face and a distant look set in her eyes, as if she were remembering some treasured memories. Then she walked over to a cool spot underneath a tree and settled our things.

“Come here, girls,” she said, bending down and reaching into my bag. “Let’s put on some more lotion before you go out into the water.” She added, “Yara, you first. Come here.”

Yara walked towards my mother as though she was getting ready to get punished for something she did wrong. Yara never liked putting on anything that smelled good. If she could have, she would have worn the same clothes all her life.

“Come on, Yara,” my mom said in an inspiring tone. “The sooner you put it on, the sooner you can go.” Yara finally reached my mom and my mom then put lotion on her.

I was next, and I was ready. I stood perfectly still so I wouldn’t prolong the process.

As my mom smothered me with the lotion, I stared at the lagoon. The water glistened with intensity from the sun's reflection and gave the impression of thousands of floating stars on the surface. Somehow, from where I was standing, it had a magical appearance.

"O.k., all done," mom said. It was as though she had said, "Get ready, get set, go!" I was off with Yara. We both screamed at the top of our lungs, racing towards the water. We splashed into the water, spraying water all around. Then suddenly, we noticed as we bounced around that some parts in the sand were higher and some other parts were lower. Yara held my hand as we slowed down and walked more cautiously. We walked further in and the water began to rise to the level of our thighs. Then we walked in more and the water went down to our knees. We stepped in deeper and it went lower than our kneecaps. I then took a larger step and not feeling the sand beneath the water, I fell into a large hole, pulling Yara with me by the hand.

The next thing I knew I was under water, and I couldn't see a thing. The water covered me completely from head to toe, and all I could see was black all around me. The moment my feet touched the bottom, I jumped up and managed to get a quick breath of air from the surface. I tried jumping again when Yara came towards me like a scared cat.

She grabbed me by the arm, and I pushed, pinched, and scratched her hard to get her away, but she managed to get on my back and put her legs around on my shoulders. She sat there in a frozen position, while I tried to jump to get some air again. She just sat there while I stretched my arms out in hope that someone would see me. The witch just sat there!

After a couple of seconds, I tried pushing Yara off again, but with no success. I even dug my nails into her skin in desperation that she would call out for rescue, but it didn't work. I struggled some more to get her off me, but I was beginning to get tired. I was underwater with no help, while she was up there breathing the sweet fresh air that I so longed for.

Defeated, scared, and running out of air, I was panicking more now. I tried to reach out to the surface one more time. This time I could feel the cold wind pass through my fingers, and I knew that at least my hand could reach the surface. Excitement filled my heart, and so I splashed and splashed and opened my mouth to cry out, but bubbles came out instead and water went in. I quickly swallowed the salty water that got in and shut my mouth again. The taste was like a bottle of salt poured down my throat. I tried once more to remove Yara from my back but she didn't budge. I could not believe she was not doing anything to get help!

Suddenly my shoulders no longer felt heavy and my feet weren't so deep in the sand anymore. I felt pressure in my armpits and someone lifted me out of the water. Then I felt a big chest against my body as one big arm held me up from my behind. A kind masculine face appeared in front of mine as I finished rubbing water from my eyes. "I got you," he said in a gentle voice. Then he asked me, "Are you all right?"

I was in the arms of a complete stranger. I couldn't answer him. I was scared, coughing and still catching my breath. I heard my mother from afar screaming, "Gina!" "Gina!" a frantic tone in her voice. She ran towards me and grabbed me out of the man's arms and carried me away to where she had all of our belongings, under the tree. She reached for a towel from my bag and wrapped me in it. As she picked me up again holding me tightly, I turned to look for the man who had rescued me.

I could see him clearly now as he turned away from the area in which he had held me for a second. He was thin, moderately built with dark skin, and as he jogged back to his post, his red shorts made him stand out from the rest of the crowd. When he reached his post, he sat in his chair and faced the lagoon. Not once did he look our way in search for some recognition. This stranger had saved my life, and I had not even thanked him.

My mom didn't thank him either. She got Yara, who was waiting at the shore safely, and me, and we packed up our things and left. Neither mom nor I ever mentioned what happened that day to my dad until a few years ago. I guess subconsciously we didn't want to re-experience the whole event.

Now whenever I go to any place that allows swimming and I see a lifeguard watching people from his post, I think of the man who saved my life and I smile. I think of how many lives he may have saved. I wish I had learned that man's name. It would be nice to let him know that I greatly appreciate what he did for me.

Faded Blue Levi Denim Fleece Jacket

Anna Lisa B. Gacusan

You know that pair of faded blue jeans with the hole right by the butt that you somehow just can't throw away? Oh yeah, you know the one. I know you're feeling me! We all have it, that one significant article of clothing that we just can't give up, that we just can't seem to part with. Even when it's screaming out at you, "Put me out of my misery!" you pretend that you can't hear it. How could you go through life without it? Like the tattered, smelly, old security blanket of many toddlers, you find solace, receive the comfort, and gain the confidence to make it through another day of life with this one addiction that you have.

In my high school years, my so-called "security blanket" was my faded blue Levi denim fleece jacket. Back then, it was the "in" thing to have, and everybody who was anybody had to have one. I had the honor of having three, one in gray, another in black, and of course, my old reliable faded denim blue.

In its pockets, I stored my treasures: always a beat up, half-empty box of Kool Mild's, a lighter, and a pack of Zig Zag's for the occasional "burning" sessions. Once, my mother had been thoughtful enough to take my jacket and wash it, but, in the end, it had only caused her pain. When she emptied out the pockets, she found my pack of Zig Zag's. She went ballistic on me as soon as I walked through the front door that day after school. Of course, being the punk kid that I was back then, I denied every accusation that was thrown at me. I don't think she ever believed me, though.

Back on Kauai where I come from, being a teenager is really a critical time. Either you sink or you swim. Although I can't remember the exact date and time, or even what day of the week it was, I do remember what happened, and perhaps, I will never forget. In fact, I remember the events so well that every so often they come back to haunt me.

My girlfriend, Marla, and I were sitting in her garage smoking half of a joint and killing time before we had to go to school. She was my buddy, way back to "small-kid" time friendships. She was a year younger than I was, but ironically, she was the one who had introduced me to my first cigarette, my first joint and my first experience of the joys and thrills of alcohol.

This one morning found us particularly bored, and as we sat there getting high, we were dreading another day of school. We were contemplating the possibility of cutting

school, but then she had another bright idea. She proposed that we have a few drinks before school started, just so school would be a little bit less painful. I decided that it was an excellent idea.

“Eh, try wait. I get some Schnapps stashed in da closet, brah!” and she ran into her room to get it. She walked out the front door of her house, face beaming as she held up an almost full bottle of Peppermint Schnapps. In her other hand, she carried her Levi jacket, and she stuffed the bottle into one of its front pockets as we got into her car.

By this time, I was feeling the effects of the joint and as we drove to school, I told her to stop at my house so I could check out the stash that my parents had. “Try go my house fas’ kine, I like go check’m out. Can?”

We then stopped over at my house, and I ran inside the house looking for anything containing alcohol, besides the one you put on cuts. I found a gallon of Spanada wine sitting by the sink and grabbed it on my way out the door. I jumped back into Marla’s car and showed her what I had found. “Brah, whatchu think, too big, eh? Bumbye we gon get busted, lidat!”

“Nah can, can handle. Just drink’m one time den pau,” she said.

Little did I know, as I held on to that liquor bottle, trying to shove it within the confines of my Levi jacket, that the bottle would seal our fate at the end of the day. I must have been really dense, just plain desperate, or stoned stupid not to see the obvious as the gallon of liquor protruded from my buttoned up jacket. Nonetheless, it was a great big recipe for trouble that we would surely face during the course of the day.

It was about a five-minute ride to our local high school, so we cruised with the stereo on high and the bass pounding into our bodies. Boom, boom! Bopping our heads to the beat of the music, we giggled from the joint we had earlier and probably because we were about to do some evil deeds and the thrill was getting to us. It was almost insane to think about!

Reaching our high school, we see our friends waving at us as we drive past them with the windows rolled down halfway and the dark tint hiding everything but our shaded eyes. After a couple of drive by’s, it was almost 7:45, so we decided to park the car and sneak into one of the bathrooms of the intermediate campus to do our little “chug-a-lug” business.

“Brah, we going be late fo’ class!”

Of course, Marla, being the epitome of cool, casually and so nonchalantly tells me, "No worries, brah. Just relax." We jump out of the car and proceed with our plans.

On our way to the bathroom, my younger sister and her friends wave to us as we pass by. On this side of the campus, high school students are "big time," so it's really cool to wave at somebody who's from the other side of campus when you're an intermediate student. I'm trying to act cool and walk by with nobody noticing the bulge in the side of my jacket.

However, my sister can't resist the obvious and says, "Whatchu get insai your jacket?"

My sister, the world's biggest tattler, will bust my ass in a heartbeat, so I play dumb and tell her, "My books. Why?"

"No look like books! How come you neva use your back pack?" she asks.

"Cuz I neva like, dat's why," I tell her.

Just a couple of yards away from our destination, we say goodbye to my sister and her friends and walk down the hall and into the girls' bathroom.

Inside the bathroom, the floor tile is a dull yellow, almost muddy brown from the abuse and wear and tear of students tramping in and out of it through the years. The walls are also faded yellow, but ironically, they are polished and you can see a dull reflection of yourself as you move around the bathroom. There are five stalls, one of which is used for handicapped students, and we choose this stall to huddle in because of its larger size.

"Hurry up, hurry up!" Marla half shrieks in a whisper, as I open up my Levi jacket to remove the bottle.

Our adrenalin is pumping as we twist off the cap and naughtily take our first sip. The warm sensation of the wine burning a slow path down to my stomach soothes me, and I start to relax. Taking a couple of shots of the Schnapps, my stomach begins to churn as the mixture of the two different liquors starts to make me feel a bit queasy. By the time the first period bell rings, we have about a fourth of the gallon left to finish and we've already given up on the Schnapps, preferring the wine.

This is when we make our first mistake: we panic. All of a sudden, not wanting to be tardy for class, Marla decides it is definitely time to go. Perhaps the close confines of

the bathroom, or maybe the mixture of the alcohols, or maybe still, the alcohol mixed with the effects of the joint we smoked earlier that morning, lead us to panic. Suddenly, we feel claustrophobic. Shoving the bottle back into the “security” of my Levi jacket, I button it shut still thinking that somehow nobody will notice.

“Come on, brah, let’s go!” Marla tells me. We wobble our way to the door, and just as she shoves the front door open, she does an about face and heads right back in.

“Holy shit, Kawane stay outside, brah! Hide da stuff!” We scramble around the bathroom looking for a place to hide our illegal goods and realize we have totally caged ourselves in. There is nowhere to go and no place to hide.

We hear a knock on the door and the voice of the principal, and at this point, all I really want to do is faint. The effects of the joint, the wine and the Schnapps are hitting me, and I’m standing there trying to figure out how not to get busted. So, in my condition, I do the lamest thing ever imaginable and try with the best of my efforts to conceal the great big bottle of Spanada wine behind the skinny skeleton of the porcelain goddess, just hoping that maybe, just maybe, our principal will be blind and not see it. Scrambling out of the bathroom stall, I hear the knocking becoming louder, but even in my buzzed state of mind I feel the fear. I look at Marla, and I can read in her eyes that shit is definitely about to hit the fan.

Outside the bathroom door, I hear our names, “Gacusan and Bodano, get outside right now!” Sadly and sickeningly, the principal already knows us by name. We’ve been to his office enough times for him to remember us. In our inebriated condition, we silently file out of the bathroom while the principal bombards us with questions as we step out into the dark hallway.

“What are you ladies doing in there? Don’t you guys have to be getting to class on your side of the campus?” he asks us.

“Yeah, we going class, just had to go use da bathroom fast kine,” Marla says.

By this time a small audience has formed around us, and the sheer humiliation in combination with the alcohol boiling in my bloodstream adds to the flush in the color of my face. Mr. Kawane is not stupid. I mean he is the principal for a reason.

“So, you mean to tell me that if I walk into this bathroom, I ain’t gonna find anything that’s not supposed to be here?” he asks.

My eyeballs want to roll to the back of my head, and this voice inside me is screaming, "*Don't go in there, please, don't go in there!!!*" But to no avail. He walks right through the door into the girls' bathroom. I see the intermediate students looking at us, along with my sister and her friends, and all of a sudden, I don't think we can be defined as "cool" anymore. What we are is totally fucked!

Stepping out of the bathroom into the hallway, Mr. Kawane returns with the bottle of wine. As if confiscating evidence from a crime scene, he has a pen inserted into the finger handle of the Spanada wine bottle, almost as if he does not want to touch the bottle and contaminate the evidence. All he is missing are the latex gloves; otherwise, he could be a forensic scientist. Carrying the bottle above his head, he sloshes around the leftover liquor inside the bottle. At this point, the first period tardy bell starts ringing. I don't know whether that bell will save us or kill us.

Before excusing the audience full of students, Mr. Kawane decides to address them and make a freak show out of us. Looking at them and then pointing at us, he says, "You guys think drinking is cool. Well, look at these girls. They ain't so cool, now, huh? You guys bring this stuff to school and you guys will get busted!" He is on a roll now, so he raises the gallon of Spanada wine and does a full circle turn, the kind that models make on a fashion show runway, and shows the alcohol bottle to everybody within viewing distance. After completely humiliating and embarrassing us, he glares at us and says just one word,

"OFFICE!"

That one word pretty much ended our day. We were suspended for a couple of days, given detention for weeks, and were forever placed on the principal's shit list. Isn't it funny that when things like that happen they're not so funny at the moment? It's only after the fact that these memories can become something we can laugh about.

That day, for me, is classic! It has burned a hole in my memory so deep and dark that I'll bet even amnesia can't make me forget it. After getting busted, I remember sitting in the principal's office waiting for my mother to come and get me. I didn't know what I was more afraid of, my mother's wrath or the person that I was becoming or choosing to become. I sat there and knew that I would do my best not to make the same stupid mistake again.

Nonetheless, through the course of my high school years, I visited the principal's office time and time again for other wrong doings. I got into a couple of fights, swore at a teacher, didn't complete my detention and committed a whole bunch of other misdemeanors.

However, no other incident compares to the one of the Levi fleece jacket. That day the warmth of my faded blue Levi fleece jacket was not enough to warm the chill inside my heart. It was a scary kind of cold. It's the chill you begin to feel when you start growing up and learning from life experiences either to become a better person or stay a child forever.

Over the years, the jacket became a passing fad and disappeared as other "in" fashions replaced the old. In the passing years, I learned to find comfort in other things, like the comfort you find when you learn more about yourself. Think about it. Why wear a fleece jacket in Hawaii anyway when it's way too hot?

Result: Failure

Joann C.T. Galendez

He just looked at me and struggled to find the strength to talk. But after 14 months of chemotherapy and radiation, he was so frail. He didn't have to say a word. I knew it was time. I stood up from his side and stood over him. I caressed his head ever so gently and whispered to him, with a tear rolling down my cheek, that it was okay. "You can go now, Honey. You've fought so hard. You can rest." A seizure came over him and then he was gone. Just like that, the absolute love of my life was gone!

The end was just as I had practiced over and over again. He would tell me when and I would say those words. I figured that as long as I knew what to expect, I could prepare a plan, a list of tasks. Associated with those tasks would be action items. I consulted with doctors, nurses, friends and family. They all explained their different roles and experiences with terminal patients. Friends and family described their feelings of devastation and despair. They described how they didn't move any of the furniture in their home and how their loved ones clothes remained in the closets long after the funeral. One widow described how she cried for three years looking at and viewing funeral pictures and videos, until her mother finally removed them from the house.

So I prepared an action plan with the objective that the whole grieving process would be avoided. Action plans were my specialty. After all, project management is what I've done in my professional life for the last 25 years. Those very skills brought me to the top executive levels, so this was easy. Gather information, consult with individuals and groups that have gone down the same road and avoid the pitfalls. The major pitfall in this process was a result called grieving.

Being the eldest and the only girl in my family, which included two younger brothers, taught me strength. Crying was a sign of weakness and for followers. Only girlie girls cried. I most definitely was not weak nor a follower! I was a leader! Women of my generation don't cry either. We are independent, self-sufficient and know not only how to get a grip on life, but to conquer it. We are capable of reaching our goals with proper planning! This grieving process is not something that I *choose* to do.

The love of my life was my husband, Charlie. He was diagnosed with the most advanced stage of cancer. The prognosis was six to twelve months. Cure? None. . . it's terminal. Dare I cry? No! I felt that if I started to cry, then God would look down upon me and see that it was okay to take Charlie now, because I'm already grieving. I refused

to accept it. We would simply do everything that the doctors ordered: chemotherapy, radiation, blood draws, CT Scans, Brain MRI's, blood transfusions and the whole buffet of medications. There's even a non-invasive brain surgery to address the brain tumors. We will not give up!

Because we were *blessed* with time, we were able to get all our affairs in order. Although it took six months, Charlie finally signed the advance directives. This was a major item on the task list that was to be completed only by him. His funeral went exactly as he wanted. The church, priest, even the clothes he wanted to be buried in. His favorite polo shirt, jeans, tennis shoes and hat, no detail was left undone. He wanted everyone in island wear, not the usual black funeral wear. He was pleased to know that I would change my career path and pursue the Radiologic Technology program at KCC. My professional life will now be in the health field where true differences are made versus business service where true profits are made. All the task items were complete! The project was a complete success, as it always had been . . . right?

With all the tasks checked off and completed, that result called grieving not only got a hold of me, but hasn't let go. But how could this be? How can I be sad? Charlie had the best medical care. We had a wonderful marriage. There were no regrets as all was forgiven. He died at home surrounded by family and friends just as he wanted. Why do I still feel so empty? Why won't this feeling of despair let go of me? It's been over a year now; what is going on!!? I moved all the furniture, gave his clothes away and I didn't hire a videographer. Pictures were taken, but after seeing them one time, my mom put them away. As devastating as the prognosis was, at least we had the chance to say good-bye.

Two grief counselors and thirteen months after his death, it finally hit me. *I* never said good-bye to my Charlie. I made sure he said his good-byes to our four children, his family, my family, and his friends and even to me . . . *but I never did*. I told him how much I loved him and thanked him for being a good husband and father, but I never told him how much I would miss him. I was in denial for over a year. During his battle with cancer, I only allowed myself to cry with him four times. There were other times when I would cry, but not in front of him. Charlie had always depended on me to take care of things. He needed my strength and I dared not let him down during the fight. That would be selfish. That would make him worry. It was so important for me to let him know that he didn't have to worry about me and the kids. He had enough to deal with. He had always taken care of himself and loved us dearly. He was angry that he would not be around to watch his children grow and enjoy our senior years together. I assured him that we would be okay. Well, we're not. Grieving is such a personal process and different for everyone. There is no template for this project called grieving. You can get away with handling grief intellectually, but there's no getting around the emotion. My heart still aches for him. This

is, by far, the worst lesson I've come to learn and as of today, this task remains incomplete. This project is a complete failure!

Clear Enemy

Lorene L. Glisson

It was a busy and crowded Friday night at Scruple's night club as my friends and I sat at the bar celebrating my friend Lehua's 25th birthday when suddenly someone said, "What can I get for you ladies?" We looked up only to find that it was an extremely handsome bartender smiling, waiting for a reply. But if I had known how dangerous it could be to leave a drink unattended, I wouldn't have ordered anything.

We were all at a loss for words when I instantly replied, "Yah, I'll have a Bud Light and whatever they want." My friends looked at me as if I were crazy not to have given him a second look, but I knew that if I had I would get into trouble with my boyfriend, so I paid no attention to what they were trying to say to me.

As the night went on, we danced, talked, and laughed, as we ecstatically celebrated our night with the birthday girl. I wore myself out with the non-stop "bootie" music dancing. I decided that I needed to take a break, so my friend and I went to the bar and ordered another beer. Then, I heard amongst all of the conversations, music, and dancing, a deep English voice ask, "Do you want to dance?" It was a young man probably in his thirties, fairly tall, and not particularly my type.

Tired and exhausted, I said with a smile, "No, thank you. I just finished dancing with my friends and I am just taking a break," as I tried not to sound sarcastic and mean. The man smiled and walked away as if he weren't bothered by the rejection.

It was about eleven o'clock when one of my friends ordered everyone another round of beers, but I had to decline because I knew that if I drank too much I would not be able to return to work the next day. Before we left that night, the girls decided to make one last toast to our friend, so we ordered shots for everyone. However, the bartender was very busy with other customers so we gave him our order and said that we would be back for it because we wanted to dance to the last song that the disc jockey was about to play. We asked him to leave it on the bar when he finished. We then headed toward the dance floor and danced till the sweat dripped down our faces. One by one, each girl slowly left the dance floor and headed back to the bar to get her drink. I happened to be the last one left on the dance floor because some guy came around and put his body within our circle and I was the one to be left with him. I danced with him to be nice. Gradually I made my way off the dance floor, so we could make our last toast before we went home. I got to the bar, grabbed my drink, and walked over to my friends. They yelled and screamed at me because I had taken so long. By now the bar was filled with smoke as we gathered to bond with one another to say our last goodbyes. We each said some meaningful words to her, then brought

our glasses together and swallowed every bit of liquor.

Soon after, as everyone made rounds to the ladies room, I suddenly felt as if I couldn't see anything. My vision went completely black, probably for about a second. I assumed that maybe I had had too much to drink, but I knew that I had only drunk three beers and one shot. I knew that I wasn't overly intoxicated, but something was wrong. I made my way out of the club where I found my friends waiting on a table that was just outside the door. At that moment I felt that I had to sit down, because I was feeling really dizzy, almost as if I wanted to throw up. My friend helped me over to the table where she allowed me to put my head on her lap while we waited for our ride home.

My friend pulled up with the car and at this point I felt very sick. I could not see anything or anyone. I had no control over my body. My friends had to carry me to the car. From this point on, I didn't remember anything that had happened. According to my friend Tiare, I threw up in the car on the way back to my house, and she filled in more details later the next day.

We finally reached my house, but minutes before we arrived, my friend called my mother to let her know that she was bringing me home and explained my situation. My mother opened the door to find me all over the back seat, practically in my own emesis. Meanwhile, my friends tried to explain to my mother that I didn't drink too much and that something was wrong. No one had ever seen me that way. They carried me into the house and into the shower because my mom wanted to get me cleaned up. My mom said that it was as if I were dead. I didn't move at all as they carried me while my eyes looked as if they were in the back of my head.

Once they got me into the house, my mother tried to take off all of my clothes to put me into the shower, which I assume she had a difficult time doing. She left me on the floor of the tub as the cold water ran down my body. She ran down the stairs to get my sister to help. When they returned, they found me flat on my back, as I sat in my own feces, urine, and emesis. My mother immediately yelled at my sister, "Hurry up, something is wrong. Help me pick her up!" They got me to my feet and tried to wash me up, but according to them, I wouldn't let them do anything to me. My mother said that as she tried to wash my hair, I attempted to punch her. As I swung my arms through the air, they realized that I wouldn't stop and decided to dry me up and get me into bed.

The next morning, I woke up with a pounding headache. Every time that I tried to move, my head would spin which made me very dizzy. Suddenly, I looked at the clock and realized that I was three hours late for work. I immediately jumped out of bed, and literally stumbled over everything as I got ready and left. My mom didn't realize that I had left

for work until she came up to my room to see how I was doing. When she finally realized where I had gone, she called my job to tell my boss what had happened and to check me before I went on the floor.

When I arrived at work, I stumbled up the stairs to punch the time clock. I still felt very fatigued and nauseated. I punched in, put on my smock and went downstairs. When I saw my boss, I apologized for being late. When he asked me if I was alright, I explained that I was not feeling well, but I was well enough to work.

One hour had not passed before I felt as if I needed to throw up again, so I asked for approval to go the bathroom. I literally ran as fast as I could because I felt that I couldn't control it, but I made it and everything came out. It was mostly liquid because I had no food in my stomach. I sat there on the floor in front of the toilet as my co-worker tried to comfort me while I threw up. After a while, nothing wanted to come out. It was more of a dry heave by now. My boss came upstairs to see if I were all right, only to find that I wasn't. He called my mother and asked her if she could pick me up because he did not want me to drive home in that condition.

My mother arrived at my job fifteen minutes later and decided that she was going to take me to the doctor. When we arrived at the doctor's office, my mother explained to Dr. McNally what had happened the night before. He immediately wanted to take a blood test. He told my mother to take me home and let me rest. He was going to call us within the hour to tell us what it could be.

While at home, I slept. I felt as if I had been run over by a car. Then the phone rang, and it was the doctor. He told my mother that my blood test had shown that I had a drug called Rohypnol, also known as "Ruphies: the date rape drug," in my system. He explained that someone could have put it into my drink while I was at the club, and said that I wouldn't have known about it because the drug is colorless and tasteless. He was very glad that my mother brought me in because after thirty-six hours, the drug would have been undetectable. I was very upset that someone would try to hurt me with such a violent drug. The doctor told her that it could actually kill someone who had been given too much. My mother said that it explained my behavior of that night and at least we knew now what had made me so sick.

After that night, I realized that I needed to be more careful about where I am and to whom I talk. It made me very scared to know that I could have been taken advantage of if my friends had not been there to help me. Nowadays, whenever I go out to a bar or any establishment that serves alcohol, I am very aware of the things that I drink. I also make sure that I don't leave my drink unattended for a second, because after that night, I know now that I would never want to meet my silent deadly enemy again.

Ending Up More like Blue Crushed

Jennifer Hernandez

It was my first day out to the beach in almost one year. My boss had given me the prized Aloha Friday off. Wanting to get back into the Aloha spirit of fun in the sun, I made arrangements to meet with my sister's boyfriend at two o'clock at a popular place at Ala Moana beach, called Concessions, so he could teach me how to surf. I thought learning how to surf would be a piece of cake and that being out in the open ocean would be a pleasant way to get some fresh air.

It was a beautiful day, perfect for going to the beach. The sun was shining at its full after noon peak and its rays instantly warmed my face. There was not a cloud in the crystal clear azure sky. As I walked down the white pavement of Ala Moana Beach Park, a light breeze whispered through the air. The breeze gently rustled the green leaves of the nearby trees and picked up little grains of sand that nicked my bare feet. The ocean was blue and calm. Occasionally, a roll of white water would break on the reef. A mirror-like glare reflected off the white sand of the beach. Parents and children played together in the sand and gentle water. Every inch of the beach was covered with tourists baking in the sun. After walking for twenty minutes, I spotted my sister's boyfriend.

When I arrived at the second concession stand, I noticed him standing next to the awkwardly constructed, embarrassingly bright orange lifeguard tower. He was wearing dark blue surf shorts printed with light blue hibiscus flowers. The shorts seemed almost electric in contrast to his dark brown burnt skin, obviously caused by extensive sun exposure.

"Hi, Jared," I said, giving him a hug. It was hard for me to believe that he was a lifeguard in training. His jet-black head of hair only came up to my chin.

"Are you ready to go in?" he asked.

"Ya, let's go," I replied with energy.

Jared picked his matching blue surfboard off the sand and dusted off the remaining granules.

"My dad took my longboard, so I had to bring the next longest board I had." While Jared looked at the surfboard, his eyes seemed to recall memories of good waves he

had ridden. "It's my favorite board in the world. It's a little smaller than what beginners would ride, but the conditions look mellow. I think you can handle it."

As I stood next to the board, I noticed it was definitely short. The board was practically the same height and width as my thin body. I grabbed the board he held out to me and confidently put it under my right arm. "Hey, where's your board?" I asked.

"My car could only fit one board, so I'm just gonna swim next to you," he told me. "I got my fins, so I'll be okay." He raised a pair of black fins with yellow tips up in the air.

We boldly walked side by side towards the ocean. Before we stepped into the water, he paused and checked out the waves from afar one last time.

"You know, the surf report said that there might be occasional five foot waves, just to let you know, but I'll be right by you so no need worry," Jared reassured me.

"Whatever you say," I replied. I was absolutely clueless as to what five-foot waves looked like.

Jared leaped into the water without hesitation. I, on the other hand, not having been to the beach in a while, gingerly stepped in and slowly immersed myself in the surprisingly cold water. Then I balanced my body on top of the board.

We began the long paddle out to sea. I was really confident in my paddling abilities and proud that I could maintain good balance on the board. One arm and then the other. Doing the strokes felt like second nature to me. Even Jared commented that I was doing well and making good time.

Jared swam ahead of me, and I followed his trail. A wall of reef barricaded our path. He directed me towards two boulders in the middle of the ocean. Amazingly, a hidden clear patch of water could be seen amidst the black rock-like coral and seaweed.

"This is the sandy spot; we can walk here," he said. "You need to get off the board and carry it." Apparently this was a path familiar to regulars.

The once completely clear sky began to form a dark gray ominous cloud that made a flaw in the sky's appearance. We anxiously ran across the sand to join the other surfers riding waves.

Once we came to the edge of the reef, it was back on the surfboard and back to paddling. Suddenly, the paddling became a little more strenuous. The current pulled me in every direction except for the one I wanted to go in. I put a lot of strength into my paddling, but it never got me past a mass of rocks that formed a lookout point to the far left.

"I'm not going anywhere, I'm not moving!" I complained to Jared.

"You are, you're doing good," he said encouragingly.

Finally, we got to Jared's intended destination. It was a surf spot called "Second Holes." The once friendly inviting waves began to change their attitude. They appeared to be gentle from afar on the shore, but were really ravenous up close. Big waves began to dodge into me and flip the board out from under me. Quickly, noticing my struggle, Jared taught me a technique called the duck dive. He told me I had to push the board down into the water as the wave approached, then use my upper body to keep the board down under until the wave passed. A lot of waves pounded on top of me before I caught on to the idea.

One after another, crazy waves galloped by, never allowing me to tame one to ride. Gray blue water with white fangs kept rolling toward us. Out of nowhere, we heard a vague yell from an anonymous voice warning, "Look out!" A random surfer had lost his surfboard. The board flew in the air, landing nose first into the water, nearly missing another surfer. The waves were out of control. To avoid being trapped by a set of them, Jared swam to a secluded spot with no activity. This left me alone with no moral support to contend with the waves.

Surfers began to rush past me, cheering each other on as they successfully caught waves. Jared waved his arms to me, and I began to make my way over towards him. Upon making my way toward Jared, I started to drift into a rough zone inhabited by surfers. Instantly, I was trapped between a passing wave and an oncoming surfer, who was about three feet away from having my teeth in his board. The surfer rapidly halted his ride as he jumped off his board.

Jared saw my distress and swam as fast as he could to come to my rescue. He grabbed hold of the board with his left hand and steered me into the direction of his discovered safety zone. I began to get frustrated with the paddling and turned the board to the side to utilize my legs for power instead of my arms. A familiar noise of rushing water at full speed paralyzed me. Boom! Before I could see what hit me, I was picked up by a powerful wave and thrown off the board. Gobbled up by the wave, I drifted underneath the water for a few seconds, becoming tangled with the smooth rubber leash. I was pulled every which way by the board on the surface. I was then spit out by the wave and quickly

scrambled to secure myself back on the board. Jared pulled the board and me back to him and told me to get ready to catch a wave.

“Okay, stop right here. This one looks good,” he instructed.

“Okay, okay, I’m ready,” I informed him.

Jared began to yell, “Paddle, paddle, paddle!”

I paddled as fast and as hard as my toothpick-like arms permitted me, but was still not advanced enough in position to be picked up by the wave.

Once again Jared called out, “Paddle, paddle, paddle!” as if simply saying those three simple words would somehow magically get me on the wave. In an act of desperation, Jared got behind the board and kicked the back of it, which moved me into position on the wave.

“I’m on it!” I cried ecstatically.

Although this wave was a lot smaller than its previous family members, the force and speed of this miniature wave was frightening. Now was my long-awaited chance to finally stand up on the board. I tried my hardest to get off my stomach, but to no avail. Each time I would get my knee up the wave would thrust me forward causing my head to hit the board. I gave up the idea of standing up and enjoyed the wave for what it was worth. To me, the wave felt like it was going a hundred miles an hour. I rode the wave in until it dissolved under me.

Since I had ridden the wave beyond surfing territory, no human beings were around me. Isolated, my only companion was the surfboard under me. A blanket of white foam covered the water. I began the unpleasant and arduous journey of paddling back out. That little wave I caught had deceived me into thinking that I was going to catch more. An eerie silence began to settle, and I could not hear the thunder of the waves. That was the calm before the storm.

At that moment the sky grew a shade darker, and the heavy odor of seaweed and fish grew stronger. A faint cry of churning water could be heard. Thinking the waves could smell fear, I put on a brave front to the waves. I assumed that I had fooled the waves, so I took my time in finding Jared. But not a second later, the waves began to roar ferociously and instantly multiply. The sky grew heavy with rain clouds, and bead-like drops fell from the sky. Salty water from waves crashing into each other was spraying all over the place,

stinging my eyes. To stop the stinging sensation in my eyes, I mistakenly closed them for half a second. Suddenly, I was pounded by a wave. While I was going under the water, my mouth was half open, allowing the burning ocean water to enter my mouth and fill my throat. Choking and coughing on the water, I screamed out for Jared. It was pointless, however, because of the obstreperous water. Desperate to find him, I pummeled my body forward. I paddled hard, drawing whatever strength I had from my toes and duck diving into the waves. Magnetically we spotted each other in the pool of white wash. Jared grasped the board firmly with both hands.

“It’s getting a little rough out here,” I stated.

“I think we better go back in,” Jared responded.

“Ya, let’s go. I’m getting tired,” I said weakly.

Jared said that he was too, so we turned around to make the arduous journey back.

Everything was safe and sound for a moment until an enormous wave, fiercer than all its predecessors, raised itself up from the depths of the ocean. I watched the wave rise up over me in slow motion and watched it slowly collapse. Smack! It crashed right on top of me, burying me downwards to the sand and rocks below. Instinctively, I clawed and scratched the water and fought my way to the top. As I emerged to the surface, I inhaled gulps of air into my lungs. It was a definite duel between the ocean and me. I pushed my body up out of the water and aggressively grabbed hold of the surfboard. Jared was circling nearby and used a wave to propel himself to me. We looked at each other without saying a word and began to paddle back to the shore.

The laborious activity of fighting to survive against the waves physically drained my body. I paddled and paddled, but never budged. Jared tried to motivate me to press on by lying that I was making good progress. A ton of salt water filled my stomach, making me extremely nauseated. My contacts were blazing from the salt water. Physically, I could not make it back to shore, and it was impossible for me to go any further. Hoping that the current would drift me back to shore, I stopped paddling. The vibration of the ocean lightly tossed the surfboard up and down.

Realizing my condition, Jared swam to my side and instructed me to remove the leash from my ankle. The crackle of the Velcro was a reassuring sound to me. No longer would I be shackled to a surfboard. He put the leash on his left ankle and began to tug me back to shore. A pounding headache began to beat in my head, and my stomach became unsettled. I put my head down on top of the board and just lay still while Jared pulled me

back to civilization. Feeling sorry for Jared's hard work, I participated in the homecoming by kicking my feet in the water to help propel him faster.

Hours seemed to pass by before we reached the shore. All we could do was lie dead in the sand. We could have stayed like that for days, but the encroaching darkness prompted us to get off the beach.

Unlike the beginning of the day, when I had gripped the board securely under my arm with confidence, this time I merely held it up enough to keep it from dragging on the ground. Both of us showered off the sticky crystals of salt and endless sand. The fresh water was truly refreshing. I realized while standing under the showerhead that it was the only water I liked to be under.

After we dried off and changed into dry, warm clothes, we sat on the wall and gazed out at the now black ocean illuminated only by the orange glow of the bathrooms across the street. We sat on the wall silently, enduring the chilly night winds and listening to the deceptive hiss of the ocean. In my mind I reviewed the days often too close close calls. My mouth tasted like I had poured an entire canister of Morton's salt into it and brought on a dizzying nausea. An intense muscle pain began to develop in my neck, arms, and lower back. My eyes burned with a blinding sensation. A light purplish bruise started to surface on my right knee, but I was thankful for all the pain and suffering I felt at that moment. I was thankful that I had survived this round with ocean and thankful that I still had my five senses to let me feel each symptom. It was amazing that I was still alive.

"Pretty rough for your first time surfing, Jen," blatantly interrupted Jared.

"Yes, it was," I told him. I assumed that he thought I would never want to surf again. But secretly in my mind, I could hardly wait for the next chance to go out and try to catch a wave.

Jaded

Kawehi Haug

I think I may have thought that the explosion was pretty – sort of like fireworks – a grand, Walt Disney World celebration of brave heroes in bright orange moon suits. A woman with glasses too large for her face is watching with pride as her husband and his friends are blown to pieces. She's still smiling, clapping, watching the show. I wonder if she knows that NASA is not in the business of fireworks and fanfare. I wonder if she knows...there! Now she knows. And in one moment, that felt like a hundred, the lady with the big glasses opens her smiling mouth and lets out a gut wrenching scream that I can't hear through the TV in my small private school classroom. But I know what she's saying. Oh my god, oh my god.

I want to say it with her, over and over again until I understand, but I can't take the Lord's name in vain – it's against the rules. But I don't want to say it in vain, I want to say it in earnest – oh my God, why? I want to scream it out loud with the woman whose husband is floating back to earth two weeks too soon.

It is 1986. I am nine years old and my world has just ended. I remember that my dad's world ended when Kennedy was killed. He told me about it once. Riding in the back of a big American car with his mom, the Canadian bride of an Air Force man, crying and crying, her perfect Donna Reed make-up bleeding all over a pack of Kleenex.

Kids don't like to see adults cry – it means things are bad. The world is ugly and hopeless. But it wasn't...until the lady with the big glasses and the dead astronauts...until my grandma's streaky mascara and the murdered president.

It is 1986. I am nine years old and I am shocked. I feel unsafe and wobbly, like one of those slippery newborn horses on a National Geographic special. It is the last time I'll feel that way.

Over the years, I'll leave America at least twice a year. Maybe I only left once in 1989 but I made up for it in 1990. I left four times. By my nineteenth birthday, I will have been to 23 countries – some of them more than once.

Over the years, I'll see a lot – perhaps too much. And the more I see, the less I'll feel. The more I see, the more I'll tolerate. The more I tolerate, the more I can see and on

it goes until eventually I become a perfect study in austerity. I will lose a very basic human quality – the ability to be shocked. I'll just lose it – not like you lose your glasses or car keys – more like losing your mind.

It is summer in the formidable city of Bogota. It's not hot and damp like the summers I know – it's cold and damp – and gray. The sky, the buildings, the streets, the faces on the slum-women of the *invaciones* – all gray. I befriend three young street kids who hold filthy rags soaked in paint thinner up to their faces and breathe until they're just high enough to be funny. And they are funny. I enjoy them. We don't understand each other when we talk. I don't speak much Spanish – just the basics: *¿Dónde está el baño?* *¿Cómo se llama?* (I like to know the name of the person who is doing me the service of directing me to the bathroom); and my three amigos have learned one word in English: *yes*. They say it over and over again, laughing and breathing into their rags and laughing some more. *Yes, yes, yes*. Lived here long? *Yes!* How old are you? *Yes!* How about that soccer team. Not bad, huh? *Yes!* We all smile and nod and we like it.

Every night at around ten, we take the bus to the inner city and get out across the street from a neon restaurant. I can hear shouting and singing and wheezy, old-man laughter. We stand outside and wait for the boys. They'll come – they always do. There they are! Brown and barefoot, their comfort rags in hand, with a few hundred other kids who own the city streets after dark. The ocean of orphans moves toward us, our fine coats and Eddie Bauer scarf and glove sets a beacon in the grayness. I feel overdressed, but the street kids don't seem to mind. They laugh and touch my white skin and pinch my rosy, doughy cheeks. I give the littlest boy my gloves. I know they'll stink of paint thinner when he gives them back, so I let him keep them; he needs them more than I do anyway, he's just a baby. A raggedy, runny-nosed, barefoot, motherless, chemical sniffing baby. I ask our three boys if they know anything about the small one's family: Is he an orphan? *Yes!* I know they're right. They bob their heads and laugh and I want to cry. Then all at once, we're alone – three street kids and a band of well-dressed *gringos*. We'll spend the night together, like we always do – drinking coffee and eating bread and butter in a dingy coffee shop that only agrees to serve my friends because they're our guests.

My mom sews each of my three friends a bag to carry their rags and other belongings so they don't have to be burdened down with all the stuff that they don't actually own. My mom's dreams become haunted with orphan boys screaming her name through the dark alleys of Colombia. I cry when she tells me about it – not frantic, breathless crying – just silent, somber tears of resignation.

And the more I see, the less I'll feel...

It is winter in Manila. There is no cool, crisp breeze. No clean, white snow. Just heat. Stifling, clingy, oppressive, wet heat. I sleep under a rainbow colored mosquito net. The rainbow is supposed to make me like it better; make me think that I'm a princess under a canopy. It works.

My bed is on the top floor of a two story house, two blocks away from the city dump. In the morning, the stench of rotting, discarded life leeches into my house and meets me where I'm sleeping under the rainbow. I'm used to it now, it's familiar and comforting. It reminds me of Alma. I visit Alma everyday – sometimes she'll come to my place, but mostly I go to her. I walk through miles of smoldering trash until I reach her home. Her home is a shack made from tin and cardboard and wood and anything else that the rich folks throw away. Her home is the city dump. She lives there with thousands of other families who are happy that they don't live on the streets. There are shops and small businesses nestled in the waste. I even had a garbage dump manicure once. Baby, the nail lady, painted the tips of my sheltered, unhardened fingers with red and white stripes. My hands looked beautiful. Baby doesn't get to paint often, because if you live on the dump you don't want to use your pretty hands to rake through burning trash. Alma likes my hands. She wraps her tiny one around my finger and puts it in her mouth. For a split second I'm worried about the germs – hands are one of the dirtiest things and mine have seen better days – but then I remember that she lives in trash and I let her suckle my finger. Alma's mom tells us that she's sick. Little Alma has no appetite and I think to myself that I wouldn't either if the view from my kitchen was the county garbage heap.

I bring her rice and leftover *pansit* from home. I hold her and play with her and she starts to eat for me. Alma and I play together everyday on the Philippine mountain of trash and I love her and I want to bring her home to sleep with me under the rainbow. I want to save her and heal her and make her eat and eat until she's more than just limbs, but she dies anyway. I ask my mom if it hurts to starve to death. She says she thinks that it's a pretty painless way to go and I feel better.

And the more I see, the more I'll tolerate...

It is April in Albania. I'm visiting a village about three hours drive from our home in the city. My dad said that if the roads were decent, we would have made it here in an hour, but the roads are just paths; widened desert trails that go on forever. I always wonder how we make it to these remote mountain villages without reading maps and following

street signs. I suppose the landmarks differ as the trail lengthens and perhaps the blackberry bush at the bottom of that last hill is as good a sign as any. The driver must have known that turning right at the bush would lead us to where we wanted to be.

The village is quiet and deflated. We all instinctively know that chatty conversation is inappropriate and we keep our voices at a whisper. We move slowly as if any sudden motion will be misinterpreted as disrespect for the pervasive heaviness that lingers over the stone rooftops of the village shacks and moves through the barren, abortive fields. We walk together to the home of a woman who is waiting for her five children to die. Her shack is dark and empty except for bundles of wrapped flesh and bone that lay on the floor in the icy clutches of death. My eyes are taking their time adjusting to the fuzzy light and I can barely make out the five bodies. My mom tells my dad that they won't make it and I'm not sure how I feel about the prognosis. I think of all things they'll miss in this world if they depart early; and then I think of all the things they won't miss. And then I think to myself that they're probably better off dead. I'm surprised by my blatant acceptance of something so cruel.

Back in town I think about the five lifeless bundles and for a moment wonder how they are. Dead, I'm sure. And I don't wonder again for a very long time.

The more I tolerate, the more I can see...

It is fall, winter, spring, summer and fall again in Berlin. I'm here because I think my friends are safer with me around. They've been seduced by needles and pipes, bottles and sex. We've known each other all of our lives and if they're going down, I won't try to stop them, but I'll be here with them. I want to be here, I choose this life. My dad tells me that it's not normal to feel comfortable in such offensive conditions, but I don't really understand what he means by normal. The house we stay in is lined with addicts and drunks hoping to hang on long enough to promise to never be so stupid again. I weave through the sea of Dr. Martens and blue hair until I reach the spot where my purple sleeping bag lay. My bag reminds me of where I could be: at home in suburbia with thick carpet lining the floor instead of post-binge punk kids who think this is the time of their lives. A nice couple with a baby lives near me, just about two meters away. Sometimes we talk like good neighbors do, but mostly they sleep and I watch out for the baby. Sophia, the precious little drug baby, is a household favorite. She's chubby and pink and happier than most people in the house. Sometimes I look at her and wonder if her parents would miss her if I took her away. She belongs with people who can buy her booties and sing her lullabies. She should be tucked into a bed with pink sheets and velvet toys. But her parents love her when they're

sober, so maybe she's okay. I'm often sickened by my own thoughts, because sometimes I catch myself thinking that things could be worse for baby Sophia, that she could be on the streets. I wonder when street life became my measuring stick.

I become a perfect study in austerity...

The cops called, Dave's been in a serious accident...Matt hung himself...Your grandfather has Alzheimer's...Mom's in the hospital...New York City's being attacked...

What?

'What'? What do you mean 'what'?

I mean...oh.

Losing My Shadow

Joli Kenney

“Joli, Shadow has cancer.”

For the rest of my life, I will remember those words, spoken by my mother. Cancer. The word has an ominous feeling; dark, full of dread and despair. I was 14 years old when I heard those words, and I had no idea what they would come to mean to me, or the way they would shape my life.

My family and I returned to Hawaii in 1985, after living in Anchorage, Alaska. My family consists of my mother and father, my older brother Tommy, myself, my younger sister Nicky, our two dogs Shadow and Ambie, and our cockatiel Pokino.

Shadow was my dog. She was an adorable Basset Hound/Shetland Sheep Dog mix, and looked like a Basset Hound with short ears and short legs with knocked knees. Shadow had a rust-brown body and face, white feet, a white tip on her tail, a black triangle that ran down her back, and what looked like a black bat on her forehead above her eyes. Her smooth fur felt like the softest velvet. She also had the biggest, moistest brown eyes I have ever seen, eyes that would melt your heart.

The year before we returned to Hawaii, Shadow was born in a house behind my family's house. My friend Kelly had adopted Shadow's brother, and she thought I should look at the remaining puppies. It was love at first sight. As fast as I could, I ran to tell my parents about her. I begged and pleaded with them to let me have her, and I think I won out of pure persistence. Shadow became my best friend, going everywhere I went. I named her Shadow because she always followed right behind me.

Although both Ambie and Shadow had to be quarantined for 6 months to enter the Hawaiian Islands, I think it was especially hard on Shadow who was a six-month old puppy when we shipped her. She was away from her family and separated from Ambie, her surrogate mother. The quarantine officials would not allow the dogs to share a common cage, but did accommodate us by placing them in cages directly next to each other.

Shadow made my transition to the Islands bearable. I was the new kid at school. I dressed differently than the rest of the kids, and my hair had completely puffed into an afro from all the humidity. I was having a hard time adjusting to the new school, the new house, and the new friends. But Shadow, my faithful friend, was always there for me.

I was feeding Ambie and Shadow on a hot summer night when the specter of cancer loomed.

“Mom? Hey Mom? I think there is something wrong with Shadow.”

(Calling from within the house.) “Joli, what do you want?”

“Mom, I think there is something wrong with Shadow. I came out here to feed her and Ambie, but Shadow’s not eating her food.”

“Why do you sound so worried? Maybe she’s just not hungry.”

“Mom, I really don’t think that’s the problem. When have you ever known my dog to not eat food? Besides, I started to notice it a little last week. She starts to eat, then noses the food around in her bowl, and then Ambie just rushes in and gobbles everything up. It just doesn’t seem like her.”

“Well, if you noticed it last week, it can’t be that big of a problem, Jolie.”

“No, Mom, I really think she is getting worse. Before she would eat at least a little of her food, but now she doesn’t seem to want any of it. And there is something else. She looks like she is gaining weight. How can she gain weight if she doesn’t eat?”

“If you are that worried, we’ll make an appointment with the vet. We’ll get this checked out, okay?”

“Okay, Mom. Thanks.”

We called the veterinarian at the Hawaii Kai Veterinary Clinic. Like all clinics it had a reception desk located right inside the front door, a few old acrylic school chairs, an end table covered with magazines, and the odor of urine and cleaning chemicals hanging in the air. My mother and I checked in with the receptionist and then waited.

“Shadow Kenney?” called the receptionist.

“Yes, that would be us,” I replied.

“Right this way, please,” she said as she lead us down a small corridor and into one of the small examining rooms.

In the center of the room was a steel top examining table. The wall behind it was lined with a bunch of cupboards and a long counter top that held a bunch of glass canisters filled with cotton swabs, cotton balls, gauze patches, wooden tongue depressors, and a preserved heart filled with heartworms. The walls were a faded yellow color and had a cute picture of a puppy and kitten hung in the center of it. The florescent lights above the examining table cast a cold, austere light about the room, making you feel like you were about to be examined. I think Shadow felt this because she was shaking at the end of her leash. She always hated coming to the vet.

After a moment, the doctor came in and said, "Good afternoon. Why don't we lift Shadow onto the table, and I'll check her out. What seems to be the problem?"

I picked up Shadow like she was a lamb, one arm wrapped around her chest, the other around her rear, and hefted her onto the table. She weighed a good 40 lbs, but it wasn't very difficult. Her paws slipped a little because her claws couldn't grasp the smooth surface very well, and she finally just sat down with a woebegone look on her face.

"She's not eating her food. She hasn't been eating a lot in the last couple of weeks, and I am a little worried," I said while I stroked Shadow's ears trying to ease her anxiousness.

"We'll start off with the normal exam and see if we find anything," the doctor replied. He took her temperature, listened to her heartbeat with a stethoscope, took a fecal sample, and then palpatated her abdomen. "There does seem to be some tension here in her abdomen; it is pretty solid, like a football," he said. "Has she gotten into anything she shouldn't have? Eaten anything unusual?"

"No, not that I know of," I responded, "I haven't seen her eat anything lately."

"I think we should take some x-rays and see what we can find."

They took Shadow into the back of the clinic to take the x-rays while my mother and I waited in the examining room. I was starting to get nervous. There was nothing wrong with either her temperature or fecal sample. I started to think that maybe if I had spent more time with her lately this wouldn't have happened. I would have noticed something was wrong sooner. I felt guilty for spending time with my human friends and not my dog.

The doctor finally returned, "The x-rays will be done in about an hour. Why don't you folks go on home, and I'll give you a call later to let you know what we find. I wouldn't

worry too much. She probably just ate something she shouldn't have, and this is a pretty easy procedure. We will just have to wait and see."

My mother and I took Shadow home to wait for the doctor's phone call. It finally came later that afternoon, but it wasn't very insightful. The x-rays didn't reveal much, and the doctor suggested we take Shadow to C.A.R.E. Animal Hospital, located near Kapahulu Avenue and Wailalae Avenue. He said that they specialized in x-rays and surgery. My mother called and made the appointment.

My parents accompanied Shadow and myself to C.A.R.E. to lend support. We arrived at the flat, white, one-story building and pulled the old green Ford Fairmont around to the parking lot at the back of the building. As we walked across the lot to the rear entrance of the building, the gravel crunched under our feet. Taking Shadow by her leash, I led her down the bright white hallway to the reception desk in the front to check in. The waiting room was salmon pink and filled with old, seventies looking, vinyl covered square-back chairs. The chairs that lined the walls were separated here and there by end tables displaying an array of magazines. At my feet, Shadow lay panting heavily, the way she always does when she is nervous. Her large brown eyes flitted from one thing to another, showing her distress at being in another vet clinic.

Finally, we were called in by the receptionist and led back down the white hallway to an examining room. My father decided to remain in the waiting area; he doesn't like blood. This room was a little larger than the one at the Hawaii Kai Clinic, but painted a light muted green color. It had the same fluorescent lighting and type of examining table in the center of the floor. On the counter tops were the same glass canisters with the cotton balls and swabs; it even had another heartworm heart.

As the doctor entered the room, she bent down and let Shadow smell her hand, saying, "So, what is the matter with Shadow?" A small Asian woman in her early thirties, she had a kind smile and pleasant voice.

"We took her to the vet in Hawaii Kai and he sent us to see you," my mother said. "Shadow has been off her food lately, but she has been gaining weight, and we are starting to get a little worried. The vet took some x-rays, but he said he really couldn't tell what the problem was. He thought maybe you could help."

"Why don't we start by examining her. She looks like an unusual breed. What is she?"

I spoke up and said, "She's a Basset/Sheltie mix."

“She is a pretty dog. Let’s see if we can find out what is going on.”

The doctor and her assistant helped to lift Shadow onto the cold steel top of the examining table, the top of which was a scale. They quickly took her weight, temperature, heart rate, and conducted a thorough examination. “By looking at her chart from the other hospital, she hasn’t gained a lot of weight, but it does seem like there is something in there. I would like to do surgery and take some more x-rays to be certain, though. The only problem is, it could be expensive.”

My mom spoke up, “How expensive?”

“I am not quite sure, but, if we do the x-rays, it will be a couple hundred. If we do the surgery, it could be around a thousand. It also depends on what we find.”

My mother turned to me with her blue eyes and said, “We should get your father in here; he’ll have to make this decision.”

When my father joined us, his tall wiry frame made me feel a little more confident. I knew my parents loved my dog almost as much as I did. I knew they would help me any way they could. After they informed my father of the situation and the cost of the x-rays and surgeries, he turned his serious brown eyes toward me.

“Joli, you know your mother and I care about Shadow too, right?”

“Yeah, Dad, I know.”

“Well, we aren’t talking about a small amount of money here, but this is your dog. What do you want to do?”

I was stressed out, but I was relieved to have a voice in the decision. I couldn’t help but get choked up with tears. I always did when my father talked to me about something serious. It wasn’t the sternness of his voice. For a man who doesn’t show his emotions, he always shows he cares. The fact that he was even thinking of spending that kind of money on my dog meant the world to me. Money had been tight for us since the move back to Hawaii, and I knew we didn’t have much to throw around.

“Joli, if you want, if you think this is what you want, we will do the surgery. Does it mean that much to you?” he asked, concern filling his deep brown eyes.

Looking into his brown face, I cried softly, “Yeah, Dad, it does.”

Taking control of the situation, as he always does, my father worked it out with the lady vet. We would leave Shadow at the hospital, and she would go through the surgery the following day. I don't know how he came up with the money, but my father made it happen.

The following afternoon, the phone call came. They had completed Shadow's surgery, and had found cancer. It was a large tumor, about the size of a large grapefruit. The tumor had been attached to her kidney, and as it grew, it filled her abdomen, making eating very difficult. They had carefully removed the mass, and even sent a piece of it out to a lab to be examined. Because the mass had been so large, they weren't sure if it had spread to any of her other organs. We would just have to wait and see.

When I got Shadow back from the hospital, she was very thin. The surgery left her with a shaved tummy and a long incision down the center of her stomach, but she started to eat. Thank God she started to eat. In the following weeks she started to gain the weight she had lost before her surgery. In no time, she was the same happy puppy she had been before. I was so happy to see her running in front of me, her back legs always trying to catch up to her front ones, running almost sideways as most hounds do. I was transported from the stress of her illness to the elation of her recovery.

I took Shadow on long walks around our neighborhood, and even up to Kamiloiki Elementary School's playground. We would lie on the lawn of the school and watch the clouds go by. I would sit in the backyard for hours, brushing both Ambie and Shadow, making up for all the times I felt I had neglected them. I was so happy to have my friend back.

Then, it started all over again. Shadow stopped eating her food. Her cancer was malignant. Her tumor was returning. I couldn't believe what was going on. My dog was going to die. The cancer was growing faster this time, and there wasn't anything I could do about it. My parents had spent so much money, only to have this happen. We couldn't afford to have another surgery, and I didn't have that kind of money. I didn't know what to do.

I was going to lose my best friend. It was the hardest thing I had to face. Then my parents asked me if I wanted her to pass away naturally or be put to sleep. I didn't know what to do. Could I actually tell someone to kill my best friend?

I spent the next couple of weeks in a deep depression. I kept trying to convince myself this wasn't happening. I spent my days sitting in the back yard with Shadow by my side. I was wallowing in self-pity and grief. I sat with tears running down my face, the sadness tearing a hole in my heart. I couldn't imagine what it would be like to look out the

kitchen window and not see my friend's eyes return my gaze. And then it hit me.

I was being selfish. Shadow would end up dying in pain if I let her illness continue. She was losing weight every day, and her tumor was making eating very difficult. Not once did Shadow's attitude change. She was still my faithful friend; it was my turn to be hers. I wiped the tears from my eyes with the sleeve of my t-shirt, and took Shadow down to the canal.

The canal was a secret place I took Shadow when I wanted to get away. Watching the sun light dance on the water, each ripple bringing a brilliance of light to life, we sat at the end of a ramp where boats could be lowered into the canal. The water itself was dirty, but from where we sat on the cold ripples of concrete, it was beautiful. As we watched a family of Mallard ducks swim along the other side of the canal, I stroked Shadow's ears and muzzle. Caressing her fur, the softest I have ever touched, I felt my heart breaking. Even though she was a dog, she was my best friend. I decided to put her to sleep. I kept telling myself it was the best decision. Shadow wouldn't suffer. If I didn't do this, she would die a very unhappy dog.

Shadow always seemed to know how I was feeling. She sat there with me, leaning close to my side. She looked up to my face, and then licked my hand. Her gentleness let me know I was making the right decision, but it didn't make it any easier to deal with.

I finished crying, gathered her leash, and returned home. I put Shadow in the backyard and looked for my mother. I found her in the kitchen, rinsing some food for dinner. When she heard me enter the room, she turned to me and quickly recognized I had been crying. With a worried look on her face, she said, "Joli, are you okay?"

"Yeah Mom, I am."

"Have you been crying?"

"Yeah, I was down by the canal with Shadow. And I was thinking about what to do."

"Have you come up with anything yet?"

"Yeah."

"Well, do you want to tell me?"

I could feel my tears returning, but I gathered my strength to say the words. "I have

decided to put her to sleep. But I wanted to ask you something.”

“Sure, Honey, what?”

“I want to be there. I want to be there when it happens, Mom. I have always been with her, and I don’t want a stranger to be the last one she sees before she dies.”

“I don’t know if they will let you, Joli. Why don’t we call and find out?”

We called the vet, and he said although they normally don’t, they would allow me to be there with Shadow when she fell asleep. He also said whenever I was ready we could just drive down and they would take care of us. I wanted to wait a week. I wanted to make enough memories to last a lifetime. My father even gave me a few rolls of film to take pictures of Shadow and myself.

The day arrived, and before my father left for work, he said, “Joli, I am proud of you. You have made a difficult decision, but I know it is the right one.” My father’s words meant a lot to me. Knowing he respected my decision and recognized how difficult it was for me gave me the strength to do what I had to.

My mother and I got Shadow from the backyard and headed to the vet clinic. Once we were there, I led Shadow into the waiting room, holding her red, nylon leash. They immediately led me into one of the exam rooms and placed Shadow on that cold, steel exam table.

The doctor said, “If you would like, we can give you a few minutes. I’ll just be outside. Let me know when you are ready.”

I was in a daze, but as he was getting ready to leave the room, I asked, “Will it hurt?”

“No. It won’t. We will just give her a shot, and she will slip away into sleep. She won’t feel a thing.” And he left the room.

I stood there for quite sometime. I told Shadow how much I loved her and would miss her. Tears started falling once the doctor left the room. Shadow, sensing my sadness, licked my cheek with her warm pink tongue. I hugged her and stroked her soft ears. Finally I called to the doctor that I was ready.

He entered the room and walked to the counter where the bottle of anesthesia and

syringe lay. He picked them up and returned to the table. As he filled the syringe with the deadly liquid, he said, "Don't worry, Shadow, everything is okay." The doctor had me walk around the table and wrap my arms around Shadow. I was to hold her so he could slip that cold needle into her vein.

As I held her, I whispered, "Shadow, everything is going to be okay, you won't feel anything. You'll be all right . . ." I kept repeating those words over and over, as much for myself as for Shadow. My cheeks were wet with tears I could not hold back.

As I stroked her ears and hugged her to me, I could feel Shadow's body start to sink onto the table. Her feet slid across the cold steel table till she lay there in my arms. Her eyes began to droop, her breathing began to slow down, and her body started to relax. Then her breathing stopped, and she just seemed to slip away. My friend fell asleep forever.

I stood there in a daze. I couldn't believe Shadow was gone. Tears continued to run down my face. I vaguely remembered the doctor saying I could take all the time I needed. I stared at her body for what seemed like forever. Finally, I reached out, stroked her ears for the last time, removed her faded, red, nylon collar and left the room.

In the waiting room, my mother gathered me into her arms and held me tight. Sobs shook my body violently. My mother whispered, "Joli, everything will be okay. I know you may not think so now, but you did the right thing. " A few minutes later, we left the clinic for home.

Shadow went to sleep almost 15 years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. I will forever be grateful to my faithful friend for making my transition to Hawaii easier. The support I had from my parents is typical of the love they have always shown for me. I am still grateful for the sacrifices they made for my friend.

I still miss Shadow, but I know I made the right choice. I would do it again today. Now, I encourage people to make sure they are present when their friend falls asleep. It is hard, it is sad, but it is the last nice thing you can do for your beloved pet. I will always be there for my own pets should I have to make that decision again.

It's Kaukau Time

Mary-Frances Kuulei Kuahine

Coming from a very large family, I was the only one who was raised in the town side on the island of O'ahu, while the rest of my family was born and raised in the heart of the country, Nanakuli. My family always threw a lot of luaus and pa'inas. For those who don't know, luaus are most common for celebrating a baby's first birthday and pa'inas are just a way that Hawaiians celebrate someone's graduation or anniversary. Whenever my family had a luau or pa'ina, I always looked forward to the long drive out to the country to help prepare and eat the delicious food with my family.

Throwing a luau or a pa'ina requires a lot of time and preparation. Everyone in the family must contribute or help out in one way or another. The adults usually take care of the harder tasks while the kids take care of the simple ones.

My uncles Solomon, Joseph, Saimin, and my cousin Jacob would go hunt pigs in the back of Nanakuli Avenue, near my uncle Saimin's ranch, in order to make kalua pig, shredded pork that's cooked in the imu or underground oven and pork laulaus, pork wrapped in luau leaves and steamed in ti leaves. My older cousins, Happ, Chucky Boy, and Bronson would go hunt for squid down at Punalu'u beach to make my favorite squid luau, chunks of squid, cooked luau leaves with a little coconut milk added for sweetness. Squid luau is a dish that is more on the soupy side, normally thrown over rice. My cousins would also take a boat out to Barber's Point to fish before heading on over to Maili Point to pick opihi. Some fish like uhu were stuffed and then grilled, others were steamed, and some fish like ahi were prepared raw, sashimi style. Opihi are very expensive to buy in the market; that's why we picked them ourselves. To get them my cousins picked them off rocks where there's rolling surf, which is risky business for the opihi pickers. Thank goodness the women in our family didn't have to pick opihi. The opihi are a delicacy on a Hawaiian menu; they're small ushy shellfish that you scoop out and eat raw. I personally think opihi is best when eaten with poi.

My aunts would guide my younger cousins and me in preparing poi, which is made from the root of the taro plant. We pounded the taro with a poi pounder made of stone, then added water until we reached the consistency we desired. Poi is the main starch meal on a Hawaiian menu, like how rice or mash potatoes are to other cultures. A few other dishes my cousins and I enjoyed making were lomi-lomi salmon, which is a mixture of diced tomatoes, onions, green onions, and salted salmon, haupia, which is a coconut jell-o dessert, kulolo or poi mochi, and triangle sliced pineapples.

"It's Kaukau time," my aunts yelled as they made sure there was enough food for

everyone and the children were put back to work once again, serving the food to all the guests.

For me, learning how to throw a traditional luau or pa'ina made me feel proud to be Hawaiian. However, one experience made me question my pride.

When I was in the sixth grade at Lili'uokalani Elementary School, our teacher Mrs. McCullen had the class learning about different cultures. The cultures we studied on were: Filipino, Japanese, Portuguese, and Hawaiian. I was stoked when my teacher mentioned that the Hawaiian culture was one of the cultures we were going to study. This required a lot of research. The students were separated into groups and we gathered information on different aspects of each culture. I was anxious to share my knowledge of what I knew about the traditional Hawaiian foods we prepared in my family.

After all the research was completed on each culture, my classmates and I couldn't wait to try all the different ethnic foods we learned about. When it was the week to eat the Hawaiian food, boy was I weak in the knees; I couldn't wait to sink my teeth into some great squid luau, pork laulau, poi, lomi-iomi salmon and haupia!

Once the Hawaiian food was out on the table, a group of boys made some nasty comments about what the food looked like. I remember Ty, Brady, and Justin laughing out loud and making rude comments such as "the opihi looks like cat's eyes" and "the squid luau looks like diarrhea." Those comments really bothered me. I became embarrassed to admit that I enjoyed eating Hawaiian food because I was worried about what they might've thought of me. Would they make fun of me also?

Mrs. McCullen served even portions of each dish on everyone's plate. Everyone gave it a try. The very same students who had previously made the rude comments came to the conclusion that the food tasted much better than it looked. I remember the look on Ty's face when he first tried the squid luau. He gave a pleasant smile and said with his mouth still full, "This is not bad," and Brady nodded his head in agreement.

I was disappointed in myself for allowing their initial comments to upset me. What others think about the Hawaiian culture or food shouldn't have affected me because I love Hawaiian food and it's my culture.

The Bus Enlivened

Dominique Martinez

The Shark Bus

It's four times the length of a car and reminds me of a big shark swimming through a sea of cars. The bike rack above its front bumper reminds me of braces. A giant shark with braces. Once I saw one devour a car. The seafoam green Honda Civic made the sound of a soda can being mercilessly crushed as the bus-shark compressed the little seafoam Civic into a thin sardine cracker, swallowing it whole and shitting it out behind it as it drove away.

Venetian Blinds for Eyes

Each bus has a sign on the front to let you know where it's going, but I have bad eyesight and can never read the sign until the bus gets really close. That forces me to stand up next to the bus stop sign to make sure it'll slow down just in case it's the one I need to catch. It's either that or sit on the bench and, as quickly and discretely as possible, pull the corner of my eye with one finger to force my eyelids into a paper thin eyehole through which my pupil can more easily focus, allowing me to see better, and then let it go fast before anyone notices what I did or how funny I looked while I did it.

#7 Kalihi Uka

The inside of the bus is actually kind of neat. It has also changed throughout the years. Gone are the old one seaters. Now all the seats facing forward are in pairs, and we *have* to sit next to a stranger. When I was young, the busses into Kalihi Valley not only had single seats instead of paired seats, but they also had a window in the back that you could look out of and see the cars stuck behind the bus. With only one lane in and out of Kalihi Valley, cars would back up quickly behind the bus.

I never fully realized that the look on the faces of the commuters behind us, when their eyes popped out of their heads while their lips moved really fast and their hands waved wildly, meant that I should probably turn around and stop sticking tongue, making faces, and mimicking their weird traffic dance. What I saw: crazy adults doing the traffic dance (Wow, they've been behind us for a while). What they saw: damn brats in the window (I wish they'd just turn around and hurry up; that stupid bus is holding up traffic).

Sue Job Slide

Once the door opens and you climb those three stairs to deposit your fare and enter the bus, you can find a seat. The floor on the bus has parallel grooves that are etched from the front to the back of the bus, creating miniature upraised rails on which you are prone to, when wet, slide from the the front of the bus all the way to the back of the bus. I could never understand why they couldn't just make the floor textured with some of those flower shaped bathroom tub stickers that prevent you from slipping. Maybe flowers wouldn't be great for the bus, but what about cute minibusses? Anything would be better than the slide rails; someone could break their neck.

The Wipe Test

When you find an open seat, you shouldn't just sit on it. You've got to give it the wipe test. Brush your hand quickly over the potential butt-resting place to get rid of debris from the previous rider and to make sure that they didn't leave any wet surprises behind. Negative effects of the wipe test: if they left anything behind, you'll get it on your hands!

An Ocular Oasis

Located above the windows on the bus are panels that hold all kinds of different advertisements. City events, Sunset on the Beach, the Punahou Carnival, Blood Drives, and even Jake Shimabukuro grace the glossy bus posters. The posters offer the advertisers an extra way to sell their product or service, but to us riders they offer much more than just a menu for services. To us, the posters are almost like a retreat for our eyes. Thanks to these posters, riders don't have to gaze around the bus and observe any of the many weirdos who may be located near us. The posters give us a pleasant getaway, a time out, an optical safe haven, an opportunity to stare at something that won't stare back at us, give us funny looks, or try to hit on us.

Transfer

A "transfer" is a rectangular piece of paper with the date and a list of all the hours in a day. It is ripped at the hour about four hours after you board the bus. For instance, if you catch the bus at 12 in the afternoon, the transfer will will ripped at 4 p.m., which is when your transfer will expire. This so-called expiration can be easily cheated by crumpling your transfer, hiding the rip and showing the driver the crunched up transfer so s/he can see the date and not much else. They never check it or take it because you can use your transfer for more than one trip on the bus "as long as it's within the grace period." You can also use it to go in any direction and on different busses. This is great for those days when I forget

my bus pass.

Change (the Loose Kind)

Catching the bus is pretty cheap compared to driving a car (but it still sucks). If you drove a car, you would have to pay for the car payments, insurance, maintenance, and any parking/traffic tickets you might acquire. But the bus is different. It's a one shot deal. You pay per ride (or you can purchase a monthly pass if you catch the bus often). Adults (including college students) pay \$1.50 and pre-college students pay \$0.75. When I was younger, students only had to pay \$0.25! Those titas in elementary used to say, "Eh, sista, I like borrow quartah!" I wonder if they've changed their fee too.

Infidelity

Lori Medeiros

Infidelity. Is it old or new? It seems to me that infidelity among women is on the rise. Recently I have more and more female clients confess to me about their extramarital affairs. According to the electronic article "Adultery: Statistics on Cheating Spouses," published by Eagle's Nest Publications, "60-70 percent of adultery victims are women" while "30-40 percent of adultery victims are men." Okay. So, men are still the leaders of adultery.

Dr. Holly Hein, author of the book *Sexual Detours: Infidelity and Intimacy at the Crossroads* wrote, "In the history of mankind, sexual intimacy did not begin with fidelity. Male and female met, mated, and separated in the same manner as almost all other animals" (11). So, there was no such thing as infidelity. Perhaps after hunting, the men went to the woman and traded meat for sex? Men weren't the "bread winners;" they were the "meat conquerors." Also Hein said, women "gathered together in groups in order to better ensure the survival of their young" (12), hence, "the evolution of cultivation and storage" (12). Men were lured by sex and eventually communities developed and so did marriage. Marriage was no more than a means of survival. "Marriage existed in the context of procreation" (Hein 12). Infidelity was not even a thought. According to Hein, only until "the Holy Roman Empire and canonical law were at their peak did marriage become a holy sacrament" (12, 13). Love was not a major concern in a marriage. Marriage back then was about keeping or adding wealth in or to a family.

Once upon a time, love and romance did not coincide in a marriage. Hein wrote, "Love in the context of romantic love did not enter society's vocabulary until the twelfth century" (13). So, marrying for love is not innate in human beings. It is something that evolved over time. Presently, I feel that we are in the midst of yet another change.

Women are working outside the home making their own money. The energy a wife once spent on nurturing a husband and children are reallocated to her work. Dr. John Gray explains in his book *Men, Women and Relationships: Making Peace with the Opposite Sex* that in a relationship when a woman gives to a man, regardless of what it is, the man will perceive it as his entitlement. This is because most men cannot fathom the thought of giving when he is not receiving. For instance, "Often a man assumes that the score is even because a woman continues to give when she is not getting" (Gray 131).

Romance, love, passionate sex, and intimacy – can we have it all with just one

man? Nowadays many women are their own breadwinners and that means there is one less reason for a woman to marry. According to the Population Reference Bureau, "In 1990, about 22 percent of woman in dual-income households earned more than their husbands; by 2002, this percentage increased to 28 percent." And "Between 1975 and 2002, the share of Americans who had never married increased from about 24 percent to 29 percent" ("AmeriStat" 1). Okay. So, *AmeriStat* does not specify if these Americans who are not getting hitched are male or female: nonetheless marriage is on the decline. Is that why the "Bush administration proposed adding \$300 million to promote getting and staying married" ("Here Comes" 1).

I suspect the demand for intimacy is higher among women. A woman can exchange sex with a man for sex with a vibrator. Pure sex is no longer limited to being with a man. Pure sex is accomplished with "Rabbit." What is "Rabbit?" Let me put it this way... You can buy it at Sensually Yours on Nimitz. As far as sexual dynamics are concerned, no man can compete with "Rabbit." Therefore, a man has got to offer more to his wife or partner than his penis: raw sex.

"Between 1970 and 2002, the percentage of adults who lived alone increased from 8 percent to 14 percent" ("AmeriStat" 1). Hundreds of women during my eighteen years of salon service sat at my table and said they would never remarry. They were older women (40 plus) who were either widowed, divorced, or who had one leg out the door in a marriage. When I was young and insecure about my financial future, I had no idea where those ladies were coming from. Now I have crow's feet, a pot belly, and weathered hands from years of hard work, and oh yeah, wrinkles on my forehead from worrying about finances. By the way, I'm married, and I still worry about my financial future. That's why recently I told my husband, "If I have to carry the weight of the world on my shoulders, then I'd rather be alone." I am proud to report that he is currently "stepping up to the plate."

If marriage is on the decline, why does a recent article on social trends regarding marriage claim the following?

The trend to couple up is reflected in the brisk sales of such books as *The Rules*, by Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider, and seems to be happening in spite of the popularity of such 'singles' television programs as *'Ally McBeal'* and *'Friends.'* It's fueled, experts say, by a new emphasis on family values, a backlash against the 'divorce culture' of the 1970's and 1980's, and an increase in AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. ("The Mating Game" 1)

"Affairs are reflections of how we isolate ourselves from our marriage partner" (Hein 15). If you isolate yourself from your partner, you will definitely crave intimacy from

someone else. I wonder if I am guilty of infidelity? I am intimate with many of my clients. (As a manicurist), I spend every day at work sharing my soul with my clients for the most part, my clients bare their soul to me. When I get home, I'm drained. My clients know more about my psyche than my husband. I'd much rather talk and share with women than my own husband. Why? Because my clients who are women understand me! We're the same creatures from the same planet! And my husband never seems to "get it" or "get me." Am I withholding intimacy from my husband? Is this emotional adultery? Furthermore, morally I ask, why is it okay to be emotionally intimate with someone of the same sex and not okay with the opposite sex? Is masturbating infidelity? Masturbating is safe sex, so I guess the Board of Health would promote it. Most people I know would say no. Why is it okay to have sex with yourself but not with someone else outside of a marriage or committed relationship?

Let's get one thing straight. Intimacy is not sex! Something I've been trying to explain to my husband for what seems like forever. Sex may be a result of intimacy, but it is not intimacy. According to a survey on infidelity, done by E-Poll / Bridge Entertainment, 22 percent of women cross the line of fidelity because of loneliness, whereas only 9 percent of men used loneliness as an excuse. In fact, the survey showed 22 percent of men said their reason for infidelity was because of "perfect opportunity" and 21 percent claimed, "not getting enough sex." I can't help but ask "perfect opportunity?" What is that? "The Devil made me do it?" Or "Man thinking with brain below?" Or perhaps the simple reasoning of "I won't get caught." Another interesting thing the E-Poll survey showed is that 13 percent of women cheated to prove that "they are still sexy/attractive to others" as opposed to only 9 percent of men. It appears women are more concerned with their packaging than men are. I think that's true! My husband and son think nothing of parading around our home butt naked before bath time! Which is something my daughter and I have never done.

Because intimacy is not sex, it's no wonder that some heterosexuals chose to be in homosexual relationships appeal to some. It's easier to communicate with the same gender and communication has to happen in order to have intimacy and the results of intimacy is sex. About ten years ago, I had a client who was in her early twenties. She was in a lesbian relationship. She told me that prior to her relationship with "Janet" (fake name) she experienced a horrific relationship with a male. "Janet" befriended her and the rest is history. I never asked my client questions about her transition from sexual relations with a male to a female, but, now I'm beginning to understand.

According to *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, infidelity is simply defined as "breach of trust: unfaithfulness to a charge or a moral obligation: disloyalty." That sounds simple. But my definition, "When a partner in a committed sexual relationship fornicates with someone outside of the relationship or marriage," focuses on adultery. But

infidelity is not only about sex.

In the book *Infidelity on the Internet: Virtual Relationships and Real Betrayal*, the definition of infidelity becomes even broader, Cyber-sex! Using the computer via the Internet to reach orgasm is considered infidelity. Now that's debatable. The book talks about three ingredients in love: passion, intimacy, and commitment. "Passion alone is infatuation. Intimacy alone is friendship. Passion combined with intimacy forms romantic love. Commitment alone is 'empty love'" (Maheu and Subotnik 44).

When I started this essay my question was about statistics regarding infidelity. I wanted numbers to prove my hunch that infidelity is on the rise among women. I thought that perhaps statistics would show me that women have finally caught up with men in numbers to the point of equality. But I found myself more concerned with the definition of infidelity than numbers.

Eleven years ago, I told my husband that he could not have female friends. And likewise, neither could I have male friends. I told him about emotional adultery. I think I learned that from church long ago. So long ago that I forgot what church. Anyway, my point was not to leave the door open for temptation. Sometimes I think of men as animals. Not in a bad way but more instinctual like animals. And according to the statistics I got from E-Poll over the Internet as mentioned earlier, 22 percent of men are "sexual opportunists," a term that makes me think of a cougar pouncing on his prey.

Now that I've been married for too long I find myself wanting to redefine infidelity to my husband as well as myself. My husband has over the years proven himself incapable of being there for me emotionally. Recently I have come to recognize the void within me. I guess my female friends have veiled my awareness, or perhaps they were acting as band-aids to my inadequate marriage by giving me intimacy. I did not expect it from my husband. Or did I? Maybe I subconsciously got intimacy somewhere else and unbeknownst to me resented him for it. Little did I know it was a strain on our marriage. I find myself longing for a male friend to be emotionally involved with. Somehow female intimacy is not enough. And I don't care if my husband finds another woman to confide in, because he drains me. I'm beginning to like the idea of concubines! Let my husband have all the shallow sex he wants with sex objects...Oh, I mean concubines and just give me a man with ears I can burn and "Rabbit." Some people would say that another man's ears and "Rabbit" is infidelity and some would say not. What would you say about it? What would your friends say? The word infidelity in my opinion is open for interpretation. Just like laws. That's why we have lawyers and courtrooms. Oh yeah, and therapists.

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Trapped

Vanessa Morton

It is dark in the room when I am awakened by a tapping noise. I sit up in my bed and look around. As my eyes adjust to the room, not only can I see smoke, but I can smell the smoke as well. I go to wake my father and when he is finally awake he realizes the building is on fire. He goes to the only door and tries to open it. The door won't open. There is a lot of smoke coming up from under it. That's when I start to panic; after all we are "only" on the top floor of an eight-story building. I become confused. "Why aren't the fire alarms going off and where are the sirens? Maybe I'm dreaming. I have to be dreaming. This can't be happening. Please, God, let this be a dream."

It is no dream; we are trapped in a burning building with no way out. "Where the hell are the fire trucks"? I don't hear any sirens and then it dawns on me, no one has called to report the fire. I run to the telephone and I dial 911. When a lady answers, I tell her that we are trapped on the eighth floor of a burning building. We are going burn to death. She asks me to describe what is happening and to calm down. The firemen are on their way, because someone else has reported the fire as well. I tell her the smoke is so thick we can hardly breathe. I also tell her smoke is coming up from under the door and the door is so hot that it is swollen shut. She tells me to go to the bathroom and fill the bathtub with water then to soak towels in it and put them around the door. I do as she says.

I'm not the only one who is in a panic; my father is too. He has filled a pot with water and is carrying it around with him. I don't know what good it will do, but I say nothing.

The smoke is getting thicker; the walls are getting blacker; we are definitely going to die. We go to the window to see if the fire trucks have arrived yet. They have. As I look out the window, I see thick black puffy smoke billowing up out of the windows that surround our apartment. I spot the apartment that is caddy corner from ours; our neighbor is hanging out of her window also. She looks as terrified as I feel. I must have the same wide-eyed look on my face as she does, filled with fear and filled with death. I wonder how many others are trapped in their apartments with no way out and suddenly I don't feel so alone.

It feels like hours have passed and I wonder why they haven't come to help us yet. Maybe they can't get to us and we really are going to die. I see the truck and the ladder. I even see that they have the hoses going full blast; but they still haven't come to

help us. It is taking them so long. I don't think we will ever get out of this alive. Looking down, I see they are getting the people on the lower floors out, but they haven't gotten to anyone on the top floors. The firemen are everywhere. They are on the roof, on the ground and in mid-air, but no one's come to help us yet.

Having had a heart attack a few years back, my father takes nitroglycerin tablets when he needs to. When I look over at him, I can see he is popping his pills like they were candy. Now I'm worried he will die from a heart attack before they are able to get us out. "What if he dies before help gets here?" I don't want to be trapped in here alone to face the red-hot flames. I don't want to die alone. What if the smoke sucks the life out of us first? My father put on a brave front, but I'm crying, saying over and over again, "We're going to die, we're going to die." He tries to comfort me by telling me he's all right and we will get out. Everything will be just fine, we are not going to die and the firemen will be here any minute. He is so brave and so right because, lo and behold, here they come up the big yellow ladder. Because of his heart condition, however, my father can't climb down the ladder. He tells me to go down and get to safety, but I won't go, not without him. I won't leave him there trapped alone!

In the meantime, the firemen have gotten the fire under control from the roof and are able to break through to get to our floor. Now we are faced with a dilemma. How are we going to get out? We can't get out through the door because the intense heat has soldered the door shut. This means we are still trapped. I can hear them on the other side of the door; they are going to chop through it. Once they break through the door, I am never so happy to see anyone in my life, anyone with an ax that is!

The ordeal isn't over yet because now we have to find a way out of the building. Our only hope is the stairwell. We get out the door and head down the hall to the stairs, no easy task. The hall is pitch black. I can't even see my hand in front of my face. I bump into a chair that is in the hallway outside the door of an apartment. I later find out it was the source of the fire. As we feel our way down the long dark hallway the water on the floor is so high we are wading in it. We still have to make our way to the stairwell. My father is having trouble breathing and all I can think about is getting out before something falls on us and kills us all. We are still in danger. When we finally reach the stairs, our red eyes are burning and the stench of the rancid smoke fills our nostrils and our lungs. I still feel trapped as we make our way down each flight of stairs, floor after floor, down to safety away from the dark smoke-filled building. As we find our way out of the building, fresh air fills our lungs and we can finally breathe. I can't believe we finally make it out. I thought for sure we were going to die up there trapped like rats in a burning building. This is not a dream after all. This is as real as it gets. I didn't realize how lucky we were until the following day when I went back to see if anything was salvageable. I lost "everything"

in the fire...but not my life or the life of my father. I thank God for that every day of my life.

The Holocaust was Responsible for The Holocaust: Tales from a Lack-of-Sleep Veteran

Candace Okamura

Let's discuss my health for a minute. In the past six months I've experienced:

- black outs
- slurred speech
- severe nausea
- blurred vision
- depression
- violent outbursts

No, I don't have a drinking or substance abuse problem (as many have speculated this, I'm sure, despite the fact that I dabble in neither). I'm what medical professionals like to call "stupid." Afflicted "stupid" people such as myself are not insomniacs, but still don't get enough sleep (by pushing themselves to stay up), even though their body is obviously telling them:

*"Um, hello? Yeah, hi, it's me, Body. Listen, is Brain still mad at me for that time we accidentally tripped and he got severely injured while I only got a few scrapes here and there? I mean, that was like, years ago, and it's so childish to be holding grudges. Anyway, I ask because he's not taking my calls anymore. I can take a good 15-16 hour daily run, but anything past that, and I start running into problems. You know, general slowness followed by all that other fun stuff. I mean, sure the whole 'second wind' thing kicks in once in awhile, but you end up paying for it even MORE later. So yeah, I've been leaving messages on his machine for the past few weeks, 'Man, c'mon. It's 8:00 in the damn morning and I don't see you slowing down there. You've seen what happens after all night benders like these. Do you REALLY want a repeat of that time you blacked out for--Oh what the hell. You're making a TV dinner now?? That's costing us another hour at least. Man, c'mon.' with no response; so I have a feeling he's still bitter. Or maybe just stupid. Whatever, just if you can, try and get him to talk to me." (As you can see, I exist in three different entities: my body, mind, and **elbow**. My body was talking to my elbow just now. He's the middle man here. I know what you're thinking "Aren't elbows part of the body?" Well you'd think that, but back in '87, my mind and body had a total falling out (long story short, it involved a botched immigrant smuggling operation), so somebody had to be the mediator, and that's when my right elbow volunteered to be the neutral party. Yep.*)*

Anyway, the point is, I don't have insomnia, and I actually *like* to sleep, yet I continue not to sleep because I feel that I am not productive enough during the day, and as a result continue to push myself for as long as possible when I'm in "work mode" (which is usually late at night) and thus cause myself to stay up for inordinate to dangerous amounts of time.

Ever since I learned of the serious health risks lack of sleep caused, I wondered why more information on this topic wasn't being circulated. I mean, sure, you'll have the occasional report on the news about circadian rhythms and how lack of sleep messes it up, and that you should get in eight hours or more, but it's nothing like the coverage that obesity, drinking and driving, or drug abuse gets, for example. Granted, you never hear about anyone dying from "lack of sleep", but I'm more than willing to bet that a lot of illnesses (especially viruses), car accidents, and even mental instability (all things that *are* popular killers) can be prevented by getting more sleep.

As a Chicago Tribune article about being susceptible to AIDS states: *A multitude of factors can infringe on the body's ability to protect itself against disease. They include such things as smoking, alcohol use and old age, drug use, malnutrition, even stress or a lack of sleep.*

Another article, specifically on lack of sleep, in the Doctor's Guide website discusses lack of sleep's affects on a more specific level: *Cutting back from the standard eight down to four hours of sleep each night produced striking changes in glucose tolerance and endocrine function-changes that resembled the effects of advanced age or the early stages of diabetes-after less than one week.*

The Cleveland Clinic Health System says: *Lack of sleep can cause some of the same symptoms as depression -- lack of sleep alone can cause extreme tiredness, loss of energy, irritability, and difficulty concentrating or making decisions.*

And a BBC News article reported: *Drivers who have been awake for more than 17-18 hours are likely to be significantly slower at reacting and will be increasingly likely to miss information as the period of sleep loss increases even further.*

Because of such findings, I don't believe lack of sleep to be any less harmful than health-risk topics that already have lots of exposure.

Back at my old job, many voice-over artists would come and go, as we recorded lots of radio commercials there. Well, one day during my first week or so there (when I was still an intern), I met one of the voice-over artists when she introduced herself to me,

I replied, "Hi, I'm Candace." To my embarrassment, I hadn't gotten much sleep the night before, and apparently I slurred MY OWN NAME when introducing myself. "Janis?" she questioned, to which I smiled and said "No, Candace. Sorry about that!" Her: "Janis?" Me: "Candace." Her: "Oh okay. Hi Candace! Nice to meet you." Maybe she had a slight hearing problem, but I don't know, I'm pretty sure I sounded like I had a few drinks before I came in that day. Plus, of all things, I just HAD to slur MY OWN NAME while introducing myself to a lady that **makes a living speaking clearly and properly**. Hoo boy. (This also bothered me, because I somewhat pride myself on my normally clear speaking voice, and instead, I came off as some underage booze whore, I'm sure. Oh well.)

The previously mentioned BBC article addresses this issue: *Research carried out in Australia suggests that the effects of sleep loss can be similar or worse than the effects of drinking alcohol to excess.* And another research site outright stated that: *Lack of sleep will make you slow and slur your speech.*

Truth be told, I've never been drunk, but judging by that study (and how many hours I've stayed up in my lifetime) I think I have a good idea of what it's like. I always tell people that I'm a lack-of-sleep veteran, because I can almost *always* relate to the lack of sleep experiences other people have had. (and scarily there are even a few effects that only I seem to have experienced, at least, as far as I know.)

Recently, I've actually started to black out during the day, if I'm THAT sleep deprived. When I say "black out," I don't mean fall asleep or faint, but to actually lose consciousness for a few seconds to minutes, only to come to with a "Whoa, what the hell just happened???" feeling all over me. It's mostly during classes in which there's little interaction, and just lecturing. (Author's note: Don't worry, it's not your class!!), but it's also happened at home while working on the computer. The following event happened last semester:

After pulling yet another all-nighter, I dragged my lifeless carcass to school. I was so, so very incoherent for the first 45 minutes of my first class that my notes got progressively messy as the class went on, and I began feeling ill due to my forced state of consciousness. I stared at my watch and saw that it was 4:03. My brain started crying at that point because the class wouldn't be over for another 27 minutes. I continued listening to the lecture and taking notes, but I must have finally fallen over the edge a moment later, because the next thing I knew, I had that "AHHH WHERE AM I???" feeling, and caught a glimpse of my watch. It read **4:09**. I had ABSOLUTELY NO IDEA what happened in those past six minutes. I know I couldn't have fallen asleep, because I didn't recall opening my eyes, nor rising from a hunched forward or backward position. Upon doing research for this essay, I came across the term "glazing," which is popular amongst Dilbert-like

office workers. It means “falling asleep with your eyes open.” So perhaps this is what happened to me. However, I’m not positive that I *was* indeed asleep. After freaking out about those lost six minutes, I looked at my notebook and saw that I had actually written notes that I had NO RECOLLECTION OF WRITING **AT ALL**. They were half coherent, too! Except for the last sentence I managed to churn out: “*The Holocaust was responsible for the Holocaust.*”

Besides these blackouts, I recall having [what I like to think was] **REM with my eyes OPEN** back in high school. My reasoning for this, is that I’d sometimes get to the point where I felt like I could no longer hold myself awake, and then all of a sudden, my eyes would start *DARTING* a million miles a second, for a good 30 seconds or so, and then the next thing I know, I’d jolt back to consciousness. That was rapid eye movement, if I ever saw, or rather *experienced*, it.

I couldn’t find anything about whether REM with your eyes open is possible or not, so until I do, I will continue to believe that’s what it was.

(With all this talk of staying up all night, it probably sounds like I actually have one of those things that everyone has... what’s it called now? Oh yes, a life. I would like to take this moment to clarify that I do not possess one of these things. I spend my nights doing severely antisocial/hermit-like things: watching TV, reading, working on various art projects, playing video games, doing laundry, etc. It is ever so exciting, I know.)

I found this sleep research site by Gary Sturt (<http://www.garysturt.free-online.co.uk/indexslp.htm>) to be the most supportive of my lack of sleep-experiences (rather, the results they achieved were very similar to many of the effects I’ve had: slurred speech with slow reaction time, but heightened short term memory and sorting powers), however, I was a little put off by the fact that it was a somewhat disorganized and unofficial looking site, so while the results interested me, I kept thinking “Hmm, who made this site, exactly? A real doctor? Some transient with a love for science and access to the internet through the public libraries? And what’s up with the fast food sponsorships??”

I’ve been actively trying to improve my sleep habits for, oh, the past **10 years or so**, with mixed results. Usually, I’ll manage to get on a good schedule for a few days to a few weeks (anything more than that is some sort of scary miracle). But eventually I’ll revert back (usually for school reasons, but once in awhile, I’ll just fall back on my own, doing personal projects way past my “new bedtime”) to under five hours a night, and or sleeping past 5:00 am, on a regular basis.

I’m sure it comes as no surprise that I wrote this essay over the course of a few *very*

late nights, and thereby experienced some of the aforementioned symptoms. The thing is, because I've *also* been reading all these articles about lack of sleep, my hypochondriac-self has become very suggestive as well, which is bad. I'm reading all these things about getting "the same effects as diabetes" and "more chances of getting AIDS" and "prone to car accidents", etc. etc. and while I'm pretty sure I'm not at risk for those things (especially the AIDS and car accident ones, as I'm not some sort of floozie/heroin addict, and I can't drive.) I still worry that my bad habit will catch up to me, and that something bad will happen. I wouldn't hesitate to believe that lack of sleep causes excessive paranoia, too. Now if you'll excuse me for a second, I need to lie down and shake uncontrollably with fear for a bit.

Ahh. There we go.

Despite my [hopefully irrational] fears, overall I think I'll be fine, as I also came across this little bit of information while researching: *Horses can become sleep-deprived if they're prevented from lying down and so can't achieve deep sleep. But this won't happen in a day, or even several days; it takes weeks, research shows.*

I usually manage to get a good night's rest at least once a week (or two), so I should be A-OKAY, because as we all know, horses are man's closest relative, right next to kitties! So I'm sure this would hold true for humans, as well.**

*As you can see, lack of sleep also causes INSANITY.

**Lack of sleep does not cause stupidity; I was already this dumb to begin with.

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Flickering Memories

Jason Ordenstein

The memory begins just like a movie. A boy walks out of an old movie theatre clinging desperately to his father who walks out with him. He looks to be about five years old; he is still too young to stray away from the immediate vicinity of either his mother or father. Up until this very moment his entire world has revolved around his parents. The boy has a dazed expression on his face. He looks as if he has experienced something that will forever change him. The boy seems to walk in slow motion, unsure of his steps, moving more by reaction than anything else. He turns back slowly, his eyes searching for something, back where the theatre is. His gaze stops at the row of movie posters on the wall near the entrance. One seems to stand out more than the rest. It shows a boy like him. The boy in the poster is standing behind a fence. The two boys, both fictional and real, seem to be looking at each other. They both seem to have an understanding that the rest of the world will never know. The real boy, still clutching his father's hand, flashes a small grin at the imaginary boy in the poster . . .

I have no memories before the age of five. My very first recollections are in fact a series of events both real and unreal which seem to fade in and out in my mind in no discernible order, like a black and white newsreel playing in an empty, smoke-filled theater. The reason for my difficulty in distinguishing the truth of my memories stems from the first experiences I had with movies.

My father first began to take me to see movies at the age of five. These movies seem to have left such a strong impression on my subconscious mind that anything that was previously inside my head was subsequently pushed out. Looking back, I see that the type of movies that my father first began taking me to were either very mature or very much beyond the presumed intelligence of a normal child of that age. Why did he think that I was mature enough to view them? Till this day, I don't know the answer to that question. The first movies that I saw-I have forgotten what the first was-were very adult-oriented films from the 80's, films like: Conan the Barbarian, Excalibur, The Last Emperor, Platoon, and Alien. He also took me to see "classic," older films, like: 2001: A Space Odyssey, Apocalypse Now!, The Godfather, Dr. Strangelove, and The Seven Samurai.

The thing that I remember most clearly, that resonates with me even today, is the *feeling* that I had watching those first movies. It's difficult to describe. I remember walking out of the theater as if I was immersed in a living dream. I would walk out into the piercing, overwhelming, virginal-white light, feeling a profound sense of loss. Yet underneath my

sadness, there was also anger, a seething type of anger that bit just below the surface. I was furious with the world. All the colors, and shapes, and outlines of the “real” world seemed to be fake and meaningless. I would yearn to return to that dark sanctuary of dreams that I had just left. I preferred that world, the one that provided me with those living, breathing illusions, to the plasticity of the one I would have to live in. It was here that I first began truly to think, as if a kind of fog that was in my mind had magically been lifted. Before, I would merely look at the world. From this point on, I would begin to “see” the world. Now, I would look to see the true face behind the mask in everything and in people as well. It was here that the creative urge first began to flicker deep inside me. The flickering sparks would—over the years—eventually grow stronger and stronger, building, feeding themselves into the raging inferno it is today.

A few movie experiences are particularly strong. I distinctly remember the feeling of having difficulty concentrating for weeks on end after viewing the movie, The Last Emperor. The movie Platoon shattered my entire world view. It was like every single concept I had about the world at that time—limited though it was—had suddenly crumbled into something I couldn’t recognize anymore. Previously, I had thought people were only capable of being either extraordinarily good or maliciously evil. I learned that the world was different from most of the cartoons I watched then at that age. I learned that there were a lot of things that are not so easily categorized. The number of secrets the world contained now seemed to multiply by a thousand. I would now start to look beyond the previous simplistic views of the world, and instead begin to see a more complicated view of the world. I would see a world that was not going to give up all of its secrets so easily now.

One movie-going memory stands out more than the rest. It was after I had seen a French movie called The Four Hundred Blows for the first time. The movie is a simple story of a boy named Antoine who is growing up wild in Paris. All he seems to know how to do is get into trouble. All he wants to do is go to the movies and to see the ocean one day. After the movie, I was in a state of disbelief. There was something inside me that clammed up, something that did not want to face the “reality” that the movie presented me. I refused to speak to anyone immediately after I had seen that movie. I remember that my father asked me if something was wrong with me, but I honestly couldn’t answer him.

There was something in Antoine that I immediately connected with. I related to how he felt uncomfortable around everyone that he met, yet didn’t really know why. When I saw how everyone clearly treated him differently, as if he was some strange, aloof creature, it was myself that I saw in him.

Antoine runs away at the moment that he seems to have found some kind of peace. He runs and runs, running so far that it seems that he has run to the other side of the world.

He runs so far that he reaches the ocean that he has wished to see for his entire life. He edges right into the oncoming waves that lap eagerly at his feet. He gazes out at the vast ocean. Then in one of the most famous endings in movie history, he stares straight into the camera and the screen freezes on his face, his blank, ambiguous expression hidden away like an undecipherable puzzle for all time.

After the showing, my father and I walked out of the theatre. My stomach felt empty, but I knew it wasn't because I was hungry. The details of my memory are not so clear but I remember suddenly realizing that my father had gotten into a discussion with a complete stranger who had also seen the movie. They were discussing why they thought Antoine had such a fervent longing inside him to see the ocean so badly, and why he subsequently ran away to see it. They both attributed it to just more quirky, impulsive behavior from Antoine. In the end they dismissed his actions as being very childish. At that moment I knew that out of the entire audience that saw the movie, a five-year child—myself—was the only person who truly understood it. I looked back one last time, hoping for something . . . something of what I had just seen, something more that I could take with me forever. I noticed that the walls near the entrance were covered with the replica posters of the old movies that the theatre regularly showed. In an instant, I recognized the poster for the movie I had seen. It showed Antoine peering out at the world behind a fence, grasping the fence with one hand. The look in his eyes on that poster has forever imprinted itself onto my mind. In the sharp softness of his dark irises, there is a deep yearning, a deep longing, like being immersed in total darkness and reaching out to a beacon of light but coming up just short, grasping only emptiness.

In a strange way, right then and there, I came to the realization that my life would unfold the same way as Antoine's. Curiously though, I was not sad to know this. Instead, I felt an acceptance for the way things would be. I remember smiling at the poster. The face of Antoine in the poster did not smile back. I know it never will. In my mind it has become something else all altogether. It has meshed with memory and experience so completely that I have a hard time distinguishing it one way or the other. I will always see him that way now, forever grasping that fence, burdened with a desire that could fill several lifetimes. Perhaps it is truth, perhaps not. Personally, I like it the way it is.

A Walk Through A Dark Scene

Danielle Reghi

For years my only experience with death had been those of my pets. I had never experienced a death of a family member. At the age of three, I lost my dog. My tears from that experience were dried with promises of a new dog. As I got older, my cat, mouse, fish, each of which died, were soon replaced with a new pet. These animals were all weak; I knew from the beginning that they would die, and that is why they were so easy to replace. So my life went on, cherishing the time I spent with these pets, but in the end accepting their deaths. Little did I know that reality was waiting for me just around the corner. Like a predator, he stalked me, dropping hints at first, and after time unleashing his force with cruel pleasure.

The first hint came to me as I got home from school one day. My mom was waiting to tell me that my grandmother had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. I shrugged off the idea thinking, "They will give her a hysterectomy and everything will go back to normal. She will be as healthy as she ever was. The cancer will magically go away, leaving us with nothing but happiness and joy for the future." This thought turned into reality in my head, and a safe haven that I could go to whenever anyone brought the subject up. After all, my grandmother Tillie was the strongest person I had ever known. An amazing spirit full of strength and vigor could be seen through her light blue eyes. If one looked deep enough into those eyes, one would also be able to see all the torment of her former life. To show the world that she was a rebel, she had worn only large loose fitting dresses for as long as I had known her. Her dresses all seemed to be cut from the same seventies-like polyester material that fell over her full figured body like a large silk sheet. Rising high above her head like a curly gray halo, her gray curls were always free from any restraints. She was a firm believer that marijuana is incredibly healthy, yet she refused ever to visit a doctor. Her diet consisted mostly of liver, Coca Cola, and chocolate éclairs. She was incredibly easy to please; all one had to do was show her an ounce of kindness, and she would act as if that one small comment or gift was the nicest thing anyone had ever done for her. However, behind Tillie's childish search for acceptance, there was a fiery temper; when provoked, her wrath would leave you frightened for days. Most of all, Tillie was my best friend, and in a sense, my hero. She was my Titanic, indestructible, a symbol of strength. Six months after Tillie had been diagnosed, reality struck. My Titanic had sunk.

I was the last in my family to find out Tillie had died. My parents told me on the car ride over to my uncle's house. When we got there, I was still in complete disbelief. As the doors opened and I was shoved inside, the initial disbelief wore off. The faces of my

family members, once so familiar and comforting, seemed foggy and blank. The noise in the room stung my ears before it turned into a low hum in my head. I stood there, my face blank, my mind a mess of emotions and confusions. "How should I feel? What should I do?" I thought. Out of the darkness my aunt had emerged, and I could hear her voice alone over the hum in my head. Her embrace, once so warm, felt cold and detestable as she spoke words devoid of feeling. "Oh, you just found out didn't you?" Then just as suddenly as she had come, she was gone, without even waiting for any kind of response from me. My disbelief of her insensitivity turned into hate and anger; I could feel fire rising inside of me. I was absolutely dumbstruck, searching inside myself for a release for the amazing pressure that was building up inside my body. I felt as though my head would soon pop off, much like the top of a volcano blows off when the final eruption takes place.

My mother pushed me further into the room. The gesture seemed so hurtful and commanding that it felt like a dagger in my back. I looked for something soothing; the room seemed cold as if it had taken on the characteristics of its inhabitants. All of the friendly pictures seemed to be glaring at me, mocking me, in their own silent way. They taunted me with their blank stares and happy smiles, as though they were telling me that I had absolutely no reason to be miserable when everyone else seemed so happy. I obediently made my way to the brown overstuffed couch. I sat rigid on its now abrasive surface. Objects around me seemed to blur and join together as if they were ghosts. I desperately tried to make sense of this insanity that seemed to be eating me alive. I was scared, confused, angry.

The room grew darker until I could no longer make out a single object. "How could they all be so uncaring?" I wondered. I was appalled by every one of them. I wanted to get up and scream at them; I wanted to hurt them like they were hurting me. In my mind I was screaming, "The reason we are all alive is dead, and you want to go disco bowling!?! Has every single one of you completely lost your minds? Are you even human?" "Obviously not," I thought to myself. "They're evil." My anger and hatred were boiling over into self-pity. A heavy blanket fell over me and seemed to say to me, "You are the victim," it said, "Death has first robbed you of your grandmother, without you having a proper goodbye, and now these monsters are robbing you of your right to grieve." Its voice filled my ears with warmth that extended throughout my body. I surrendered to its embrace, "Don't let them win," it said to me. Its comforting words tingled on my skin like fingertips; its first hand seemed to slide into my chest numbing the pain in my heart. "You are completely justified in these feelings," it said, "You are right, they are wrong." With those words its second hand found the core of my emotions and flipped the switch off, numbing all my pain. My self-pity brought me what I thought was sanity. My anger and resentments toward my family and toward death combined in me to give me new strength, so I could stand up and be numb to the world. I was in the state that I was most comfortable, and knowing this I could go disco bowling, which was way too colorful and joyful for my black morbid mood,

go to the funeral, and survive the whole ordeal without so much as a tear. Some would say that behavior was “being cold hearted.” At that point in my life, it seemed like my only option; it was my survival mechanism.

Now that I look back at this experience, I realize that I was thinking completely irrationally. As a matter of fact when it comes to Tillie’s death I still tend to be a bit irrational. Grief is a very real thing; it makes people do things they would never have done before. In my case, Grief was too much for my, I couldn’t handle it, and to be able to cope with it I had to become a victim, so that I could become numb. The sad thing is the only person who is victimizing me, in these situations, is myself.

An Unforgettable Beach Day

Shauna Sanborn

There I lay, outstretched along the beach at Waimea Bay. It was a gorgeous summer day with the sun at its prime penetrating through the lenses of my Roxy glasses. I could feel the warmth all around me, making me both cozy and content. My hands rested behind my head and my eyes remained closed, as a slight breeze ran against my body. I took long deep breaths and let out all my worries. My body was coated with Monoi Tahitian Oil so I could better obtain that perfect Hawaiian tan.

In front of me was a small slope, which ended where the tide crept up along the white, crystal sands. I could hear my two friends, Ashley and Brandee, breathing hysterically as they raced up the sloped sand. Boom!!! They both fell below my feet, flinging sand all over me. My irritation rose as I opened my eyes and sat up to dust off.

“You guys got sand all over me. Can’t you see I’m trying to tan?” I said sternly.

“Can’t you see I’m trying to tan?” they repeated sarcastically.

Both of them were covered in sand and looked like some kind of white monsters out of a movie. They had the nerve! Just because they were covered in sand didn’t mean I wanted to be.

“You’re so boring. We drive all the way around the island just so you can lie on the sand? Come on, let’s go in the water. It feels sooooo good,” Brandee taunted, shaking her head.

Then she and Ashley began pulling me by my arms, as my chest sunk in holding all my dead weight. Not wanting to make a scene, I finally got up and speed-walked in front of them grunting. I took my glasses off and threw them on my towel and turned around with attitude. I could hear them behind me making comments and giggling, and I tried to keep from laughing too. I am one of those people who can’t stay angry for long.

I brushed over the surface of the water with my big toe. The water felt just right. I turned around, splashed water in both my friends’ faces, and dove in before they could do anything. The cool crisp water ran through my hair and over my body, sending a tingling sensation along my oiled skin. I began swimming free style, extending my arms as far as they could go. I opened my eyes and felt the salt water slightly sting them, but then was

in awe of the beauty beneath the crystal clear water. I finally surfaced, and was amazed at how far I had swum from shore. Ashley and Brandee finally caught up with me and we all giggled in excitement.

“Let’s go skinny-dipping,” Ashley persisted.

“Are you serious?” I questioned. “Okay. You go first then,” I encouraged.

“No you go first,” Ashley answered.

Brandee watched as we argued back and forth.

“Fine. I’ll go first since I go first for everything,” I said, rolling my eyes.

I appeared confident, but in the inside was a little hesitant. “What the heck,” I thought. I pulled my bikini down my thighs, and then finally off my feet. I kicked my legs to keep me above water and swung my bikini over my head with pride as Ashley and Brandee began laughing hysterically. I was about to untie my top when I heard Ashley through her chuckling, very briefly warn, “Don’t.” I became confused. I knew something was wrong. When she motioned for me to turn around, I immediately put on my bottoms and very slowly began to turn around. Oh my gosh! A couple feet away from me a man was snorkeling! I glanced with big eyes at Ashley and Brandee, as their faces began turning red from laughter. I then began to reassure myself that he didn’t see.

Just then an unfamiliar voice behind me spoke. “Hi,” the voice spoke. I turned around to confront him and realized that he was talking to me.

“Hi,” I said beneath my breath.

“Why, that’s not a sight you see everyday. I wish I could see it more often,” the man said smiling. “I’m Eric, the lifeguard of this beach. Wow, it’s really nice to meet you. What’s your name?”

I was completely stunned. Some man I had never seen in my life had seen my behind. I felt my cheeks burning up and turning red.

“Shauna,” I giggled, embarrassed.

“Don’t be shame. You have a nice butt,” he insisted before swimming into shore. I knew that next time I went skinny dipping, which wouldn’t be soon, I was going to look

around really good.

We all swam to shore and began to pack up our things not long after. I was still processing in my head what had just happened. With Ashley and Brandee still laughing, I knew I was never going to hear the end of it.

Just as we folded up our towels and began walking to the shores, Eric approached us.

"I just want to say bye. Next time you come back here, come visit me. Don't forget now, my name is Eric."

"Okay. Sorry about that whole incident," I said.

"Don't be," he responded.

I had never before felt both flattered and embarrassed at the same time. Now, every time I go to Waimea Bay, I just chuckle to myself. I've contemplated a few times whether to ask for Eric at the lifeguard stand. But every time I get the confidence to, I think of how ridiculous I would look. And since that memorable summer day, I've never seen Eric. I doubt he'll remember my name, but I know something he'll always remember.

Evolution of a Cyclist

Cheri Scott

I am a cyclist, and the fact quite surprises me. If anyone had asked me four years ago if I wanted a bicycle, I would have answered, "NO!" I idealized a perspiration free existence, and the eighty pounds of extra flesh that accompanied me everywhere actually aided me in this endeavor. I didn't have the stamina or muscle tone necessary to climb Leahi, a volcanic crater better known as Diamond Head that is now part of my daily commute in Honolulu. Some of my bulk simply had to evaporate before my metamorphosis into a bike enthusiast could begin. In hindsight, I took my first step towards becoming a cyclist in the fall of 1998.

"I am going to stop eating chocolate," declared Melanie. Mel was one of my closest friends, a tall, slender waif with wavy blond hair and green eyes who would forget to eat if she was upset. I feel that demands of "Why?", however politely phrased, muzzle my momentum when I make a decision, so I try not to do the same to others. I never asked Mel what prompted her choice, but her statement electrified me. I did not pause for introspection; I simply deleted chocolate from my diet.

There have been four decisions in my life that took about five seconds to make, and I often wonder where my resolve came from. When I was fourteen, I decided to become an exchange student for a year during a fifteen minute presentation from the program's counselor. I spent the next year in Australia. At twenty-one, I was looking for a college where I could begin my undergraduate studies. I felt no zeal for the quest until my father suggested I think about where I wanted to go, rather than what school I wanted to attend. "Hawaii!" my imagination shouted in reply. I bought a one way plane ticket from San Francisco to Honolulu the next day and have now lived here nine years. The third great decision-making moment in my life came when I decided to quit eating chocolate.

Headaches, nausea and debilitating lethargy plagued me for two weeks after I severed ties with my favorite food. I had a part-time job and would collapse into bed in the afternoon after work. I would awake from a two to three hour nap feeling as if I had never slept at all. My eyes would be dry, my temples throbbed, my stomach churned and I had no desire for consciousness. I didn't make the connection between my symptoms and the absence of caffeine in my diet until another friend watched me vomit in a parking lot, and commented, "You're going through withdrawal." The observation stunned me, but I knew it was true. Chocolate would never seem innocuous again, and I have not eaten it since Mel made her startling statement almost five years ago. Anything that could make me feel

that ill has to be evil!

Melanie moved to Arizona to live with her brother and work as a waitress at a Chili's one year after I was weaned from chocolate. One friend exited and another took her place in the form of Soo-Jin Laanui and her husband and their four children. They met a new version of myself, one that was thirty pounds lighter sans chocolate. The children found me fascinating. I was the same age as their parents (old at 27), yet I was single! Inquiring young minds would ask, "Are you going to get married, Cheri?" "Do you *want* to have children?" I represented possibilities they had never been confronted by in their own home. Soo-Jin was equally fascinated by me. I don't see myself as an object worthy of study, but I know I am forever delighted and intrigued by my closest friends, and I saw it as a sign of our friendship that Soo-Jin felt the same about me. After we met, both she and her husband adopted a chocolate-free lifestyle and endured the same trial I had.

A chocolate-less Thanksgiving was the first holiday I spent with the Laanui's. I arrived forty-five minutes after my ETA, and the walk had caused a bus trekker like myself to sweat. The Laanui's lived only two miles from my apartment, so walking was more practical than taking a bus. Honolulu has an amazing bus system. You can get anywhere on the island, so long as you're not in a hurry and don't want to take a direct route. To catch a bus from my apartment to theirs would have required me to walk one third of the distance, wait an indeterminate amount of time before boarding a bus that would take me a couple of miles away from my destination, and then deposit me a good ten minute walk from the Laanui's front door. It was simpler to walk. Soo-Jin was not angry at my tardiness; she had a solution. "You need transportation! I am going to have my husband fix up my bike, and then we'll give it to you. I don't use it; someone should!"

"I don't need a bike, Soo-Jin! I buy a bus pass each month." Secretly I didn't want a bike; I had my perspiration-free lifestyle to protect. I could walk slower or take the bus next time to avoid melting. Months went by and Soo-Jin would reaffirm her intention to provide me with a bike each time transportation issues got in the way of us getting together. Could I meet them at Borders? Sure, but it would take me about half an hour to walk there. A movie at Kahala? Ok, but the Number One can be a little unpredictable, so I'll be there in an hour and a half. Ultimately, it was not inadequate transportation that brought a bike into my life; it was a visit from my father.

My parents divorced when I was four, and, over the years, my father would sometimes show up for our visits sporting a tan and wearing an aloha shirt. I was envious and proud at the same time. How many other kids had a dad who regularly went to Hawaii? When I reached high school, his trips stopped. I had lived in Honolulu for seven years before he paid me a visit. I was excited he was finally going to make good on his word to

visit me. I have always been close to my father. He makes me laugh, gives me hugs, and is very consistent (even with habits that annoy me).

My father's vacation lasted a week and a half. He would spend his days on the beach reading while I was at work. When I arrived home, he would cook dinner for me and we would walk and talk until I needed to crash. I must have casually mentioned Soo-Jin's offer of a bicycle, because my father asked if I could get it for him. He is mildly diabetic, and I think he imagined himself a changed man due to the sun on his skin and the beauty of Hawaii constantly before his eyes. Without the stress of his inner city office, his blood sugar had dropped into the almost normal range, and my dad was eager to stay outside in the hope it would drop some more. I called Soo-Jin with my father's request, and she said, "Of course!" I think she felt that she was flaking on a promise to two people instead of one, and guilt spurred her into action.

"Where are you?" began a typical conversation with Soo-Jin.

"I am at work. I am finished in half an hour, why?"

"The bike is ready." She sounded like a nighttime news anchor with a juicy story. "She's beautiful! My husband cleaned her, changed the tubes in the tires, put air in the tires, replaced the back tire, replaced the brakes, balanced the wheels, oiled the chain," I heard a deep intake of breath, "and she's ready to go! Get over here!" I couldn't help but smile at her pride.

"I'll stop by after work, but I have to go straight home cause my dad is still here."

"Alllrrriight then!" Soo-Jin drew the syllables out and shaped them like the curve of an ocean swell.

With perspiration on the brain, I boarded the Number One going towards Soo-Jin's house. I disembarked at Pensacola, walked four blocks mauka (towards the mountain) past Safeway and the freeway entrance, and turned right onto Davenport. The kids were playing in the street, keeping an eye out for me when I rounded the corner. The Laanui children yelled, "Mom! Mom! She's here!" Their voices were amplified as the other kids in the neighborhood picked up the cry and yelled, "Mrs. Laanui, Mrs. Laanui! She's here!" Did those kids ever wonder *who* was here? I smiled and waved, and I think I blushed a little to have created such a spectacle. The Laanuis lived in an apartment smack in the middle of Davenport, by the time I reached their building Soo-Jin was downstairs with the bike. A sparkly, deep purple Specialized Hardrock mountainbike. It was a man's model and had twenty-one gears that I didn't know how to use.

To this day, my knowledge of bicycles has not progressed past the color and the self-serving graffiti provided by the manufacturer. Out of necessity, I have learned to change tubes and tires, adjust my seat, install a rack for packages, and oil the chain. My bike's other needs are met by a mechanic. I do not tinker; I do not follow bicycle related sports; I ride.

Soo-Jin showed me how to work the quick lock release on the seat so I could adjust it to my height; then the whole gang watched as I mounted my new bike and wobbled down the street and back. Soo-Jin's brow was furrowed, "Do you *know* how to ride?"

"Of course I do! It's just been fourteen years since I've done this." I had a dad waiting at home, so I set off after quick good-byes. The wind rushing past me was exhilarating! How could I have forgotten how good that felt? I am a woman who will hike up Makapuu Point, hop over the protective railing, climb twenty feet down the face of the cliff and stand with my arms outstretched just to be a part of the wind racing across the ocean. I was moving so much faster than the pedestrians! Why did I ever think walking was an acceptable form of transportation? I glided to a stop in front of my building fifteen minutes later, and my thighs trembled when asked to walk me up the two flights of stairs to my front door while I carried my new bike. I left the bike, prepped for display, in the middle of my studio, and found my father reading on the lanai. He took one look at the bike and told me we were visiting Sears after dinner.

I didn't make the connection between Sears and my bicycle, but after dinner I found myself standing petrified with embarrassment as my father placed various bike helmets on my head and lectured me on their value. Seeing that I was going to leave Sears the owner of a big styrafoam headpiece, I pointed to one of the sleeker models, mutely indicating my preference. My father loudly told me, "No, the more padding the better! You don't want to make a fashion statement with a helmet! Bigger is safer!" I was greatly relieved when a green helmet finally fit to his satisfaction. The helmet was so large and insect-like that I referred to myself as a superhero named Ant Woman for months afterward. My father also picked up a bike lock, water bottle holder, all-purpose tool and a new squishy cover for the seat on our way to the register.

The shopping trip should have been an indication to me of my father's plans. He commandeered the bike for the rest of his vacation. My father was visibly tanner when I returned from work each evening. He punctuated the detailed travelogues of his adventures with lots of arm waving and pointing towards the directions he thought he had ridden.

My father returned to California on a Sunday morning, and before I went to bed that night, I made the decision that turned me into a cyclist; I was going to ride my bike

to and from work. It was an expensive gift, and I felt obligated to use it. I twisted my ankle Sunday afternoon, but I did not waver. Soo-Jin showed up at my apartment Monday morning to wrap my ankle before work, and ask again, "Do you want a ride?"

"No!"

"OK," she said with raised eyebrows.

My first commute via bike took place the last working day of March 2001, and lasted sixty-five minutes. I rode on sidewalks, was out of breath the whole way, and felt as though my thighs were on fire when I gratefully dismounted. I walked in circles around the first floor office, alternately panting and taking swigs from my water bottle until it was time to clock in. Climbing the stairs to my office on the second floor caused such pain I could do nothing but laugh. Pain took on a new definition when I climbed aboard my bike for the ride home. My thighs weren't the only thing that hurt. My pelvis was not used to bearing the weight of my entire body, and my vagina was *not* happy. I now joke with friends that when I marry, my husband will discover I am a tough old bird. Two weeks would pass before my body would perform without complaints.

Two months passed before I understood how to use the twenty-one gears my bike came equipped with. I was sitting on the toilet one Saturday morning and I glanced at my legs. I gasped and thought, "I am Conana the Barbariana!" My thighs were solid muscle and as thick as ham hocks. While I appreciated the loss of an additional fifteen pounds from riding, it was not my intention to transform myself into a female doppelganger of Arnold Schwarzenegger. I had been riding around town in nineteenth gear; the higher the number, the greater the resistance. Two of my co-workers used to race, and I asked them about my predicament. They assured me I needed to drop to a lower gear for town riding, and informed me of possible injuries to my knees and hips, "You want to arrive at your destination, Cheri, not blow out your joints!" I started using twelfth gear for town and named my bike Magnum Mortis.

I cannot explain where Magnum came from. I have a tradition of bestowing male names on my possessions; I am a single woman after all. Maybe Tom Selleck flashed through my mind during the search for a moniker? Mortis is the name of the steed Death, or Thanatos, rides in Greek mythology. I had recently read *On A Pale Horse* by Piers Anthony in which Thanatos is the main character. I was so impressed with the abilities of Mortis, who was a sidekick rather than a means of transportation, that I felt it an appropriate name for my bike.

Aside from my thighs, Magnum Mortis made other changes in my life. I found out

months later that my co-workers had a bet going about the cause of my suddenly improved disposition; the favorite theory was I had obtained a boyfriend. Actually, I was taking my frustrations from work to the asphalt and pushing anger out of my body with every tired, strained muscle I possessed. It was a relief to have a clear head during my personal time, rather than reliving aggravating episodes from work punctuated with improved come backs from myself.

Despite the benefits I was experiencing, I quickly became dissatisfied with riding through town. Roads I regularly traveled, like Kapiolani and Dillingham, were in terrible repair. Potholes were so wide and deep I had to migrate to the middle of the lane to get around them. Worse than the roads were the cars and trucks and buses and mopeds swarming over the streets. They seemed to think *I* was in *their* way, when actually it was the reverse. I longed to ride without having to stop for a traffic light, or slow down for a vehicle that hugged the curb and emitted noxious fumes.

At the end of my first month as a cyclist, I rode from Windward Mall to BYU-H in Laie on the North Shore. After Windward Mall the road is obstacle-free; no lights, no signs, and sparse traffic. The ride was glorious! I took the Fifty-Five bus from Ala Moana Shopping Center in downtown Honolulu over the Pali Highway and arrived at the mall at 6:30 a.m. The highway follows the coast, and I rode ensconced in the majesty of ocean, mountains and sky with a lovely breeze tickling my skin the entire way. I smiled like a maniac and turned down the occasional country road just to see where it went. I rode past tropical rain forests, beautiful homes, pine trees, fish farms, parks with campers, and local oddities like, "The Hygienic Store." Two hours later, I reached BYU. The Laie ride became a weekend favorite, and within three months I turned my sights on Tantalus.

My first attempt to ascend one of the steep roads that circumscribe Tantalus led to vomiting. I chose Mott-Smith Drive as my point of entry to the hill. The street tackles the hill head on, and soars quickly in elevation before joining Makiki Heights Drive, a road that rises slowly through the contorted wanderings of switchbacks. I pedaled with all my might, dropping gears every ten feet and quickly reached first gear, a place I had never been. My heartbeats became painful blows assaulting my chest from within. Every muscle engaged in moving me forward burned. However, I kept my butt on the seat and forced my muscles to propel me forward. Standing on the peddles would have employed my weight rather than my strength for movement. My shoulders tensed in concentration as I was reduced to a woman forcing her way up a paved precipice. The thought of reaching the head of Mott-Smith Drive consumed me. I made it! And then I hurled.

While, I have not thrown up again due to biking, neither have I succeeded in

circumnavigating Tantalus in the two years I have been riding. I refuse to try another approach until I am able to push past the crest of Mott-Smith Drive. I have a fantasy that I will one day ride the complete circuit of roads that wrap around Tantalus. There is music that accompanies this dream, "Because We Can" by Fatboy Slim . . . "Because we can can can, yes we can can can, because we can can can can can can can!"

In real life I have a daily commute of twenty miles. It is five miles from my apartment to work, a ride I complete in thirty minutes now, instead of sixty-five. (I have a second fantasy about riding to work on empty streets. How long would it take me without cars getting in my way?) From work I ride ten miles towards home and past it again to Kapiolani Community College where I am a student. This leg of the journey includes the volcanic crater I mentioned earlier. The route home is a five mile, downhill roller coaster.

Magnum Mortis made the daily pilgrimage with me for sixteen months before succumbing to an irreversibly broken part (my mechanic could explain better). Three weeks later I was miraculously given another bike by a different patron, a classmate who was moving to Maryland. My softened thighs and groin had to go through a readjustment period again, thankfully shorter this time. My new vehicle is a forest green, and marked by the appropriate graffiti "GT Timberlake." The initials "GT" led to him being named The Green Turtle. Yes, I have another male bike with twenty-one gears. The main difference is this model would better fit the body of a thirteen year old. I look enormous and a little silly perched on the seat, but The Green Turtle does his job. I am forever grateful to the people who have generously given me bicycles, but I will buy the next one.

My lifestyle has an amazing impact on lay people. Some try to "help" by telling me where I can buy a cheap car. Others note the bike helmet that perpetually hangs from my backpack, and describe me as athletic. Odd, since I'm easily thirty pounds overweight still. Strangers usually refer to my bicycle solely as a means of exercise. Maybe that's what a bicycle would be to *them*; I ride for pleasure, for transportation, for relaxation. I am a cyclist!

My Brush

Yufei Rishelle Zhou

The Chinese calligraphy brush is similar to the brush used for watercolor painting; it has a finer tip suitable for dealing with a wide range of subjects and for producing the variations in line required by different styles. Since the materials used for calligraphy and painting are essentially the same, developments in calligraphic styles and techniques can also be used in painting. The writing brush is composed of the body and the tip. The body can be made from bamboo, wood, lacquer, and porcelain. In rare cases, the body may also be made from precious materials including pearl inlay, ivory and jade. The tip of the brush can be made from white goat's hair, black rabbit's hair, and yellow weasel's hare. On the basis of the function of the tip, the brushes are classified into three groups: a) hard, b) soft and c) mix. Depending on the selection of the brush, a calligrapher can write the various fonts and size. The tools used to write Chinese calligraphy includes: a) brush, b) ink-stick, c) paper, and d) ink stone. I consider the brush to be the most important tool in writing Chinese calligraphy; without the brush, the texture and stroke necessary to form a word would not be possible.

To understand and appreciate the importance of the brush, we begin with a synopsis of the history of Chinese calligraphy. According to an on-line article written by Francis Wood, the written Chinese word can be dated back over 4,000 years old based on legendary tales and archaeological studies (1). During the many stages of their evolution, Chinese characters and calligraphy have been treated as an art, and well into the modern era they have also been considered to have mystical powers. As Wood states, "In China, the written word has long been regarded as powerful, even magical: during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), good calligraphy fetched higher prices than painting." Calligraphy is picture oriented and is very unique in structure and tools.

When I was six years old, my mother and father thought I was an overly active little girl. On the advice of my grandfather, my parents decided to enroll me in a Chinese calligraphy class. I practiced diligently daily for the first three years of class and frequently thereafter for the next seven years of my teenage years. I consider my ability to write Chinese calligraphy to be a precious skill which I continue to practice today.

At first my brush was not very friendly to me. In some way, I considered the brush to be a bully, and I wanted to conquer it. At the beginning the brush wouldn't cooperate. It seemed to have a mind of its own, going anywhere on the paper except where I wanted it to. Everyday for a whole month, I practiced how to write one single horizontal stroke.

Word by word, stroke by stroke, and month by month I practiced, until I mastered my brush. On my command, my brush has now become a communicator of my thoughts and wishes. I have learned to look upon my brush as more than a writing instrument; it has become more like a silent friend over the years. True to its form, my brush has allowed me to convey my emotion in artistic expression accurately and reliably for many years.

After the initial five years of writing Chinese calligraphy, I no longer view my brush as a bully which caused me much pain in every joint of my hand and arm. I look upon my brush with pride and respect for its simplicity and functionality. Friends, family, teachers and associates have recognized and complimented my artistic excellence in Chinese calligraphy writing. My parents were very proud of my second place finish when I competed against other kids my age at the national level in 1988.

In the early years of practicing to write Chinese calligraphy with my brush, I learned the importance of having a clean and flexible brush in order to achieve accuracy and consistency in my writing. After each writing session, I clean my brush by gently swishing it around in a jar of cool water. I take care not to use warm water; it will dry out the natural oils in the brush hairs and may dissolve the glue that holds the hairs inside the handle. After shaking any excess water from the brush, I dress the brush by wiping it against a paper towel or between my fingers to bring it to its original shape. Finally, I store my brush horizontally in a dry, dark and cool place.

To this day, I continue to practice my Chinese calligraphy writing. On special occasions, I write poems and characters as heart-felt gifts for close friends and family. Without my Chinese calligraphy brush, I would feel deprived of a critical form of communication, one that expresses the traditional Chinese language in the form it was meant to convey.

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