

DIAMOND JOURNAL



Spring 2007

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Acknowledgements

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Carolyn Skinner, a faculty member whose happy influence will be fondly cherished by the many students and faculty who had the good fortune to know her.

The photographs on the front and back covers were taken by Dylan Little.

We applaud the efforts of all the writers who submitted their work for consideration and celebrate their creativity.

Editors

Kari Barnes
Dylan Little
Elise McKnight-Kim

Advisor

Mark Lawhorn

The Scope of *Diamond Journal*

Diamond Journal specializes in publishing works of nonfiction that take the form of personal narrative. The two types of writing that most commonly appear in these pages are the personal narrative and the personal narrative essay. A personal narrative is an autobiographical story about a specific incident or series of related incidents in a writer's life which reveal conflict and often growth in the writer's character. Personal narrative may be defined as a true account of personal experience. Rather than "autobiography," which implies a rather comprehensive account of one's life, the term "memoir" might more suitably describe this type of narration. The writer of this genre, who must inevitably be highly selective in choosing details to share with the reader, strives to draw the reader as fully as possible into an experience that is largely communicated through creative use of the following:

- Effective pacing and blending of summary and scene,
- Sharp, believable dialogue,
- Distinctive characterization that "brings characters to life,"
- A palpable setting (time, place, even atmosphere, and the details to give them meaning) that places the reader in the world of the story,
- Action verbs and concrete nouns that show instead of tell,
- An organizational structure and focus that help the reader stay with the story all the way to the end (usually, but not always, chronological).

In the personal narrative essay, experiences taken from one's life are connected to an idea. Because a personal essay may be more idea-driven than story-driven, however, storytelling techniques used in personal narrative may be somewhat less prevalent than in the personal narrative. Occasionally, a good bit of research from secondary sources may be incorporated into a personal narrative essay in order to explore the subject more fully. Such essays, with their scholarly elements of textual citation and bibliography, are often identified as personal critical essays.

The common thread in all the types of narrative writing mentioned here is, of course, the word "personal." Sharing personal stories is one of the oldest, most valued rituals of our species. Taken as a whole, these stories celebrate the diversity of our students at Kapi'olani Community College. They also reaffirm our common connection with any brave, thoughtful person anywhere, anytime who has taken the time to tell a story worth sharing.

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Diamond Journal, a publication of the Board of Student Publications (BOSP) at the University of Hawaii at Kapi'olani Community College, is produced once each semester. Funding for BOSP is provided by student fees. The written works included in *Diamond Journal* reflect the experiences, opinions, and views of their authors, not those of the BOSP, journal editors, advisors, or staff. Authors are solely responsible for the content of each submission. While *Diamond Journal* invites all submissions, selection for publication is entirely at the discretion of the editors, who also reserve the right to edit for grammar, punctuation, and length.

A Deadly Infection

Joan Allas

My husband is the craziest person in the world to me. He makes me laugh all the time, and he creates silly jokes to entertain me, my friends and family. He is like a comedian who has the latest jokes on hand. Rey is very positive; his childhood was not so funny. He grew up in the Province of Pangasinan, in the community of Luzon, which was very poor. Coming from a family of eight, including his mother and father, he is the second youngest. Although his family was poor, everyone had enough to eat. He is a very caring and loving person, especially to his parents and his siblings. Rey is always there to lend a helping hand, always doing favors for others with no questions because he is just a nice guy. Rey is very fun, yet a practical and a patient individual. When complications arise, he is there to solve the problem the right way. He is my husband, my partner, and my confidant. Rey's courage and strength encourage me to strive more in my life.

Rey's family moved from the Philippines to Hawaii in 1980. Restaurant job opportunities were the easiest to apply for in the islands. Back home, the labor construction work in the Philippines was difficult when equipment and materials were limited. He found several jobs in Hawaii right away. While working, he met my girlfriend at work and asked her if she had any friends that he could date. My friend pulled out a book of prom pictures from high school for Rey to look at. From all of those prom pictures, he chose me. My friend met me that night for dinner and to my surprise she had invited Rey to dinner also. I had no idea he would be there. Rey asked my friend if I was the one in the picture, and I was. When I first met Rey, I thought he was crazy, but his personality captured my interest and we started dating. Five months later we got married, we had our son in 1984, and after twenty-two years, we are still married.

Now that we were married and settled down, Rey worked and received medical benefits. Rey had a total right hip replacement surgery in 1986. He had the surgery due to his family history of arthritis. Since we had good medical benefits, Rey decided to fix his teeth after his surgery. His front upper big tooth needed to be removed because it was corroded and his lower front teeth, the front four, also needed to be replaced. A lot of work went into his teeth. Year after year, he made appointments to fix his teeth. Unknowingly, Rey needed to take antibiotics before any dental work. The medication would prevent any infections that might develop in his artificial hip prosthesis. If no antibiotics were taken, infection would begin to grow in the hip area causing serious illness or death.

As these appointments became routine, he suddenly was not feeling well. He was in excruciating pain and could not walk. He could not even stand the pain of sitting down. The expression on his face showed that the pain was pretty unbearable. Feeling nauseated, with his eye deeply indented, Rey looked like a skeletal monster from Halloween. Rey felt very weak and his face was pale. When he moved, the pain was intense. From home to the car, Rey's brothers had to carry him in a chair. Tests were done to determine the cause of this painful feeling. The results of the x-ray showed his prosthesis was protruding through the

right thigh and had swollen up to twice in size. Urgent surgery was needed. The equipment was set for the procedure. The orthopedic surgeon started to sterilize the area which was previously cut in 1986. I was worried. The diagnosis of his condition seemed unpromising. I thought I was going to lose him.

In the operating room, the table felt cold, and everything looked sterile, like stainless steel. Music was played in the operating room to calm down Rey's nerves as well as to relax the surgeon. The anesthesiologist started to administer the sleeping medicine into the intravenous tubes. Rey counted up to two and soon fell asleep for the procedure. A few minutes later, the orthopedic surgeon started the procedure. He began to slice the skin and noticed that the procedure was not going as planned. Thick forms of liquid, the color of pink yogurt, were oozing out of Rey's hip; it was not blood. As soon as the surgeon saw the pink yogurt liquid, he knew it was infected. The infection started to fill up the first container. Soon, there were three containers filled with liquid infection. In the process, Rey's condition worsened. The heart rate began to fall. Nurses, assistants, and the specialist scrambled in to revive Rey back to normal conditions. An irrigation procedure was used to minimize the infection. The procedure that normally took two to three hours was now in its fifth hour. Rey's body lost a lot of blood, and the surgery was overwhelming for him. Blood transfusions were administered to replenish the blood loss. But it was not over yet.

The wound was closed. When Rey arrived at the intensive care unit (ICU), the numbers on the monitor began to lower again. The nurses and the medical team rushed into his room. He stopped breathing. Immediately, the code team entered the room with machines hooked up to Rey to revive him. An electrical shock was given to him several times until a heartbeat was seen on the monitor. The reviving went on for ten minutes, which seemed forever. A heartbeat finally appeared on the monitor. Rey nearly lost his life that day.

Rey stayed in the hospital for a month. Later, he left the hospital with crutches, but no hip joint in place. The surgeon had to make sure that the infection was completely gone before reinserting his prosthesis. It took another three months for the infection to completely disappear. Antibiotics were injected with a needle through his chest tube three times a day. I played a role as his nurse on duty, administering the antibiotics. Because there was no single joint in his right leg, I also had to measure different weights to keep his right leg in balance. I was very relieved to see Rey's recovery from such a deadly infection.

In mid-May 1991, Rey went back to the operating room to reinsert his new prosthesis. The prosthesis was fifteen inches in length. The first prosthesis had protruded into the bone. The new prosthesis would pass that hole, and it would be more stabilized in the joint.

Rey is a very brave and strong human being. He has been through a great ordeal. Rey always thanks me for being there for him. I always tell him that I would also do anything for him as well. Having to care for him has inspired me to pursue my career in

the medical field. I am amazed by his courage and strength. Now that I have my husband back, I will cherish every moment that we are together. I will never know when life will just come and take it away.

Drowning

Sira N. Baker

Some people think that it is strange to go to the movies alone. I, on the other hand, look at it as a chance to sit in peace for two good hours. I mean, you aren't supposed to be talking during a movie anyway, right? So what do you need to bring a companion for?

I once ran into a group of friends at the theater on one of my solo movie nights. They asked me who I was with. When I said, "No one, I am by myself." They all looked at me like I just said that I was from the planet Snorfblatt and I came to eat their children. They gave me looks of pity and invited me to accompany them. What was so wrong with wanting to be alone?

Of course a group of single men in their mid twenties could not possibly understand. Knowing me from work, they had no idea that I felt like I was drowning every second of every day. They would not understand that two hours sitting in silence in a dark theater was like a month long vacation to me.

I was a young, single mother, newly separated from my husband, living on my own with my infant daughter. I had become swept up in the new titles of my life. Wife... Mother... those were new to me. They were titles that came with an entirely new set of responsibilities that I was not sure I was prepared for. I didn't know if I could handle both new roles at the same time so I bailed on one before I failed at both. It was too late to escape being a mother so I gave up being a wife.

My marriage suffered the second I became pregnant. I have been accused of being anal retentive, some have even gone so far as to call me obsessive-compulsive, not in the neurotic "tap every door handle ten times before I open it" way, more in the sense that when I do something, I like to do it thoroughly and as well as it can be done. I remember thinking, "If I want to be a good mother, I cannot be a wife." I don't know why I felt that way. I felt like I could only focus on one thing at a time. I guess that I had been witness to my parents staying together for the kids for so long that I didn't want to lose myself in a sad, drawn out, exhausted marriage, waking up one day to realize that I don't even know what I like anymore because I am so busy trying to figure out what it is that makes everyone else happy. I would rather make a go of it alone than lose myself in a role I was not prepared for. I can't even say why I got married in the first place.

I have this thing about going to a movie right when it comes out. I do not like crowds and for that reason, I always see movies about a month after their release. The movie was *The Hours* with Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore, and Meryl Streep. It had been out for a little over a month so I knew that it would not be crowded. It wasn't exactly a huge blockbuster hit either. I really had no idea what the movie was about. I hadn't read the book

and I had no idea what I was in store for. I had heard it was a story of three women and their attempts at living their lives, but living them for other people. Being a new mother, I knew exactly what that was about so I gave it a shot. To my surprise, when I walked into the theater, it was completely empty. I was the only one there. As the screen filled with trailers, no one ever walked in. The movie began and all I could think was, "Wow, I've never had an entire theater to myself before." It was pretty cool.

It is difficult to admit that you have made terrible decisions; especially ones that have made indelible marks on your life that were not necessarily for the better. Getting married, having children, they are things that I often wonder if I could have lived without. I often wonder about the places I would have been had I not tied myself down so soon. Would I still feel like I was drowning, just for other reasons? Many times, I think that I would. I mean, that's life, right? I often wonder if I would long for this life had I not lived it.

Having children changes everything and there is absolutely nothing that you can do to prepare yourself for it. I have never imagined that I could be so fatigued. And what some people don't understand, or maybe just refuse to acknowledge is that yes, sometimes you want to kill yourself. Sometimes you want to kill someone else. Sometimes that someone else is even your very own child. The stress and the pressure along with the lack of sleep and the added expenses can be too much sometimes. I felt like I was drowning and with my daughter only 3 months old, I had no hope that the pressure would let up soon. There were the feedings every 3 hours, no child support, rent, work, no time to shower, no time to sleep, no clean laundry, forgetting to eat...all the while, my child is feeding on all of the nutrients that I have in my body. I had nothing for myself. I was alone. I was always tired, always dirty. But motherhood is supposed to be beautiful. It is supposed to be the reason for living. So if I just don't talk about hating it, no one will ever know that I want out.

There is a scene in *The Hours* where Julianne Moore's character bakes her husband a cake, drops her son off at the sitter and then goes to a hotel room to commit suicide. Everything is done so matter of factly. She lays the pills out on the bed. An overhead shot shows her laying in the middle of the bed while the room fills with water, tons of water, flooding the room, pouring over her as she lays there. I sat in the theater alone and began to cry. It was a heaving sobbing like my soul was pouring out of me as quickly as her room filled with water on the screen. I couldn't stop. It was as if my life was pouring out of me. And at that moment, to see that someone gets it, to see my emotions symbolized before my eyes, to take a feeling that I could not articulate to anyone laid out before me moved me in a way that I could not have dreamed. I had no idea how much I needed that until I sat there,

bawling, broken down, devastated and alone.

Lunch Sucks

Serena Berg

It was about a year and a half ago when I first met Mr. Kobayashi. It was late at work, with about an hour to go before closing. The store was dead. Then all of a sudden, a beautiful Japanese woman walked in. She was dressed head to toe in Chanel Couture. She looked and walked like a runway model. Then I noticed a short man with her, maybe in his fifties. He walked quickly to keep up with her and I couldn't help but notice that they seemed to be in a hurry.

About three weeks later he was back. But instead of the gorgeous, statuesque woman he was with earlier, a more typical and petite Japanese woman now joined him. The couple reeked of cocktails and liquor and Mr. Kobayashi stumbled around the store misplacing everything he picked up.

"I like that," he slurred as he pointed towards a strawberry-colored women's moccasin. "You have size?"

I tried to hold back laughing as I realized that he was serious about the shoes. "Yes, one moment please," I murmured. I managed to find a women's size that fit him. However, Mr. Kobayashi was not ready to leave just yet.

"I need use bathroom, you have bathroom?" he said in broken English. "Umm...yes," I hesitated. I did not feel comfortable with the idea of escorting him up to the third floor alone, but how bad could it be?

I never before noticed how dimly-lit the elevator was before then. As soon as the door closed, Mr. Kobayashi leaned towards me. "You are verrry cute girl," he slurred in a garbled tone.

"Ha-ha, don't be scared, I am nice man, ha-ha".

I relaxed as the elevator came to a stop and the door opened. I could finally step away from the intoxicated man. I purposely stood to one side of the bathroom door as I opened it to allow him to enter. Not being able to leave Kobayashi alone on the third floor, I stood by the elevator with my hand permanently pushing the elevator call button. The last thing I wanted was to be stuck with this man alone.

I had been waiting for over five minutes when Mr. Kobayashi reappeared. As he stumbled towards me, the elevator made a deafening buzzing noise and the door closed abruptly. I pushed the call button, but nothing happened. I'm not sure if the sound of the

elevator descending or the thought of being stuck alone with Mr. Kobayashi irritated me more. Mr. Kobayashi leaned against the wall and as he told me about his daughter who was the same age as me and babbled about other countless other things.

It seemed like it had been a long time when the elevator finally responded. I wondered if Mr. Kobayashi remembered his friend downstairs and if she had bought everything in the store in the amount of time we had been gone. As we reached the first door, the bright halogen lights reminded me of an interrogation room. Mr. Kobayashi's female companion had not forgotten about her host. She jumped to her feet and gave me a less than friendly look. She started talking in an upset tone and at a very quick rate in Japanese. What followed was a short-lived argument between the couple with the distraught lady demanding my manager to explain to her that nothing unprofessional had happened upstairs. I felt both mortified and ready to laugh at the same moment.

Mr. Kobayashi paid for his purchase in a several thousand in cash and insisted on one gigantic shopping bag for the couple's items. However, the lady would not hear of this and she wanted her things put in a separate bag from Kobayashi's. But Kobayashi would not agree and he stood his ground. The paid-for items went back and forth like this for another few minutes when the little Japanese woman finally, but reluctantly agreed. Clearly, the woman wanted to take her things and split.

I did not see Mr. Kobayashi for a while after that. Then one night, he came in with a different Japanese lady friend. This lady was different though. She had been to the store before and I remember her with her small son and daughter. She quickly got my attention and very quickly and quietly explained "I want that bag over there in black and also those shoes." She hurried to some other shoes and tried on several pairs as fast as she could. "Do you have these in my size too? Please hurry!"

I found everything for her as fast as I could. When I returned Kobayashi apologized that he forgot his cash and instead pulled a fifty dollar bill and handed it to me. "Here is TIP for you. Next time I call you and we all go to dinner at La Mer, ha-ha," he joked.

"Tomorrow we come back. I promise," said the lady. The couple left as quickly as they had come. I looked at the twisted fifty-dollar bill and as I unfolded it there was in fact two fifty dollar bills waded together.

Sure enough, the next night Mr. Kobayashi and his friend were back. "Areeesa!" clamored Mr. Kobayashi, "Weee are baaack!" Trailing behind Mr. Kobayashi was a small girl that I recognized as Kobayashi's friend's daughter. Mr. Kobayashi approached me. "Next week okay we go to dinner at La Mer. But you and me, I leave Keiko-san. I promise

I won't do nasty thing, I nice man. After I take you shopping anywhere."

"That is very kind of you," I assured him jokingly.

"You should go with him," Keiko said. "He has a kind heart."

Mr. Kobayashi paid cash for all of Keiko's purchases and gave me 2500 dollars, all perfectly crisp.

"Here you keep change."

"But you gave me too much, here," I said handing him a couple hundred back.

"No, you keep the change," he insisted. I ended up with about two hundred and forty dollars.

My thoughts raced. I thought about going shopping with Mr. Kobayashi and where we would go first. There was a bag I was in love with at Louis Vuitton but it cost more than my tuition for the semester. We could go to Cartier and get the Pasha watch I really wanted. Maybe we could go to Dior, Gucci, anywhere.

My manager cut in to my thoughts and exclaimed, "Wow, Aresa. I would go to dinner with him and after I would go shopping with him at Cartier. I love their jewelry! Besides, I think he's harmless."

But then something popped into my head. I remembered the first principle in my Micro Economics textbook: "There in no such thing as a free lunch."

The phone rang at precisely 10 pm as I was closing. I did not answer the phone in time and the message machine picked it up. "Hello Areeesa!" slurred Mr. Kobayashi. "I made dinnah reservation at La Mer Thursday night". "Please call me. You make me cry if you don't call me. You are so pretty Areeesa, I love you!"

I almost laughed at the conclusion of the message. The ten minutes later there was another message. "Areeesa, please call me, I made reservation for Thursday night. I talk to you later, bye-bye."

When I got home that evening, I told my boyfriend about the continuing saga of Mr. Kobayashi.

“It seems like you have a Sugar-daddy,” joked my boyfriend. “Why don’t you offer to have lunch with him instead? That way you can still keep him as your client but keep it professional.”

“Your right,” I said. The next day I called Mr. Kobayashi and apologized that I was not able to make it to dinner because my mother happened to be coming into town that same day. He was very disappointed and he did not sound at all excited about my lunch proposal.

Later that day, my favorite coworker explained it to me. “Aresa, do you really think he would want to go to lunch with you? He wants to take you to dinner, where there will be alcoholic drinks and he can tell you to keep drinking. Then after you guys could go have fun. Of course he does not want to take you to lunch. Because lunch sucks.”

I haven’t seen or spoken to Mr. Kobayashi since, but I am happy about the decision I made and of course I can still dream about buying all the expensive things I passed up. Besides, I would rather go to La Mer with my boyfriend for a special occasion than some old sugar daddy anyway.

Troubled Times

Angel Cheng

Josiah Johnson, my boyfriend, almost got sent to jail. He made drug deals, got into fights, and did property damage. If he didn't change his life, he would most likely be locked up right now. Standing 6' 2" tall, he is 20 years old, and he has straightened his life out. Currently employed at Pflueger Honda, he is hoping by working there he can learn more about the automotive industry. During the time Josiah's mom passed away, he had a troubled life growing up, but when he found out he would get sentenced up to 7 years in jail, he tried to change his life for the better.

At the age of 2, Josiah's mother passed away. Since he grew up without a mother, his aunt, father, older brother and older sister took care of him. The person who had the biggest influence in his life was his father, but he still got into trouble from time to time when he was young. He got into fights, stole, and was truant in school. At the age of 3, he moved in with his aunt because his dad couldn't handle caring for 3 kids by himself. He stayed with her for about 3 to 4 years, and when Josiah turned 7, his father got remarried, so he moved back and was reunited with his family.

Josiah started getting into trouble at age 10. His life spiraled downward because he did not like listening to other people and wanted to do the opposite of what people told him to do. By age 11, Josiah ended up getting arrested for the first time for shoplifting pencils. During the time he was in intermediate school, he got arrested for possessing drug paraphernalia. Since he had possession of drugs, he nearly got kicked out of school and that was his first strike. In school, he kept on dealing marijuana even though he had gotten in trouble numerous times before.

By the time he reached high school, he was more out of control than ever. In his first year of high school, he got arrested for possessing drug paraphernalia, drug distribution, and assault in the 3rd degree. In the following year, he got in trouble with the law again for drug distribution and criminal property damage in the 2nd degree, and his father paid over three thousand dollars in damage. After the incident, his probation officer sent him to detention home on the day of his father's birthday. About a year after he was locked up, he got into trouble again for drug distribution and that was his second strike. If he got into trouble again, he would have been tried as an adult no matter how minor the crime was and sentenced for a minimum of 7-10 years.

From that point on, he woke up and realized there was not going to be anymore chances in his life. He decided to shape up and reevaluate his life. He also thought that if he kept on doing those things, then he would have gotten shot or killed one day. At first he was having a hard time staying out of trouble and staying away from drugs. He felt the more he tried to stay out of trouble, the more he got into trouble. It seemed like there was no turning away from it. Some of his friends who he was hanging out with were doing drugs almost everyday. Having friends who were still doing drugs was a big struggle for him, but with the support of his family and other friends, he got help. He set a goal for himself to stay off

drugs and also got a full time job to keep himself occupied.

Now that he is older and much wiser, he knows that the things he used to do were going to get him nowhere in life. He has learned from his past and tries to not go back down that road again. Having rebellious behavior and living in a crime-related neighborhood are some reasons behind his actions. People told him he couldn't do certain things, so he wanted to prove them wrong. Knowing that drugs are illegal is another reason he chose to get over them. Not having his mother around is another possible reason he turned to crime at an early age. Right now he is happy that he has at least a roof over his head, money in his pocket, and food on the table.

During the time he was getting in trouble with the law, I didn't know him yet. My older brother and Josiah were friends in elementary school. We knew each other, but we never talked to one another before. I actually met him through my other friend, and we just started to get to know each other for a few months before he became my boyfriend. When he told me about his past, I was surprised and shocked by his actions. I am just happy that he is not doing illegal activities anymore. In the beginning, I was confused, and I didn't understand why he did those things until I asked him. During the time when I was getting to know him, he was still doing drugs and was beginning to get out of it. I supported him and tried my best to help him out. Finally when he got off the drugs, I was very happy at what he accomplished.

Some positive effects he has on my life are that he assists me when I need it, supports me in what I want to do, and encourages me to do better. Some things he helps me out on are my school assignments. The day before I have a test, he helps me study until I get the answers correct. When I want to give up, he encourages me to do better by telling me that I can do it and to keep on trying. Seeing how independent he is, I realize that I can not always rely on everyone to do things for me. I now pay for my own bills, do the laundry, cook, and buy groceries. For these reasons, he has been a big influence in my life.

Josiah went from a bad boy to a person who cleaned up his act. I also think he can inspire other people who have been in the same situation and help them to see that it's never too late to turn around and start all over again by learning from a person's past and moving on. From getting arrested to dealing with drugs, he is now a person who works hard for his money. I am really amazed at what he has been through. Even through tough times, he has made it through successfully. Many people think he is still doing drugs and is a bad person, but as long as he knows he won't go down that path again, he will succeed by living his life day by day.

A Greek Temptation

Jason Graves

It was my first day at the “St. Nicolas Ranch,” a Greek Orthodox Christian camp for churches on the West Coast. Located in the hot, sparsely wooded hills of Fresno, California, the camp teemed with Greek-American teenage girls.

These were not the ones I saw in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. Instead, I was staring at well-figured Aphrodites wearing short-shorts and chatting in the shade. By the pool, olive-skinned goddesses in bikinis introduced themselves to me.

“Hi, I’m Maria.”... “You’re from Hawaii, right?”... “Do you surf?”... “Could you teach me how?”

Maria was the daughter of the camp’s director, Father Salmas. His girthy body stood six foot three. Fr. Salmas was austere and his tirades were legendary. Campers avoided him like a bear in the woods.

Invitingly, Maria said, “Are you coming to our cabin tonight with the other guys?”

I affirmed that I was. Being a teenager, the prospect of spending unsupervised time with flirty girls was tempting, and worth the risk.

Father Salmas and a few responsible adults ran a strict camp. No personal body contact between sexes, and definitely no boys in the girls’ cabin, was allowed. Expulsion from camp was probable when the two infractions were combined.

Transfixed by the sway of Maria’s hips as she walked away, I dismissed the idea of trying anything with her. Even though she was the most captivating girl at camp, getting caught while in a lip-lock with Father Salmas’s daughter did not appeal to me. Besides, more than one vixen had flirted with me.

The attention I received from the girls wasn’t because of charismatic wit or well cut abs, I didn’t have either. Being the only camper from the “Islands,” I was exotic, and the girls were attracted to that.

My uniqueness helped to forge friendships with the camp counselors, who had the responsibility of direct supervision over the campers. The counselors were only a few years older than the campers, making the counselors’ authority just above that of a hall monitor. So that night, negotiating our release from the cabin was simple.

“John, after ‘lights out’ we’re going to girls’ cabin. Want to come?”

Not even glancing up from his book, John said unperturbed “The less I know about that the better.”

After getting the “green light” from our counselor, six of us left the safety of our cabin. The goal was to covertly cross the shadowy field of low cut grass that separated the girls’ cabins from the boys’. If caught at this stage, the punishment could be mitigated by

saying we were just going to play a harmless prank. After receiving a stern lecture, we'd be sent back to bed. If caught fraternizing in the girls' cabin, the chances of an early trip home increased dramatically.

While creeping across the field, a thought came to me: *Was there an extra penalty for fraternizing with Maria?*

I didn't want to think about it. It was safer to avoid her and give another goddess my attention.

We got to the door of the girls' cabin without incident and filed in. Gazing over the shoulders of the two guys in front of me, I saw someone sitting on the bottom half of a bunk bed, positioned directly across from the entrance. As I entered the room, I naturally looked ahead and straight into Maria's hazel eyes.

"Hey, have you ever seen a shark when you were out surfing?" She gave me one those hypnotic, womanly smiles, the kind that can turn man into puppet. She slid herself over to one side of the bed, implying that I should sit down on the other side. So much for the plan of avoidance.

She probably just wants to talk.

As we talked I noticed her white V-neck T-shirt she had on, and my heart rate rose.

Slow down, sailor. Keep this thing platonic

With another one of her persuasive smiles: "Want to give me a massage?"

I calmly said, "Sure." What was I supposed to do: fake a cold, get up and leave, say, "I can't touch your gorgeous body because I'm afraid of what your dad might do"?

We moved under the cover of the bunk above her bed. I sat against the wall cross-legged, with Maria also sitting cross-legged, her back towards me.

This wasn't like sneaking a few pieces of bread before communion. I was massaging the back of a priest's daughter and enjoying it. But I was sure the "bonus penalty" for having carnal knowledge of the Fr. Salmas's daughter was a lifetime excommunication from camp. I didn't know whether to take it a step farther or break out in a nervous sweat. Maria made that decision for me.

She leaned back against my chest, and purred, "Mmm . . . That felt wonderful."

Her hands slid under mine, fingers interlocked. She wasn't just being friendly and my body was responding.

Waves of carnal urges surged through me like 20 footers at Waimea. Sure, Eddie Would GO!!! But Eddie didn't have to worry about being chased around a room by a

berserk priest in a “You touched my daughter” rage.

With my mind focused on one thing and my body on another, I hardly noticed Maria had twisted around to face me.

What the hell am I doing? Risking future summers of fraternization for this one girl. I should have . . .

My train of thought was stopped by the feeling of Maria’s tongue in my mouth. All rational areas in my brain were being drowned in a wave of teenage hormones. My fear of both expulsion and an enraged priest were gone. I was fully committed on the riding this wave of lust for as long as it was going to last. Unfortunately, the wave lasted as long as a barrel ride at Sandy Beach, because someone whispered, “Holy shit, I think Father Salmas is outside!!!” I vaulted myself out of the bed and dashed for the back door.

I was the first of the boys out of the cabin. Luckily for us, there was nobody out back. With Father lurking about, it took us a while to navigate our way through the shadows and back to the sanctuary of our beds.

John was still reading his book when I sat on the edge of my bed, hunched over, trying to calm my breathing down. “Wh...Wha...What’s the Greek word for ‘temptation’?”

Cracking a smile, John said “Teirasmos.”

Footprints

Tyler Holser

“Hey! What the heck took you guys so long? We’ve been waiting here for like five minutes,” Donovan said to Mana, as Mana pulled his truck up along side Donovan’s car.

It was an overcast night in Hau‘ula. Donovan Gomes had been able to convince some of his friends from McKinley High School to drive out to Pounder’s Beach to go ghost hunting. He was told by his friend Mana that the beach was supposed to be haunted. Donovan was still mad that nothing happened all the other times he went ghost hunting; he just really wanted something to happen for once.

It was 12:15 a.m. when they finally got there. The moon was shining through the hazy clouds. They got out of their vehicles that the six of them had piled into. There was Donovan, Mana, Lawrence, Joanna, Cody, and little Ricky. They already had an eerie feeling because they saw only three other cars on the long drive there. Everyone else on the island must be sleeping, getting some rest before they went to work tomorrow. Lawrence took out his video camera. He thought he could get some cool shots for his English video project, if not actually a ghost. They didn’t plan it out very well; they only had 3 flashlights so they were going to have to share.

They started walking towards the beach along a rinky-dink trail through the brush. Donovan and Lawrence were out in the front, anxiously leading the pack, just wanting something to happen. Joanna, who was already getting scared, was walking between Mana and little Ricky. She was holding onto their arms. Joanna knew that Mana had a thing for her. She gazed at him. He was proudly wearing his wrinkled Kau Inoa t-shirt like a Hawaiian superman. Joanna had feelings for Mana too. He was the reason why she came on this ghost hunt. Cody was walking in the back by himself.

“Hey, you guys will protect me if something happens, right?” Joanna asked worriedly.

“Ummm, no, it’s every man for themselves,” Mana said jokingly.

Joanna hit him. “Hey! You better not leave me!” she cried out.

“Nah, nah, don’t worry, you’ll be fine. I’ll take care of you. Besides, little Ricky is her,” Mana replied.

Joanna snickered at the thought of Ricky, a quiet, blond-haired freshman who looked like he’s still in elementary school trying to protect her.

Kkraassshh!!! A loud rustling noise came out from the bushes.

“Ahhhh!!!” Joanna screamed. Everyone jumped.

“Aah!!” Mana screamed out as Joanna dug her nails into him.

They all shined their lights at the bush.

“What? What was that?!!!” Donovan yelled looking at everyone. He saw a look of panic and fear in their eyes. After a couple of tense seconds, he said, “It was just a branch.”

He saw Joanna still clinging on to Mana. Donovan thought, if she should cling on to anyone, it should be him; he was the biggest and strongest guy there, plus, he was better looking too. Donovan then looked back at Cody, the troublemaker of the bunch, who had a smirk on his face. “It was just Cody,” he announced, calming their fears.

“Cody, am I going to have to snap you in half like the twig you are?” Donovan said jokingly, pretending to hold up a twig and break it.

“What did I do?” Cody replied throwing his arms out, the smirk still on his face.

“Dammit, Cody!” they all said in their own special way.

“Eh Mana, so what kind of ghosts get over here?” Lawrence asked.

“Umm, I don’t know...I forget the whole story my uncle told me, but I know it’s supposed to be haunted by some lady that died here looking for her kid,” Mana said.

“Evil spirits? Damn, looks like I’m gonna die first...black people are always the first to die,” Lawrence said jokingly, “Hey, you white guys better not ditch us.”

“Hey, let’s split up. Donovan, Ricky, let’s go this way,” Cody said kiddingly, pointing at the 2 other white guys, “Here, you three go that way...”

“Ohh, Hell no!” Lawrence yelled out.

They all started laughing.

They made it to the beach. Looking around, they saw no one else was there. It was eerily quiet, even the waves breaking on shore 20 yards away hardly made a sound. Miles of

open beach stretched to the left. To the right, they saw a sand dune and a large pile of rocks stacked over in the distance. They decided to go to the right. They started to walk slowly along the beach, several yards away from the overgrown brush on their right, staying tightly packed together, as a light fog started to roll in. Several minutes later, they came across the small sand dune they saw earlier; they started to go over it.

"Damn, Dog," Lawrence said sputtering, "You just kicked sand in my face."

Donovan looked at him and rolled his eyes. He said sarcastically, trying to be funny, "Are you okay? Do you want me to wash your face for you? Do you want a cookie?"

Lawrence gave out a sigh. "Freakin bastard," Lawrence muttered, shaking his head while wiping his face. Lawrence knew Donovan since elementary school. He could sort of expect a response like that. Donovan could be really funny at times, but sometimes he was a jerk.

As they were walking, Cody turned around all of a sudden. He was shining his flashlight behind Joanna and Mana. Cody's eyes were wide open. Joanna and Mana both snapped their heads back fearing the worst.

"What?! What is it?! I don't see anything!" Joanna squealed.

"I thought I heard something," Cody said back.

After a few tense moments, they continued on. A couple of steps later, Cody turned around again. He shined the light behind them but this time he was pointing at something. His jaw dropped. Joanna gripped on to Mana for dear life. Seeing Cody's reaction made Mana's jaw drop too. Joanna turned around, totally scared at what she might see. She didn't see anything, except, the empty beach and, when she turned back around, Cody holding back a smile.

"Nah, Cody. Come on, cut that stuff out," Mana said. Cody was having fun making everyone paranoid.

"My bad. Look, I promise I won't do it anymore. Okay?" Cody apologized.

They were all starting to get a little bored with the ghost hunt. They had been walking for a while and nothing had happened.

"Man, we should've brought some weed. This would've been a lot more fun if we were stoned," Cody said smiling at Lawrence.

“Yeah, for reals,” Lawrence replied nodding his head. “You know, we could probably drink out here, there’s no one even out here. It just sucks that it’s so far away.”

As they strolled along the beach, they found a humongous tree leaning over on a rock, blocking their path. The tree looked all messed up, like something clawed it up and tried to shred it to pieces. Donovan found a small opening under the tree near the rock; they were all able to duck under it. For some reason, it seemed a lot foggier on that side of the tree. Up ahead, they saw the large pile of rocks near the ocean. They started walking towards it. Donovan started to get excited with each step; he was really hoping that this was what he was looking for. He thought that maybe this really would be the time that he would finally see a ghost. When they got to the pile, Donovan and Lawrence started to race each other up the rocks, like two little kids running to get to their Christmas presents.

“There’s nothing up here!” Donovan exclaimed to everyone else below. He was obviously disappointed. “It’s just an old foundation of a house.”

It started to drizzle lightly.

“This sucks!” Lawrence said, frustrated. “Let’s just go already.”

Lawrence and Donovan climbed down from the rocks. When they got to the bottom, Donovan looked like he saw something; he walked towards one of the rocks. He just stared at it, totally mesmerized. They all walked towards him to see what he was looking at.

“Damn guys, I’m trying to pee,” Donovan said turning his head.

“Hey don’t pee here. It is Hawaiian land,” Mana exclaimed.

“What? What are you talking about? The whole island is Hawaiian land...”

“Whhaaahhh.” A child’s voice cried out faintly. It went quiet.

“Whoa! What was that?” Cody asked.

“Shut up,” Joanna said.

“Freakin Cody, if you keep pulling this crap, I’m gonna blast you,” Donovan said, getting freaked out by Cody’s antics.

"No, no, I'm serious," Cody replied, "I swear, I didn't do anything."

They heard the sound again, "Whhaaahhh!" this time louder than before. Their hearts started beating faster. Again they heard it, getting louder. They tried to figure out where it was coming from...

Tippy-tap tippy-tap!

"Holy crap!"

Donovan felt like he was frozen solid. He saw a flash of light and a white blur go by him. "Run!!!" someone yelled. He bolted.

They all started running along the beach, back towards the general direction of the cars, totally freaked out breathing heavily, and not really being able to see where they were running in the foggy darkness. As they fled, their shaking flashlights were able to light up the fallen tree ahead. Lawrence dived under the tree and into the wet sand; he crawled through like a Navy seal. He got up and started sprinting away. Everyone else got bottlenecked at the opening; they were all trying to squeeze through the small gap. Donovan was the last to get there.

"Hurry the fuck up!" Donovan yelled at them. He looked back behind him. He saw the blur of something coming towards him fast. "Freakin' move!" He started to push them all through, causing Cody to slam his head on the bottom of the tree. Donovan squeezed his big body through and started chasing after everyone up ahead, following the trail of their footprints.

They started getting separated as they ran along the beach, desperately looking for the trail to lead them back to the cars. Sand and slippers were flying everywhere. They started praying for their safety, "Please God..." They each had a million thoughts racing through their minds. Wondering if they were going to die, if anyone would miss them, if they could run any faster if they were black like Lawrence, if

All their flashlights went dead. They could hardly see anyone else now; they were each running by themselves on the beach, they were all on their own. They all knew one thing though: they needed to hurry the fuck up because they sure didn't want to be last.

Donovan was glad that he took track his senior year. He started to catch up to everyone else, then pass them. The first person he saw was Cody, he was sort of running zigzag. Donovan ran past and felt a little relief to know at least someone else would die

before him. He was trying to keep his track form and work on his breathing. He needed anything that might give him more boost. He felt something coming up from behind. He was about die. Screw it already. He started to make a manic dash, running as fast as he could. He ran by Ricky, whose little legs couldn't carry him that fast. Then he zipped past Joanna who was out of breath and slowing down.

Joanna made it to the sand dune; she knew she was almost there. She frantically scrambled up, clawing her way to the top, not daring to waste a second looking back. Ricky caught up with Joanna at the top; she could see that they were way behind everyone else.

"Arrgghhh! Arrggh! Aarrgghh!" Loud grunting noises from behind were getting closer. They became panic-stricken. "This way," Joanna exclaimed, grabbing on to Ricky. They darted down the hill as quick as they could, totally out of breath....

The trail was up ahead. Yes, safety at last. Lawrence was the first to run in... "Ahhhhh!!!" Lawrence cried out with a girlish scream as he fell backwards on his butt.

He looked up at the ghostly figure of a haole lady in a torn, white dress standing in front of him with a distressed look on her face. Lawrence was totally shocked, he didn't move. Mana ran into the entrance of the trail, he froze when he saw her.

"Help me! Hey you! Have you seen my child?!" the lady asked frantically.

Chills ran over Mana's body. He knew he heard that before, it was the same thing that the supposed ghost there at Pounder's Beach asked.

"Um, um." He didn't know how to respond. Donovan saw the trail and darted in.

"You!!!" she yelled aggressively.

Donovan's heart stopped. He was stunned. "Ohh crap!" He thought. If he hadn't already peed; he would've just then. Did she know that he peed on the rocks? He wondered. Yeah, she must have. She was going to kill him, he was a goner. Why the heck did he want to see a ghost so bad anyways?

"Do you know where my baby is?!" she asked him. "He has blonde hair and brown eyes."

This totally surprised Donovan. Either she didn't know, or didn't care that he peed on those rocks. He looked at Lawrence and Mana for help; but they had blank stares on their

faces.

“Uh, over there,” Donovan responded nervously, pointing back down the beach. She started moving towards him. She passed by and headed in that direction. He was totally relieved. Giving a sigh, he looked at the ground, she left no footprints.

The three of them started walking quickly to the cars, checking behind them every once in a while. Mana remembered the rest of the story, and started telling them...

“That was the freakin ghost of story... she was a lonely housewife; she died trying to save her drowning child here. And that, that, foundation of the house, that is where she supposedly lived. It’s haunted now. And that sound we heard, that was the spirit of child calling out to his mom. That lady, she still frantically searches for her lost child. And they say that she will take anyone that looks like him to try and calm her restless soul.”

“Umm, would she think that Ricky looks like him?” Lawrence asked curiously.

“Oh, Crap,” Mana said, picturing Ricky in his mind. Ricky had blond hair and brown eyes just like the lady’s kid. “Where the heck is he anyways?! Is he still on the beach?!”

“Uh, probably. I think they’re all still back there,” Donovan said back, busy thinking about how he pointed the lady in Ricky’s direction. It’s not like it was his fault he thought. Ahh, he’ll be alright.

“We gotta go back for them,” Mana announced.

“What? Heck no! Let’s just go already.” Donovan exclaimed.

“Hell! We gotta do something. They’re in danger. We can’t just leave them.”

“Well that’s not my problem...they should’ve run faster.”

“You’re such a freakin asshole, Donovan,” Mana said, giving him a dirty look. Mana looked over at Lawrence, “Wanna go back for them?”

“Yeah, we got to, we can’t leave them.” Lawrence looked over at Donovan and shook his head. Mana and Lawrence started running back towards the beach.

“You know what? Screw you guys then!” Donovan stood yelling back at them.

Donovan started walking towards his car by himself. He thought, what is he supposed to do? Is he supposed to go and die with them? He didn't want to die yet. Besides, what are you going to do against a ghost? He scratched his head, wondering what other people would think. Would they forever label him the guy that let his friends die? The guilt started to get to him. He stopped and looked at back down the trail thinking of his friends. Damn it, he thought, he was going to have to go back for them.

Joanna pulled Ricky and darted into the thick brush along the beach. She figured they wouldn't be able to outrun whatever was chasing them, but maybe they could hide from it. They were crouched down using the brush for cover, looking out towards the beach. They were out of breath, trying not to move. Joanna anxiously waited to see something. A minute passed. Nothing. What is it? Where is it? The anxiety started to build. Another minute passed. What was going on? They looked at each other, not making a sound, maybe they were all clear. She started to relax a little.

Joanna began to think about everything that happened. She was not only scared, but a little mad too. She still couldn't believe that Mana ditched her, what was up with that? When she saw him again, she was going to give it to him.

They decided to head toward the cars. They got up, and they froze. Up ahead, walking on the beach was some lady in a beat-up white dress. She had no feet; she was sort of floating in the air. They ducked back down quickly. Joanna closed her eyes, hoping the lady didn't see them. When they looked back out at the beach, the lady in the white dress was gone. They gave a sigh of relief. Joanna felt the hairs on the back of her neck move. Then she felt it again, the hot, steamy breath on the back of her neck.

"AAaahhhh....!" She started screaming, but a hand covered her mouth. It was covered with blood. She closed her eyes, expecting to die. "It's okay, it's okay. Relax." She opened her eyes and looked behind her, it was Cody. His head was bleeding heavily. Splinters from the fallen tree Donovan pushed him into were still lodged in his head. Both she and Ricky were relieved. They started checking out Cody's injury. All of a sudden, Cody jerked his head up and looked out at the beach. Joanna and Ricky snapped their heads around. They saw the waist of the lady right in front of them. They looked up at her face; her eyes were glowing red.

"Hey!! Get away from my baby!!!" she yelled.

"Aww shit!" It was the loudest anyone ever heard Ricky speak.

Family's Worst Nightmare

Eleanor B. Javier

There's no place like home. Bystanders often mistook our A-frame house for a church. It is an intriguingly unique experience because there is nothing like it in the block. The original pine redwood structure filled the house with a warm and cozy feeling throughout the year. The memories and lessons from this house will never be forgotten but will surely be treasured forever deep in my heart.

Even today, I can smell the food cooking on the stove as I pass by my mom's house. The aroma of her cooking gives anyone the appetite to eat. A couple of feet separated my house to my mom's house when she would call me to have dinner; my sister who lives next door to me would bring a pot that she had just cooked, and the whole family would all eat in the dining room enjoying the meal. I didn't know how to cook. Every dish served on the table has always been awesome on those occasions. My mom's cooking is the best.

My mom is a senior citizen but still very much young at heart. Her image and inner beauty conceals her age because she is outgoing, energetic and fun to be with like hanging out with a bunch of guys watching pro-football. She brightens the world with her beautiful motherly face; her soft flawless skin shines, framed with a boy-cut grey hair covered with black velvet highlights; in addition, her contagious smile shines with her white gleaming teeth. She could pass off as our older sister because she would dress like a teenager with capri pants and a halter top underneath her sweater like the fashion back in the 1960's. She has a pizzazz modern hip style which she is accustomed to.

Every Sunday afternoon, my brothers and sisters would always wash and polish our cars. During the weekends, I would bring my friends over with the rest of the family drinking liquor and singing Karaoke all night. There were times when my dad would come out of his room late at night in his pajamas with a flashlight and send everyone home. Other times we would pretend we were sleeping, and as soon as he went back in the room, the party continued. Sometimes my friends got so drunk that they would sleep over. My parents taught us that being at home was safer than going out anywhere. My dad was stricter than my mom. My mom is so cool; she would always support the things that we did, as long as we didn't get in trouble. My mom is the key to our happiness; she keeps the family bonded through good and bad times. I only discovered this when my family's worst nightmare began.

It was a still and very quiet chilly night. The stars were shining so brightly; they lit up the sky. I could hear the crickets chirping like chimes. The moonlight sounds of darkness made me sleep throughout the night. Suddenly in the midst of the night, I was awakened by the sound of shattering and breaking glass from a distance. I thought to myself as I lay down in bed at 4:30 A.M. on a Saturday morning, "What is that noise? Where is it coming from?" My curiosity burst as I lay down still staring at the ceiling in

complete darkness; I listened closely and squinting my eyes to get a better sense of what was happening.

Then I heard a scream follow by more glass breaking and shattering. At this moment I thought, "Is someone in trouble? Is a house being burglarized? Should I call 911?"

Adrenaline rushed through my body as I scrambled to look for my glasses. I quickly put it on like a mad dog and stood up on the bed. I opened my bedroom window to get a glimpse outside. I couldn't see anything outside but the sounds of glass breaking and shattering were becoming more distinct and louder followed by popping noises -- like fireworks on New Year's Eve. I wasn't getting any view from the window, so I walked to the living room, and I went outside my house. I couldn't believe what was happening. I stared, stunned at the sight of my mom's house, speechless with my jaw hanging out, and my mouth wide open. I screamed and yelled on top of my lungs with panic, "Oh my God! The house is on fire!"

There were huge, red hot burning flames gushing out through my mom's kitchen windows. I panicked like a chicken running around without a head. Then, my body and mind froze with fear; I didn't know what to do. Everything happened so fast in that one split second. My first instinct was to go back in the house, and I woke my husband screaming, "The house is on fire!" like a crazy lady. My husband immediately got up from bed and asked me, "What's going on? What happened?" I repeated myself over and over, "The house is on fire! Mommy's house is on fire! We have to get out now!" I carried my 2 year old son out of the house as fast as I could for safety. My husband took the hose from our house to help extinguish the fire, but it didn't help because the flames were so enormous.

My heart was pounding with fear, while I ran outside the house holding my 2 year old son tightly in my arms. Then, I saw my brothers and sisters rushing out of the burning house like a flock of birds running for their lives. We all stopped across the street in front of the burning house out of breath, while all our hearts pounded like drums in a rock concert. We could hear each person inhale and exhale a breath of fresh air. We were all shaken up and shocked. We couldn't believe our eyes and what we were seeing. "Is this a nightmare?" I blinked my eyes again and again, hoping to wake up from a dream. But this was real. It was so real that I could smell the distinct burning redwood, and I could feel the smoke and heat running through my arms and legs. We gazed at each other with droopy eyes and confusing look as tears dropped down our faces like rain. The thought of having no house to live in just hit me. All the memories started to burn along with the house as I watched it being engulfed with red flames. Helpless, I could not do anything at that point but watch and I could taste salty tears flooding down my face.

Shortly afterwards, there was a loud screeching; a honking siren from a distance made its way to our street, practically waking up the whole neighborhood. There were

bright white, red and blue lights flashing and flickering a mile away. Sure enough, the firefighters and police vehicles crashed their way down the streets as if the president was in town to make a debut. The police patrolled the entire block not giving way to anyone except for the emergency team. I thought, "Thank god! The firefighters are here!" Due to this horrifying tragedy, I didn't even call 911 because I was frantically confused. The firefighters wheeled their hose down and immediately started to extinguish the fire.

The only person missing was my mom. I asked everyone, "Where's Mommy?" and nobody responded. From that moment on, I thought my mom was still in the house trapped like a mouse burning alive. My blood rushed through my body pumping my heart even harder. I wanted to go back to the house and search for my mom through the burning fires of hell. Even if I tried to go back in the house, the firefighters would not allow me or anyone to do so because it was too dangerous and the house could collapse any time. We notified and explained to the firefighters, that my mother could still be inside the house being barbecued alive.

At this time, I thought I lost my mom, and thought I would never see her warm humble face again. Her loving caress vanished from this world, "What is life after this? Why is this happening to us? What did we do to deserve this? How can I live without a mother? Where could my mom be?"

The nerves in my brain sparkled like thunder, and I remembered that she usually goes to the open market every Saturday morning to buy vegetables, which was one block away from the house. I ran like lightning while my heart roared like thunder, and looked back at the burning house thinking, "Please god, let my mom be okay." After I reached my destination, I searched every single booth, but my mom was nowhere to be found. I rushed back with the speed of light. As I was approaching my brothers and sisters across the street from the burning house, I thought I saw my mom's figure, and that it looked like her from a distance. Surely my mom is alive and not burning in the fires of hell.

My mom was a complete wreck. When I first saw her, here's what I saw: her hair was all messed up, her clothes were so wrinkled, her eyes bulged out, her nostrils flared, and her face was flushed. She panicked like a senile lady walking around the street. She walked up to the fireman and said, "That's my house; see I have the key." The fireman authorized her to stay back, but she replied, "My children are still in the house." She was so frantically confused; she didn't even know who was there besides her. We had to calm her down. If we hadn't calmed her down, she could have had a heart attack because of the situation we were in, or she could have had a stroke because she has a high blood pressure condition. I didn't want to lose my mom from all this commotion again. She gradually calmed down and embraced us with love.

The closeness of feeling from everyone and being alive was the greatest reward from this tragedy. Hugs and kisses were flying everywhere. We all mourned and cried like babies as we sat down on the hard dirty concrete street, and watched the house being engulfed in red hot flames burning down the house. As the firefighters extinguished the fire, the flames slowly receded. After the fire chief inspected and gave permission to go back in the house, our feet trembled as we slowly walked toward the burnt house. I could feel the hairs on my skin as goose bumps covered my whole body. I was shocked and stunned when I walked into the house. My tears soaked my shirt as I walked around and inspected the damage of the house. The anger and pain I felt was so excruciating -- the house was completely gone.

For the time being, the duplex house where my sister and I lived was not damaged from the fire. We all lived next door from the burnt house like a pack of sardines for two weeks. We were deeply touched by the sight of the burnt house because all the happy memories were burnt along with the house, so we vacated the place. This was the beginning of the separation of the entire family.

I will never forget this tragic incident. This incident taught me a valuable lesson. Through the separation, I learned to be a more responsible adult. I learned how to cook and support my own family. I made mistakes along the way, but I learned from each mistake. The family bond keeps getting stronger each day as we strive through life. The most important thing that I learned from this accident is to be there for my family to love and support each other in times of crisis. I know that they will always be there for me because they were there when I took my first breath, and they will be there when I take my last breath. This tragic moment pulled me through life, and put me where I am today -- enjoying and appreciating every precious moment of life.

An Intense Appreciation of the Microbial World

Andrew Rego

On Monday, January 8th, 2007, I found myself sitting on the stairs in front of Subway at Kapiolani Community College, nervously fiddling with my cell phone and watching the time count down until my next class. My heart was beating rapidly. I felt like I was about to step up to the bench before a judge. If I were a smoker I would have gone through a dozen cigarettes during the last thirty minutes. I think I had a good reason to feel this nervous. I was terrified of this next class because I really didn't think I belonged there. I'm serious. No one takes a microbiology lab unless they need to fulfill a prerequisite for a degree that is *somehow* related to medicine. My major was, and still is, undecided. If you ever find yourself in a hospital and see me as your attending nurse, I would advise you to check in to a better hospital because nothing good is going to come out of this. You're probably going to die. I literally did not belong there.

I started to make my way to the lab. Reluctantly. Very, very reluctantly. Nothing I saw was setting me at ease. There was a flock of students standing in front of the lockers near the entrance and they were all talking amongst themselves. Oh my god, they all knew each other. I was infiltrating some secret society of people dressed in hospital scrubs and lab coats. They were going to find me out once they saw me. They were going to realize that I am not one of them and show me the door. I had to push these thoughts out of my head before they overwhelmed me and I started running away, screaming in terror. Somehow, I had managed to screw things up for myself so badly that I was forced to take this class or endure another semester here. I don't want that. I had to pass this class and that means I had to go through that door. I waited until the flock had drifted into the room and I followed.

I can't give anyone a real academic definition of what microbiology *is*. I must have known the answer once, because as I write this, the semester is almost over and I'm getting a passing grade. But, I forgot. That happens. If I had to give a definition, I'd say that microbiology is the study of living things that you can't really see. When you can see them, they look like grapes, little pink pencil shavings, or the kinds of flowers that you'd expect to see on an alien planet. They're small, but they're powerful. And they're everywhere. They're all around you; they're *all over you*. Right now, at this very moment, there are billions and billions of microscopic bacteria crawling around, eating, dying, and having sex all over you, all the time. Some of them can kill you. That's the part that I found the most interesting.

Once, while the semester was well under way, I was talking with a friend of mine about school and how we were doing. I had started talking about the lab I was taking, and was going into as much detail as I possibly could as to how each of the organisms I had studied could completely destroy a human being. My friend cut me off with a wave of his

hands and said, “You’re so *negative*.”

“I don’t think I’m negative,” I said, feeling a little embarrassed. “I just have an intense appreciation of the microbial world.”

Of course, this “intense appreciation” would only come much later in the semester.

Fluorescent light glared down on me through grids in the ceiling. I was immediately taken aback as to how cramped and crowded the room was. There were only four benches in the lab, but they were huge, massive constructions with white shelves and blue table tops. There was very little empty space, just the walkway between the two center lab benches and a few feet near the very front and very back. And there were things everywhere. Glass things, metal things, plastic bottles filled with liquid. I had no idea what these things were, but they were *everywhere*.

And then the smell hit me, that sharp, metallic smell of disinfectant that my brain naturally associated with hospitals and doctors offices. That’s not a happy smell. My stomach suddenly felt empty. I could feel cold sweat on my back and shoulders. This was going to be worse than I thought. I took the very last stool available. Luckily, it was the one closest to me.

I sat down and tried to act natural. I was convinced that they could smell fear. The professor, a short, German lady who carried herself with purpose, introduced herself, introduced the class, and assigned us lab partners. Now the fear of being found out was combined with pity for my lab partner. That poor girl, I thought. She had no idea that her choice of seating had linked her up with the dud of the class.

The first two weeks passed without incident. We learned why it was important not to touch anything with your bare hands. We learned the history of microbiology (which I forgot). We also learned how to use a microscope, and I learned to hate that microscope. I was constantly convinced that I, the one person who really had no business being there, would drop it and cause the department to go bankrupt.

My journey into this savage underworld began during a summer session two years ago. I needed a natural science and a co-worker needed a speech class. I agreed to take microbiology if she would take the speech class. We would pool our combined intellectual power together and pass both classes with flying colors. It was a fool-proof plan that was destined for success.

The amount of procrastinating that she and I did during that summer must have been record breaking. I spent most of that microbiology lecture either sleeping or drawing in my notebook. All of my speeches were written the morning before I would have to give them. The semester long microbiology project that I partnered up with my co-worker to complete was done five minutes before class began. Literally five minutes. I don't know how I passed that class, but I did. I got a "B"!

But, life was simpler back then. Yeah, I would say to myself, I took the challenge. I took a class that I had no business taking and I came out pretty good. I came out better than good, actually. Fortunately, I would tell myself, there's no way in hell that I'm ever taking that microbiology lab. I had danced with the devil once. I didn't want another round. I had a master plan that would involve taking a geography lab. I mean, come on, a geography lab? How hard could that possibly be? I know how to read a map.

When registration time came, I looked horror in the face. I was unable to take the geography lab. If I wanted to graduate this summer, I had to take microbiology. There was no other choice. The unthinkable had happened.

I never got into the routine of that class. Every class began with me sitting right outside the door in a state of near hysteria because I had no idea what to expect from the days lesson. My lab partner got used to me not having a clue as to what was going on. The professor would talk a little about how some subject should be "a review" for us. Not for me. This was the first time I was ever going to see this material. I made up for it by being a pretty good assistant. I would get all the materials and do most of the work that required absolutely no knowledge of the subject matter. I also took pretty good notes, so I think that somewhere near the middle of the semester she decided that I was sort of "okay."

That first half went pretty good. I managed not to spill any samples of bacteria, drop the microscope, or kill myself. That's all I really wanted to do. By some act of divine luck, I was also maintaining a pretty regular "C" average on the weekly quizzes. Unbeknownst to me, I was also learning something.

The gram stain project came up, just after midterms, and with that, a startling new revelation: *I knew how to do this!* I don't know how this information got into my head, but it had. In between standing around in wide-eyed confusion during every lab assignment, some information had slipped into my head. In order to perform a gram stain on a bacterium, you must first suspend a sample of said bacterium on a tiny drop of water placed on a microscope slide. Then, you turn on your Bunsen burner and slowly "heat-fix" by passing the slide above the flame until the sample becomes cemented onto the glass slide. If you've done it right, the bacteria should look like a tiny grey cloud in the center

of the slide. In class, the easiest way to do this was to grab a clothespin from the bin at the end of the bench, and use that to hold the slide so your fingers wouldn't burn. You don't want to get burned.

Because I knew how to do this, I was feeling pretty good about this project. I was also feeling pretty good about myself. I was starting to feel less of the alienation that I had imposed upon myself in this class. I was finally starting to feel, not necessarily that I belonged there, but that I could at least hold my own. Riding this wave of euphoria, I strolled to the bin, passing students that were vigorously working over the flames of their Bunsen burners, and reached in for a pin.

My first thought was, I want one of the good ones that close correctly.

My second thought was, something is wrong.

My third thought was, something is burning!

I looked down. My elbow was directly above the open flame of a student's burner. She was busy making notes on something and had no idea what was going on. I jerked my arm up and away quickly. Flames licked at my face from the sleeve of my lab coat so I jammed my elbow into my side to smother the fire. Tiny tendrils of smoke leaked out and faded into nothingness. The fire was extinguished immediately. The smell of burning cotton hung in the air like a storm cloud. I looked around, hoping no one had seen that act of careless stupidity.

The owner of the Bunsen burner stared at me with eyes the size of golf balls behind her glasses. I bit my lips trying not to laugh. She jabbed a finger at my arm. I started to giggle. I don't know why. I laugh a lot. I think it's how I cope with things that my brain isn't ready to cope with.

"Did you burn?" She asked me.

I brought my elbow away from my body and examined the damage. A large melted hole, probably big enough to fit a tennis ball through had been burned into the white fabric. "Just my coat," I said, "I don't think I burned my skin or anything." The professor was at the other end of the lab, sitting across from my stool and staring into a microscope. "Can you smell that?" I asked her.

"Yeah, it's everywhere," she said, still staring at me.

I grabbed the clothespin I had been looking for. "Don't tell her about that, please,"

I said. She nodded and gave me a look that said “no problem, you can count on me,” and I made my way back to my stool. It was too much, though. My professor was sitting right across from me, I had just lit myself on fire, and I had done it trying to get a *clothespin* of all things. I started laughing. I couldn’t help it.

My professor looked up and asked me what I was laughing at. I told her that my sleeve had caught fire while I was reaching for a clothespin. She asked me if I was alright and I said that I was fine. “That happens. You need to tell me when you really catch fire, Andrew,” she explained, laughing with me “that way I can throw the fire blanket on you and roll you outside.”

My top three favorite organisms are *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Clostridium botulinum*, and the Rabies Virus. There is only one factor that is considered for an organism’s placement on this esteemed list: how badly can it ruin a human being? There are a lot of microorganisms on this planet, and many of them have their own unique ways of inflicting harm on people. I believe that these three are unique, mainly because they all have their own special ways of destroying living things.

Staphylococcus aureus eats blood. It loves to eat blood. *S. aureus* is the vampire of the microbial world. It can’t get enough blood! *S. aureus* is like a morbidly obese vampire in the front of the line at the all blood buffet. *S. aureus* is a vicious, nasty little thing that has evolved so that it can hide from the human immune system once inside you. It’s also highly resistant to penicillin and other antibiotics. People survive staph infections. I’m sure that it happens all the time, but that doesn’t mean any of us should actually attempt to take this little guy on. Wash your hands thoroughly and clean all your open wounds often.

Clostridium botulinum is a bacterium that produces the highly lethal nerve toxin, *botulin*, which in turn causes *botulism* in human beings. I didn’t know much about botulism before I had taken this class. I knew that it was bad to eat from cans that are dented outward because you could get botulism and that would make you sick. My understanding was that you would just get a little sick, throw up for a few days, and be back to work or school within the week. It’s that and so much more.

The botulism toxin travels up into your nervous system and stops it cold. You’re completely paralyzed. If you don’t have someone with you who can get to a hospital quickly, you’re probably going to die from respiratory failure. Even if you get to a hospital, you had better hope that you have medical insurance because you’re going to be on a breathing machine for months.

Learning all this had unlocked a memory from years ago. I was only about ten years

old, it was Christmas Day, and I had accompanied my step-father and his two friends to the Hula Bowl at Aloha Stadium, like I used to do every Christmas. One of those two men (his name escapes me, but he talked like Will Ferrel in his *Saturday Night Live* days) worked in a laboratory and was currently working with the awesome, the revered, botulism. He was leaning against the car, sipping his mimosa at nine-thirty in the morning, discussing his line of work and why he was doing it. "The reason that they want us looking at it now is because of its use as a weapon," he explained. Remember, this is only a few years after the first Gulf War and many years before the current disaster in Iraq. "Right now I guess they're worried that Saddam Hussein might start looking at it, because you would only need a few drops of it to kill millions of people." *Clostridium botulinum* is a good example of an organism that knows how to defend itself, and it should be given the utmost respect for being so ruthless.

The Rabies Virus doesn't really fit in on this list. It's not a bacterium; it's a virus. For safety reasons, we were not allowed to study rabies during the lab. I had learned about rabies during the microbiology lecture that I had taken two years ago. I was completely in love with it. Living in Hawaii, I'm lucky that I don't have the grim specter of a rabies infection lurking around, but it is worth talking about.

I don't know what a virus is, so I'll just make up a definition that I think fits. A virus is an assassin born out of the leftovers of creation. They are renegades, loose cannons who play by their own rules and get results. If you by some chance come down with a rabies infection, hold on tight because you are about to face a fury ten times more vicious than the wrath of God Himself. You'll grow agitated and paranoid. The very sight, smell, and sound of water will drive you into madness. You'll go insane and start clawing at anyone and anything you can get your hands on. And then you will die. Rabies is better off being left alone.

I don't think any of this makes me *negative*, as my friend claims it does. I would never wish any of the above on anyone, and I don't mean to undermine the tragedy that would befall anyone infected with, well, anything. But the lethality of these three organisms did give me my "intense appreciation of the microbial world," and for that I am grateful.

The semester is wrapping up. I danced two rounds with the devil and I think I turned out fine. I worked with dangerous bacteria and survived. I learned to respect the world around me and I learned to admire all forms of life. I even inadvertently lit myself on fire with a Bunsen burner, and not many people can say they've done that. The whole experience was worth it. I'm pretty confident that I'll pass Microbiology 140 with a C, but a B would be nice. Always wash your hands before you eat, and if you see a dog foaming at the mouth, run away as fast as you can.

Sundays Andrew Rego

I stock shelves for a living. It's not exciting, it's not ambitious, and there is absolutely no future in it, but that's what I do. I'm in the same boat as everyone else in Long's Drugs number 185 in Hawaii Kai, trapped by the better than average pay and the dirt cheap medical plan. I also get to carry a little card around that gives me a discount, which is an added bonus. Working in the Liquor Department gives me some comfort, though. All I have to do is make sure all the coolers are well stocked, that the soda and beer displays are standing tall, that the wine is packed onto the shelves and faced appropriately, that there are plenty of giant bottles of Skovar vodka on the shelf so that the ten dollar price doesn't empty the display out in an hour, and that the three aisles are filled before I leave. Periodically throughout the day I have to ring people up at the register. That may sound like a lot (or a little, depending on your point of view), but it's not too bad; it pays the bills.

"Eh, brah. You get one cold case Heineken in da back?"

I hear this question about a dozen times a week. Upon hearing it, my body sags, my eyes half close, and have to give a half laugh/half sigh inaudibly. Sighing out loud wouldn't be appropriate, and laughing would make me look crazy. I understand that this particular customer has no way of knowing that this is the tenth time I've been asked this today. She has no idea that this might as well be the only question I am ever asked at work.

Of all the people that I encounter anywhere from thirty-eight to forty three hours a day, six days a week at Long's Drugs, the Heineken People are both the best and the worst. A close second would be the Busy People. These are the people who have absolutely no time for anything. They immediately enter the store, stomp across the faded, scarred linoleum floor, and march up to the cooler of Coca-Cola that I am trying to pack with twenty ounce bottles of soda so that I won't have to worry about it as the day goes on, lean on the bread rack dramatically so that loaves of Love's bread fall off onto the floor and explain that they need a frame, or a notebook, or a digital camera *right now*. On this particular Sunday, its picture frames.

I say, "Picture frames? We have them in the photo department. I can--"

"Take me there," the customer says, glancing at his watch so that I understand just how little time he has. He's dressed in what I understand is called "Business Casual," but not typical for Hawaii. Instead of an aloha print shirt above his black slacks there is a long sleeved blue and white pinstriped shirt. His watch is gold and very expensive looking. The carry case that he so theatrically flung onto a rack of bread cannot be anything other than

genuine leather. His blond hair is long, and luxurious (an adjective that I never thought could ever be applied to a man's hair until I was confronted by this character). The Busy People are always dressed well.

He stands out like a mustard stain on a white shirt. The store I work at is old, grungy, and basically just worn out. The aforementioned bread rack has been there since the eighties; the shelves wobble, and it looks like it's been hit by a truck repeatedly. For all I know, it has. The white floor is scarred and cracked, there are numerous burn marks planted on it from the floor buffer. The giant store windows in the front of the store are dingy and tinted with a thick layer of dust and grime, it probably hasn't been cleaned since the janitor retired because there is a good chance that I would be the one asked to clean it, which I don't want to do. The music doesn't play when it rains, and the dome lights above the register give off a greasy, flat light that really doesn't illuminate much.

In short, it looks like pretty much every other Long's Drugs on the island. Not really dirty, not really clean, but sanitary enough to pass a health inspection.

"This way," I gesture for him to follow me, and we're off. We walk passed rows of chilled cans of green tea on our right. We pass through shelves stocked end to end with more varieties of cereal than I previously thought existed. Up ahead is film, all kinds of film. Any type of film you need, they probably have it. I take a left when we reach the film and pull up to the frames, a very small collection of frames, according to this man. My customer is not pleased.

"This is it?" He asks jerking his head sideways at the frames.

"Right now, yeah." I don't know what else to say. I don't know anything about picture frames and I'm honestly surprised at how many we carry. I can tell my customer isn't pleased. He's bent over at the waist, his long hair is hanging over his ears, he's running his fingers over each of the frames. I don't know what he's looking for specifically and I don't ask because, "What exactly are you looking for in a frame?" sounds like a funny question to me.

I glance at my watch because this is already taking too long. The general rule that I apply to customers is to get what they need for them quickly, ask if they need anything else, and if they say "no" to get as far away from them as possible to finish what I was doing. At this point, he has been looking at the frames for a while. I can hear the links of his watch clicking as he examines the selection. He picks up different frames of different sizes, turns them in his hands, examines the clasps on the back, and puts them back on the shelf in disgust. I know that I'm not free to just leave him because as he's looking he's

muttering to that the selection is “ridiculous,” and that we “really have nothing that [he’s] looking for.” I’m not into this conversation. It’s a retread of the same dialog I hear every day. I’m thinking about the soda that I was stocking is in the front of the store, and that I had better finish all that up because the aisle is completely empty, the coolers are bare, all of my displays are decimated and there’s only an hour and a half until the five o’clock rush.

Mr. Blond Hair holds up a picture frame that to my eyes looks exactly like every other one on the shelf, “Do you have any of these with a blue trim?”

“I’m not sure,” I said, swiftly taking my eyes away from the face of my watch so as best to pretend that I’m giving my whole, undivided attention. “I’d have to ask the girl that runs this department.”

“You mean you don’t know?”

“Not off the top of my head.” I can already tell what’s coming next. I brace myself. Oh, god. Here it comes.

“Well, don’t you work here?” He spreads his arms out as he says this, his head is tilted sideways and he’s giving me the most condescending look imaginable. I could have taken a picture of him and sold it to be used as an example in a dictionary. “Why don’t you get me someone who actually knows what they’re doing instead of wasting my time?”

There it is. And at this point, a flick of his wrist tells me that I am dismissed and not fit to remain in his presence, which is good for the both of us.

I force away the image of snatching the frame out of his hand and making him eat it and move away, I’ve only been on the clock for thirty minutes and it’s a Sunday. Four days until pay day. That’s my mantra. And, after all, it’s not all bad. The Busy People aren’t too common, but the Impaired People are a dime a dozen.

The impaired people are mostly local Japanese old ladies who flag me down like shipwreck victims while I pass by. The most memorable one is noticeable because she always wears a blue and white striped polo shirt. Rain or shine, night or day, she’s wearing that shirt.

She waves me down holding a canister of salt in her left hand and her shopping list in the right. When I approach her, she screams at me, “What this say? I cannot read because I lef’ my glasses in the car!”

She can't hear too well either.

I say, "It says 'Iodized.'"

She nods. Then she says, "Wha?"

"Iodized." A little louder this time.

She squints, her lips purse together. "Wha?"

I try to stifle a laugh, but it doesn't work. She sees me laughing and she laughs with me. We're two people laughing over salt. I get a hold of myself and yell, "IODIZED!" Heads are turning. People are no doubt wondering what a jerk I am for yelling at an old lady holding a canister of salt.

She cocks an eye at me. "What? I just want regular."

I take the salt from her and hold up a new canister. "This is the reg--"

She cuts me off, yelling, "Is that the regular?"

"Yes, this is the regular one."

She turns her head so that her ear is directly in front of my mouth and she waves me forward like a cop directing traffic. "Sorry, I cannot hear."

"YES. THIS IS REGULAR SALT."

She nods repeatedly. "Good, good."

I stare up at the black plexiglass dome that surrounds one of the many security cameras and wonders if anyone is watching this, wondering if they can see me yelling at a customer. She then drops the container into her cart that's already brimming with the usual odds and ends: cans of Vienna sausage, ramen noodles, Sudafed, the obligatory As Seen on TV product. She pats me on the shoulder and says, "Thank you!" She says this very loudly, but the sincerity in her voice is still apparent. She may be hard of hearing, and on several occasions she has run over me with her shopping cart, but she does give the best thank yous.

There's also the THIS is how much I should pay for this product, and THIS is all

I'm going to pay for it people. You can usually mark these people because of the vicious scowl their face has been contorted into like a mask. Ninety-nine cents? Forget it! That's way too much! I can get this product at Wal-Mart for SEVENTY-NINE cents! What do you mean you don't price-match? That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard and I am never shopping here again!

After having this tirade unloaded on me by one of our regulars (who, oddly enough, has never followed up on her last threat), one of the cashiers that used to work at the store across the street nudged me with her elbow and whispered, "She used to do that where I used to work, too."

There's also the people that are just confused, but only one experience really stands out. He was a middle aged guy with wire frame glasses, standing in an aisle surrounded by various cough and cold medicines. When he saw me, he gave me a look of such comic bewilderment that I'm sure I will remember until the day I die. He threw his hands up in desperation and said, "I can't find the one that's on all those commercials!" It was so much like something out of a movie that I laughed. I couldn't help myself.

All in all, though, the customers that take the cake are the Heineken People. There's so many of them, and working the liquor department ensures that I get to talk to each and every one of them when they come in. The amount of Heineken that is sold in that store is beyond the scope of my mind because I don't think it tastes good at all, but the proof is there. I'm pretty sure that we could sell nothing but Heineken and still manage to stay in business.

The reason I claim that they're the worst is simple: strength in numbers. The demand for that product is so high that on an average day, whatever I have displayed on the shelf will be gone within an hour. It doesn't matter what it is, six-packs, twelve packs, those weird keg cans, they all sell out at a ridiculous pace. Trying to keep up with that while dealing with the Busy People, the Impaired People, and your average customer is similar to writing an eight page term paper an hour before it's due. It's insanity.

They're also the best because they're the easiest to please, and they lavish the praise on like I'm royalty. Usually it's a simple, "Awesome!" Every now and then I get, "Really!? Right on!"

The best one is one that I used to get every Sunday like clockwork. Same lady, glasses on a chain around her neck and frizzy, auburn hair out to here. "Eh, brah. You get one cold case Heineken in da back?"

Same smile, same stifled laugh. I go into the back, bring it out, and put it in her cart. She gives me a nod, "You da bes'."

I don't know about that. It's just another day.

Fresh Powder

Randall Sato

“Randall, get up! Get up! Marty’s gonna be here pretty soon,” said my sister as she began brushing her teeth at the foot of my bed.

Sheltered from the frigid outside air that frosted the windows, the small Reno hotel room was a comfortable, cozy temperature. It was an unusually cold December in Reno, Nevada.

I tried to resist and sleep in for another hour, but then I remembered why my cousin Marty was coming here. He was scheduled to take me and my older sister snowboarding today. Although I had always wanted to try snowboarding, I really had no idea what to expect. I was sixteen years old, full of vigor and always looking for a new adventure, a new way to challenge myself. What started off as just a trip to the ski slopes, became something much more special.

I leaned over the heater and peered through the window to see what kind of view our room had. My feeling of slight anticipation instantly turned to excitement and eagerness when I saw the enormous snow-capped mountains off in the distance. The horizon of the colossal mountain range filled the frame of the hotel window. I had never seen anything like it in my life! The view distinctively reminded me of the label on the Crystal Geyser brand bottled water. It was quite a view for a room that my mom had probably gotten for free through a promotional package in the mail. The massive triangular mountains stood boldly, encased completely in white, and stretched out as far as the eye could see.

“Wow! Look at that!” I exclaimed to my sister as I pointed out the window. She was equally impressed.

The moment I saw those mountains, all of that snow, I knew I wanted to be up there. I couldn’t wait!

My hapa-haole cousin from California arrived at our room with his girlfriend. They carried arm-fuls of heavy snow clothes, all made from the same cushy, waterproof and insulated material with the exception of a few acrylic beanies. The pants that I picked out were much too long for my small 5’2” frame.

“Don’t worry, dude. It won’t matter how long your pants are once you have the snowboard strapped to your feet,” my cousin assured me.

The boots that I borrowed were also too big, but I achieved a tight-enough fit after three pairs of my thickest socks. With our wardrobes complete from head-to-toe, we were now ready for whatever Mother Nature had to throw at us.

The four of us set off on the long, strait highway headed directly into the Sierra Mountains. As we continued down the interstate, the scenery gradually became more and more white. The small patches of snow on the sides of the road slowly blossomed until there were no more dark spots left to be seen.

“Let’s pull over and see the snow!” I suggested.

“Dude, this is nothing... wait til’ you get up into the mountains,” said my cousin, “It’ll be snowing hella hard up there.”

We made it to a diner, surrounded by maybe a dozen or so tiny shops. This small strip of urbanization in the middle of nowhere reminded me of the town in the animated T.V. show *South Park*. The streets were lined with snow-roofed cars, yet the sidewalks were almost completely bare of any white. We entered the small diner which was well-lit and furnished with lots of wood furniture. The smell of maple syrup and French toast filled the air. I had bacon, eggs (over-hard), and hash browns alongside a cup of hot chocolate. I didn’t have much of an appetite, but I forced myself to finish the three huge slices of bacon. The breakfast was nothing special, but bacon and eggs are *always* great, no matter how you serve them.

Now well-stuffed, we continued on our tour deeper into the mountains. The road became narrower, with more twists and turns. I was amazed by the huge pine trees that lined the road on both sides. On the left, we passed Donner Lake, named after the infamous Donner party. *In the winter of 1846, the Donner caravan consisting of 90 travelers was stranded in the Sierra Mountains due to a snowstorm. The reason for their notoriety is that cannibalism was said to have taken place while the surviving members awaited rescue. Of the 90 travelers, only 48 survived the ordeal.* The eerie thought reminded me of the bacon I had just had.

As we continued our trek, the road became increasingly steep and it was now snowing lightly. The temperature on the dashboard read 30 degrees. We pulled into a scenic lookout on the side of the road. I hopped out of the car to get a feel of the descending snow. “This is so awesome,” I thought to myself. I felt like a little kid again as I amused myself by watching my breath form like puffs of smoke in front of my face. After watching the tiny snowflakes collect on the sleeves of my jacket, I walked over to the railing to see the view.

At the bottom of this enormous valley was Donner Lake, which looked much, much bigger from up on the lookout. Surrounding the lake, were deep forests of giant pine trees. And enclosing all of this were the colossal Sierra Mountains in all their glory. Everything was so grand in scale that just this sight alone had made the trip all worth it. I could have gone home right then and I would have been satisfied. But I wasn't done just yet.

Almost immediately after getting back into the car, the tiny snowflakes on my jacket disappeared and were replaced by little water spots. We rode for another good forty minutes before we got up to the skiing lodge parking lot. At the higher altitude it was snowing much heavier, and the dashboard now read at 27 degrees. I laced up my boots, and we lugged our gear up to the lodge.

It wasn't long before we were at the bottom of the slopes, and my cousin began tightening the plastic and rubber straps around my boots, connecting me to the snowboard. He tugged on the notched rubber straps which made a "clickitty" noise as they locked in place under the plastic clamps. I was now one with the board so to speak, but in no way did this mean that I was now an agile, master of the art. Just trying to stand up became rather cumbersome with the board restricting my feet from moving where they wanted to. After standing, I struggled to rotate myself into position by first twisting my upper body, then having my hips follow. I probably looked like some kind of animal struggling to free itself from a snare trap. I managed to turn the board a few inches at a time. When I was finally facing the right direction, I gave my hips a slight nudge forward. With almost no resistance at all, I began moving. Over the freshly fallen snow, I slid down a slight incline at the bottom of the actual slopes. This was only a practice run.

In no time at all, I had left the beginner-level slope behind and was trying my best not to kill myself on the much steeper, advanced-level slope. I had already mastered the art of getting off the ski lift by gliding my board on the ground and letting the seat of the ski lift push me down a small ramp. When done successfully, it should look like you're just snowboarding down the ramp. It seemed so simple. Yet as I observed from the side, most novice snowboarders would get a little panicky in the transition and end up sliding down the ramp on their asses rather than standing on their board. All of this boasting aside, there was one area in which I needed much improvement. And this was stopping.

In order to stop, you need to turn your board 90 degrees so that your entire body is facing forward, lean back, and dig your heels down so that the friction from the board kills your momentum. When done correctly, your board might spray a wall of snow, and you should end standing. When I attempted to stop at higher speeds, rather than coming to a clean and graceful halt, I usually ended up sliding down the mountain on my back

while getting a refreshing scoop-full of ice in my jacket and down my snow pants. If I didn't fall on my ass, my board would sometimes get stuck, resulting in quadruple forward summersaults down the slope. Imagine yourself going downhill on a bicycle at 30 mph, then slamming on your front breaks. The effect would be similar. The end result of all of this tumbling must have looked like an unfortunate Asian kid caught in an avalanche. Sometimes I would end up on my back, with my head facing down the slope, completely covered from head to toe in fresh powder. Fresh powder is snowboard jargon for the soft, powdery layer of freshly-fallen snow. Occasionally, I even caught some of this fresh powder in my mouth. Although my braking "technique" was a bit unorthodox, it got the job done none the less.

After a few hours, constantly picking myself up and lugging a snowboard around all day had exhausted my body. We were all just about ready to head back to Reno. We capped off the whole experience with a set of snow angels and a snowball fight in the parking lot. We even made a three-foot tall snowman which had eyes and buttons improvised from slices of salami. I named him Hannibal.

It's been years since I've visited the mainland. Yet I remember everything so vividly: the massive trees, the feeling of butterflies in my stomach as I look down from the ski lift, the little diner which smelt of French toast. There's just something about the snow, the cold air, the smell of pine that keeps my mind never too far from this experience. One day I'll go back. And maybe then I'll learn how to stop.

My First Car

Randall Sato

With my eyes half-open, I stagger out of my friend's old, white Integra. We have just arrived at the Safeway Parking lot where I had left my car. Earlier in the night, I had carpooled with two of my friends to *Noblesse*, a small nightclub in Honolulu. Steven and Casey are satisfied and are ready to head home. My night however, is far from over with. Less than five minutes from now, I will experience one of the worst moments of my life.

"Shoots-den, Casey," I say as I shake hands, "K-den, Steven."

I lurch towards my beautiful 2004 Mazda 6 type-S. The parking lot lights reflect off of the clean white paint which I had just washed and polished earlier in the day. This is my first car and the current love of my life. Three weeks earlier, my parents had bought it for me as a high school graduation present. They were a little hesitant at first: my mom because of the V6 engine and manual transmission. I guess she worried that I would kill myself street racing. And my dad because of the price which pushed my given budget. He didn't want to spoil me, but he eventually gave in to the below-blue book deal that we were getting.

More than anything that I could have asked for, the car is a teenage boy's dream and most would probably agree that it's too nice for an 18-year-old's first car. It has the factory sports package which includes a spoiler, lowered suspension, and side skirts to give it a slight import-racer look, 17-inch alloy wheels, tan leather interior with heated seats for that luxury feel, and the V6 engine with a stick shift means that it's got some balls. The flawless pearl white paint stands out against the black tint. With only 20-something thousand miles on it, the car looks brand-new. Being as materialistic as I am, I am infatuated with this car. This car gives me a confidence I never thought I had. It also gives me that false sense of hope that it somehow makes me more attractive, and that girls will magically appear in my passenger seat.

I sit behind the steering wheel and call my friend who's still up drinking somewhere in Kahaluu. Its three-thirty AM. I'm exhausted and half-drunk, but the night must go on. I can handle. "Randall Can Handle" is my personal motto.

"Hey, what's up man? I just got back from the club."

"Oh, ok shoots... come meet us at the Hygienics Store," he says in a slurred voice. "We still get some Budlight left for you!"

"Alright, sounds good... I'm leaving Safeway right now."

“Shoots den.”

“Shoots.”

The Hygienics Store is a small convenience store located a couple miles north. It gets its name because of its location near a hygienic sewage plant. And yes, the area does smell like fart every time you drive through it.

I press the clutch pedal and start the ignition. I had driven drunk countless other times that summer without incident, sometimes in much worse condition. This is nothing new. Just keep an eye out for any blue lights, I tell myself.

Not even a block down Kamehameha Highway, I miss the left turn which leads directly onto the main street that the Hygienics Store is located on.

“Shit.” I glance down the road to the left, as I pass through the intersection.

No big deal. If I continue on strait through the back road, I’ll eventually end up back on the highway. Hey, it’ll probably have fewer cops anyway, I think to myself. I head down the narrow, two-lane back road, checking my rear-view mirror every couple seconds for headlights. I go through the first bend in the road and look up at the mirror again. No headlights. I’m all alone now. I have the street to myself. I push the throttle then shift into fourth gear. The hand on the speedometer slowly rises. I think of those BMW commercials, with the anonymous man gunning it along a winding, mountain road, the camera cutting off to images of his hand shifting gears, the engine screaming. I go around the first bend in the road, not taking my foot off the gas. I reach 45 mph. I shift again into fifth gear as I come around onto a strait-away. My Mazda 6 is my formula-one race car, and this secluded detour is my race track. I squeeze the gas pedal to the floor and listen to the engine start to climb. 50... 55... 60 mph down the slick asphalt, which is wet from the windward showers earlier in the night. I’m pushing my car to its limits, speeding along the snaky 25mph road. I’m holding the steering wheel carefully with both hands now. My hands are beginning to sweat. My heartbeat seems to be accelerating at the same rate as my car. The butterflies of adrenaline are surging through my torso. Down a strait-away I reach 65 mph, and that’s when I see it.

Coming up on the left side of the road I notice the yellow flashing hazard light. Oh, shit! THE TURN! I remember that about 10 yards past this hazard light, is a sharp bend in the road that barely makes 90 degrees. In a second, I see the yellow hazard light fly past me. The 15 mph sign passes me a second later. I begin to ease on the brake, trying to give

it just enough pressure to make the turn without slowing down so drastically that the car loses traction. I'm closing in on the turn way too fast. Still easing the break, I begin the turn. I feel my body being pulled to the left side my seat. Please make the turn. Please make the turn.

Halfway through the curve, my worst fear becomes a reality. I hear the screech of my tires as they lose their grip on the slippery road. My car is sliding sideways to the left and forward at the same time. I panic. I take my foot off of the break, hoping the car will go back on course. I slide across the opposite lane of traffic, onto the dirt shoulder. I manage not to slide directly into the mountain on the left side of the road. I've stopped sliding and I'm going strait forward now. I feel my heart drop into my stomach when I see the sight ahead of me. Strait ahead, only 10-15 feet away is a large, wooden utility pole, about a foot thick. Again I try to ease my brake quickly, but not abruptly. It's no use. My tires have absolutely no traction on the dirt and gravel of the shoulder. I watch in horror as the large telephone pole closes in on me. I can't do anything but lightly grip the bottom of the steering wheel at 8 and 4 like they taught us in driver's-ed class. I brace myself for impact.

POW! Both airbags explode and the car comes to a dead stop. I sit, dazed and in disbelief, starring at the telephone pole in front of me. I stare at my hood which is bent upward like a piece of cardboard. My Gym Class Heroes CD is still blasting. The inside of my car is hazy from the powdery smoke of the airbags as they deflate. The "new car" aroma is taken over by the pungent smell of smoldering electrical wiring. Indifferently, I pull the key from the ignition, turn off my one headlight, and unlatch my seatbelt. I open the door and step out to see the damage. I am absolutely terrified of what I might see when I come to the front of my car. I shyly walk forward to view the damage. I feel like I'm 6 years old, walking into my Dad's room, knowing that I'm about to get the belt.

The driver's side corner of the car looks like a T-rex had taken a bite out of it. The bumper is hanging on the ground, partly attached at one end, radiator exposed. The front driver's side tire is bent inward so severely that you can barely tell that there's a tire there at all. A little smoke is seeping out from under the mangled hood. My type-s sports grill is 5 feet in front of the car, on the street.

I begin breathing erratically. My heart is ricocheting inside of my chest. I feel as though I might have a panic attack.

"Oh, god... What did I do? What the fuck did I do?" I say aloud, in a whimpering voice. All I can do is repeat the same thing over and over again in a weak, delirious laughter, "What did I do? What did I do? What the fuck did I do?"

I want to cry. I'm trying to cry. But the tears won't come. I don't know if it's because of the alcohol, or maybe I'm in too much shock.

This cannot be happening... this cannot be happening to me... what the hell was I thinking driving so fast? Maybe it's not totaled... maybe it's still repairable... maybe we can get this repaired... and everything will be back to way it used to be... What will Mom and Dad think? I just got this car... I love this car... this cannot be happening.

In my head I picture what kind of slow, girly replacement car my parents will get for me with the insurance money. Will they even get me another car? I think about everyone I know, the things they'll say about me, "He's such a dumb-ass... He only had his car for three weeks and he totaled it... good for him...he's spoiled anyway." Because of this envy, people will only smile inside when they find out about this. I have no one on my side. I'm all alone in this mess.

I walk across the street, off to the side of the road, down towards a ravine, just enough so that I'm hidden from the passing traffic. I figure that I should hide until I sober up to avoid getting a DUI. I kneel down among the ferns on the slope, watching cars go by, several of which pull over next to the wreck to offer assistance. I duck down like a scared cat. They see that the car is abandoned and drive off.

A few minutes pass by, and I decide that I don't want to spend the night in this mosquito infested ravine. I'm at risk of getting an under-aged DUI, but can it get any worse than *this*? I call my older sister, and she arrives shortly before the police officer does.

The police officer asks me a few standard questions for the report. Eventually, he asks me the question that I've been dreading.

"Have you been drinking?"

I look down at the ground and pause for a moment. Before I can come clean and tell him everything, he cuts me off and says, "I see dis all da time around dis turn... Let me guess, you were coming down before da turn going around 60, den slowed down to about 50 right around here." He points towards the bridge before the turn. "Den you lost control right around there." He's incredibly accurate. It's as if he was there, watching me slide out of control.

I'm a little relieved to find out that he doesn't even give me a sobriety test. Maybe he's decided that I've been devastated enough tonight. He says that I would've had to take

a test if I had hit another car or a pedestrian, but because only state property was involved, it was unnecessary.

It's been half a year since the accident and it still bothers me to think about it. I don't know if getting that car in the first place was a blessing or a curse. On one hand, I could say that it *has* made me a more cautious driver, but the overall embarrassment, frustration, and wound to my ego that the accident has caused just doesn't seem worth it. I try to tell myself, "Well at least you weren't hurt or didn't kill anyone... at least there was no oncoming traffic when you slid across the street... it could have been so much worse..." This optimistic thinking offers me little consolation. Maybe one day I'll look back on this and value it as a learning experience, but for now I just want my damn car back.

The Short End of the Stick

Randall Sato

The average American male is 5'9" and the average American woman is 5'4" (Lannelli). At only 5'2", I'm about a full head shorter than most men and a few inches shorter than most women I know. Other than that, I guess you could say that I'm just your typical 5'2" guy.

Don't get the wrong impression. I appreciate life as much as anybody and I'm endlessly grateful for my good health. But there's always those moments when I wish I could be just a few inches taller. And these are the reasons why.

First off, I'll start with some information which I found to be pretty surprising... and disappointing. Statistically, tall people are luckier with their love lives, and actually make more money. A 2004 study found that every inch of height amounts to a salary increase of about \$789 per year. That might not seem like much, but that would mean that over a 20-year period, a 6-foot man should be making \$157,000 more than me. There are countless theories that try to explain this phenomenon. Some claim that it's caused by social biases; others say that it's a matter of self-esteem, and some even believe that taller people are just smarter (Donohue).

Probably the main thing that bothers me the most about being short is what the opposite sex finds attractive. Offhand, I can't think of too many girls that are attracted to men shorter than themselves. Well then maybe I should have better luck with short girls? Maybe shorter girls go for shorter guys? According to a university study supported by the National Science Foundation Grant, women of short, medium, and tall stature evaluated pictures of men, who were believed to be either short, medium, or tall. Men of medium height were seen to be significantly more socially desirable than either short or tall men. This was true whether the female evaluator was short, medium, or tall (Graziano). I'm not saying that the reason why I haven't always won the girl is due to my height. I'm just saying that in cases of rejection, it's hard to keep my ego from leading me to think that way. One question that particularly girls like to ask me is, "How tall are you?" It's a question that's been asked enough times to be old, but not frequently enough that it doesn't bother me. It might sound like a casual, polite question, but to me it's like asking a fat lady, "How fat are you?"

Why couldn't they have coined the phrase, "*Short*, dark, and handsome?"

Speaking of meeting women; what better place to do so than the nightclub? Going to the club is an awkward situation. Most of the time I am *literally* the shortest guy there. When it gets crowded, I don't see faces, I just see a wall of collared shirts. To seal out any hope of meeting someone eye-to-eye, all of the petite girls are usually wearing high

heels. It usually takes about two Jager Bombs and four Heinekens for me to forget about how I might be sticking out like an under-sized sore thumb, squeezing through the mobs of average-sized people. Well at least the bartenders remember me when I give them a good tip.

Drinking all of this beer in a short period of time leads to another little annoyance. I barely meet the height requirement for urinals in some public bathrooms. I'm just tall enough to make it into the porcelain and not on the wall below it. I get the privilege of being very close to those pink, scented tablets. Sometimes, I tippy-toe, but only on one foot, hoping that the drunk guys behind me won't notice.

There's no getting into the club without the right dress code. Finding long pants that fit me is almost impossible. The pants that fit my waist are always about a foot too long. I'm left with two options. I can either roll them up and try to pass them off as a fashion statement, or I can get them hemmed which never looks right, and is always embarrassing when people notice it.

Adolescence was a tough period in my life. Ninth grade was probably the hardest year because that's around the time that most of my friends got their growth spurt. They all shot up to 5'8" and 5'9", while I remained at 5'2". I'm not sure what it was that kept me from getting any taller. Was it a lack of vegetables or protein in my diet? Or could it have just been genetics? My mom is only 4'8" and my dad is 5'4". So maybe I just fell somewhere in between. I found further disappointment when I realized that I wouldn't outgrow my dad, as most of my other guy friends surpassed theirs. My transition into high school was intimidating. I was switching from intermediate school where half of the boys haven't even hit puberty yet, to high school where the halls are filled with full-sized men. Walking through the hallways, I felt singled out, even though most of the boys probably looked right over my head anyway. I became so self conscious to the point where I was embarrassed just going to the movies with my much taller friends. My friends would only be rubbing salt into a fresh wound when they would say things like, "Why the hell are you so short?" or "Man, Randall... you need to get taller." I have the most supportive friends ever.

In high school, I joined the school wrestling and judo teams. They were sports that I thought my height wouldn't leave me at a disadvantage. After four years, I turned out to be just another mediocre wrestler, but one of the more competitive Judo players. Judo is a martial art invented by short, Japanese men, so I guess it's just in my blood. In fact, the founder of Judo, Jigoro Kano actually stood the same height as me at 5'2" (Adams). I also ran on the cross country team for three years. I figured that there was no way in hell that I'd excel in a sport like this. And I was right. I never did qualify for states, but I managed

to keep up with or even out run most of the taller boys on the school's team. It's a win/win situation for me when I'm shorter than 99% of the boys I race against. If I win, then I can say that I did it at a disadvantage, and if I lose, I can say that I only lost because I have a short stride. I probably use my shortness as an excuse for more things than I should. I usually placed somewhere in the middle for most of the races.

Although it doesn't bother me nearly as much as it used to, I'm still not completely comfortable with my height and I still feel self-conscious in certain situations. Hopefully one day I'll be able to see it as something that just makes life more interesting, or something that offers unique challenges. I'm not big on playing poker, but one of my favorite quotes is, "You just have to play the cards that you've been dealt." It's something that I can apply to everything in life. And when I really look at my situation, my hand isn't that bad at all.

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Opportunities of Change

Liona Sledge

"You do things for yourself, not for me," Michael Wright frequently suggests to his elementary school students. Mike has inspired his students to do things for themselves, such as accepting change and using opportunities in their lives. Mike has conquered many things in his life to become who he is today. He is a compassionate, knowledgeable, selfless teacher, who also is my friend and my companion.

Mike was born in Puyallup, Washington, on October 14, 1982. As soon as he entered this world, he was in a fight for his life. Mike had a rare infant heart disorder that kills 99 percent of newborns who get it. He almost died three times from that battle, but thankfully managed to survive. After witnessing his biological father cheating on his mother, he was scarred for life. Mike's mother filed for a divorce very shortly after this ill-fated incident. Mike and his mother lived poverty-stricken in the projects for years in Puyallup, Washington, where Mike became a victim of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse from a near-by neighbor. As if Mike had not gone through enough, he watched his mother get very sick as she lay in the hospital with brain damage that would permanently change her personality.

Mike's mother quickly discovered that Puyallup wasn't home for Mike or for herself. When Mike was five, his mother decided Petersburg, Alaska, would be their next destination called home. At the age of six, Mike began commercial fishing in southeast Alaska.

"I was involved in the most brutal work on the planet from the age of six through ten during the blizzards in winter," Mike said, reliving the past. Working his way up, Mike became very knowledgeable about the sea. He was in a special program for children in fishing families called Migrant Education, which allowed him to take his homework with him while he learned the trade of fishing. Mike was given the title of First Mate by the time he turned 14 years old. Until he was 17 years of age, Mike continued to work five months out of the year fishing for halibut, herring, salmon, and crab.

Finally, Mike rose to the position of Captain at the age of 18, on board a fishing vessel. With the amount of time that he put into his trade of fishing, Mike was offered this great position. Unfortunately for him, he had a rough start to becoming a Captain. During his first opening at sea, the engine exploded underneath him, which woke him up from a deep sleep. He found himself drifting in the middle of the ocean, in a dense fog bank, with no power for the radio to work or to call for help. Desperation caused Mike to rip apart the radio. He tried everything possible to make the radio work. At last he rewired what was left of the radio and gave the radio life. Mike was able to contact another vessel and be rescued out of his chain of bad luck. What he learned from this experience is that if he just does his best and perseveres, amazing things can happen. "I think a lot of people think hope is lost when hope is still around them," he spoke confidently. "The key is never to give up on it. If

you put up a good fight and you are happy with yourself, then that in itself is a victory.”

Mike had persistently talked about moving to Hawai‘i since he was in elementary school. He constantly told his classmates that one day he would travel the world and eventually live on a beautiful tropical island, mainly because he wanted to experience life in an entirely different environment. His friends just laughed him off, doubting his dreams. By chance, Mike got an offer to attend the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa in 2004. Before he got this offer, he was attending the School of International Service at American University in Washington, DC. It was the top school for diplomatic service, and that’s the field he was interested in at the time.

After spending two and a half years studying politics, Mike had enough. He started to realize that a lot of people in that field really didn’t care about helping people and making the world better as much as they cared about status, money, and driving the newest, most expensive vehicle around. His reason for wanting to get into the field in the first place was to help people, and he was immediately turned off by the selfishness of the people in politics. So, he said to himself that he needed to start from the bottom and work his way up. That is when he decided he wanted to pursue a career in education. Around this time is when Mike and I met. We became incredible friends and companions.

Mike chose to become a teacher because he wanted to do something with his life that would make a profound impact on the world for the better. “I don’t want to teach what to think. I teach how to think,” he said reflectively. The last thing Mike wants is to pigeon-hole or brainwash a student. His main concern is equipping his students with the necessary tools and attitude they need to overcome anything they may come across in life, to self-actualize, and to get to a point where they can make the world a better place.

Mike had a lot of inspiration growing up. The first two people who came to his mind when he thought about inspiration were his grandfather and his social studies teacher in high school. Mike’s grandfather was an educator as well as a politician, and his social studies teacher is a world traveler as well as one of the most enlightened people he has ever known. Both pushed Mike to study abroad when he was 16, and both worked on him like their own special project, in an attempt to mold Mike to help others in the world. When they figured out what the other was trying to do to him, they started collaborating. Mike likes to think they were successful in their efforts.

Amazed by his courage, I have realized that it doesn’t matter what the situation is. It is how I choose to deal and cope with a situation. Mike still holds the rank of Captain in the fishing grounds of South East Alaska, but chooses to pursue education and to fulfill his passion for helping others. As he seeks his full potential in life, he takes pride in helping others find their special, unique self. I find that his determination to help others is an astounding trait. Inspired by the way Mike has overcome the obstacles in his life, I have learned how to accept change and to see that there is an opportunity in every situation.

Stopping to Smell the Roses

Cynthia Thurlow

Guy Meyers awoke from the dream with a start. He flung the sweat-drenched sheets from his body. A glance at the clock confirmed he had awakened at 3 a.m. yet again. Guy eased out of bed trying not to disturb his wife, Eileen. He reached for a cigarette and lighter and sat by the open bedroom window. The restless nights were becoming more frequent. He found himself sitting in this same place night after night.

He could barely make out the glow of the sliver of moonlight behind the passing clouds as he inhaled the cool, refreshing smoke. The menthol taste draped his tongue like a favorite old suit.

The argument he had earlier that evening with his son, Daniel, still haunted him.

It was a school night and fireworks were triggered when Daniel asked to borrow the car to hangout with his friends. Guy asked him if that was all he thought there was to life. He reminded Daniel that he was not going live with his parents when he was 30 years old. Daniel yelled, "I don't want your life. I want to stop and smell the roses. I don't want a job I hate where I have to spend all of my time."

Daniel just wanted to get the heck out of school and out on his own.

Guy tried to reason with his son, but Daniel grabbed his skateboard and backpack and stormed out of the living room. The front door slammed. Skateboard met concrete, and with the rumbling of its wheels, Daniel zoomed off into the night.

Guy ran to the door, but it seemed to move further and further away. As he tried to open it, his arm felt as if a lead weight was holding it down. The feeling passed as suddenly as it came on. He flung the door open. The cool night air flowed over him like a silk sheet. He tried to call out to Daniel, but his speech came out garbled, like he was talking under water. Eileen wanted him to go to the hospital, but he refused. Guy had just had a physical last week.

The doctor's voice echoed in his head. He needed to try to lose thirty pounds and he should quit smoking. The doctor warned that between his lack of exercise, his high blood pressure, and his excessive smoking, Guy was a walking poster child for heart attack or stroke. He should cut back and stop to smell the roses.

Now he looked into the twilight sky as he exhaled his final drag and extinguished his cigarette. He knew the doctor was right. He also knew that he was predisposed to stroke symptoms. His retired father suffered a stroke five years ago and had not fully recovered.

The stroke had left him paralyzed on his left side. His parent's meager pension and Social Security benefits barely covered the nursing care costs. Guy helped to cover all of the outstanding expenses.

When Guy told Eileen his diagnosis, the fear in her eyes made him stop to think. If anything happened to him, would she be able to make it on a single income? Would she be able to handle Daniel on her own?

He glanced at the bookshelf. Eileen had filled it with videos on yoga and relaxation techniques. She had even made an appointment for him to have a massage. Hell, he would love to try any of those things, but with all the crap he was dealing with at work he couldn't afford the time it would take to learn the techniques. And, where would he find time to practice them? The time off for the doctor's appointment alone had caused him to fall a day behind on a project at work. His head hurt just thinking about it.

Every year someone new was hired at the agency. Each co-worker seemed to get younger and younger. Their "deer-in-headlights" expressions told him they were fresh out of college. As the senior co-worker, Guy was stuck with the responsibility of training the new hires. The veteran hires were given the projects that lead to opportunities for advancement and promotions. Guy was not included.

Back in bed, Eileen lay in peaceful slumber. She had been a real trooper through his late hours at the office. She understood that he had to compete with his younger co-workers. He had been promising her that they would get away and take some time off for a rendezvous. Every time he got ready to schedule time off something always came up at work. As soon as he could get the piles on his desk down, he would put in for some vacation time. Someday he and Eileen would stop to smell the roses.

The nerve in his neck was pinched so taut he thought it would snap. The throbbing in his head sent white flashes of light through his mind.

Guy went to the bookshelf. He ran his fingers over the cool metal frame. Was it really ten years ago that he and Daniel put the shelf together? He reached for the beginner's yoga video. The barefoot man and woman on the cover wore matching white outfits. He longed for the tranquil smiles on their faces. Guy took the video and headed to the living room.

He stopped by Daniel's bedroom door and knocked. There was no answer, so he gently opened the door and took a peak inside. Daniel was sound asleep with his headphones half hanging off his head. Guy smiled. He was happy Daniel had come home. He couldn't help but wonder how Daniel and he had got to a place of conflict. They started out as buddies.

He taught his son to ride a bike, to drive, and to fly fish. For years, they had been planning to go on a fly fishing trip together. Guy wanted to do that with him before he graduated from high school.

The Harry Chapin song, “Cat’s in the Cradle,” played in his head when he thought about his relationship with his son. “When you coming home, dad? I don’t know when, but we’ll get together then. You know we’ll have a good time then.”

Guy moved the coffee table out of the middle of the floor. He put in the video and fast-forwarded past the warning to consult a physician before starting an exercise program. The video started out with relaxing deep breathes. Guy followed along with the instructions. His chest tightened like a vice grip the deeper he breathed. He sat on the couch and caught his breath. He had to keep going. He needed to do this for his family.

Guy got through some of the simpler routines. Then he came the floor exercises. At one point, he tried to lunge forward and reach to the sky. The explosion in his head and blinding white light seized his body.

The video continued playing as Guy lay motionless on the floor. His eyes were open but unseeing. He would never get to stop and smell the roses.

Drop Twitch

No one else was awake. The first rays of sunlight pierced the East facing windows and shot their way across the kitchen and into the open cabinet. The warm, luminescent beams scattered fiercely around the glassware before throwing themselves onto the tile floor, reflecting back into my eyes an intricate disco ball effect of illuminated hot spots. I was to savor this rare moment. On a normal day, my sleep would be rudely interrupted by my mother screaming at me to wake up. I would then be hauled off to school before the sun had a chance to creep up out of its bed below the horizon. Luckily, it was Saturday, and no ordinary Saturday either.

I gazed into the cabinet and moved my focus from crystal glasses, to porcelain plates, and down to the center of attention, a wheel-sized, hand crafted, meticulously colored, prized collectors' item of a bowl. Specks of light glinted across the edge, and like a protective parent, I reached out and cradled the bowl gently in the palm of my hands. I stared intently at the richly saturated hues of blue, green, and violet arranged in a dazzling pattern almost too indulgent for us common folk to deserve a look at. The patterns appeared to swirl around gracefully beneath the glazed surface as if the Pacific Ocean itself was caged inside. I wondered about how much it had cost my mother to buy this masterpiece. But I shifted my mind onto the more important issue of how majestic this bowl would look as the centerpiece of the dinner table for tonight's big party.

These lavish family gatherings were always big trouble. I knew that within minutes, my mother would be rushing out of her bedroom to scream at me to help her begin preparing the oversized turkey. A growling stomach triggered a desire for breakfast, and I entertained the idea of eating cereal out of the splendid work of art that lay in my eleven year-old hands. While my left hand parted shortly to reach for the box of Fruit Loops, my right hand kept a firm grip. Not wanting to lose touch with what was most important, I kept the focus of my attention on the bowl and admired the silky smooth feel on my fingertips that slid easily across the surface. However, that admiration was short lived as I realized that a slipping sensation was not exactly what my right hand should have been experiencing.

At the very edge of my field of vision, a downward movement of something blue immediately instilled in me a touch of panic. My head snapped right back into position, and I peeled back my eyelids in horror at the sight of the bowl not suspended by anything but the thin air around it. At the onset of an emotion that can only be described as "Oh shit", the second hand of the clock stood still. The highly valued spectrum of colors began its untimely descent.

All animals have instinctive reactions to keep them from undue trouble, and I was no exception. Without any thinking on my part, my lightning fast reflexes kicked in, forcing

my hands back under the plate. Speed was in no doubt on my side as both hands positioned themselves to stop the fall. Dexterity, unfortunately, was not. The hefty bowl paid little attention to my feeble grasp as it pushed itself further down. The tips of my fingers merely slowed the movement of the edge nearest to me, revealing the bowl's underside. Another pattern of the same color and intensity spanned outward from the center. 'How impressive,' I thought, 'that even the bottom takes no slack in showing off its looks.'

Since failing to stop the fall, my mind raced through a collection of thoughts and possible outcomes. Obviously, knowing the importance of the bowl, I wished for it not to come into contact with the tiles, breaking into a million pieces. "Could it actually happen? If it does, what would happen afterwards?" I was not in the mood to sift through all the consequences resulting in certain death, but the possibility loomed large like a storm cloud over my head. The pressure was slightly more than I cared to handle. I was trapped in a surreal moment that everyone is familiar with where one is not 100% certain that what is going on is real. But all I knew was that I wanted out of it, even if this happened to be only a nightmare. I yearned for the times when life was easy. I found it ironic how we curse boredom until we find ourselves in a situation that is the exact opposite.

The bowl leaned at a steeper angle, inching its way down with the leading edge pointed directly at the kitchen floor. It sliced through the rays of sunlight, cutting them off their path one by one and reflecting them off in random directions. Each reflected beam that briefly struck my eye appeared as a camera's flash bulb, fascinating yet blinding. The spectacle was a difficult distraction to ignore, but the bowl had still only fallen halfway. I considered another possible attempt at saving the day. No longer relying on age-old instinct, I guided my open right hand toward the bowl, with every movement backed by diligent thought and purpose. My arm traced a Nike swoosh through the air in time to place my fingers in the perfect position for a grab. "This time," I thought, "I would succeed."

My thumb and fingers formed a U shape around the edge of the bowl, and I gave them the command to squeeze, resulting in a perfectly executed grip. But had my skin not become so moist from stress, the bowl would have stayed in place. Though dexterity was on my side this time, the laws of physics paid no interest in my intended victory. Downward it continued, leaving my palm and digits behind. The blues, greens, and violets now reflected their own colors off the floor. A little over a foot was left before its imminent destruction, and the only options I had left were praying for divine intervention and cursing fate for allowing these series of events to unfold. I had given up, and I gazed with lost hope at the shimmering colors and subtle tints parading its final dance. I reflected on the fact that I had never fully appreciated its beauty until then, when I had the least amount of time to do so.

Suddenly, I was held up by a flashback of a similar event that had occurred years

earlier. I relived the moment clearly, seeing a glass falling and extending my foot out at the last second, softening its landing enough to save it from suffering a single crack. I immediately snapped back into the moment, and I noticed that my foot was already on its way to break the fall. My foot and the bowl was on the final stretch of its race, in each a driver with a rock-solid determination to win. I closed my eyes and braced for impact. An unexpected sensation of relief then overwhelmed me as a sharp collision sent a shock-wave of pain into my ankle. The ordeal was over. I had learned my lesson that fate was, after all, looking out for my best interests. How ironic it would have been had the prized centerpiece bowl been allowed to break at my fault. My life, the bowl, and more importantly, the night's party had been saved.

Or so I thought.

A cacophonous uproar normally accompanying an auto accident rudely interrupted my premature rush of bliss. I heard the explosion of a balloon followed by the chaotic ring of a thousand microscopic bells. The second hand of the clock resumed its normal tick-tock, and the kitchen floor was covered by an intricate arrangement of glitter more spectacular than what the sun had originally cast upon it. "How impressive," I thought, "that even after it's reduced to dust, it still looks like a million bucks." But it wasn't supposed to happen. Luckily, time slowed down for me once more as I conjured up all possible excuses.

The Closer the Relationship the Bloodier

Kristy Wong

"Help!" I cried with the last bit of air inside my lungs. I couldn't take this pain anymore. It was far too agonizing for any child at the age of seven to bear. I grasped the phone, only to feel my hand crushed with pain and I screamed. I felt the rubber flat object stomping at my fingers as I reached for my life line.

"Can anyone hear me yelling help?! How can they not? I live in a condo for goodness sake!" I screamed in my head. Then, I soon realized I was bleeding where my fingers held dearly and tightly to the cord. My fingers were numb. I let go of the cord and stared at my outreached arm and I saw blood from where my new stitches once were. I looked toward the phone cord and noticed a clean cut in the cord from where the phone was attached to the outlet. What now?

It started with waking up at four in the morning to take a shower and watch Sailor Moon at five in the morning on K5, the Home Team channel. It was a routine I did on a daily basis. Then I continued my day, leaving the condo at 6:30a.m. with my older sister to Liholiho Elementary School. Along with the daily routine, we went through the daily complaints by our mother of how messy we are, how we should make our beds, and make sure we get to school on time. By the time we got to school, it was usually already time to go class.

The school bell rang to start class. My classmates and I said the Pledge of Allegiance just like any other day. As soon as we were done, we had activities such as finger painting. I was always a child who kept to herself, never wanting to interact with others unless necessary. As I painted at my usual spot in the corner of the room, I accidentally covered my stitches with yellow paint. I didn't bother to wash it off and soon enough the paint had formed a yellow crust on top of my wound. "Yuck," I thought. "I'm going to have to clean this off." These stitches were fresh from the day before when I was cutting a pear and the knife went right through the fruit into the palm of my hand. The pain was still excruciating - after all, I didn't get the wire threads taken out yet. This held the flap of skin to my hand. Every stare at my stitches reminded me how my life and emotions needed stitching too. Every splash of water to rinse off the yellow paint reminded me of how my life also needed cleansing.

As my thoughts started to shift towards my life and my family, I realized I didn't have much of a life in school either. I was different from the rest of the children in my class. I kept to myself as if I was a walking disease and for the safety of others I kept my distance. I could feel tension between classmates and I felt the stares as if I wasn't human. My family set the alarm for four in the morning for school causing me to tire out and sleep during recess. When we had nap times, I had to be woken up by a shake. My life at home took toll in school and I hated both places. *Where do I belong?*, I often wondered.

Just as I zoned off, the teacher began explaining another assignment of the day. Just

great, I thought. "Class, I want you to all create a Mother's Day card to tell your mom how thankful you are of everything she does for you," Mrs. Bercouski said. "This assignment is going to be one of the hardest assignments yet," I mumbled. It seemed like everything I did in school dealt with my family somehow or we ended up doing something that included them. For the sake of getting over the day, I grabbed for the black card and realized I should be grabbing the pink one. So I took that one instead. I did my best with the card and wrote "Thank you, Mom" without a reason. As soon as it was done, I threw it away.

"Ring, ring, ring." School was finally over and as usual I waited for my sister to finish JPO. I admired how she held a stop sign to lead people to safety. If only someone could do the same with my life right now, leading me across the street, but to a caring, loving, and thoughtful family. As I waited, I saw my mother approach me. She brought the usual four Char Sui buns in a Ziploc bag and a Sunny Delight orange juice drink. I was a heavy child and I couldn't help but think how ugly I was. It seems like my life couldn't get any worse then it already was. But it did get worse once I got home and the house started to shake as it always did when someone got upset. I realized quickly that everything that our family did outside the doors of our condo seemed to be for show. A show to let the world know we were just another family. Just another family? If that was only true. As I finished my last bit of Char Sui, I heard a whistle blow, "Ok, that's all for today. You may go home, JPOs."

My mother, sister, and I were on our way to the bus stop and it just so happened that the bus was on its way, so we all ran. We flipped out our bus passes and went towards the back of the bus. As soon as my butt touched the seat, I noticed it felt sticky. I stood back up and my mother realized at the same time as me that I had gum on my pants. "Oh no," I said under my breath as I felt a pair of eyes full of rage stare my way. I removed what I could with my fingers, violently ripping at the gum to get the majority of it off. Did I say majority? I meant all of it!

Soon enough it was time for us to get off. So I shoved my way through the bus towards the door and pushed it open. Of course, I held the door open for my mother. We got home exhausted and my mom yelled at me in Chinese about being careful where I sat because I had to remember who's washing my clothes. I knew immediately after she said that, it meant she wasn't planning to wash them for me, so I changed and washed the pants myself. I felt like I was Cinderella being the slave and treated badly except without the part in the story where she wanted to go to the ball and meet a prince. But then again, being taken away by a prince sounded good even at my age just for the sake of a better life. Although, I knew that boys had cooties.

By the time we got home, it was four o' clock and I was getting hungry again. Although I ate four Char Sui buns already, it seemed like I never seemed to get full. I looked in the fridge to grab anything to eat and I smelled my favourite dish. Sweet and sour

garlic chicken wings made by my mother. I grabbed for it, but I lost my grip. The dish fell to the ground with a “Clingggggg.” The noise of the stainless steel hitting the tile floor was the sound of panic. I felt my heart beat faster and faster as I shoved the chicken back into the stainless steel pan. Quicker, I told myself, but no matter how quick I was, I knew right then and there I better get ready for the usual hitting. I just sat there waiting.

“Bitch! What the fuck is all of that on the ground?” I sat there with water filling my eyes. I knew it was coming. I just knew. I heard the plastic of the clothes hangers and I was ready to be beaten down with them until they snapped lifelessly. As soon as she came back, I shut my eyes, closing out the world and accepting what was soon to come. I screamed in agony, but no one seemed to care. Where was my sister, you might ask? Hiding for her life, afraid for her already beaten body, afraid she would witness her own little sister beaten down like a worthless piece of shit as my mother told me I was. She wasn’t hiding because she didn’t care about me - it was fear and survival like in the wilderness. It’s everyone for themselves in times like these.

As the rainbow of color hangers snapped upon touching my body it left scars. This was no surprise, of course. But today was different. She was enraged. I was never sure even now after 10 years why she snapped the way she did, but she grabbed the chef’s knife. The knife you use to cut through poultry and bones. I was in for it and it was all because I was hungry. Why? As soon as I hit the age of 51, I realized there are things in this “normal” family that there are simply no answers to and which you don’t question either. The tall beast stood over me with the sharp object, cussing and threatening. I could see slight hesitation to use the weapon. I laid there with my knees at my head praying to God, mumbling how much I loved Him and told Him how I’ll start going to church if I survived tonight.

From the corner of my left eye, I saw something coming towards my stomach. “AHHHH!! HELP! HELP! HELP!” I screamed the loudest I could but nothing came out. Apparently, I lost my voice. At the same time, I felt the skin on my face beginning to tighten from the tears I’d shed while I was getting whacked. But it was about to get wet again as my sight began to blur from the water in my eyes. I thought it was the weapon that was coming at me, but I soon realized what it was. A foot, I told myself as I felt it finally hit my stomach, crushing my lungs. With that hit, my knees buckled towards my head protecting myself as much as possible.

“What the fuck are you trying to do, protect yourself?” she said with much more rage. She stomped rather more violently, preventing my lungs from inhaling any air to my already half-dead body. It seems as though she was having a rush of adrenaline every time she heard me groan in agony and pain. It was a type of high she was having and nothing could stop her. Nothing could stop this animal. It was a predator who had found its prey and it was ready to kill it off this time.

I woke up and it was 12 midnight. My body was bruised and I didn't have the strength to stand or move at all. Five minutes later, it clicked to me that I must have fainted. My mind seemed to register things at a slow pace and I felt as if I was still half unconscious. My body was sprawled on the floor with my head on the side and my arms and legs spread out. My father wouldn't come home till two in the morning and I knew better then to lie there and be half-dead. If I did stay there, half-dead, I would be dead.

I finally got up and stood in the middle of our living room and staggered right towards the telephone which was five steps away from me. I started laughing. Was I crazy? If I was, I knew I wasn't even half as bad as the beast. I shot my attention back to what really mattered at this point. I took two steps before I felt dizzy and hit the floor.

The beast must have heard the thud because sounds of footsteps followed after my fall. It was the sound of terror, danger, and it cried killer. I took a deep breath, but even that was hard because of all the brutal stomping and whacking which I had endured earlier. My nose had become stuffed and I couldn't even take air when I had the chance to. With the last bit of strength, I reached for the phone...

It's quite amazing that I survived five more years with this bitter woman. What happened next after the phone incident and over the five years shall be kept a secret and taken to my grave. I've noticed after years of living with my family that there are just so many secrets. I soon found out one secret about my mother I knew I wasn't supposed to find out. Even my father wasn't supposed to find out. This woman wanted to take it to her grave, but secrets are secrets within the Wong family. They are usually revealed when others know besides you. This secret made me understand why my grandmother left her in China when she was six months old. It was simply because she was adopted.

After all these years, I don't think I will ever understand why she treated me the way she did. Although she had been adopted and neglected, I would think she wouldn't want her own blood and creation to be treated the way she was. Now at the age where I don't have to depend on my parents to take care of me, I've grown to appreciate what I had been through rather than becoming a bitter human. Recovery took years, but I came through. I ran through the path most teens go through in an environment such as mine: drugs, gangs, and basically sleeping on the streets or wherever I could find shelter. Not wanting to stay in such an environment, before I knew it, I grew to love education. I have motivation to exceed the standards. The lesson I learned in all these years is that in order to help yourself, you must want it first. I started to go to church, of course, because there is no better place for hope than God himself. I kept my promise, and to show my love for Him, I wear a cross. Soon I will have one on my body, to show Him I will never neglect Him and forget Him.



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