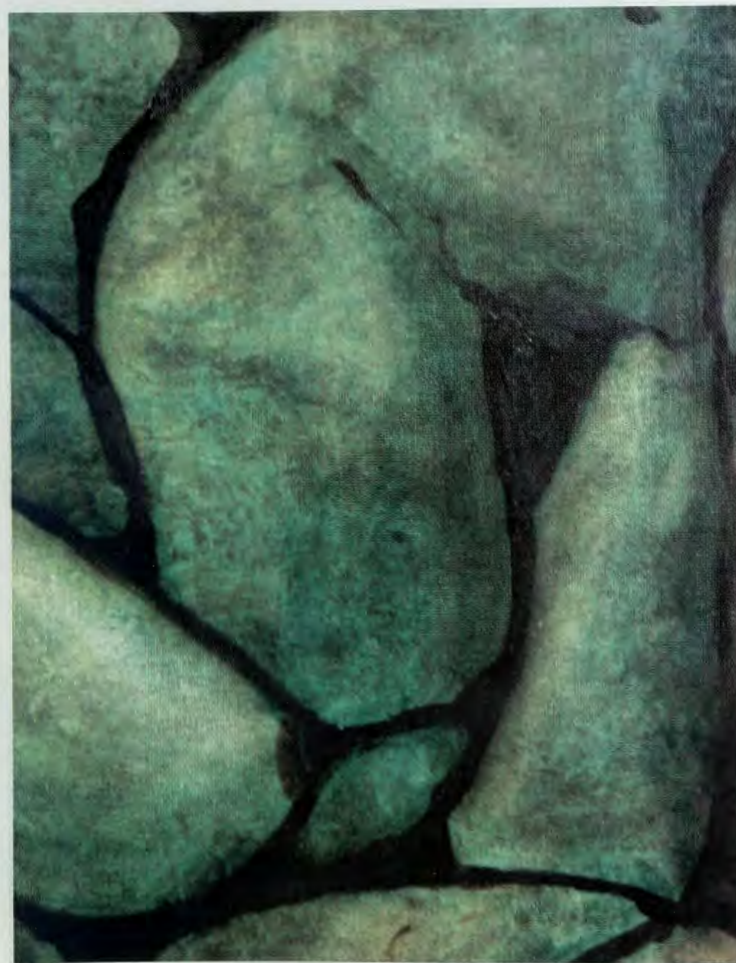


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Untitled

By:
Stacy Lok
Linda Lu
Allison Spencer
Meredith Seery
Erica Wong

In a empty room, standing all alone


I kissed a boy

Tearing through my mind like a knife stabbing my heart

Starfish and seashells are coming to me

He was standing in the doorway with the sea in his hands

I finally stop and look around



“Faraway Embrace” by Dawn Sueoka

Maui, No Ka Oi

by Jennifer Wimmer

I looked down at the Maui book Mom had placed in front of me. Mom and Dad were both staring at Kristal and I with big smiles. “Wow, we’re going on vacation to Maui this time?” I was in 8th grade and not easily impressed. We had been going to Kona on the Big Island almost every summer since I was young. Since my step dad was born and raised there, half-Hawaiian half-Japanese, we had lots of family there.

“No”, Mom replied, “Your Dad was offered a great job opportunity to open a new restaurant in Lahaina and we would be able to become part owners of it. Isn’t that great, girls?! We’ll be moving at the end of summer.”

Maybe it was the death glare I gave or the fact I burst into tears, but they seemed to get the idea that I was not happy with the present situation. We had just bought a beautiful home in southern California, a huge 5-bedroom house on a half an acre land right up against the foothills of Tustin. I was going to be starting high school at El Modena High, and was the star pupil of my acting class that I had been with for five years. Our acting class was working on putting together a pilot for a teen soap opera that dealt with kids’ problems. Needless to say I was high on life, there was no way I was leaving. Unfortunately God, or someone else, had other plans for me.

June came and my sister, Kristal, two little brothers, Andrew and Aaron, Mom and I were living out of our boxes at Grandpa’s and Grandma’s. Life was hell and I was a wreck. I adamantly decided at least once a week that I was going to live with Grandpa and Grandma and was NOT moving anywhere, especially to any island named Maui. But do you think they would listen to me? No. So we packed our bags and at the crack of dawn on June 20, 1994 my grandparents drove us to the Los Angeles International Airport. We were “going down a new path, an adventure, a new life awaited.” Ha! During the drive I was silent as I thought up elaborate plans of jumping out the car or maybe even “getting lost” in the airport crowd but I knew it wouldn’t work. I was stuck. Life was so unfair, we were moving and that was that. As my grandparents and other relatives hugged us and said their good-byes they told us how lucky we were to be moving to paradise. I, on the other hand was hysterical. By the time we walked onto the plane all three of us girls were blubbering idiots, and yes, even Mom who had thought she was so ready for this change, was not.

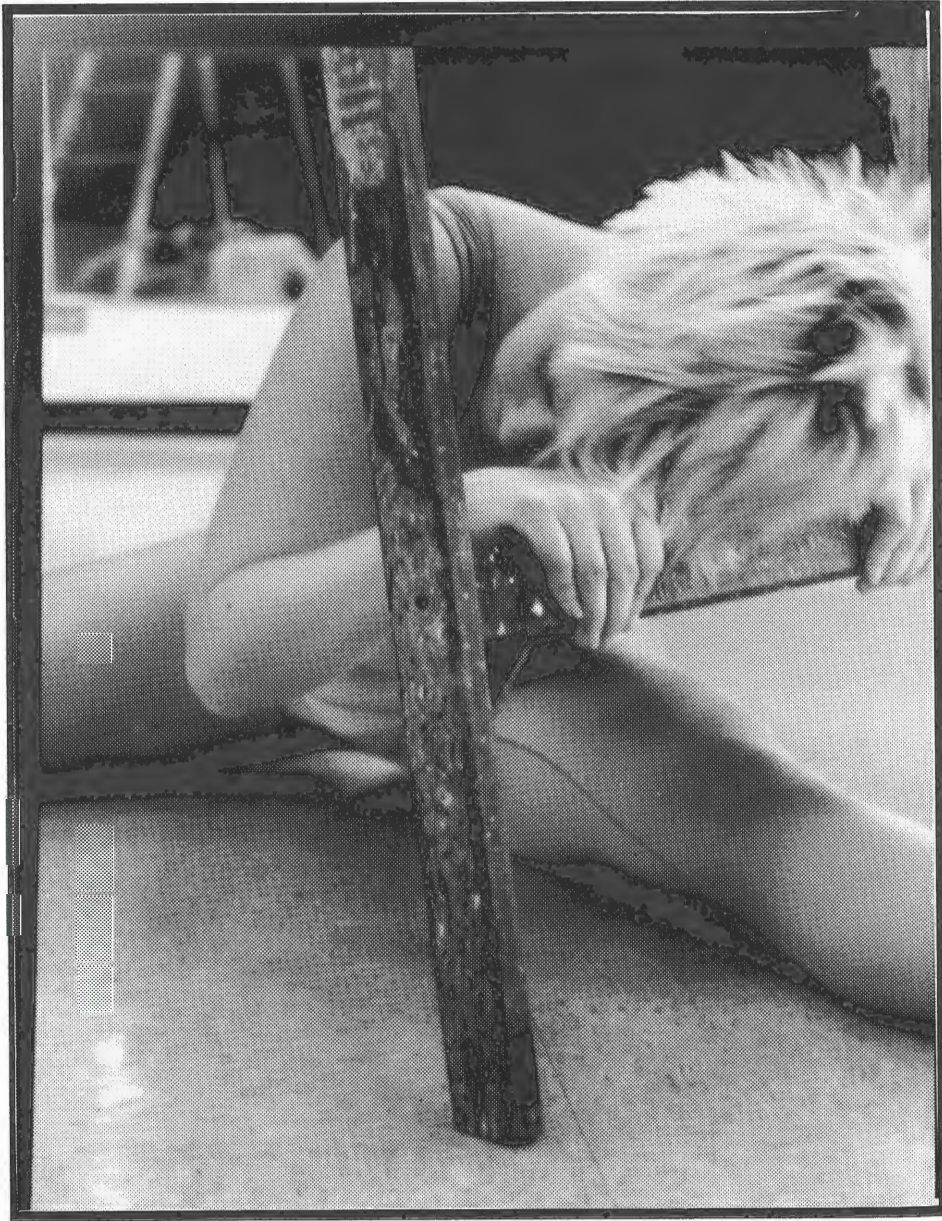
We had no idea what to expect. All we knew was that Dad would be waiting for us on the other side. He had been there for the whole summer trying to get the restaurant going and finding us a place to live. The restaurant part was accomplished but I can’t say the same for the living conditions. Since rent is so high on Maui and we were still paying a mortgage in California, the best he could do was a condo near the beach, which was 2 bedrooms and 1 bath. Now you tell me how you fit 6 people who once lived in a house before that into 2 bedrooms?! I don’t know how we managed that summer but we did. I

recall a few heated discussions (maybe one or two) trying to gather the reason, one more time, for moving.

Lahainaluna High School: “Oldest school west of the Rockies.” “Pride and Spirit #1 Since 1831!” Champions of the spirit competition for ten years in a row, but that’s about it. I’ll say this much: it was a beautiful school with one of the best views you’ll ever see, but I hated it. I think it was safe to say I hated everything at this point. At my old school, I had loved sports, I was always the aggressive go-getter type but here P.E. class was the worst. “Oh, poor Barbie, nobody like her play on da team.” The snicker and sly comments of the local tita girls, even the pretty popular ones, shot out left and right. “Eh haole, yeah blondie I stay talking to you, no worry, maybe next time you get fo play.” Not only the thought of going to P.E. gave me panic attacks but other classes like Japanese did too. I had to sit next to the most popular boy, Kana’au, and pretend I knew what the hell katakana and kanji were. Praying the whole class period Ms. Matsushita wouldn’t call on me. Breaks and lunchtime were also just as bad; try hiding bright blonde hair, green eyes, and white skin among 800 dark-haired, dark-skinned people. Well let me tell you, it just doesn’t work. At the time I could literally count on two hands how many haole kids there were in school. But you see, it wasn’t like I was that haole kid who comes from the Mainland and goes into cultural shock at island life. Like I said before, I was raised by a Hawaiian-Japanese step dad from Kona and had two little hapa brothers. I knew what a haole was, what it meant to take a bocha, what hana badda’s were, what it meant to have choke of something, and that in Hawaii slippers were not house shoes that kept your feet warm in the winter. And I think that’s what made me so furious, the fact that I had always known these things. Heck I was practically local already!

I think the main problem stemmed from the fact that Lahaina is a very small town, which is virtually isolated from the other parts of the island. Actually, a long and windy two-lane road (known as the Pali) separates Lahaina from what we call the “other side” - Wailuku, Kihei, and Up Country. This is what made Lahainaluna so different from any school I was ever used to; the students were all so close. These kids had grown up together since kindergarten and knew everything, good and bad, about each other. Johnny Chankonhamy was the Thai kid whose family owned the only Thai food restaurant in Lahaina, Katie Norman was the overachiever who was adopted at five, and Kanalau Dunn was the crazy Hawaiian boy who surfed 24-7 and lived by Lahaina Pump. So here I was the new girl, with everyone looking to know my story and to see what I was about. My saving grace was something many feel is very unique about Lahainaluna; it is the only public school that exists with a free boarding department. Seeing my opportunity to fit in, I decided to befriend the only other new kids in school, the boarders. The boarders, like me, didn’t have the inside scoop. So I spent my first year hanging out at “boarders tables” listening to dorm stories of which I also could not relate. My only two friends were these girls from Hilo, Sarah and Sheila, who had so many inside jokes and stories it was ridiculous. Home life still wasn’t any better either, with my mom always insisting on taking “family field trips” to see different-parts of the island. Going to beaches where all the local boys surf and I get stuck carrying all the blankets, chairs, and coolers. I really

“Caged” photo by Chandraka Fisher



didn't think my life could get any worse or more humiliating.

I was right, and by my sophomore year things were beginning to look up. I began to “step outside my bubble” and talk more with the kids in my classes; I even started to become friends with some of them. It all began one day in biology when we were partnered up to dissect a frog during lab. Mr. Bartholomew was our teacher, and he was one of those super smart guys from the mainland who had written his own book and thought we should all just “know how easy molecular structures are to understand.” Anyways, I remember during one class Mr. Bart yelling at us to partner up because we were going to be applying what we'd learned. Looking around frantically as everyone grabbed someone I quickly asked the girl who was sitting next to me if she'd mind working together. It was during that class Lia and I bonded and from then on pretty much became inseparable. Who would have thought frogs, something I have a slight phobia of, could bring any two people together? We began to spend our recesses and lunches together getting to know one another. Lia wasn't the “typical” local girl, which is why I think we got along so well. She never ceased to amaze me with her leopard print clothing and flashy colored outfits. She was half-Samoan half-Italian and loved to talk. Lia and I spent countless amounts of evenings throughout the next couple of years plotting and scheming stories to tell our parents so we could go “cruz” down Front Street. And every time it was the same goal, running into the popular boys who always sat on the sea wall. She made everything an adventure, which was great.

By my Junior year I had finally gained almost all of my confidence back and the “new girl” syndrome had pretty much worn itself out, for both sides. And although there were some whom I knew would never fully accept me, I was beginning to feel as if I could call Maui “home”. I began to take an interest in different things; actually swimming in the ocean, learning to dance hula and taking a notice to local boys - especially the hapa ones. It was during this year I became infatuated with Kana'au. Now we never actually said more than one sentence to each other but I was convinced I was absolutely in love. I remember the day it started, it was Valentine's Day and it was one of those rare weather occasions where it was pouring rain in Lahaina. And somehow I must have miscommunicated with my mother because I thought she was going to pick me up from school. So with that in mind I waited in the normal spot, on the bench under the stairs. Well, almost an hour later, I figured she wasn't coming and it was too late to catch the bus, so I began to walk down the hill towards my dad's restaurant. As I was walking, getting soaking wet, I saw a beige van begin to slow down along side of me. I decided to look up and saw it was Kana'au and a bunch of his surfer boys (also known as the “Harbor Rats”). I thought I was going to die of humiliation! As he pulled up right next to me and rolled down the passenger window Kepa sat back and Kana'au asked, “Hey, you like one ride?” I could see all the other boys smirking and side eyeing Kana'au. This was one of those moments in life where if I could crawl into a hole in the ground, I would of. I looked up at him hair pasted to my head and all, and tried to smile, “No thanks, I'm just going a little further.” He looked at me one more time and to this day I still have no clue as to whether he was completely joking or if he was serious. His

beautiful brown eyes fixated on me and only me. “Well shoots then, catcha later.” Then he drove away. I knew I had just made a complete idiot of myself. But what if he was only joking, and the moment I said yes he would have sped away? Then what? Unfortunately, that was my only moment of glory, after that Kana’au and I never spoke more than two words to each other. My chance had passed and there was nothing I could do about it.

By our senior year I was elected senior class secretary and Lia and I had begun hanging out with the popular girls, but still something was missing. I watched as all the girls went through crushes and relationships with the boys in our class. Then there was me, all I could do was be a good listener and advice giver. Sure I had a fling or two but it never amounted to much. The problem for me was most of the local girls were still very protective of “their local boys” and tried to “keep them away from haole girls” like me. So I watched from a distance as Kana’au went out with this cute little Japanese girl Pam, for the whole year. As graduation came around I gave him a lei and said good-bye. I watched as he and his friends gathered and talked about the big party after the ceremony, of course one of which I hadn’t been invited. He looked so happy. All I could think of



“Sunset Palms” by Kaori Kiana

was the next time I would see him would probably be at his wedding.

As I went home that night I reflected on my four years at Lahainaluna and I felt a great sadness come over me. I had learned a lot those four years in high school, especially the fact that nobody can predict or truly brace him or herself against change. Change is just something that is a part of life and we must learn to deal with and accept it. I was actually going to miss walking up all those millions of stairs to get to class, the unreal view of Lahaina, the dances, the excursions to the counselors office in hope of seeing one of our boys, the talent shows, leadership camps, even the intimidating surfer boys who sat in the stair well. High school had ended up not being such a terrible thing after all. And I had even made some friends I knew I would have for life, like Lia.

As the years went by and I went to college at UH Manoa I would come back every summer to work at my dad’s restaurant. I would always pray that I would somehow run into Kana’au. And you would think that being as small as Lahaina is the odds would have been in my favor, but as my luck would have it, it never happened. Sometimes I would see him in passing - driving his blue Ford truck down Front Street, listening to his reggae, shirt off, checking the waves. He would smile and give me the head nod but that was all. I always went back in the fall a little disappointed.

It all changed one New Year’s Eve when I was visiting my grandparents in Anaheim. I was waiting for my mom, on Maui, to call when the phone rang. As I picked up the receiver, expecting it to be my family on Maui, I was thrown off by the sound of a local accent. “Hello, may I please speak to Jenny.” There was a long pause. “Um... this is she.” I was still racking my brain. “Hey, this is Kana’au. I hope you don’t mind but I heard you were in California too so I got the number from your sister and I wanted to know if maybe we could get together?” Now this had to be an episode of the Twilight Zone or something because these kinds of things just don’t happen to people like me. Come to find out he had run into my sister and family in the airport just after they had dropped me off and he asked for the number that I’d be staying at. He too was flying to L.A. to visit one of our classmates, Jay, who had been living there for the past year. It just seemed too good to be true, and it turned out it was. All possible days he was free I wasn’t and the days I was open he was busy. And being he was up in L.A. and I was down in Orange County there was just no way it was going to work out. I couldn’t believe what a disaster this was, how could someone have such ridiculously bad luck? As I rode home on the plane I couldn’t stop thinking about how random it was that he had called and had wanted to get together. And although we didn’t get to hang out I can’t explain how special I felt that he had called.

Back on Oahu a couple months later I got a phone call from my mom asking if I would like to come home to Maui for a wedding that dad was doing the music for. My dad works with a lot of local bands and puts together music events for the community like Taste of Lahaina. So she told me it was for a friend of the family and it was going to be a lot of fun. Seeing as I needed to get away from the stress of school and work, I decided to come home and visit the family. Wearing my new outfit, white Capri pants and a purple tank top, I felt better than ever. My dad had left early that morning to make

sure everything with the stage and sounds was okay and the rest of us were to meet him there later. The wedding and reception both were held right on the beach front of Honokao'o. There was a small platform facing the ocean where the bride and groom were to be married. It was decorated in ti leaves and beautiful flowers like roses, antheriums, and plumerias to add color. It was like a picture straight from a magazine, I was in awe. The whole ambiance of the stage, koa tables, tents covering assembly lines of food, flowers and palms everywhere, and the background sound of the ocean was just unreal. As the ceremony was about to begin I spotted Kana'au standing across the way wearing an orange aloha shirt which matched the rest of the wedding parties attire. I nudged my sister to look, and as I did our eyes met and directly locked gazes from across the tent. I couldn't help it but my eyes wouldn't look away. He looked absolutely wonderful. I could feel my heart pounding and my face blushed at the fact I was blatantly staring, but then again so was he. It was the first time we'd seen each other in about a year. Still staring he began to walk toward my sister and I. I thought for sure that I was going to throw up or faint. But before I could do either, Kana'au was in front of me leaning over to do the Hawaiian tradition of giving a hug and kiss hello. But instead of the kiss on the cheek we both leaned in a little too close and it was more of what I like to call a corner kiss, which is almost on the lips. I can't describe exactly what was exchanged at that moment but it was way more than just a kiss a friend gives to say hello. We both just stared for a moment, he was smiling at me now and I thought I was going to melt. He finally told me it was great to see me and that I looked very beautiful., Completely forgetting everything around me, I said the same. My sister, finding this very amusing, stood there right next to me watching the whole thing and just smiled. Come to find out the "family friend" that was getting married was his mother. How ironic was that? My family and Kana'au's mom had become really close as they had been working on a few community projects together while we had both been away. Fate seemed to be pulling both of us together, it seemed as if this were a second chance. But this time it wasn't too good to be true. All night long we could barely take our eyes off each other. I watched his every move with admiration and adornment. Toward the end of the night Kana'au walked over to where my family was sitting,,his mom close on his arm. He wanted to meet my family and personally introduce me to the beautiful bride, his mom. As our families exchanged hugs, kisses, and words of congratulations his mom leaned over smiling and whispered in my ear, "So you're the beautiful girl my son has fallen in love with, it's very nice to finally meet you." I think it's safe to say the rest is history. We spent the next evening, which was the night before I left, cuddled in the back of his truck gazing at the stars and talking all night long. We both agreed that fate had brought us together time and time again, yet this time we were going to hold on tight and not let go. I truly believe that some things in life happen for a reason and some things are meant to be. That night in the back of Kana'au's blue Ford, under the magnificent Maui stars, I vowed to myself then and there that I was going to put my trust in the Lord above and see what new adventure this path would lead me to. And with that promise I laid my lead on Kana'au's shoulder and fell asleep.

Walls

by Jhoanna Calma

Davs after we decided
it was best to be apart,

after we divided our possessions,
and agreed that you would be the one

to move out, we stood silent
in the bedroom, listening

to the argument next door,
the young woman screaming something

about him not loving her
enough. Their voices resonated

as if there was no wall that separated us
from them, the shrill desperation

of her voice so pierced my chest
that I almost felt as if I were the one

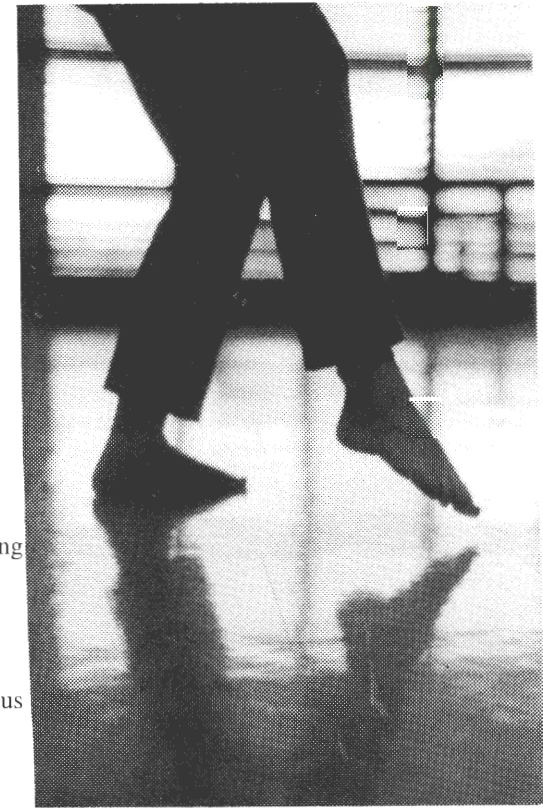
fighting for his love. When the air went
quiet, and it seemed that we were back

to being alone together, on tiptoed to the wall
and pressed your ear against the thin wood.

I scolded you for doing wrong,
but soon I was beside you, listening

to the sounds of their love,
muffled, as if trying to keep from us

the key to making up, as if they knew
just how many keys we had already lost.



"Kiss"

by Chandraka Fisher

TANGIER

By
Roya Maroufkhani Dennis

In the winter
he brought me tangerines.
He left me hungry

until spring. I stole

time, I wrapped it in a clock.

It was too

hard to

resist his, still-lingers-in-the-winter

-touch. I set the clock,

make the bed, eat tangerines,
from the window sill, sitting on time to steal
time. I hunger

for you to call. Hunger

for you to feed me tangerines...I smoke to
steal

time. In the winter,

I wait for spring. I light tangerine

candles, take long baths with bergamot, to the

ticking of the clock.

I wrap the clock

in a blanket. I sleep on your side of our indigo bed. My finger strokes the pillow, hungrily



“The Fallen Web” by Kaori Kiana

inhaling your scent. I remember, last winter you brought me tangerines
from Tangier, Northern Morocco. "The place were tangerines began," you said. Two
birds fly south for the winter.

I watch them through the steel

bars around our bedroom window. I lie in bed as time
steals

away. Three o'clock,
winter
night. I
Hunger
to
taste your
tangerine

oiled mouth. I dream of springtime, the smell of tangerine

blossoms, a memory I stole...
from you. I wait for hours to
see the clock
change one minute. My pain becomes

hunger

in the dead of

winter.

When you return I will lace tangerine blossoms with plumeria. I'll steal behind you
To watch you searching the room for me, checking the clock.
You left in winter, I stayed hungry, eating tangerines until spring.

My Reflection

By

Erica Wong

When I look in the mirror I see nothing but flaws
When I look in the mirror I see everything wrong
When I look in the mirror I see a girl wanting everything perfect
When I see other people I see everything perfect
When I see other people I see not one ounce of flaw
When I see other people I see nothing but beauty
When I look in the mirror I see a girl wanting everything perfect



"Untitled" by Jennifer Pickren

Lessons From My Youth

by Hiroyuki Nonaka

(1) The Sea-Monkeys

I think that only someone who can take responsibility for the life of his or her animal should have pets. Have you ever seen a mail-order catalogue in the back of a child's cartoon magazine with pictures of merchandise that looks like mostly junk and silly, fake stuff? These catalogues were so popular with Japanese boys when I was a fifth-grade student, it was a status symbol for us to have a catalogue like this and show it off to our friends.

One day, I noticed an odd-looking cartoon in one of these catalogues. "What's this?" It was an ad for some kind of creature that you could order through the mail. The heads of these creatures were supposed to look just like monkeys' heads. Their bodies were supposed to look like fish.

Immediately I thought the ad was fake and the catalogue was using it to get the attention of kids and sell their merchandise. I wasn't interested in getting the Sea-Monkeys. But the picture of the Sea-Monkeys started to show up in my dreams. So, believe or not, I sent a registered letter to the company, and I ordered some Sea-Monkeys. And I was even looking forward to getting them.

A week later I got my Sea-Monkey kit. I was so excited. I spent that day and night reading all the instructions and looking at my new kit.

Next day right after school, I went straight home without even saying "good-bye" to my friends, and without telling anyone any details about the Sea-Monkeys. I wanted no one to know anything about this private adventure.

But I had no idea what was about to happen. In the kit there were two middle-sized tubes, two small boxes of bait for the Sea-Monkeys, and another box that looked like an aspirin package: I couldn't imagine what was in it.

I was able to produce the Sea-Monkeys according to the instructions. First I had to put the powder from the package, and add some water into one of the tubes. This was simple, just one step, but the beginning of the process was the most intriguing moment in the whole process. There was just the tube now, whose bottom part was full of a tiny white sediment

in some water.

However, on that second day, nothing happened in the Sea-Monkeys jar.

On the third day, finally, something weird happened. About fifty small, quarter-inch creatures were now swimming all over the tube. What I could see was much grosser than I'd ever thought possible. These creatures were not like Sea-Monkeys at all. All of a sudden, they were no longer the mysterious exotic Sea-Monkeys, but just "things," which to me were big, ugly, and hateful monsters. Therefore, I poured some soapy water into their tube, and flushed them all down the toilet without any sense of guilt.

Sometimes I wonder where they are now.

(2) Lesson on the Roof

I was just a typical kid. However, sometimes I used to be late coming home because I hung around with rascally friends.

One day, as soon as I came home around 7:00 p.m., I noticed that my mother was in a bad mood waiting for me. So I tried my usual procedure, which was to sneak in the house and not upset her in any way. Unfortunately, this time my plan didn't work at all. As soon as she noticed me, she shouted, "Where have you been, and why are you so late? The neighbors and I have been looking around for you all afternoon!" Her thunderous yell roared in the house, and suddenly her right hand unfolded like a big fan and whipped me on the face. It was so painful, but I just couldn't do anything but cry to beg her for forgiveness.

But that night was different and unfortunate. Sometimes after I used to give her a hard time, she would punish me and later forgive me gently. This time, however, she didn't get rid of her anger even after slapping me and causing tears. It was as if she were a doll being worked by a suspicious puppeteer. For the first time in my life, I was told to take off all my clothes, go out the back door, and climb up the stairs to our house's flat roof. At this time, I couldn't understand at all what she meant. Hence, I took off my dirty clothes (which suggested that a fight with bullies had made me go home so late), and thought that now I was going to maybe take a bath. Not true. I was going to climb up the cold cement stairs to the roof of our house, which was flat and made of concrete! And as soon as I went out to the back steps, I suspected something bizarre was going to happen to me. But it was too late to go back, for suddenly she locked the back door behind me.

Now I had no place to hide. Actually, it was possible to go around from the back to the front of the house and open the front door, but I couldn't do this for one big reason: I was naked, and the front door faced the main street with a lot of people. My mother was making me take steps to hell by having me climb up the dark stairs. Up on the flat roof, I could see my mother standing in front of the house and looking up at me. She ordered me to stand still right above the front door of our house, until she would forgive me. I was just a miserable naked boy standing on a flat roof on a quiet and warm Okinawan night. All I could do was to stand still so that passers-by didn't notice me, and I used my hands to cover my private parts. I was scared to death that neighbors or friends might notice me, and spread the story of my dilemma.

A couple of strangers walked by, looked up, saw me, and began to laugh. But at this moment, I was overcome with a funny and strange feeling. I felt a sense of my own superiority as though I were a hero who was doing something that nobody had ever done before; I felt as though I were a naked king, who was looking down on people and the world. Strange to say, after I experienced this feeling, I could afford to enjoy my situation with peace of mind. So the strangers didn't bother me. In fact, it started to be fun to watch various kinds of people on the street. Some looked happy while walking, and others didn't. From the flat roof, I could see that the owner of a noodle shop (who had no idea that a naked boy was watching his every movement) was working so hard to make tasteful noodles. And I also noticed a cheerful-looking father was driving his car in a hurry. He seemed to be looking forward to maybe getting home for his daughter's birthday party. I found that watching things and people in an objective way, like this, could be an interesting experience.

About half an hour later, my mother came out from the house and said, "Have you thought about what you have done?"

"Mom, not yet!" I replied like a saucy kid. She was offering me a chance to be forgiven, and I was declining because I was enjoying this weird situation.

Soon after this, my research on social behavior came to an end unexpectedly. I heard the call of nature. Now that I think of it, maybe I could have pissed over the house or even onto the faces of the laughing passers-by. I couldn't do this, so I disobeyed my mother's order, and climbed down the steps to the back door, then screamed, "Please, for god's sake, let me in to pee!" And then she finally opened the door.

As you can imagine, I stopped staying out so late afterwards.

Years later, looking back on this incident, I think the reason why it is such an interesting memory for me is that you don't usually punish a kid by making him take off his clothes and stand on the roof. In addition, from a different point of view, I learned that I do have

a gift, which lets me enjoy my life even in a bad situation. And I also learned how much my mother loves me and cares about me.

Recently, I asked her if she remembered the incident when she sent me up to the roof. She said, "Yeah, Hiro, I remember that!" Then I asked, "Why did YOU send me there with no clothes on?" And she answered, "Because your clothes were dirty!"

(3) Unfinished Business

Every year in mid August, for many Japanese it is a time to celebrate the Bon Festival. The Bon Festival is the commemoration for our forefathers. We burn incense, make offerings, and chant prayers to commemorate the spirits of our dead ancestors. According to Buddhist doctrine, they come back to this world from the after life at this time every year. And feeling that they are with us, we show our respects. In my case, I pay respects to my late father, who was killed in a car accident when I was two years old. Somehow I believe that his helpful spirit is still with me, because I have had a couple of mysterious and miraculous experiences that are hard to explain. Come to think of it, I still wonder about a particular traffic accident in Okinawa.

I can't recall exactly when it happened during my summer vacation, and can't remember most of the small details. But it did happen on a summer afternoon. I was little, and up to that time had never seen a ghost in my life.

The story begins when I was looking around in both directions to cross the highway in front of my house. Maybe I was on my way to lunch at a noodle shop in front of my house. Suddenly my memory went blank.

When I opened my eyes again, I was lying full length on something like a bed, and it was moving backwards very quickly. The ceiling was passing by my eyes in a blur.

The next image was of three people, my mother, another woman (a shop owner's wife), and myself, and we were heading to a noodle shop. My mother was carrying me on her back; however, I had no idea why she was doing this. I felt so heavy just leaning on her.

We got to the noodle shop. Now I was lying on a tatami mat, waiting for my food, and listening to a story about the accident that my mother and the wife of the shop owner were talking about. According to them, a car had hit me while I was crossing the highway. My mother and the shop owner's wife had watched the accident. Fortunately, a hospital was a block away. So my mother was hysterical to help me, and brought me there. Miraculously, there was nothing wrong with me. At this time in the emergency room, they said that I was conscious and could respond to the questions of the doctor.

According to my mother, I told her that we should go to the noodle shop for lunch as soon as I was released from the emergency room (I was supposed to have had my lunch at the noodle shop).

Now we were back at the noodle shop. The wife of the owner said to me while I was eating, "What a lucky child you are, Hiro! Do you remember your flying about 30 feet from the point of impact? I thought you'd be dead when you hit the ground!"

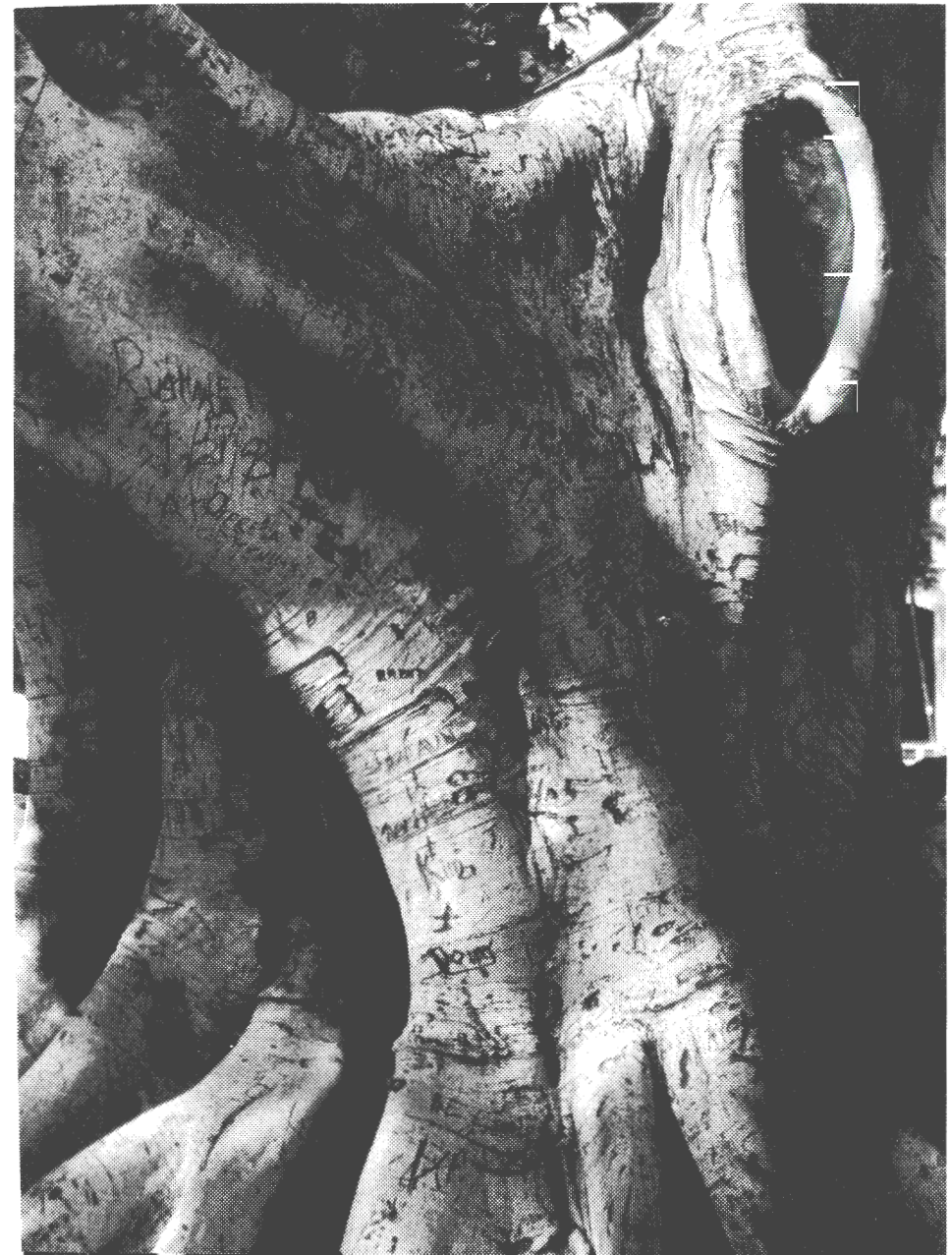
I just smiled at this woman and kept on eating.

Soon after that, my mother said to me, "I saw a black object flying through the air from right to left while I was getting paid by a customer! As soon as I realized that it was you, I ran out of the store without a further thought!" I was wearing my black school uniform that day.

Some people think that a ghost is unfinished business. Whenever I look back on this incident from my childhood, somehow I think of my late father. Might he have been taking care of me in some way? I believe now that his spirit was still with me as my guardian angel, and he had been there to help me when I almost died. Perhaps he saved my life and wanted me to live longer for some reason or purpose. Therefore, perhaps I had better do well in life not only for me, but also for him.

I wish I had been able to see or hear him while I was unconscious at the hospital, because it is possible he could have been there, too.

In the long run, these three incidents are, for me, not only funny stories but also important lessons that have taught me a lot of things and have built my personality. "The SeaMonkeys" taught me that only someone who can take responsibility for the life of his or her animal should have pets. So I never have had any pet since the incident happened. "The Lesson on the Roof" taught me that watching things and people in an objective way can be an interesting experience even in a crucial situation. So in applying that lesson I wasn't so distracted when someone stole my car while I was surfing. "Unfinished Business" taught me that I had better do well in life not only for me, but also for my late father. So I decided to go back to school and be able to support my parents someday.



"Poe-tree" by Kaori Kiana

Sowing a New Seed

by Kim Hashimoto

Razors pain you
and make you bleed
Your love, a razor
My heart, a seed

Small, thin cuts
you make with precision
Each mark made
a detailed incision

Now that seed is damaged
And who would've known
the potential that existed
when that seed was sown

No hopes for a tree
by the rains to be showered
No use to even wish
for a thing already soured

Now I shall replant a seed
with great strength and power
So one day it can blossom
into a big, beautiful flower

"Water Lily" by Alan Odo



The Forest

By Kim Hashimoto

I am finally free and on my way
To go to a land so far away

Where I am anything I wish to be
I go to those places I wish to see

Where every step, a new adventure unlocked
My footsteps imprinted upon the ground I walked

where the birds, the trees, the shadows are friends
And every new journey, a road that never ends

Where the blue jay rests his beautiful wings
And the hidden cricket softly sings

Where the redwoods stand majestic with pride
They give me security, places to hide

Where time is forgotten as the sun goes down
And shadows stretch themselves on the soft, dirt ground

A growl in my belly suddenly halts my play
Across the street my dinner awaits
But I will return yet another day
I will return yet another day.....

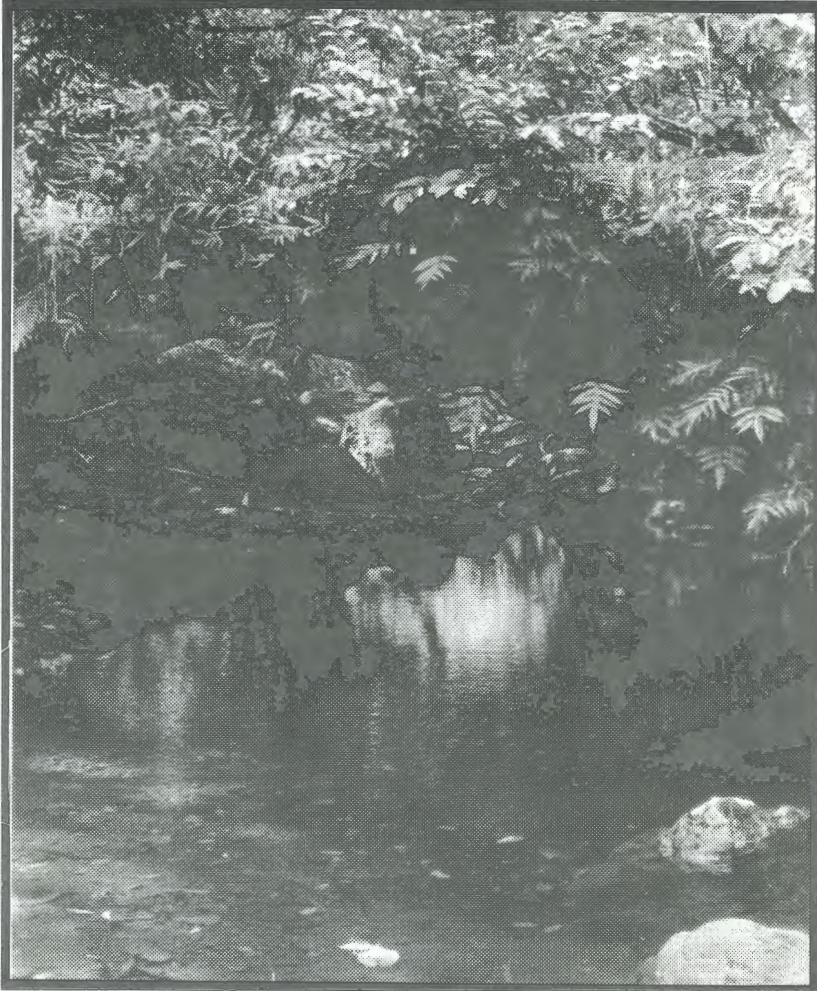
FEDERICA

by Kim Beccaria

Once upon a time there lived a couple on a small farmland. Julian, the farmer, was a very content man, and he and his wife, Francine, were very much in love. They had been happily married for 3 years now and were thinking of starting a family. They had saved enough money to have bought the land that their modest farm was built on. They also had a few acres of land nearby the forest where the animals could roam freely amongst the field of grass and flowers. Francine loved the serenity of this farm, but sometimes missed the sound of water, taking her back to her adolescence. She had requested that a pond be built behind the farm and thus Julian did so for his loving wife.

After a year of trying to conceive, Francine became rather solemn and no longer had the cheerful face that she used to have when they were first married. This began to take a toll on their marriage and Francine often hid herself by the pond's bushes to get away from the sight of their house. She felt the burning sensation in her heart each moment that she thought of children. Everyday she would ask herself: "Why me? What did I do so wrong to have such a miserable life?" Francine and Julian had slowly separated in feelings for each other and didn't speak in those loving tones of voices that they used to.

One morning after Julian had gone off to tend to the sheep and cows, Francine hid behind the pond's bushes and began to weep. Her laments were heard deep below the ponds waters. Suddenly, a fish appeared and startled Francine. He began to talk and told her: "Francine dear, I have heard you for a year now, weeping your sorrowful tears into these pond waters. I can't understand what makes you so sad? Weren't you the same person that would come and feed us everyday with your sweet voice full of gaeity and laughter? What has come over you?" Francine, startled at first, began to tell the fish the story of her unhappy marriage, due to the fact that she wasn't able to conceive. She told the fish that her marriage was dissolving and that Julian didn't love her the same way he used to when she would sing to the pond's fish. "I will tell you something, but remember to not say a word to anyone. You must cook me on a night



of the full moon and then you must make sure that both you and Julian eat my flesh. The only thing is that you must bring back my cooked eyes and bury them here near the pond. Make sure that nobody eats them, for if I can't see, I can't grant you your wish and I won't be able to maintain your happiness that night, after doing so, you must make love to Julian and pray to the moon for a child. You will see then, after having followed these steps, that a child will be blessed between the two of you. You may only have one child. Don't ever be greedy because otherwise I will take it all

away from you.” And with this, the fish swam deep down below. Francine couldn't believe her ears, but kept it all a secret.

On the night that the full moon was to appear, Francine went to the pond and called upon the fish. It swam right into her net and shook frantically around. She ran quickly inside and dumped the fish into the pot of soup. The fish cooked right away and did not feel much pain. That night she did as the fish had told her and after having made love to Julian she felt a sudden tremble in her stomach. She cried quietly by herself, for she knew what was about to happen.

Nine months later, a little healthy baby girl named Federica was born. She grew up to be the center of her parents' lives. She grew up strong, smart, and beautiful. She loved the water and loved her farm. She spent a lot of her time with her father and her mother, but was growing so quickly that Julian was putting pressure on Francine to have another child. Of course, she remembered that she couldn't. The fish had told her only one. It was very upsetting for both Julian and Francine to be in the same position as before. More and more the pressure was on her. Her husband was often violent around Federica, which made Francine grow worrisome. One evening, when all of them were sleeping, Francine went to the pond. She remembered where she dug the eyes and decided that maybe she could make soup of what was left. The eyes were in the same box that she had buried years ago.

The following night, without a word to anyone, Francine made fish soup, making sure that she and Julian were to both eat an eye. That same evening, the two of them had sore stomachs and were vomiting so much that they didn't get a wink of sleep. The next morning, when Francine went to wake up Federica, she saw that her blankets were moving violently. She uncovered the blankets to find the fish. He looked at her and told her that she had been warned not to eat the eyes and that the spell had undone itself. She and Julian were to be turned into algae, green with greed. Unfortunately, that's the lesson she had to pay for being too greedy and overlooking what a precious gift the fish had given them, sacrificing his life for their happiness. Soon, after he had spoken, he found himself in the pond, surrounded by leafy and silent algae which he ingested slowly.

Excerpt from “The 8 Scrolls of Orochi”
by Brent Fujioka

Chapter One: Release! The Eight Heads of Orochi are Freed!

Sho was a young boy who had lived in the Shimane Prefecture all 15 years of his seemingly adult life. For as long as he knew, his family had always had high standing throughout the village, and that allowed him to lead a fairly good life and experience a perfectly normal upbringing. His mother had died when he was very young, and the only other family member that Sho had was his father Kitsue. Although he was a moral person at heart, Sho had always felt as though his life had lacked meaning. Everyday, it was the same thing over and over again. Wake up, eat, tend to the fields, eat, go back to the fields, eat again, and sleep. Ibis is how it went for almost everyday of his life. Sho always wanted something more out of life. Keeping that in mind, it was only natural that a favorite hobby Sho had was exploration. During his days away from the fields, Sho could be often found exploring the mountainous terrain above Shimane. The mountains were filled with rich history and were stocked full of random trinkets and knickknacks that were left in them over the years. Sho would scavenge these items that he found during his ‘journeys into the hidden caves of the mountains, and sell them to local pawnshops for a decent rate. Even though it was rather dangerous for a teenage boy to travel into the mountains alone, the thrill of the adventure was enough to make Sho press onward every time.

One day while wandering the mountains, Sho came across a site that he had never seen before. From the outside it appeared to be just a normal cave except for a large stone next to the entrance that was covered in Buddhist scriptures. He thought that it was very odd that after his many years of exploring caves, that there would be one in plain sight that he had never seen before. As soon as he set foot in the cave, Sho immediately noticed the thousands of Buddhist scriptures that were hanging down in front of him. There were lines and lines of scriptures that were hung across the width of the cave. The lines had been nailed into each side of the wall

to prevent them from falling down. Each scripture was written on a sheet of paper that measured roughly 3 x 6 inches. The paper had been discolored due to the fact that they had probably been hanging there for some time. The scriptures warned that the cave was cursed and that all should avoid its contents at all costs. With every gust that blew ‘into the cave the scriptures flew eerily like souls drifting towards hell. Although this unnerved him, Sho continued onward.

As he walked forward, Sho noticed that there seemed to be a strange aura emitting from the back of the cave. His heart started to pound as he walked deeper and deeper. From the outside, it looked as though the cave would be rather shallow. However, as he walked into the cave, Sho realized that the cave went far deeper into the mountains than he had first estimated. By now, it was extremely dark and humid. He was forced to light his little lamp that he kept in his pack and once again continued forward. After walking for about ten minutes, Sho reached what appeared to be the end of the cave. In front of him was a tight passage that led into darkness. He thought it strange that a cave this deep in the mountains would have a bottleneck passage.

It almost seems like no one was ever meant to come here, Sho thought to himself. After a few moments, he shrugged off his feelings of fear and continued onward.

As he struggled through the passage, Sho found himself standing in a large square room. This room obviously had some sort of purpose seeing that there were three candleholders mounted on the walls, one on each side. Sho looked around the room, and to his despair the room did not have boxes of gold or piles of jewels, but instead only a single item: a small gray box. Sho knelt down next to the box and examined it. He set his lamp down and attempted to open the box. It was very heavy and it took Sho all of his strength to remove its lid. Sho looked closely at his new find. He blew into the box and a huge cloud of dust exploded in the room. As the dust cleared, Sho rubbed his eyes and moved his head closer to the box.

In the box, Sho found eight scrolls that had been sealed with hot wax. Each seal appeared to carry the symbol for “God” which was written in kanji. Each of the rolled pieces of paper were yellow and tattered from

all the years that they had been in the cave.

“This is what I came here for? I risked my life for a bunch of worthless drawings,” he said aloud. “Wait a minute...” he stopped. “These could be priceless artifacts, the will of some great emperor maybe. This discovery will make me rich!” he shouted. “Yes, that’s it! Why else would anyone hide a bunch of tattered old rags in such a place!”

Sho grabbed one of the scrolls and carefully broke the seal. As he unrolled the scroll, a beautiful drawing began to unfold before his eyes. It was a magnificent drawing of a dragon’s head done in charcoal. Sho looked at the picture a little puzzled. Sho looked at the very top of the scroll where he had first began to unfold the drawing and noticed a tiny word written in kanji. “Seishin” it read. Suddenly the scroll that he held in his hands began to glow.

“What the hell?” Sho screamed as he threw down the scroll and backed away. On the ground, the scroll quickly unfolded as it remained lit, glowing in the dark cave. By this time the glow emitting from the scroll was far brighter than the light that the candles were making. Sho looked at the drawing on the scroll and as he did, the drawing began to move. Slowly, from the head to the tail, the drawing of the dragon moved around on the scroll. It made a terrible noise that echoed throughout the cave. Out of nowhere a bright flash filled the cave. Sho knelt down and rubbed his eyes as the sound continued. His vision began to return and the room began to have a terrible smell. He looked at the scroll. He could distinctly see a large green nose come out of the scroll. The nose was followed by teeth and then by yellow eyes that seemed to glow in the dark. Sho’s eyes opened widely as he finally realized that the dragon in the picture was coming to life. After only a few minutes the entire dragon had come out of the scroll. The dragon quickly broke through the narrow walls of the cave and flew onward to the outside world. The walls of the cave rumbled fiercely from the force. Little rocks fell from the ceiling as the shaking of the ground began to subside. Sho stood in shock. He had never expected anything near this caliber to happen. The scroll from which the dragon emerged, lay on the ground next to the lead casing. Sho looked over at the other scrolls and noticed that they were glowing as well. His eyes grew wide and his heart started to pound like

never before as the wax seals snapped on each of the remaining seven scrolls. The scrolls suddenly began floating in the air. They all started to simultaneously unroll, and as they did, seven different colored dragons emerged from within. Sho could distinctly see each of their different colors. One by one the dragons emerged from the scrolls and flew toward the entrance of the cave. Sho stood in shock. With labored breathing, Sho fainted.



“Seduction” by Alan Odo

Chapter Two: A New Beginmig! 'Me Slayer Sho Ara'ke

The dragon was coming after him. He had nowhere to run, and nowhere to hide. He ran as fast as he could for what seemed like miles. He looked back to see where the dragon was, however, it was nowhere to be seen. Puzzled, he turned and looked forward. As he turned, he saw the moist green nostrils of the dragon staring straight in front of him. The dragon's powerful paws pounced at him and suddenly there was only darkness.

Suddenly, Sho opened his eyes and realized that he was still in the cave. Quickly, he looked around the cave in a cold sweat. Left to right, he scanned the cave looking for a trace of the Orochl. Nothing was there.

Thank God, Sho said to himself as he let out a giant sigh of relief. It was just a dream, he thought to himself as his lamp burned illuminating the darkness. With a slight chuckle, Sho began to look around the room again. However this time out of the corner of his eye, he noticed something that he had not seen in his first appraisal of the room. In the corner of the room were small broken gray blocks. They seemed to be stones that had been cracked. Sho slowly got up and walked towards them. As he got closer, he noticed that these blocks composed the lead casing which he found the scrolls. He bent down to get a closer look, and he noticed that there was something under the shattered casing. He moved a few blocks and suddenly stopped in fear. For under the blocks of the lead casing were 8 wrinkled pieces of paper. Sho stood over the scrolls in complete silence. He could not believe what he was seeing. Did eight mystical dragons really emerge from these pieces of paper? Without thinking any further, Sho grabbed the scrolls and threw them into his pack. He slung his bag over his arm, grabbed his lantern and rushed towards the entrance of the cave as quickly as he could. Sho dashed through the dark passages of the cave bumping into every wall along the way. Breathing heavily, he finally reached the entrance of the cave.

However, there was a problem. All of the lines of Buddhist scriptures that once hung above the cave were now ablaze in an endless scorching inferno. There was no other way out. This was the one entrance 'into

the cave. The heat would be unbearable if he tried to cross, and even if he tried to crawl under the fire, the sporadic burning would surely cause his clothes to catch ablaze.

Those damn dragons, Sho thought to himself. They must have did this. Now there's no way out. I have no water and even if I did, I wouldn't be carrying enough to put out this fire. Damn! Its all over for me. Suddenly, there was a mighty flash across the fire as the previously enflamed scriptures fell to the ground in a dismal pyre.

The flames have gone out by themselves, Sho thought. This is my chance. I can finally leave this awful nightmare and go home! Sho climbed out of the cave and into the bright afternoon sun.

Sho walked out of the cave only to find a rather gruff looking man standing next to the entrance. The man was middle aged and had a rather husky build. He wore heavy stock armor just like a samurai. By his side, he carried a sword that was thrust into an antique leather sheath.

"You stupid boy." The swordsman said in a low brutish accent. "Do you know how lucky you were that I was here to save you?"

"You saved me?" Sho inquired.

"Of course I did. Flames don't just put out themselves! Do you have any idea what you just did?"

"Yeah, I wen in this cave and passed out." Sho replied.

"You moron, you just freed Yamata no Orochi from a three thousand year sleep, the most fearsome beast in the history of Shimane.

"You mean the eight headed dragon from the legend of Susano?"

"That's night! This cave was its prison. Many years ago, the people of Shimane sealed the Orochi in this cave. By a twist of fate this cave only appears on one day each year. Today is the anniversary of the annual awakening of the Orochi." Said the swordsman.

No wonder I had never seen this place before, Sho thought to himself as he bowed his head and began to mull over his actions.

"Sho Arake!" said the swordsman. "You and you alone have freed the spirits of the 8 heads of Yamata no Orochi. Now, it is your duty to recapture them. I bestow on you the title of slayer and command you to hunt and destroy the spirits of Orochi from this day forward!"

"Wait a minute, how do you know my name? Who are you?" Sho

asked.

“That is of no importance at the moment. If I were you right now, I’d be a lot more concerned with my own welfare.” The swordsman replied.

The swordsman walked over to Sho and grabbed his backpack. He opened it and pulled out one of the scrolls.

“Observe,” He said. “each of the scrolls on which the dragon heads were once drawn, is now blank. These scrolls serve as capture devices. Prisons, if you will. Orochi cannot be killed, merely weakened, and then imprisoned. You released the dragons from the scrolls. Now you must capture them. Your mission whether you like it or not, is to slay the heads of Orochi. Each of the heads has grown into a full-size dragon during its 3000-year imprisonment. Once each individual dragon is defeated, then and only then, will the head of Orochi return to its prison within the scroll.”

“Why do I have to do this? I’m just a kid! I’ve never killed anything in my life! I wouldn’t be able to kill a chicken, much less a dragon!” Sho proclaimed.

“You have no choice.” The swordsman said. Sho Ara’ke, you are much like your ancestor, he was reluctant at first as well. Perhaps you require incentive. Here!” the swordsman said as he tossed his sheath and sword on the ground. This sword has mystical powers. It will enable you to recapture the Orochi. After your Job is finished, you may do what you wish of it. I believe you can get a fairly decent price for it.”

Sho looked at the swordsman in confusion. The swordsman quietly turned around and began to walk away. Suddenly, the swordsman stopped dead in his tracks. “Ah,” he noted, “I almost forgot. There is one small catch.”

“Catch?” Sho inquired.

“Yes, each of the Orochi that you will be hunting are elemental. In other words, this means that they will each be able to manipulate and blend into their specialized environment. They will not hide in caves like other fire lizards. Well, some may, but its not likely.” Sho began to shiver. “There is one Orochi for each of the elements of the natural world. Fire, Water,

Wind, Earth, Lightning, Dark, Light, and Time. Each of the scrolls have been marked on the bottom in the corresponding Kanji. Let’s just hope that you haven’t fallen so far behind in your studies that you can’t read the labels.” The swordsman stated.

He then threw Sho another pouch. “Seeing as how you are unprepared for the journey that you are about to make, I feel it necessary to give you another small gift. In that bag are magic seals. After each Orochi returns to its scroll, place one of these wax seals on it. These seals require no heat to work. They will seal as soon as they touch the enchanted paper. just a word to the wise, if you do not seal the scroll quickly enough, it may be possible for the Orochi to escape, so always try to seal the scroll as soon as you capture an Orochi with it.” With those words, he continued to walk away.

“Wait! How do I find them? What happens when I do?” Sho yelled.

“You need not find them.” The swordsman said in a soft voice. ““They will find you. Your blood calls them ... the blood of Susano no Mikoto.” The swordsman turned his head and looked Sho ‘in the eye. “By the way, ... my name is Hanzo, and I will be watching YOU.” Sho watched as the swordsman Hanzo walked off towards the horizon disappearing under the line of the sun.

Sharing Des(s)erts

by **Roya Maroufkhani Dennis**

May 19, 2001
Israeli warplanes
Attacked the West Bank
And the Gaza Strip
for the
First time
Since
1967

A Palestinian man
Walked into a
Bustling
Israeli-
Mall and
Blew
Himself and five
Five
others
Up into
The Kingdom of
God
100 were wounded

I sit outside
Starbucks
The one on
This corner
Not that
Corner
With the view of
The Ko'olau Mountains
Laced with highways
I sit outside
I cry

Sunglasses fogging up
A man in blue sits
Across the way
He is talking to
Himself
His mustache moves
Up and down as
He speaks
His words are
Sound-waves
Bouncing off
My body
Shaking with
Fear

Brothers and sisters
Why
Do you
Kill
Each other?
You should be
Sharing
Des(s)erts
Made from figs
And dates
Honey and flat sweet
Breads crisped with walnuts
In your old brick ovens
Made by people
That love
Their children

As the sunsets
I sit with five women
I love and
my words
spill into the world

The Gaza Strip
The West Bank
An Israeli-Mall
Were bombed today
Lightning-bolt-
flash



"The Great Leveler" by Alan Odo

My friend speaks
She has anger in her
Eyes
They look
At me
"in defense of
my
people
how long
can
a people
put up with
oppression
displacement
genocide"

Her words drop onto
the floor
roll
out onto the smooth black pavement
just missing a passing car
I soothe my anger
in my
Cigarette-flicking-fingers
Smoke
Swirls in the
Space
Between us
I think to myself
They
They
Are
ALL
My people
My family

We are five women
A Jewish-Buddhist
A Finnish-Spiritualist

A Muslim-Spiritualist
A Kanaka Maoli-Buddhist
A Kanaka Maoli-Chanter
The youngest woman
Of the five
Assembled
Says
Violence is not
 The way to peace
Revenge
 Is not a solution

I think
What is the solution?
When two women
 After dinner
 Sweets
 Coffee
 and smoke
Cannot see
They are all our people
United in my tears
Ting
 ting
 On the green metal table
Starbucks
 On every corner

This corner
Kamehameha Highway

An Untitled Short Story

by Morgan Goshi

Mr. Albert Fish was walking along a dirt road, contemplating what life was and, when he figured out what it was, why it was happening to him. He had been struck with a fierce curiosity to know what things meant, what life meant, what everything meant. He pondered long and hard about morality. He spent days on end, without sleep or food, thinking about all the moralities humanity had laid forth as examples. He wondered why there was a conformity to regulations and laws. He reckoned it was so that a way of life could be preserved and adhered to. But, he reasoned, could this way of life be advantageous or as beautiful as everyone deemed it to be if questions of its very structure were able to come about on the whim of curiosity? Mr. Fish reasoned that humans, by nature were imperfect creatures, and everything uttered forth from their mouths had the quality of being false, or the underlying nature of being false. Nothing perfect can come about from something imperfect. Therefore, the laws for humans made by humans were subject to scrutiny. There were certain laws by which we should nevertheless endeavor to adhere to. Mr. Fish knew what laws these were, laws that were as lawfully based as it was in the morality of the hearts of men. Murder, for example, is the ultimate sin. Killing. Putting to death some poor bastard. This seemed to be a most repugnant act. But why? Why should this, reasoned Mr. Fish, be such a reprehensible act when adultery and false worship are frowned upon in the same respects by God. For are there not congregations who bow down to some non-existent deity? Or those who marry and promise to stay faithful, but, when given the opportunity, fall prey to temptation and indulge in the fruits of the flesh? There are degrees to which sin is held up. And if certain sins are held up on a plateau, a plateau which bears the weight of other sins that are of the same magnitude, deterring away from good to commit certain sins from that very group on the plateau, but not others, when those very sins are as evil and wrong as the

one an individual choses to do, well, this seems a bit contradictory and hypocritical to Mr. Fish. He has every reason to be in doubt of what can be called wrong and right. And that is another thing. Mr. Fish reckoned that there is nothing that can be called right or wrong with absolute conviction. For what is bad or wrong to one may be right and good to another. If a certain individual finds pleasure in eating his own feces and singing racist songs from dusk till dawn, good for him. Calling a certain thing good or bad can never be a definite claim. What's good is relative, what's bad is relative--both are terms that represent human intuition. Humans assume that this may be bad and that this may be good. But since human intuition is imperfect due to the very fact that humans by nature are imperfect, then, what can be called good or bad is also in question. It depends merely on human reactions. While pondering all these things, Mr. Fish came to a conclusion. He decided that nothing was good or bad. That anything could be done, and there is no morality attached to whatever action an individual sets out to commit. There is no morality attached to an action until humans prescribe a morality to it. Therefore, he reckoned, morality is decided by humans ... for God can not be a judge on what can be called morality--he's invisible and silent to all questions. So, Mr. Fish reckoned that since morality is attached to actions that can only be observed, judged, and known about, what if an action weren't known and therefore could not be judged or observed? He felt no morality could come about and the only person who would know is himself. He also brought into question his conscience. However, he reasoned, his conscience would be free of guilt, for guilt comes about only when one is in fear of what others think and since there would be nobody to know what he was planning to do, there would be nobody to judge or think of him in a contemptuous manner.

He came to the conclusion. He would commit an atrocious deed, a deed that would, in actuality not be atrocious, for, remember now, he reasoned that humans decide what is atrocious and what is not and since human reasoning, his included, is subject to fault, nothing can ever be said to be this or that with definite clarity. However, this brought into question another perplexing thought. If,

Mr. Fish reasoned, his intuition was open to doubt and he was far from being infallible, how, then, could his conscience say whether or not what he had in mind to do was in fact, either good or bad? Atrocious or not atrocious? To put an end to the matter, he thought over everything that he had gone over before. He knew that human intuition was wrong due to their imperfections. He knew that human judgment was susceptible to fault. And, therefore, it would be preposterous if one went around worrying whether or not one was doing either good or bad due to the fact that there could never be a definite answer to this question. And because God was, as he said earlier, silent to questions, it was only in the best interest of humans to decide what one should and should not do. And Mr. Fish did not trust human instincts and so felt, finally, at ease with what his brilliant little mind had concocted.

Mr. Fish thought long and hard. He walked to a cafe downtown, bought a coffee and a newspaper. He took a seat at the back at the cafe and observed the occupants. He smiled a malevolent grin, knowledgeable of the fact that he could do anything he pleased to any one of these people and be at complete ease with it, though, he knew, others would not ... that is, if they knew. And who was to know?

He spotted a beautiful redhead girl. About thirty, green eyes, creamy complexion. He laughed silently to himself. A rush of ideas came to him, ideas of what he could do to her if he damn well pleased. He laughed at the thought and sipped his coffee.

He looked outside of the cafe and saw some rowdy kids. He remembered certain incidents when such kids would throw their rice cakes at him and come up with some inventive, yet insulting, epithets to mock and irk him. With such memories bursting forth in his head, he nearly had a hemorrhage just thinking about it. Now that he was free from guilt, now that his conscience could be guilt-free, and now that he could do anything he wanted without the slightest worry of consequence, he felt pleasure at the fact that those little children would pay the price of revenge ... one day. Not now, though. He was on the look-out for something and he did not know what. He wanted to find a person who walked with an air of righteousness. Yes, he wanted to find a ostentatious bastard. The type of individual who is

only content when he or she walks into a room and everybody's eyes are fixed upon them and only them. Mr. Fish knew what he wanted. There were a whole assortment of people who would soon pay, but he was after a specific individual now. And his keen eyes of perception were on the look-out.

Scanning the cafe, he saw a teen-age boy, nervous and fidgety, trying to study for a Physics test. Rather than think of all the malicious things he could do to this boy, his heart went out to him. You see, he had been such a boy at one time or another. When he was younger, he was a good student, always studying, trying to get good grades if only because he wanted to please his mother and father. Nothing was ever good enough for them--they never wanted him. He too recognized the nervousness and shyness of the boy. He had been exactly those things--shy and nervous. Mr. Fish cringed with embarrassment at the memories of his youth, the time when he was an object of ridicule for all those who were willing to subject him to numerous disgraces. A small tear trickled down his cheek and he wiped it away.

The boy who was studying for his Physics test looked up at Mr. Fish and, demurely, smiled. Mr. Fish returned the smile and waved. The boy coyly returned his gaze to his book, his lips trembling. Mr. Fish could only hope that one day that boy would come to the same realization he had come to.

Just then, a few tables away, Mr. Fish spotted the victim. It was a woman. A beautiful, thin woman. He had actually noticed her when he entered the cafe, but he dared not contemplate to even touch such a creature for, let's face it, such angels who walk amongst us have this invisible "offlimits" sign attached to their being. However, the time he had spent scanning the cafe looking for the right victim, was a sufficient amount of time for him to decide that nothing was off-limits and everything was prohibited. He laughed, inwardly, with the knowledge that he was, in a way, a God. A twisted God? By no means. It's just that he knew what others did not. He felt an inward happiness at the fact that the world he had once pictured to be a bleak landscape, a murky, gloomy, depressing landscape for human filth and degeneracy, had now been turned into a luminous Heaven with opportunites around every corner, with no con-

sequences, that is, if one took the time to carefully plan his/her intentions, intentions, when executed, that could be done with stealth and a guilt-free conscience ... if you had what it took, if you were open to the doors of possibilities.

The beautiful, thin woman wore a tight black sweater and a lovely pair of blue denim jeans. She was not wearing a one thousand dollar dress that can be purchased from those stores that are set up solely for the business of the wealthy. However, Mr. Fish saw something in her that made him sick. Was it vanity? Maybe. Most definitely. What else? He knew what it was. It was her effortlessness to attract attention to herself. There were some people who worked up a firestorm to attract attention, and their methods were either subtle or dead obvious. And then there were some who did nothing and yet received the same air of attention, if not more so, as those who worked for it. He detested that quality of people. Was it their fault? He doubted it. It was a gift of nature, a gift such an individual as this woman, knew they possessed and, therefore, used to their advantage. He hated that. He was never blessed with good looks, not even modest looks. Maybe that was why his parents detested him so.

He decided to watch the woman, to observe her every move and see if there could be seen some sign of attention-getting, some sign that told him that this woman was using every asset at her disposal to make men drop to their knees and demand that they kiss her shoes if she were only kind enough to slap them to touch them.

She was reading magazines. Ha! The vanity in such a woman! She was reading those detestable magazines, you know the ones! The ones with beautiful women gracing the covers, their bodies looking impossibly gorgeous, their figures as thin and desirable as food is to a starving man. What occupation, if not modeling, could be more vain, thought Mr. Fish. As he sat in silent contemplation, an unstoppable progression of rage arising within him, the woman, to Mr. Fish's astonishment, looked up from her magazine to lock eyes with Mr. Fish. Mr. Fish, stunned beyond words, lost track of his thoughts and became a frozen, stricken man-but struck with what? Not love? He hated her. Envy? Yes, envy. But he was feeling this even before she dared look in his

"Hanging Octopi" by Alan Odo



direction. As a matter of fact, it was exactly that-envy--that made him hate her with a passion. So, what, then, was it he was feeling? He knew. It was embarrassment. He felt that in this look, she could somehow read into the *thoughts* of his mind, she could somehow decipher what his stare meant and look into his brain and see the deceitful thoughts that lurked in wait for his intention of making them a reality.

The woman and Mr. Fish stared at each other long and hard. He felt that he might die. This woman's eyes cut through him like a razor through a tomato. He actually felt shame at the fact that this woman, who was suppose to be his chosen victim, should now take on the dominant role and make him exactly what she makes other men: slaves. He felt the anger returning, he would not let her win this game. He waited for what seemed like eternity for her to divert her eyes first, but she refused to budge like Stonewall Jackson. Mr. Fish decided to stare at her as long as it would

take for her to realize that he was a new man today, a man who awoke to a beautiful new world. Something told him that even if she knew he were a man who could now go forth in committing any criminal deed without a moment's hesitation, that even this would have no effect on her. Her role as a beautiful woman who garners reactions without demanding them had instilled in her a fixed state of vanity of such metallic strength, nothing could harm her ego, threaten her lofty disposition, or make her tremble even in the face of death.

As the two individuals, individuals who existed on opposite ends of the spectrum, stared at each other, the woman, sensing there was something more to this stare opposed to the common, envious stares she's used to receiving on a daily basis, would not fall victim to defeat: if this man wants to look at me and wishes me to divert my eyes first, let him stare at a commoner, a dimwitted girl straight off the cotton-picking plantation.

Mr. Fish, noticing the whore's impenetrable disposition, slowly by slowly, felt the rage coming back in calm, subtle intervals. His demeanor was one of icy cold stillness. You would've sworn that he was a mannequin. Mr. Fish had never in his life had the courage to look a female in her eyes for more than a couple of seconds. Even his mother he shied away from. Nevertheless, he found himself in the ultimate staring contest in which the goal was not to make the other laugh first, but to see who would give in first to the intimidation that both contestants were obviously firing at one another. Feeling confident about the eventual outcome, Mr. Fish slowly and menacingly, curled the one hand he leisurely rested on the table into that of a tight, thought-provoking fist. His inner voice cried out in exaltation when he saw that his hand-to-fist performance had the desirable effect: the woman, for a split second, diverted her eyes from Mr. Fish's eyes to look at the fist wherein she swallowed and, passively, returned her gaze to Mr. Fish's eyes. However, there was nothing that her eyes could do to him now, thought Mr. Fish. The situation had taken a turn for the better. He had won a small victory. It was almost as if both individuals were involved in a fight. Both were throwing fists, but neither fighter was hitting their desirable mark. The fight was in progress and Mr.

Fish had struck the first and, so far, only blow. His confidence was ten fold. As he celebrated his little victory, basking in the glory of his own achievement, he noticed that the woman's countenance seemed to him disgusting now. As though she were no longer the envious, desirable woman who he saw a moment ago, but rather a detestable harlot who was in need of being told where her place was: the bordello.

The woman, her spirit broken at having fallen first, felt like a raped woman who, after suffering such a horrifying brutality, was now looking up at her momentary master, the rapist. She decided that this silly occurrence had better come to an end sooner or later, and better sooner than later for she knew not who this strange man was, nor, for that matter, what he was after or all about. Rather than be humble about the whole ordeal and admit that she was defeated, she told herself that the situation tired her and she was merely giving in due to the fact that she was better than the whole thing at hand. Convinced that she neither lost nor won, the woman diverted her eyes quickly and with stealth. She had, in her opinion, kept her pride.

Mr. Fish, seeing that the woman had turned away first, was so ecstatic at the outcome that he could not help but let a silent giggle come up through his throat and out pass his moist lips. Feeling content, he unraveled his fist, grabbed his cup of coffee, brought the cup up to his mouth, and was about to take a hearty, feel-good sip when, due to the fact that he was engrossed in supreme happiness, the cup all but missed his lips by a good inch and, instead of the hot, brown liquid being welcomed into his mouth for the purpose of consumption, it spilled out onto his shirt, tie, and groin region. The steaming beverage immediately took its toll and Mr. Fish leapt out of his seat, rubbing his mid-section with violent strokes as though he had awoken to discover a centipede on his penis.

The cafe went into complete silence, every eye riveted on the madman who took pleasure in assaulting his scrotal region. When the pain had passed and his sensory-perception had returned to its calm state, Mr. Fish, acknowledging where he was and what a fool he had made of himself, froze in utter embarrassment. Those times from his childhood came back to him. When the little children would tease him about

how fat he was. Or about the queer haircut he wore or the stupid clothes he was attired in day after day. He thought those days, those days of immaturity and name-calling and teasing, were supposed to be the only times in one's life when one's feelings were to be hurt. He had always reasoned that hurt and pain were a part of growing up and that the more older you got, the more an individual earned respect and, therefore, was out of harm's way when it came to teasing or name-calling. However, the present situation had proven his philosophy wrong. All these memories flooded his head and he wondered quickly what to say and do in order to earn back his dignity and right to be treated as an adult.

"Are you all right, dear man?" asked a chubby man with blotched marks on his skin.

"Yeah," said Mr. Fish. "I am."

The crowd turned their backs on the ridiculous man and dove back into their conversations, delicious pastries, and coffees as if nothing had even transpired.

Mr. Fish felt defeated. He sat back down in his seat. A moment ago, he had been in Heaven, he had seen it. The angels had welcomed him in with embracing arms, all smiles and rhetorical talk of love and do-goodness. He had even been so vain as to assume he would see God in all his glory. And now? Now, he was a grounded man, a silly man who forgot how to control his impulses. He was one to accept good fortune, but not one to use it to his advantage. His inner voice told him of what he should have done, of what he could have done, and of what he did do, the silly boy. He should have taken the victory he had won with the woman, put it into his pocket, got up from off his seat, and walked out of the cafe with pride. He could've done that. However, he chose to sit and revel in his victory, the price of which was abject humiliation. It was often the case in most of the situations that turned out good for Mr. Fish that he did not know how to handle it. He did not know how to be humble. He was a zealous admirer of being right and, when right, a showman of the most conceited nature.

In light of all these thoughts, he came to a sudden halt. Mr. Fish remembered the woman, the beautiful, envious woman who he came to detest, the reason for why he had spilled his coffee on his genitals. He looked up at the table she was sitting at. She was gone. He looked up and

about, scanning the cafe as a black man walking on a lonely road in Mississippi scans the land in fear that the Ku Klux Klan are out for some "Hang-a-black-boy-by-his-neck-from-a-tree." He could not see her anywhere in sight.

Suddenly, an ear-raising guffaw pierced through the racing thoughts of Mr. Fish. The laugh was of such volume, everybody in the cafe turned to look at Mr. Fish, assuming he was once again the reason for this interruption of the calm. However, when his lips and face gave anything but a release of laughter, everybody looked for the guilty party. Everybody's eyes darted off in a single direction. Mr. Fish followed what everybody else was looking at. He saw what everybody else saw: the beautiful woman, her back turned to everybody, her body, apparently convulsing and doubling over with laughter, walking out the front door of the cafe. Everybody shook their heads and, once again, returned their attentions back to their own business.

Mr. Fish felt doubly humiliated. His forehead broke out in sweat. His eyes became glazy and his lips trembled. He wanted to go after the woman. Maybe catch up to her outside in the parking lot and crush her head. But he feared the daylight people, the good samaritans walking around, who came to have a cup of coffee and a doughnut and not to see a homicide-in-progress. Do it quick and be gone with you!, thought Mr. Fish.

As he ran over what he would like to do and what he probably would do, the kid who was studying for the Physics test, got up from his table, came over to Mr. Fish, and offered him solace.

"Mister, you okay?"

Mr. Fish looked up at the kid, his memory clouded with impure thoughts of what he would like to do to that wretched woman. He would do something to her and whatever it was, it had better be executed soon for she was probably on her way to her car. Mr. Fish immediately stood up, grabbed his coffee, and was about to take a sip when his convictions told him otherwise. He cautiously put the coffee cup back on the table, then locked eyes with the kid.

"What did you say to me, kid?" asked Mr. Fish.

"I asked if you were all right," said the kid.

"Never better. Take care, kid."

And with that, Mr. Fish turned and walked out of the cafe. He was on a mission, though he had devised no plans. He had the courage to go through with what his mother and father and society--blind, ignorant society--had always told him was the wrong thing to do. He would find her, and when found, reduce her head to that of a watermelon after a fateful fall off a thirty story building, and feel joyful at the outcome and the totality of the whole situation.

Mr. Fish exited through the cafe door as a pair of beach bunnies, young girls that is, entered. Mr. Fish surprised himself when he mechanically held the door open for the two young creatures. You see, he had never held the door open for anybody in his life. However, he was devoid of gratitude or kindness, it was as if he was functioning on robotic-like movements: actions done without emotions. He was going through the motions, but nobody was taking it in.

The girls took notice of Mr. Fish's blank stare. Their optimistic, sunny attitudes took a 180 degree turn. If only they knew what was about to transpire in the next five minutes. Boy, they would be blown away. The two girls, as if suspecting that Mr. Fish's body was there, but his mind was elsewhere, quickly entered the cafe and said their thanks. Mr. Fish grunted in reply and exited the cafe.

As he stepped out into the daylight atmosphere, the sun's rays pierced his vision and he became temporarily blind. He closed his eyes; squinted, adjusting his pupils to the bright orange. It was hot out, and windy. Mr. Fish took a deep breath. He took in the scent of french fries, popcorn, and air. Air had never felt better. He scanned the parking lot. Mr. Fish spotted the woman walking towards her little car, a rusty beat-up insect-like vehicle. He smiled and made his way towards her. He was about to make the woman his first victim.