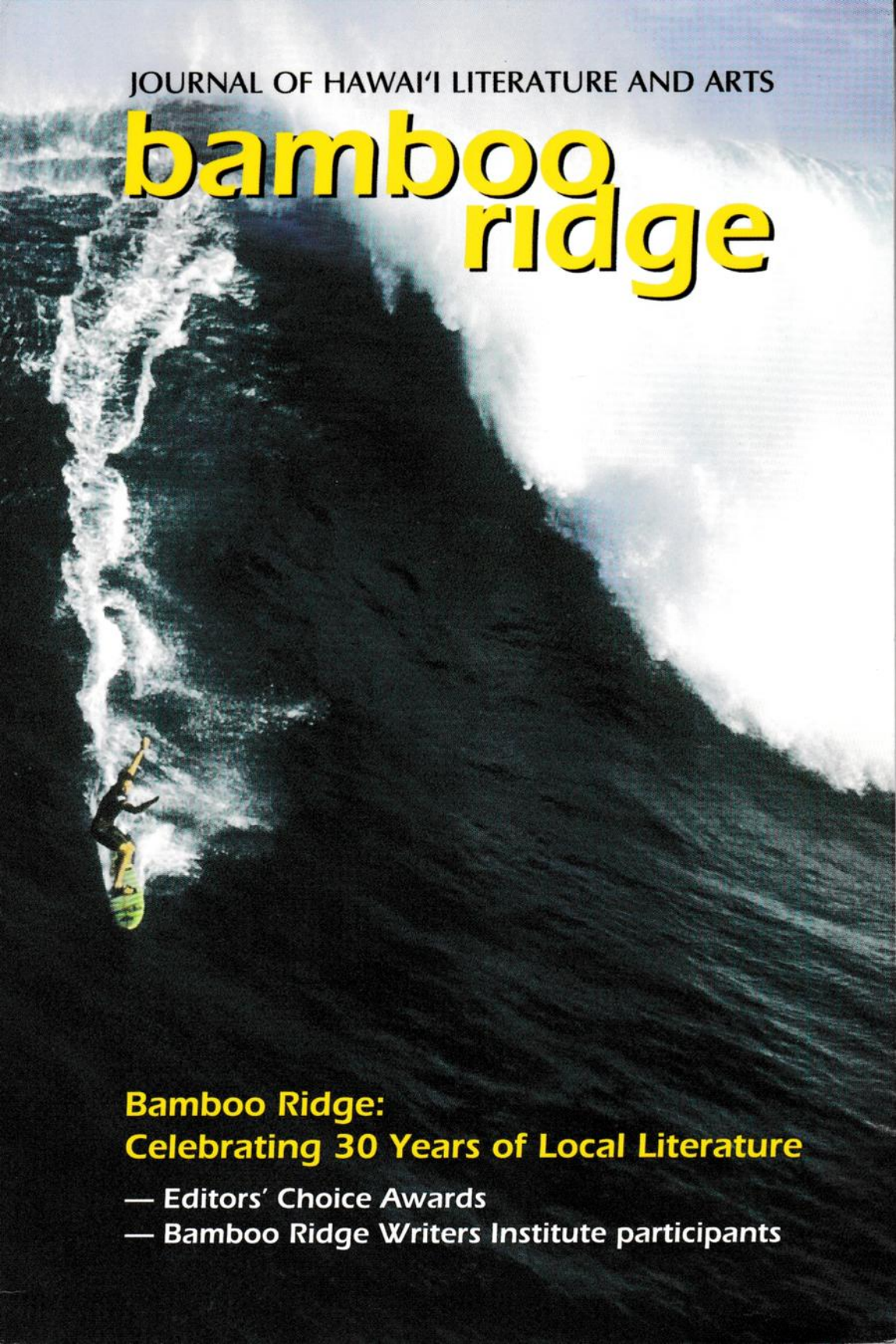
JOURNAL OF HAWAI'I LITERATURE AND ARTS

bamboo ridge



Bamboo Ridge: Celebrating 30 Years of Local Literature

— Editors' Choice Awards
— Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute participants

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NUMBER NINETY-ONE

ISBN-10 0–910043–77–9
ISBN-13 978–0–910043–77–9

This is issue #91 (Spring 2007) of Bamboo Ridge, Journal of Hawai‘i Literature and Arts (ISSN 0733-0308).

Published by Bamboo Ridge Press
Indexed in the American Humanities Index
Bamboo Ridge Press is a member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP).

Cover: Photograph by Erik Aeder of Gerry Lopez at Peahi
Title Page: “Mentawais 2005” photograph by Tom Servais of Gerry Lopez in Indonesia
Pages 111-143: Photographs courtesy Mari Hatta
Pages 200 and 213: Photographs by Kit Boise-Cossart of Carlos Andrade at Pākalā, 1967
Page 221: Photograph by Jamie Ballenger of Carlos Andrade at Ala Moana, 2005
“Recess” by Kealoha was previously published on the full-length spoken word CD entitled *Kealoha*.
“Century’s Lullaby” by Brenda Kwon was previously published in the *The Korea Fulbright Review*, Summer 2006.
“Transferring the Willow” and “Kuan Yin Shopper” by Kathy J. Phillips are part of *The Moon in the Water: Reflections on an Aging Parent*, forthcoming from Vanderbilt University Press in spring 2008.
“Reciprocity” by Jean Yamasaki Toyama was previously published in *Caprice*, edited by James Mechem and Lynne Savitt, 2003, *The Ancient Mariners*, Fall 2003, XVIII:3.
“Aunty Chong Sum’s Comfession” from *Behold the Man*y by Lois-Ann Yamanaka. Copyright © 2006 by Lois-Ann Yamanaka. Reprinted by permission of Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, LLC.

Typesetting and design: Wayne Kawamoto

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Bamboo Ridge is published twice a year. For subscription information, back issues, or a catalog, please contact:

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Bamboo Ridge Press gratefully acknowledges the generous donations of the following individuals and organizations in 2006:

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From the Editors

This ninety-first issue of *Bamboo Ridge* begins with our selection of the work that we found the most outstanding in this anthology. The Editors' Choice Awards for this issue are:

Best Poetry – Rachel Ana Brown for her poems "Pele's Tears," "Starting the Mythology Unit," and "Learning Hawaiian the Hard Way"

Best Prose – Peter Van Dyke for "The Hostile Elders"

Best New Bamboo Ridge Writer – Christine Thomas for "'Ie'ie: Sacred Lei of the Gods"

We are grateful to the Marjorie Putnam Edel Trust for its support of these awards and the $100 prize that goes to each winner.

The four Bamboo Ridge Writers Institutes (2001–2006) have brought together local writers, readers, students, and lovers of local literature to talk about the craft of writing about the island experience. In this issue, we highlight the work of some of the presenters and participants who have made our Institutes a continuing success. Their work is identified by the fish logo in the Table of Contents. We are grateful to the Baciu Cultural Fund of the Hawai'i Community Foundation for the funding that helped make this section possible. Finally, our striking cover features legendary surfer Gerry Lopez, who contributed an excerpt from his upcoming book. His story about Pākalā on Kaua`i spurred fellow surfer Carlos Andrade to share his memories of that special break. Mahalo to Michael McPherson for his help in putting together this section.

Once again, we present an anthology full of writing that is vibrant, provocative, funny, and poignant. 2008 marks our 30th year of publishing local literature. We hope you'll agree that the writing helps define us and sustain us and will continue to have lasting effects on all of us. Aloha.

—Eric Chock and Darrell H.Y. Lum, Editors

EDITORS' CHOICE – BEST POETRY

Rachel Ana Brown

PELE'S TEARS

It hasn't rained for four years.
Mom has one of her boyfriends
hook the bathtub drain to a pipe that leads to the yard.
A plastic trashcan collects the cloudy turquoise runoff,
smelling of Aussie shampoo and White Shoulders perfume.
Every morning, like a yoked ox,
she lugs heavy buckets of blue bathwater,
waters the ferns, the segos, the arecas in the black plastic pots.
Later on, the dying, gasping *'ōhi'a* trees,
one full bucket for each gray ghost grasping weakly at the rock.
"There you go, babies," she reassures them. "Better now?"
Nights of crisp, brittle stars.
Days of milky blue sky and stringy gray clouds.
Our own water from the tank tastes thick and unwholesome.
If a poor, thirsty *'ōhi'a* tree manages to spit out a blossom,
some dry and chalky *lehua* with no sweet nectar for us to suck,
we pick it. Pray for Pele's tears.
It hasn't rained for over four years.

Our ti plants all died. They need too much water.
Mom says we'll get ti from Wai'ōhinu Park this year,
to make my May Day skirt.
We show up with buckets of dryland flowers,
lehua from the woods, crown flower from behind the library.
"Let's sit far back," Mom says.
They whisper about her as we pass,
all the Hawaiian and Filipino moms who buy their dope from us,
who all pretend that they don't smoke.
"Go get leaves." Mom sits to husk the crown flowers.
The plants on the playground are picked over,
so I slip through the hole in the back fence,
and slide down the gulch to find the huge ti,
with leaves almost as big as me.
"No go down there!" my classmates squeal.
"Alanka ukulele, we telling!"

“I no care!” I shout back up.
Mom always says, don’t touch anyone’s dope, but go wherever you like.
Can find better things to eat deep in the woods, anyway.
Thimble berries. *‘Ōhelo*. Down in the gulch, *liliko‘i* and guava, wetland fruits.
“Any for Mommy?” I give her a mango and some purple berries.
“Taste sour,” I critique, “but no give the runs.”
She trusts me.
Don’t eat white things. Red only if you know for sure. Most bluish things are okay.
Mom turns her back to the crowd and lights a joint.
Gives me a puff. Peels me a mango.
Her thumb is green from ti sap.
I lie down on the grass
and she dumps the crown flowers on top of me.
Everything looks soft and purple now, like being inside a cloud pregnant with rain.
I know she’ll make me a beautiful skirt
with a crown flower and *lehua* waist, and a thick *haku* to match.
Graduated strands of *pīkake* for my lei, too, if her bush hadn’t died.
Some kid will tease, “What, you go Merrie Monarch?”
because their moms will just make
ti on a fishing line, plumeria lei on thread.
Plumeria wilts before the May Day court even walks out.
Haku can last for years, dried out but still thick.
The hula teacher, her kids get *haku*, too.
“Stand up, let me measure.”
Ti strung on hemp, twisted with *lehua*.
I twirl around, the leaves flaring out juicily.
“Good,” she says, “now I’ll make the head lei.”

It’s not her fault she’s a haole,
cannot say *haku* or *pua kenikeni*.
No need say, I figure, if you can keep alive through
what turned out to be thirteen years
of praying for rain, for Pele’s tears. Getting none.
    Hauling bathwater around the yard.
    Her shoulders were as big and knotted as mountains.
    Her hands were tough and wrinkled like *pāhoehoe*.
She left footprints in the earth forty thousand miles deep
to hold sweet groundwater during droughts.
When it finally rained,
she cried. Pulled handfuls of *lehua* off her *‘ōhi‘a*
and hurled them up in the thundering air.

Rachel Ana Brown

STARTING THE MYTHOLOGY UNIT

Our English teacher expected trickster myths
when he invited the *kupuna* to speak.
Instead we get a translation of the *Kumulipo*
with its repetitions and philosophies of water.
"Women of the broad stream, men of the narrow stream"
for an hour and a half. We must have looked like statues
by the end, stunned and glassy under the drone
of her soporific metaphors, as slow as creation.
But good local kids that we are, we stayed silent
and motionless as the rocks on the shore,
letting her words flow over us, and over us.
Only in her pauses did the freshmen sigh;
a soothing whisper in that void,
like waves clicking on *'ili'ili,* stones
which are small and dance restlessly
instead of letting the water fulfill them.

Rachel Ana Brown

LEARNING HAWAIIAN THE HARD WAY

My sister got the good Hawaiian dictionary
when our parents split up.
She lives where it's cold,
where she can't see the ocean,
and likes to unpack my bags when I visit
so she can bury her face in my jeans
and smell the zippers rusted by salty wind.
To test myself, I leaf through the book,
looking at ugly sketches of plants and gods
that are giving her false ideas about home.
It's hard to find words that I know
because I can speak them, but I can't spell.
Pua kenikeni. Lau hala. Hāpu'u.
Reading the dictionary, I now know why
my sister says extra sounds and splits some words in two,
even though I've always thought they were one.

EDITORS' CHOICE – BEST PROSE

Peter Van Dyke

THE HOSTILE ELDERS

Except for the driver, all of us on that tour were fat, but Mrs. Judith Crandall was in a class by herself. The bus sank and groaned when she stepped aboard, and Margaret Prudholme, who was a small woman, grew lightheaded and faint that first morning when she sat next to Mrs. Crandall and was squeezed between her and the side of the bus for over an hour as we crawled along the circle island highway to the North Shore.

I don't want to give you the mistaken impression that we were anything out of the ordinary, that we were a special tour for the abnormally obese. We were regular corn-fed Americans, your bread and butter. And I exaggerated when I said we were all overweight. Margaret, for example, was quite trim, and the Metzgers, Ted and Carol, were both really thin, but the rest of us—we were 29 altogether—were thickened each in our own way with that padding that lines the bodies of those of us fortunate to live long lives of ease and success and good, steady meals.

Most of us were past that stage in life when you can have "dream vacations" or "the trips of our lives." Most of us had been to Yellowstone and Paris and cruised the Southeast Passage in Alaska, had been taking this sort of vacation for years. For many of us it was the second or third trip to Hawai'i, and so when Segundo, our driver, pointed out Diamond Head as the bus crawled east along the shoreline drive, we gave it no more than a glance, and instead of following his narrative, we peered through the tinted glass of the bus window into the yards of the residents, and, where we could, through their windows even, into the little corners of their rooms where we glimpsed an untidy pile of books on the end of a coffee table, or the back of a man's head as he sat eating breakfast, and we

thought about the strange lives these people must live, going and coming, working and relaxing, much as we had for most of our lives, but in this unrelenting hot and humid air scented by tropical flowers, eating rice for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, being in all probability, Asian of some sort, or Polynesian, or something of a mix, as most of the faces we saw outside the bus were inscrutably unlike our own.

Not, I might add, that we were without some racial diversity ourselves. Henry and Joyce Collins, a wonderful couple really, were black—African American, that is—from just outside Chicago. Let me tell you, they fit right in, too, laughing and joking with the rest of us and entertaining us with stories of some of their other tours. In fact, Joyce was so open and friendly that it was to her that Mrs. Crandall first began unburdening herself with that unrelenting stream of woes and complaints and injustices that we all became so familiar with before the end, and now, as we passed under the prow of Diamond Head, brushing by joggers and rental cars like so much passing flotsam, the Collinses had the misfortune to be seated across the aisle from Mrs. Crandall, and she had turned toward Joyce, pressing the already woozy Margaret even tighter against the bus window, and continued the diatribe that she had begun that morning at the breakfast buffet.

"Were you able to sleep, even for an instant, with all the noise those air conditioners make? And if I turned it off, it got so hot I felt I would die. Then Mrs. Prudholme here started making all these sounds. She needs to see a doctor." Not only was Mrs. Crandall Margaret's seatmate, they were also sharing rooms for the duration of the tour.

Joyce allowed as to how she had some trouble sleeping herself, but indicated that it was not the noise of the air conditioner that kept her awake, but Henry's snoring, "Which I swear he does louder and longer on vacation than he ever does at home, don't you Hank?" And Henry, with his big, hearty laughter rising above the drone of the bus engine so that the mood of the group for three rows either side of the Collinses rose with it, denied snoring at all, at home or on vacation, and claimed that the accusation was just a plot by the missus to clear him out of the bedroom so she could get up to who knows what. It was plain that this was a well practiced routine of the Collins couple and we waited for more, ready to laugh along with them and take sides and even bring out some of our own well practiced routines on the subject if the opportunity arose, but Mrs. Crandall was not having it.

"Well, when Mr. Crandall started snoring, I wouldn't tolerate it, and I got him fitted with sleep prosthetics," she said, but before we could turn over in our minds what she meant by sleep prosthetics, the bus swayed around a curve to the left and Mrs. Crandall pressed against Margaret so hard that poor Margaret let out a kind of squeaking sound that the Phillipses, being eager bird watchers, took for the call of a bird outside the bus window, and Ruth Phillips in her enthusiasm

shrieked, “A shearwater!” which diverted our attention for a few moments as we scanned the seascape for a bird that did not in fact exist.

The air inside the bus was like ice, but the yellow cast to the window tint gave the world outside a hazy, overheated look. We gazed down at the busy people in their SUVs just getting underway to work, still weaving through the streets of their neighborhood into which our shiny bronze giant of a bus intruded, a quiet, gassy monster. Their thoughts apparently were not on us, as they did not give us a glance but stared ahead in that abstracted manner of people everywhere when they first emerge from their houses for the day, and they looked away from the road only to check the details of their hair or answer calls on their cell phone or grope for their coffee cups in the center console.

It was just 8:30. Of course the time of day meant nothing to us, so thoroughly had our systems been disrupted by the time change. Now as we cruised toward the morning sun, we were neither hungry nor full, neither tired nor rested, and we even wondered whether we needed to go to the bathroom or not.

Only Mrs. Crandall seemed to know her own mind. “I can’t see why they make us wait so long for breakfast,” she announced. “I’m going to complain to the tour coordinator. They know we are up early, why can’t they let us have breakfast when we get up instead of making us wait?” The doors to the breakfast buffet at the hotel didn’t open until 6:30. Back home, most of us rose at 6:00 or earlier, and on our first few days here in Hawai‘i, we were awake at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

“We just have to adjust. That’s what’s fun about traveling,” said Margaret.

Mrs. Crandall turned from the neck only—her body proper was too large to respond to such minor provocations—and peered down at the small woman by her side. “I don’t need people I’ve known for less than two days telling me how to enjoy myself traveling.”

Margaret looked away. Outside ran a long, white, plastered wall, over the top of which drooped a palm hedge. Above the hedge rose a shingled roof that seemed to go on for a city block.

Mrs. Crandall was still unhappy with the breakfast arrangements “They didn’t serve Wheatena,” she said. “I can’t abide a day without Wheatena. I’m going to complain to the tour coordinator about that too.”

“Did you check the convenience store?” said Joyce. “There’s one in the lobby. The first thing we got in on Tuesday evening, Hank had me go out and find him a beer and there it was, before I got out onto the street, the cutest little store.”

“The doctor says I should drink beer for my heart,” said Henry. “I told him, ‘If you say so, Doc.’ Only time I ever thought I really got my money’s worth from a doctor’s visit.”

“Only time you ever listened to the doctor too,” said Joyce.

“I won’t shop in those little tourist traps,” said Mrs. Crandall. “They think

they can charge you twice as much as they charge their own people. I'm telling the driver to take us to a regular supermarket, a Safeway or an Albertson's. I'm not giving my money to those gougers."

Well, there's someone who's not satisfied with anything and lets everybody know about it on every tour, but Mrs. Crandall was proving to be a real champion complainer. For the rest of us, the tour might have its ups and downs, its pluses and minuses, but we take the good with the bad and put on a smile and try to enjoy ourselves. It's a vacation after all, and there are plenty of problems without having to bring them on vacation with you.

The traffic thinned a bit as the morning progressed and we wended our way toward the dry eastern corner of the island, anchored by another crater, impressive for its jagged rim that Segundo informed us was held by the Hawaiians to resemble a certain part of the female anatomy, and those of us who maintained an interest in such things, which is to say, all of us except the rather sniffy Bob and Julie Hoffer, and Mrs. Crandall, we squinted and peered and cocked our heads this way or that and tried to see what those naughty Hawaiians had seen in the rise and fall of the brown line where the crater met the sky, but either we were not so thoroughly familiar with the subject as the Hawaiians, or our imaginations not so rich, or we were just hesitant to shout out, "There it is, I see it, why it looks just like yours, Patty Ann," so none of us admitted to catching the resemblance. Still, our estimation of the Hawaiians rose a notch or two and we wondered at a people who had carried on their daily lives in the shadow of a monument to a thing we hardly dared think about.

Then as we passed the crater, Mrs. Crandall blew, and she was a regular Mount Saint Helens of fury. "I did not pay my good money for a Hawai'i vacation to be subjected to dirty stories," she said. She banged the armrest and shouted, "Driver! Stop this bus! Driver!" And she half rose, but the momentum of the bus and her own mass were too great for her to overcome, so she fell back into her seat. Margaret groaned.

The driver looked back into his mirror and said, "There's a stop just ahead, ma'am. May I remind everybody that this bus is equipped with a restroom located at the rear."

At the crest of the hill, we pulled into a turnout and stopped. The driver opened the door and said, "If you want to get out and stretch your legs, or you want to take pictures, there's a good spot for pictures of the bay just there ahead of the bus." About half of the group, bearing a small fortune in digital gadgetry, filed down the aisle and out the door.

Some of us who stayed behind may have been reluctant to leave the air conditioning, and some of us may have been just those creatures of comfort who never like to leave a soft seat once they are settled in, but I know some of us stayed on board just to hear the confrontation between Mrs. Crandall and the driver.

Our driver was on the smallish side, a dark man with an impressive head of straight, thick, jet black hair going to gray, slicked back in the style of an Asian film star. His badge said "Segundo Valise" and he later told us Segundo meant he was the second son, and that his parents had moved with the whole family to Hawai'i from Manila when he was sixteen. His English was nearly perfect, with only a trace of an accent and his voice was so mellifluous that when he spoke through the bus PA system, he put us in mind of none less than Don Ho.

Segundo walked down the aisle with a small wicker basket in his hand, from which he offered each of the passengers who had stayed on board a choice of cellophane wrapped hard candies. When he was within three rows of Mrs. Crandall's seat, she banged the armrest again. "You do not have my permission to speak of filthy, unmentionable things. I won't have it. I simply won't have it. I demand that you turn around and take me back to the hotel."

"Easy now, auntie," he said. He offered the candy to the Collinses, seated right across from Mrs. Crandall. "You got to hang loose a little. This is Hawai'i, ma'am, relax a little. I was just having a little fun. Besides, it's true, it's history. That's what the name means in Hawaiian. I cannot help that."

"You nasty minded little man. You sex offender! Auntie indeed."

"Whoa, ma'am, sorry. If you like, I'll call a taxi and you can go back to the hotel."

"I paid for this trip and I'm staying on this bus," Mrs. Crandall said.

Henry Collins leaned forward and spoke across his wife's broad muumuu. "Give it a chance," he said. "You got to enjoy yourself a little. We all got to enjoy ourselves."

"Well, I don't doubt that you enjoy this bus driver's dirty jokes," Mrs. Crandall said. But she sat back and set a look of mean resolution on her face and said no more, and allowed the driver to pass the basket of candies in front of her so that Margaret could take a cinnamon mint.

As we glided up the east side of the island, the soft whine of the bus and the faint whiff of diesel seeping into the artificial atmosphere of our little moving habitat were the only tangible evidence of a real world beyond the darkened screen of the bus windows. Outside, tangles of tree limbs that seemed to be covered with skin rather than bark and dense glades of deep green, fleshy leaves alternated with wide expanses of blue sky and aqua reef flats. Here and there in the shallow waters were little rickety fishing platforms, and we wondered at the minds that would conceive such alien structures, and the hands that would build them, so dilapidated and cobbled-together they looked, so unlike the neat, sturdy deer blinds we built at home, following plans we found in the pages of *Hunters Monthly*, and we wondered what it would be like to sit out there on one of those fishing platforms a hundred yards from shore on a sunny morning and whether a mahimahi or a big tuna might find its way inside the reef for us to catch. And some of us dozed from time to time despite the early hour and the occasional

remarks from Segundo, whose voice was so fluid and sonorous that it seemed almost part of the languid landscape that floated past our windows.

The only dissonant voice, in fact, that intruded into this dreamy procession was that of Mrs. Crandall. She found occasion to complain at various times about the air conditioning, the proximity of the bus to the car in front, the lack of synchronization in the traffic signals, the profusion of fast food outlets, the lack of certain fast food outlets, the unhappy prospect of lunch on this outing, the color and general design of a Methodist church that we passed, the sanitary arrangements of the off-shore fishermen, the strangeness of the vegetation, the slovenliness of the general population as evidenced by the dress of two middle-aged women emerging from a neighborhood market as we passed, the obviously unsafe practice of selling shrimp lunches from dilapidated, graffiti-covered vehicles, the decision by Rob Phillips to recline his seat, the abruptness with which he returned his seat to the upright position, the miasma that invariably arises from coastal backwaters like those along which we passed, the lack of large raptors as compared with certain locations in Alaska, the ramshackle homes that crowded between the road and the shoreline, the occasional grammatical lapses in our driver's delivery, his moral laxness, the irresponsible nature of the organization that apparently paid him wages to drive us and be our guide, the lack of adequate turnouts along the highway, the tendency of the driver to pander to the desires of the photographers in the group, the lack of accommodations for the needs of certain superior travelers in the scheduling and outfitting of this tour, and so on, until at last we turned off the highway and up the lane to the bus parking area for Waimea Valley Audubon Center, the first stop on our seven-day, four-island holiday vacation called "Great Gardens of Paradise," with guided excursions to at least one great garden on each day except the initial settling-in day and one final "shop till you drop" Sunday before we left.

Margaret was faint and short of breath when we got there, and stayed behind at a picnic table in the shade while the rest of us boarded a tram for a tour of the arboretum. Darlene Huber stayed behind with her to keep her company.

"That woman is unbearable," Darlene said to Margaret. "You should ask to switch roommates. I don't see how you can stand it."

"Oh, she's not that bad," Margaret said. She patted her forehead with a damp paper towel. "It just calls for a little Christian forbearance." A nut about the size of a golf ball fell from the tree above them and struck the picnic table. Both women flinched.

And so it was that as the days passed, we went to Kaua'i and Maui and the Big Island, and the days on those islands were filled with beautiful sights of waterfalls and hillsides of bougainvillea, beachside estates converted to botanical gardens, cliffs that took your breath away, sharp mountain ridges, and groves of bamboo that covered entire valleys. On each of these islands we had drivers and

guides, and some were funny, some were serious, some were sincere, and some were obviously worn out by the likes of us, and in each of these places we had hotels, and some had traffic noises, some spacious balconies, some had tiny bathtubs, some had compressors that ran on the roof below our window all night and spoiled our sleep, and we ate croissant upon croissant, whole plantations of bananas, cold cuts, hot plates, teriyaki beef, Denver omelets, pineapple chicken, and pepper steak.

Some of us liked the whole setup, the food, the hotels, the gardens, and some of us didn't like it that much, but all in all, we were generally satisfied and thought we got our money's worth and thought that it sure beat sitting around the house all week or even going to Florida or Mexico and like as not getting stuck in a hurricane or getting dysentery or having your pocket picked.

We were satisfied that is, except for one thing: everywhere we went, Mrs. Crandall went on and on with her complaining and her insisting to speak to the manager and demanding her money back and snapping at us or the tour guides or the bus drivers or the poor ladies who cleaned up the hotels. And sometimes Mrs. Crandall's harangues set us on edge and made us grouchy and inclined to find fault with each other and with our surroundings and sometimes we wished we had stayed home doing nothing or had braved the dangers of travel to Florida or Mexico, had been anywhere, in fact, except here, within the domain of Mrs. Crandall's all-consuming ill temper.

It took a toll on all of us, but especially on Margaret. She wilted and grew listless as Mrs. Crandall's voice seemed to grow stronger and her spirit meaner. We didn't see Margaret lingering over scones and coffee and sneaking crumbs to the sparrows at the breakfast buffet like she did the first few mornings, and she no longer stopped to photograph every flower we passed as she had at the first few gardens we visited.

On Saturday, our last day on the Big Island, our last day before we returned to Honolulu for that free day at the end of the vacation, Mrs. Crandall got us ejected from the premises of a beautiful garden just outside Hilo. She started by accusing Margaret of taking her umbrella, but by the end, she had railed against not only Margaret but also the visitor services staff of the garden, a nice looking family from Oregon, and a group of farm bureau members from the states of Georgia and Michigan. From the shuttle bus as we left, we exchanged looks with the members of that other tour, and they shook their heads in sympathy.

As we boarded our own bus, Mrs. Crandall still had enough unpleasant feeling left within her heart to tell Ruth Phillips that bird watching was "nothing but a waste of time." "Birds," she declared, "are filthy animals, no better than rats with wings." Margaret was actually crying.

We were quiet as the bus climbed the long slope to our last destination, Volcanoes National Park. We found ourselves wishing the day were over, looking forward to the free day tomorrow, when we could disperse throughout the city

and not see each other or Mrs. Crandall. We dutifully watched the short movie on volcanoes at the interpretive center, we walked like prisoners in a silent line through the long, dank lava tube, and when the bus stopped at the crater rim lookout, we sat without moving until the bus driver said, "Eh, what's the matter? You no like our volcano, Madam Pele no like you. She get mad, watch out then."

The lookout was down a short paved trail that passed through a stand of stunted gray-green trees. Margaret seemed to have got a hold of herself and seemed determined to enjoy this last outing. She had stopped under the trees to photograph a bush with pink berries, and Rob and Ruth followed a forest bird a short way down a dirt trail that left the paved path and disappeared around a bramble of ferns. The rest of us stuck to the pavement and shortly gathered behind a low railing beyond which the ground fell off so abruptly that we could see nothing of it again until it flattened out at the floor of the crater, hundreds of feet below us. Across the broad expanse of the crater floor, here and there were little puffs of steam, and on a trail that crossed the floor tiny hikers braved the sulfur air for a closer look at the bowels of the volcano.

It was a bracing view and our mood turned brighter. Henry told Joyce she was lucky he was feeling so fine or he might just offer her up as a virgin sacrifice to the volcano goddess and Joyce reminded him that she was lacking in one of the main requirements for the position and Henry had to admit that indeed she was. We talked and took pictures and poked around the edge of the crater until Kimo, the driver, showed up, and someone said, "Group picture," and we all generally agreed that would be a good thing as this was the last attraction on the last day we would all be together.

So we gathered together in a group in front of the railing, and Kimo got a whole collection of cameras out there on a rock beside him and started taking pictures as we smiled and laughed and called out instructions to him on how to operate all these different cameras.

We must have been on about the tenth shot when Kimo put the camera down and said, "Wait a minute. Where's da kine? You know," and he scowled and puffed out his cheeks and everybody knew he meant Mrs. Crandall.

"She probably got mad and stayed on the bus," said Dorothy Hoffman.

"I'm pretty sure she was with us when we started down the trail," said Dorothy's husband Norm. "I remember she said she couldn't understand why they didn't do something about the smell."

We finished taking the pictures and went back to the bus. Mrs. Crandall was nowhere to be found. We searched, and the driver searched, and finally the driver called the rangers and they searched.

After a couple hours out there on the turnout on the crater rim drive, we got in the bus and drove to an old military camp near the park headquarters. They used it as a sort of hotel for service people, but right now it was pretty empty, and they let us relax in the lobby and we could buy snacks from the cafeteria if we

wanted. A couple of the gals found an art gallery nearby, and the Phillipses and a few others went outside to look for birds or take pictures, but the rest of us got out our crosswords or our vacation books or played cards, and in that way another hour and a half passed. We were just starting to wonder about making our flight to Honolulu when one of the rangers came in looking pretty grim and asked us to gather together in the meeting room just off the lobby. His name was Abraham Cahill.

It took about fifteen minutes to gather everybody together and by the time that was accomplished, everybody seemed to have heard the rumor: Mrs. Crandall had been found dead at the bottom of the cliff near the lookout.

That's just what Ranger Cahill told us when he had us all together in the meeting room. It took a minute or so for the news to sink in. We just sat there in silence until finally someone said, "God rest her soul," and there was a scattering of "Amens."

"But how did it happen?" asked Joyce. "We never saw her at the lookout."

"She took a side trail," the ranger answered. "There are places where those trails go right to the edge with no railing. Tell me something. Why would she have taken off on a side trail? Was she the adventurous type? Was this the sort of thing she usually did?"

"No, she pretty much avoided any extra walking," said Bill Manhardt. Bill was up there in years and used a cane himself, but once on Kaua'i Mrs. Crandall had made him get out of the tram and wait for the next one so that she could get back up the hill to the bus when she wanted to.

"Did she take pictures? Could she have wanted a really special shot of the crater?"

"She wasn't that much of a photographer," said Darren Huber. Once on Maui she had insisted that the driver leave without Darren, who was photographing a really gorgeous seascape, and she made it amply clear to Darren when he finally reboarded the bus that she could do without him and his cameras.

"What about, and I hate to mention this," said the ranger, "suicide?"

Nobody really knew what to say to that except for Marilyn Wagner who spoke up. "I'm a retired clinical psychologist," she said. One time Mrs. Crandall had told Marilyn to her face that all psychologists were sick in the head. "I've worked with all sorts of patients, including suicidal ones. I can tell you, Judith Crandall was not suicidal. She had too much to live for."

Right, we all thought, like filing her complaints with the tour company, and demanding that all of the drivers got fired, and ruining the final day of our Hawaiian vacation by complaining.

"So I don't get it," the driver said. "Why did she go down that path?"

Margaret Prudholme raised her hand.

"Yes," said Ranger Cahill.

"I think I know why Mrs. Crandall ran down that path," said Margaret. "She

… she loved birds. I think she must have seen a bird and rushed down that path for a better look, and then when she got to the edge, she couldn't stop and …" Her voice trailed off.

We sat silent, taking in what we had just heard. I think all of us at that moment remembered Margaret lingering in the little stand of trees near the fork in the path taking photos of the purple-pink berries.

Finally, Rob spoke up. "Why, that's right," he said. "She wanted an 'i'iwi for her life list. She had over 400 birds on her life list, you know. She must have thought she saw an 'i'iwi."

After another long pause, Darlene Huber, Darren's wife, said, "Is that one of those red birds? I think I saw one there by the fork in the trail."

Ranger Cahill waited a moment longer to see if anyone else wanted to speak, then snapped his notebook shut and said, "Right. That explains it then. Now, you've got a plane to catch."

We didn't talk much on the bus ride to the airport or on the plane ride back to Honolulu. We wanted to be by ourselves and we retreated to our hotel rooms that night. The next day everybody went their own way, but for a lot of us it was a marathon at the mall. By dinnertime, most of us were in the mood to socialize again, and about half of us were there at the hotel restaurant for the Sunday night buffet.

"I'm never going to forget this tour," said Henry as he settled in at a table. A huge slab of prime rib teetered on a bed of mashed potatoes, cole slaw, macaroni salad, sushi, and green salad.

"I'm never going to let you forget it if you spill that prime rib all over your lap," said Joyce.

"Oh, don't you fuss, dear," he answered.

Nobody talked about Mrs. Crandall or what had happened, and when we did reminisce, it was about all the good things we had seen and done and the nice people we had met. There wasn't a single complaint, and before we left we exchanged addresses and promised to write and keep in touch, but except for a couple of Christmas cards from the Hubers, I don't think anybody really did.

EDITORS' CHOICE – BEST NEW WRITER

Christine Thomas

‘IE‘IE: SACRED LEI OF THE GODS

The first sign of trouble was the *lepa* hung on posts at the corners of the Rothwell house. Banners made of roughened squares of white *kapa* cloth fastened to thick bamboo poles, signaling *kapu*.

In ancient times, important events like the yearly festival of the Makahiki or sacred occasions as upon the death of a chief, brought about the placement of a ritual *kapu* where certain actions were forbidden. If the shadow of a man fell on the house of a chief, that man would not escape reprisal. If a menstruating woman entered a *heiau* or another hallowed place, this was *kapu*. Enforcement remained the right of the high chiefs according to their rank, and it is said that the Kaua‘i Chiefess Kahamalu‘ihi was the ancient origin of the *kapu puhi kanaka*. The privilege to burn men.

This house built close to the beach, where the sacred banners now fight with the winds for the right to remain, is not the dwelling of an ancient but is instead a modern home of an old haole family of today. But James Rothwell is *ka‘ana like*, striving to be alike, so here the banners of the gods fly. Upon the death of his father, as the eldest male he has placed the *kapu* just the same.

For months James's father Samuel had complained of ailments too vague to cause serious alarm—mostly heartburn and indigestion, which over-the-counter medicines seemed to relieve. Increasingly he had spoken of a deep pain in his stomach and of always feeling very full after even the smallest meals. When he began to lose weight, exaggerating the frailty of his seventy-five years, it seemed to make sense to the family, given his digestive difficulties. It was only when his abdomen began to swell and lumps appeared around his collarbone that anxiety dawned and the Rothwells took him for tests.

But now it is too late. The brief respite brought by a change in diet and regular consumption of antacids has also delayed the diagnosis of cancer. It is now too advanced for even the doctors at his preferred hospital, built over a century ago by Queen Emma and King Liholiho, to envision a feasible cure. The only things to do now are stay home and keep him as comfortable as possible.

But James will not believe.

"They don't know how to cure, these modern doctors. How to discover the true source of an illness." He whispers this to his only daughter, Eliza, as they leave the hospital, causing her to worry even more. She believes the doctors and knows just how sick her grandfather has become, how grave his condition. And now she questions what it is doing to her father.

Back at the beach house James summons two *kāhuna* for a fresh diagnosis: one who diagnoses by critical insight, and one who is skilled in the supernatural. Each feels for the disease, pinpoints it, and recommends a cure, and after examination both confess the same prediction. There is severe bloating of the abdomen as well as an immovable lump, and though Samuel's appetite remains—a seemingly positive indication—it actually proves a grim outcome.

Again outraged with the presumption of death, James discards both opinions as the pronouncements of ignorant minds, and begins to work it out on his own. He becomes obsessed with discovering the foundation of his father's illness, reading every book on medicine and healing, on religion and *huna*, from the Bishop Museum and the Rothwells' own library. According to one detailed account he finds on his father's shelves, he makes a *papa 'ili'ili*, a table of pebbles arranged in the form of a man. One by one he carefully sets out chosen stones on the living room floor, arranging them just so until the outline is complete from the head to the feet. The medical *kāhuna* of old—surely, he thinks, more knowledgeable than those today—were trained in the diseases of the body this way, and he is certain it will provide a thorough analysis leading to the root of his father's affliction.

"There are a thousand diseases that can extinguish life," he murmurs to himself, repeating a phrase from a book: "I just have to find the right one and then the right cure."

When the pebbles, too, seem to indicate the same inevitable fate, he suspects sorcery or the capture of his father's spirit. He reads further and learns that the deity Pua was known to take possession of people, and those through whom she moved were then haunted by swollen stomachs, just like his father. So, following one tradition, when other family members are out of the room, he makes Samuel take secret sips of healing seawater. Following another, he even tries to find a way to bring his ailing father into the sea itself but fails, since no one agrees to help lift Samuel, who no longer feels strong enough to walk.

James barely sleeps, and when his eyes do manage to force themselves closed, allowing his mind to drift, he dreams—thick and heavy visions of swim-

ming in a deep pool of salt water, of finding himself in a glowing blue cave dripping with algae. He can't find a way out and every time he tries the waves arrive to knock him against the rocks until he is scratched and bleeding and has lost all his teeth.

On the final night that Samuel Rothwell lies in his broad koa bed, sipping the last breaths that stomach cancer will allow, a powerful deluge of rain falls on the house. The drops sound on the shingled roof, combining in a mute wail, occasionally splattering in quick bursts of wind on the panes of glass. James sits at his side, as he has for days. When his father takes a rattled breath, James draws near, bringing his mouth to Samuel's so that he takes in the exit of air from his father's lungs as though it is a sacred blessing.

But just as on a quiet day when the mountains are released from clouds, then from nowhere an impenetrable mist appears and covers the peaks with rain and storms, so death comes to Samuel Rothwell. A net of darkness settles over his eyes, the lids close, and his last breath is expelled. At first James doesn't realize his father has left the warmth of the sun, and so remains waiting, perched above his father's body like a watchful thief. Finally he lays down his head and hugs Samuel in a fierce grip of longing, crying until he must fight his own body from falling into the quiet of sleep.

He knows this is an important time, so before he calls to his mother or daughter or anyone else, he locks on to his father's eyes, studying his wrinkled lids to see if they remain closed or, if after a few hours, open again revealing a dark fleck of brown to the left of the right pupil. He desperately wants them to open. When this happens, it is said that the dead person is searching for one of the living, and James yearns to be searched for even if it means he, too, will be taken into the world of the spirits. Perhaps I must die soon, he tells himself, but if Father calls I will go.

The next morning Samuel's body is laid out on the bed according to Rothwell tradition, before being readied for lowering into its place among the weathered stones waiting in the family plot. Groups of relatives and friends come to the house to see Samuel for the last time, carrying *maile* lei and bundles of red ginger. In the kitchen they talk to Helen, his staunch but mournful widow, and eat and drink the efforts of the ever-gracious hostess Clara, her daughter-in-law.

Eliza and her brother Ryan have turned their shock towards the grey and churning sea as they sit on the lanai with untouched plates of food on the table in front of them. Occasionally they whisper to each other, or she rests her head on his shoulder, her hair falling in a thick veil over her face. They sit together among ghosts in a shared fog, at first unmindful of anyone or anything.

But later when she sees her father so bereaved, his behavior so extreme, Eliza has to do something. She begs him to sleep, to leave Samuel's side, but as with everyone, he pushes her away. She can see that a part of her father is dying with

her grandfather, but no one else seems to notice. Either her mother isn't paying attention or just doesn't care that her husband has locked himself away. She tries to think of what to do but she, too, is weighed down with grief, her mind working as though underwater.

James now waits for a stronger reaction from the corpse. Vomiting will mean Samuel felt great aloha for those still living, a flow of tears yet another sign of affection. He tells no one what he is doing, just insists on staying with the body, even overnight when the rest of the family goes back to the estate.

Knowing how much he loved his father, looked up to him, it seems understandable, this need they all imagine he is feeling. But when they return in the morning with the hearse, boxes of lei waiting in the cars, they find the iron gates bolted shut, the doors locked, and the shades drawn.

And James barricaded inside, alone with the decaying body of his father.

When a person dies, the '*aumakua* take charge, revealing their ancestral guardian forms to the newly emerged soul. A procession of spirits may march all through the night to welcome the dying relative, their chanting ringing out alongside the high notes of the flute, and drumming so loud it seems to be beaten right where you stand. Yet there are many who die only to creep alone like vapors over land until they reach the leaping place of souls. Others, with no '*aumakua* to claim them, wander the forests among the spiders and moths, feasting on shadows until losing all sense of the world and leaping forever into darkness.

James isn't positive that ancestors already guard his family, and he wants to ensure that his father's soul will be saved from the deep plunge. He takes it upon himself to call out and offer the prayers he has discovered, invoking the gods by the ones, the tens, and the hundreds of thousands, praying to the spirits to protect his father.

"'*Aumakua* of the night," he recites, "enclose your child in light, give him *mana*, end the *kapu* and help him to be freed."

After the prayers are completed, the real work begins. Because he has remained inside the house of the deceased, James knows now that he is defiled as much as the corpse itself. He must shun work and the company of others, and eat only food that he himself has prepared. So he fasts to begin purification, and leaves the doors and shades closed to shield him from the view of others. He knows Eliza has been coming, that she might be out there even now. Knows his teenage daughter leaves food for him every day on the front steps, but does not let her in.

Each afternoon Eliza finds the unwanted food in exactly the same place she left it, except now accompanied by undulating trails of ants. At first she thinks maybe it is her choice of prepared meals that her father doesn't like, so she switches to fruits and simple foods: she leaves banana, sweet potato, papaya. At

some point he has to emerge, she reasons. He has to. Or what will happen to them? To her? But as the days pass and the food remains untouched, reality sifts and settles around her feet.

It is clear that her father is experiencing something deeper than grief, but when she tries to discuss it with the rest of the family they appear calm, unworried, though they are beginning to get nervous about "the body." She hears her mother whispering the words on the phone three evenings running. Eliza can't bear to think of her grandfather that way, and doesn't want to imagine her father in there at all.

Enclosed in the darkness of his father's room, James is shaving the dark brown hair from his head as a sign of respect for the dead, letting the strands fall in clumps to the floor. He tattoos a small black spot on the tip of his tongue, using a sliver of bamboo dipped in the soot of a burning *kukui* nut. He presses until color rises to the surface, pain tracking lines of silent tears down his face. "Pain, great indeed, but greater my aloha!" were Ka'ahumanu's last words—a sign of his love and loyalty that will never wane.

Sitting before his father's body, he begins to rock, talking until the whispers become screams, until the words bleed into wails. His song of sorrow sounds through the night, prostrate, standing, beating the ground, his cries and guttural growls swirling above him in an endless crescendo. When his voice cracks and emits nothing but rushes of air, he simply sits and weeps.

This prolonged release leaves him feeling as though he is soaring through the clouds like a god of fire, his whole body broken open to reveal a wide buzzing core. In this sharpened clarity—a state that some would call madness—he tries to discern the next step from the very air around him, attempts to unearth the right way to proceed. Something must be done with Samuel's body—by tradition and by practicality. Because the smell, the stench of moist swampy decay, now burns through his senses along with the heightened awareness of his newly unfastened mind.

He must choose between two options for preparing the body. Though he is ready to defend the needs of his father in the highest capacity, he can't deny that the process of embalming feels too intense and all consuming. His very skin ripples and seethes at the thought of cutting open the body of the man who created him, of removing everything inside, taking out the heart and lungs and smaller organs in his hands and then filling the emptiness with salt. No, that he cannot bear. Instead he selects the second approach, which though involving equally thorough acts for James to perform, seems somehow simpler, cleaner, and more pure. More holy.

That night, when the sky has faded and the clouds have metamorphosed from plump white billows into narrow folds of shadow, he begins to dig a long, deep pit in the side yard. He has decided on an area that is sheltered and secluded, watched over by a dense plumeria grove, its blossoms weighed down with sad

strokes of red and yellow. He easily carves out the earth, his arms lifting rocks and sandy soil with a pickaxe and shovel as if he were only bailing gourds of water from a canoe. And when it is sufficiently deep and long, he drops his tools and forages the property for banana leaves, gathering four piles of fronds next to the pit, a blanket of green covering the opening like an altar cloth, waiting.

As he struggles to carry the body from the bed to the back door, James's heart gallops. He expects it to be effortless, but when he turns his father so the head is the first to greet the air of night, he loses his grip and Samuel's feet crash to the tile floor. James squeezes his eyes shut to shield himself from his father's vacant gaze, his entire body pulsating like one erupting vein. He never expected to feel such fear. Praying for strength, he lifts again and walks out into the night, and as though by divine grace the weight departs as the body clears the house. He smiles, imagining the wings of his newly acquired *'aumakua* aiding him in the preparations.

At the pit, bolstered by adrenaline and false confidence, James tenderly wraps the body in a garment of leaves. He lights a pile of coals and wood, poking and turning until they blaze and shine. After removing his father's hair and two of his teeth, he sets the body above the scorching earth. The air is ripe with the fragrance of sap and blossoms mixed with the fire-eaten branches of *hau* and *lama*, of leaves and flesh. The flames lick the body and the smoke begins to drift and swirl, and James shudders and convulses as though he, too, is being devoured by fire. Leaning against a tree, he heaves bile among the roots, fighting to regain his resolve to keep steady watch until the sun announces its presence to the sky.

The pit burns until the flesh of Samuel's body separates completely from the bones, the wood ground into ash. Consumed by a new, relentless calm, James removes the fallen skin and entrails and puts them to one side on a banner of cloth, tying it into a compact bundle. One by one, he lifts the bones onto a separate piece of older *kapa* that had been folded away in the house, frayed at the creases but the diamond pattern still smooth and defined, almost as if the lines of dye had just dried. He can't help thinking that all along this cloth, saved through the generations, was meant for just this purpose.

Just before sunrise, he walks down to the sea. Tiny globes of phosphorescence accompany his steps in the sand as he follows the trail to the cove where he keeps his one-man canoe. He sees it as a favorable sign—the divine ancestors of night lighting his path. Placing the smaller bundle of remains at the front, he paddles past the breakers and the tranquil areas good for fishing, deep enough so that the currents will not wash his offering back on shore.

When the canoe stills, he feels the dark surface of the sea with his hands and looks up into the sky. He follows the smooth layer of clouds resting over the mountains to the red patches budding on the horizon, as though they might gift him with a message. Closing his eyes, feeling the movement of the ocean beneath him, he says a final aloha to his father and sends him to the womb of the earth,

gently releasing the bundle and watching it float and spin as it is swallowed by water. Then he lowers the lei he made, a double strand of plumeria, where it floats next to the canoe.

He paddles back quickly, not looking behind him for fear that the bundle will have once again risen to the surface. The sky is fast growing with light, a glimmer of color is developing in the mountains, and the water is losing its silvery darkness. After pulling the canoe onto the shore, he bathes in the tepid water. The sand swirls around him as the waves break on land and composure washes in. James is cleansed, his muscles stripped of their burden, his limbs light as the feathers of the *kōlea*.

And all at once the shades of night are drawn, the mountains and sea collide with the break of day, and in front of him the house appears, suddenly abloom with yellow light.

It is later that day, when James's movements are dulled and quiet, that Eliza finds an opening and slips into the house. For the first time, her father has taken one of the papayas she still leaves on the front step, and in his distraction has left the door ajar. She looks around, her eyes darting, absorbing the gloom and the musty air.

The dim rooms are so stark and unfamiliar that it leaves her cold, and in the back of her consciousness, just touching but not enough to alert her to its presence, is the thought of her grandfather's body. As she walks the halls she guards herself against the sight of it, but finds the first room filled only with open boxes of photographs and letters, worn books with soft, yellowed pages stacked in neat piles in the corners. Feather necklaces, cloths mottled with holes and stains, and other relics that have been gathering dust and mold in one of the garages are now spread on the tables and floors leading to the back of the house. Carefully circuiting a mound of dried lei, she stops in front of her grandparents' bedroom.

James has laid out a large *kapa* blanket, the one that has always hung in the study next to her grandfather's desk. He is tying a small pouch made of the same cloth around his neck, muttering softly. Soon Eliza can make out the words he is repeating in a single tone as though chanting a mantra. She knows these words as well as she knows the touch of her skin, her brother's favorite foods, or the stretch of beach leading from the house. Has heard them in school nearly every year as a child growing up, and has herself repeated them over and over in memorization.

Ua mau ke ea o ka ʻāina i ka pono, Ua mau ke ea o ka ʻāina i ka pono; the life of the land is preserved in righteousness.

She whispers the state motto once along with him without thinking; he turns, a strange smile curving on his face, and in the lamplight she can see his shaved head. When she gasps it is then that recognition forms on his features.

"I thought you were a spirit," he says slowly. "You knew to come."

"Dad," she says, her voice croaking, "I've been worried about you."

He turns back around, and though stiff with apprehension, Eliza wills her legs to move, wishing that she had just dropped the food off and left like always, had never searched for the opportunity to come inside. Her mother had warned her to leave him alone, not to worry. Had said that her father would take care of things soon enough and all she needed to be concerned about was her final exams. Your grandfather would want you to get good grades, to get into a good college, she'd said. Besides, even *he* can't stay in there forever.

Eliza searches her father's face as she approaches, tensing at his faraway gaze and the dark rings that swallow his eyes.

"Dad …"

He doesn't respond, only folds his hands over the uneven blanket and looks just beyond where they stand. Her heart begins to pulse in her ears and frost sizzles through her body as he fingers the small pouch around his neck, drawn and tied with a few strings of light-brown cord. It looks familiar somehow, and she wonders if she's seen it, or something like it, before.

"What's in here, Dad?" she asks, looking down at the cloth. For a moment her eyes trace the patterns, the dye an ochre as light as sand.

"This is *kapu. Kapu*."

He cradles the pouch now as he speaks, and the lei *palaoa* flashes in her mind, the whale tooth ornament strung with a mass of tiny braids of human hair that her grandfather had first shown her as a child. High chiefs alone were allowed to possess it, he told her, fastened around their necks when they went into battle. She looks closer at the twine hanging from her father's neck, picturing the dark strands, hair of the high chiefs, which held carved bone. But this is the color of her hair. Of her grandfather's. Before she can open her mouth he speaks again, his tone returned to that of the chant.

"I am the next ruling chief. It is I who must officiate the duties of the *akua*. It is I who must carry on the *kapu*."

As he lifts the *kapa* into his arms, something slips, shattering to the floor.

But Eliza is already running, blind steps leading her out the back to the beach. She flashes through the sand and along the water until her muscles refuse, then plunges into the sea with her clothes still on. She pulls herself along the shore, not fearing eels or sharks or man-of-war, until her arms and shoulders fail, then walks again until she reaches the end. Sitting on a low stump beneath whispering ironwoods, her arms wrapped around her legs and huddled close, she rocks back and forth with her head down, her hair swirling like leaves in the wind, not looking at the sea.

She doesn't know how to explain what she has seen, or what she thinks she has seen, for she isn't sure of the meaning of it all. Of her father's changed face, his shaved head, the deep pitch of his voice. Of the *kapa* and the cord and the crash. She wants to shut it away forever like the light now kept from her eyes, leaving only fiery stars beneath her tightly shut lids. It is as though in an in-

stant the world she knows has been deposed, replaced with an altered form of the original imperceptible to everyone but her. Her mind spins with the effort of rationalizing, of denying the truth that lingers just beyond the images she recalls, ready to slip over her tongue. If she says it out loud she will have admitted it to herself and then what will she do?

She lifts her face to the sun, orange and red burning around her. For a moment her father's face looms like an apparition in the clouds, in the patterns the wind leaves on the sand. For a moment, she is swept away, along with her father, out to the far-reaching sea.

Lisa Asagi

SAID

Said. It was said that these things never happened when anyone was looking and that first and foremost, nothing ever happens. It was as if these useless phrases had been carved at the edges of the island, giving its citizens the logic behind their seeming boredom. People watched TV at night and ate snacks between commercials. And when they dreamt, it felt as if their souls tore out of their bodies, careened out of their houses, desperate for an open window, soaring above their parked F150s and Camrys, carousing and solving mysteries with complete strangers, or finding previously unknown living rooms and classrooms, some dank and warm, some brightly lit. Everyone wore each other's clothing in these dreams and no one had names. People sang, survived gunshot wounds, and cried like never before. Because of this, the city, the only city in the world to do this, shut itself down completely at night, except for the twenty-six branches of a local restaurant, a 24-hour chain that glittered seven days a week, where the sleepwalkers convened with the insomniacs and the dreaming.

Lisa Asagi

FIRST

At first it was just one egg. Then it was another. And then another. Which family do you come from? Which one are you? On the island of various, numerous, saturated, unstable choices, you could answer or not answer this particular question. First, you would have to surmise if it was actually a question, in the true sense of a question as a request for an answer. This was the case as a large portion of the population had evolved or reverted to communicating solely via questions they did not expect to be answered. It was not that they understood their questions to be impossible to answer or at all hypothetical. More, it was a belief, small and personally rampant, that their questions would never be heard or taken seriously as in need of a definite answer. "Do you know what I mean?" "Why would she ever do something like that?" "How could anyone think they could get away with something like that?" "How can nobody say anything?" "Doesn't anybody care about anything anymore?" More than a century of questions unanswered and ignored, created an unusual weather system that was never before recorded. The volume of humidity, measured in percentage of moisture and caused by pressure in the air, climbed rapidly, arching in the mid-70s and spiking in 2005. The air quality was visually pristine but almost impossible to breathe. Even simple questions caused impossible and stifling days. But that is another story altogether.

Dave Manu Bird

GUILTY IN YAP COURT

"I knew it. I just knew it would happen," I muttered to myself as I whacked the steering wheel of the hated Subaru Brat with my fist. How I loathed that pseudo-truck.

I was headed back to the education office at Alaw after a Board of Education meeting when I looked in my rear-view mirror and saw the flashing lights on a blue-and-white police pickup. I pulled over and parked underneath the massive mango trees across the road from the Rai View Hotel, thankful for the shade on that hot, humid day. When I cut the engine, the sound of booming thunder instantly died away.

The police officer approached me. "Sir, do you know that you are illegally operating a defective motor vehicle?"

I couldn't see how I could deny the fact since even a deaf person could have heard that truck coming from miles away. "Well, ma'am, I guess the muffler sort of got worse all of a sudden," I allowed.

"I have to ticket you anyway," the officer said, and she did.

Several weeks later, I left my office and walked down the hill to the courthouse to face judgment. My ticket indicated that I had to be there at 1:00 p.m. I was surprised when I entered the courtroom. It was dark. I turned on the lights and had a seat in the back to await my fate. I waited for some time by myself, getting more puzzled by the minute. No one else appeared—neither clerk nor judge nor fellow miscreants. I finally stood up and wandered into the main office of the state justices.

"*Mogethin*, Tinan," I greeted the justices' secretary, who was also my neighbor in the village. "What's up?"

"*Oiy, mogethin*, Qarcheaq," she said, using my Yapese nickname.

"What happened to court?" I inquired. "I'm here because of my summons."

"*Maang ea* summons *rom?*" Tinan asked, looking perplexed. "I don't know of any summons for you. Anyway, there's never court on Wednesday afternoons."

"But my ticket here says that I'm supposed to appear today at 1:00 p.m.," I explained as I pulled it out of my basket.

"*Mu pii ngog*," she said with hand extended.

I gave her my citation, which she carefully scrutinized. I prepared a betel nut chew while she rummaged through her files, looking for something. "This is strange," she finally said. "A copy of this ticket was never filed with the court by the arresting officer as the law requires. The date is really funny kine, too. You had better see Tharngan." With that, she ushered me into the chambers of the chief justice of the Yap State Court.

"*Mogethin*, Qarcheaq!" Tharngan exclaimed when he saw me. His exuberant greeting gave me momentary pause. Ironically enough, I had once been Tharngan's supervisor when he was social studies curriculum specialist for the Yap Department of Education, but I doubted that anyone had ever "supervised" him in his life. I admired Tharngan's intellect and knowledge; at the same time, I knew that he could be arrogantly independent and did not suffer fools lightly. I long suspected that Fanechigiy (my boss) and I were on his fools list. Still, he was gracious and escorted me into his office.

"*Moey nga qaraay*," he said with a sweep of his arm. "*Mu par nga cheeya*." I did as I was told and sat where he indicated. "*Mu feek boech ea langad ngom*," he commanded as he reached into a beat-up Budweiser carton. He proceeded to stuff my basket with handfuls of betel nuts and wads of pepper leaves. Tharngan often had piles of *langad* to share because he bought extra chews from impoverished elders who lived mostly outside the money economy so that they would have dollars for lamp kerosene and the like.

"*Ke rii mu magaer*," I said, thanking him.

We then spent half an hour chewing *langad* and talking story with two old men who were already in Tharngan's chambers. Tharngan often consulted with his elders when questions of custom and tradition came before the court. Our conversation turned to a fine point about land stewardship, and it quickly overwhelmed my pathetic and inadequate Yapese language skills. My mind started to wander as it sometimes did in such situations.

I looked around Tharngan's chambers. The room was a mess. Dozens of legal tomes were scattered in piles on the floor and in disarray on the office shelves. Beer cans with their tops cut off littered his desk. They were overflowing with old reddish-black betel nut quids and cigarette butts. Little quivering clouds of minute fruit flies pulsated over the desiccated chews. Motes emanating from the layer of dust covering everything in the room hovered in a shaft of sunlight that shone through the window. The smell of mold and mildew from the books and

the ancient air conditioner wheezing in rusted agony stung my nose.

"Why is it you've stopped by?" Tharngan finally asked, turning his attention from the old men to me. I handed him my citation. He examined it for some time, occasionally muttering comments about dimwit police officers. He obviously noted the date and time of my court appearance. Then he said, "Tell me about it."

I proceeded to relate at length what happened. I explained that one morning Fanechigiy directed me to attend a Board of Education meeting in his stead because he had other conflicting meetings and that he told me I had to drive his truck. I protested because the truck had a bad muffler, but he insisted because it wouldn't look right if I walked to the meeting. "I don't know what the big deal was," I told Tharngan. "I could have gotten to the meeting in Keng in ten minutes by walking down the Nimar village footpath." I then told him about being stopped and cited and getting into a snit fit with Fanechigiy because he got off scot-free. He had failed to heed my recommendations to fix his truck, yet it was I who was stuck going to court. "You know what he's like," I reminded the chief justice. "He vacillates whenever he has to make a decision, even if it's something dumb like taking care of his stupid muffler." I was tired of being his fall guy.

"*Ka yog*. Enough already," Tharngan said, interrupting my diatribe. "Never mind all that stuff. The basic question is this: Were you driving a vehicle with a defective muffler on a public roadway?"

"Yes."

He then reached down and took off one of his rubber slippers. He smacked his desk with the slipper as if it were a gavel. "I hereby find you guilty," he declared. "I fine you one dollar. Pay the clerk on your way out."

I sat there stunned by my unexpected court venue and speedy trial. Little did I know that surprises weren't finished that day. Tharngan returned the zori to his foot and then reached into a desk drawer and extracted a large bottle of whiskey. He delivered a little speech: "Now that the rule of law has been upheld and justice has been served, let us celebrate."

The four of us spent the next several hours polishing off the liquor. The two old men were delighted by my testimony and Tharngan's verdict. Huge smiles exposed their betel nut-blackened teeth. They assured me that they couldn't wait to get back to their village to tell Fanechigiy, who also lived there, all about my trial. Their words were a portend that I was too naive to heed. Like most people in powerful government positions, Fanechigiy did not handle bad press well.

After paying my one-dollar fine late that afternoon in spite of an alcoholic fog, I stumbled back up the hill to Alaw even if I didn't have to. I wanted to collect any office messages I had received as well as retrieve my calendar of appointments for the next day. When I arrived, it was just about quitting time. Fanechigiy was not happy with my pie-eyed condition. Because I had taken vacation leave for the afternoon and because my adventure with the Yap State legal

system was his fault, I thought there was nothing Fanechigiy could do to me, given my trial and inebriations—that is until a year or so later when he finally made a solid decision for once and fired my ass.

Dave Manu Bird

HĀNAU HANA HOU (PART 1)

Tinan and I were stretched out on the rug-covered floor of a darkened classroom at Hawai'i Loa College. The floor was comfortable enough, or so I hoped for Tinan. Our heads were sharing a pillow. Tinan was lying on her side in what I teasingly told her was her tripod position. Her still small but growing *'ōpu* formed one leg of her tripod, so to speak, because it prevented her from rolling over easily. We were listening to an audiotape of ocean waves. After a while, I could hear Tinan's breath start to deepen, so I knew that the Lamaze class relaxation exercise was working for her. For me, it wasn't. I had too much to think about. I was busy remembering my failures.

I opened my eyes and peered into the darkness, which hid not only the instructor but also the pictorial charts covering the classroom walls. I could see those charts in my mind. They included diagrams and illustrations of uteruses in various stages of stretch and other stressed-out female anatomical features. I didn't believe the bizarre situation I was in.

You bird-brained dodo, I said to myself as we lay there. *You stay one old faht. What the hell you doing, eh?*

I knew that I was not the only one asking that question, given the wary looks we had been receiving from the young couples preparing for the arrival of their babies. I could imagine what they were thinking about us: the old shark-bait haole man with wrinkles in his face and the cafe-au-lait colored girl with the billowy mass of kinky black hair. I say "girl" because although Tinan was a twenty-year-old woman, she was a petite little thing who looked no older than fourteen or fifteen, a fact, which—I'm sure—fueled comments behind our backs. The other birth trainees had no way of knowing that this was not my first Lamaze class, that I was not preparing for the birth of my baby, and that Tinan was not my lover but—in stark contrast—my *hānai* daughter.

I closed my eyes and tried to relax like Tinan. The attempt was futile; I felt fearful. Tinan was the first of my children to make me confront the dreaded G-word. I didn't feel old enough to be a grandpa, yet at the same time, it wasn't the G-word that caused my fears. Simply put, I was scared for Tinan's future, for *pēpē*'s future, and for the whole damned extended family's future. There were too many unknowns. *What if The Flake's family claims* pēpē *and takes the little one away forever?* I felt like I was losing it. Because of circumstances, I was caught in a parent trap that most certainly did not feature Hayley Mills.

Ocean waves rolled on in audio as the relaxation exercise continued. I was

in no mood for oceans that Saturday morning even though my thoughts began to drift across the vast Pacific to Yap in the Western Caroline Islands, Tinan's place of birth.

I lay there next to Tinan and thought about her, trying to conjure up her image that day when I first walked down the stone-paved path into Nimar village many years before and stopped at the housing compound of her first dad and biological father, Rubothin. I'm sure she was there, a seven-year-old girl hanging out around the family's thatch-roofed cookhouse with a horde of her younger relatives and neighbors. Her wide grin must have made her stand out because I cannot remember any time in the village without seeing her beautiful smile. Her first mom, Banyan, gave me directions to Tinan's uncle's house, which was my destination.

I continued along the village path winding through the jungle and around small taro patch gardens to Pugram's house site, a swarm of *nīele* children acting as my guides. At that time, I was a UH-Mānoa faculty member on official business in Micronesia. Pugram, Tinan's uncle, was an educator whom I had worked with in Honolulu and who had become a close friend. Little did I know that day that in a couple of years my nuclear family would move to that village and build a house on a piece of Pugram's land and that our lives would be changed forever because of it. How could I have ever imagined then that our Hawai'i extended family would be doubled in size by a Yapese one and that my wife and I would gain a daughter as well?

Is this hāpai *woman really the same person as that little girl?* I asked myself in the fashion typical of those who reach Oldfartdom. *Was I really* po'o'ōpae *enough to drive this special person away from home? How come dis faddah nevah know bes?*

The classroom lights went on, and mercifully, the Lamaze instructor turned off the tape player. Once again, the anatomical charts blazed before my eyes. *Will all those parts work and* pēpē *arrive safely?*

"Now we're going to practice delivery positions and related breathing," the teacher announced. "When your cervix dilates to ten centimeters, you need to start pushing baby through the birth canal. Depending on circumstances," she continued, "there are several positions you can assume, especially if you are not yet in the delivery room and don't have knee stirrups."

We began practicing knee raises and breathing for the expulsion phase of birth. "Men," said the instructor at one point, "at this stage, it sometimes helps to support your partner's back from behind while you lift the knees. Elevating the upper body can also be oxytocic. Let's try it. Remember, Moms, no pushing until the actual time comes. Just do the breathing exercises."

I sat down on the floor, and Tinan leaned back between my legs, the back of her head resting on my chest. I reached underneath her arms and around her torso and grasped her legs behind the knees.

"Okay," said the instructor. "Contraction starting. Take a cleansing breath. Lift the legs. That's it. Now panting breaths for sixty seconds."

I couldn't believe what I was doing as I looked down across Tinan's body nestled in my arms. I had her legs pulled up and her knees spread wide apart. I felt immensely embarrassed and self-conscious even though I knew that when the time for *pēpē* came, there would be nothing left to the imagination. I felt filthy touching and feeling my daughter like that. I tried to fall back on my old emergency rescue experience and psychologically divorce myself from the immediate circumstances as rescue personnel must do to keep their sanity, but to no avail. I wanted to hug my daughter in a fatherly way and tell her that she was precious, not open her legs wide in a public place.

Bird-Nerd, what the hell you doing, eh? I asked myself once more, but I guess I already knew the answer.

Like many times before, Tinan needed my support, physically and emotionally. I couldn't turn my back as I had done the year before during our estrangement. The memory of our arguments and shouting matches and her running away from home and her college studies again flooded me with the shame I had been trying to shake for a long time. I couldn't help thinking that maybe she wouldn't have had a mindless fling with The Flake and then come home *hāpai* if I had been a more patient father. In spite of my thoughts, however, I knew that I had to overcome my feelings of parental failure and survive that Lamaze class. I had to persevere so that Tinan and *pēpē* would make it, too—even if deep down I didn't feel strong enough or wise enough to be Tinan's daddy any more.

The weekly class was finally over. After our many hours inside the Hawai'i Loa classroom building, the late morning sun was blinding, for it was an exceptionally clear February day. The pali of the Ko'olau towered over us, the light yellowish-green patches of *uluhē* and kukui standing out in sharp contrast to the dark green areas of the cliff face.

"Oi, tank God *pau* da kine, eh?" I said as we climbed into the pickup truck.

Tinan raised and lowered her eyebrows in a microsecond, communicating a Yapese affirmative. I pointed the truck out of the parking lot, through Castle Junction, and down the Pali Highway towards Kailua and home. We were passing Church Row when Tinan turned to me.

"Dad?" she addressed me. "Tanks 'eh for your *kōkua*."

Instead of making me feel honored and appreciated as her words were meant, Tinan's mahalo made me feel immensely old and sad. Fatherhood had somehow taken on a whole new twist from what I had ever expected.

Elsha Bohnert

MOTHER OF DEMONS

Borneo

Something made me do it. I was six years old, getting ready to bathe, when I wondered what it would be like to scream. Thinking it made me giddy. I had never screamed really. I was quiet. Screaming just to scream? I dropped my clothes on the floor and walked over to the white-tiled, square tub in the corner, filled with water from the catchment in our backyard. A fine film of sediment, unhindered by the cotton-cloth filter around the faucet, had settled on the bottom of the tub. Careful not to disturb it, I took a scoop of water from the top with a long-handled dipping pan, poured it over me, and watched it dribble down to the drain in the floor, leaving little puddles along the way. Everything was noonday still. What would it be like to scream?

My first try was a quick squeal, high up through my nose. I liked it. Try again. Deep breath and aaaah! Scary, but fun. Okay, all the way now, mouth wide open and … AAAAAH! My voice pierced the air. Was that really my voice? The curious silence that followed felt electric. It made tiny specks of light swirl all around me in a crazy happy dance. I got ready to scream again when all hell broke loose. The door flew open. Mamma rushed in, eyes wild, followed by Auntie Nini and the maids. "What happened? What's wrong?!" Everybody was yelling at once. The maids jockeyed at the door, peering in, trying to catch a glimpse. What happened? Poison toad? Snake? What? I'm standing by the tub, naked, still clutching the dipping pan.

"*Meitje!*" Mamma is shaking me now, shouting. She never shouts. Her face is right by mine. I can smell the dry duskiness of her thick black hair. One of her front teeth bears traces of her lipstick. "What's the matter? What's wrong?"

she cries. My arms begin to hurt from the pressure of her fingers. I've never seen her this way. She usually leaves me alone with Auntie Nini, even when the sirens went off and we had to fly out the gate to reach our neighbor's bomb shelter. It was always Auntie who, asthma and all, grabbed me tight and didn't let me go until the All Clear signal was given. A soft breeze tickles my skin and I reach down to scratch my knee.

"Nothing, Mamma," I say. "Nothing is wrong." A baby gecko zigzags crazily across the window screen and in the distance the *mudhin* rings the call to prayer, which also serves to drive away evil spirits.

Uncle Willie is back from the War. He survived prison camp in Japan, torture, and working as a slave laborer in the Nihama coal mines. He is short and dark, talks about hell a lot, loves to sing, and smells of clove cigarettes. He bought a big motorcycle and likes to make it roar like an angry beast. Sometimes he puts me on his lap and tells me stories about strange and beautiful women that live in *waringin* trees and only come out at midnight. "Do you know what happens when it rains and the sun shines at the same time?" he asks. I don't know and am almost afraid to hear the answer. I just look up at him, trying not to blink my eyes.

Uncle wears his hair slicked back with his favorite pomade of *makasser* oil. He is rolling himself another fat clove cigarette, sealing the thin paper edge by running it quickly over his tongue, then pinching and twisting both ends shut. "It means the devil is throwing a party in hell and everyone is invited to beat up the goddamn fuckin' Japs!" he grins before lighting it. I wonder where hell is and if they have a school there. Mamma only allows me to go to Dutch school even if it is run by Roman Catholic nuns. I like Mrs. Tuinema, who is not a nun and comes to our class on Friday afternoons. She knows every song in the Dutch songbook and teaches us embroidery and how to knit long wool scarves.

"Goddamn fuckin' Japs." Uncle Willie spits. I wonder silently if I know any Japs. Maybe the school principal is a Japs. Or Sinterklaas who stuffs you in a sack if you're bad and takes you back to Spain with him. Uncle Willie grimaces, taps the ash from his cigarette, then jumps up and says, "Hey, you wanna hear a good song?" Without waiting he launches into a series of songs about the majesty of our Fatherland, of dunes sparkling in the sun, brave sailors crossing the oceans, and mighty oaks falling in the storm. I know them all—they're in Mrs. Tuinema's Dutch songbook—and I happily sing them with him even though I've never seen sparkling dunes or the famed Fatherland. They're stowed away in the same category as snow, wool socks, and winter scarves. Then he sweeps into a song about a young woman with long black hair and a garland of flowers, swaying her hips as she pounds rice, all the while pretending not to notice her lover hiding in the wild grass, watching her every move. I know that song too. It's full of wanting and needing, needing, needing what you can't have. Such a beautiful melody, but the song is so very sad. Uncle stretches the notes until I can't stand it. He lets his

baritone crack just so and it's like having to go to the bathroom but having to hold it in. I can hardly breathe from the heat and vibrato in Uncle's voice. Mamma forbids me to be alone with him.

Mr. Hartono lives across the street. He has no wife, only dogs. He beckons me to come over. He wants to give me candy, but I'm scared of his dogs.

I don't like to eat. Mamma makes me stay at the table until I finish everything on my plate. When she leaves the room, I sprinkle half the sugar pot over my plate, hoping it will taste better. It doesn't. Mamma doesn't like to eat either. Her voice is thin now, and dry, as if she has completely run out of songs.

Every day before sundown our gardener Karto lights the anti-mosquito coils and rubs citrus oil on my face, neck, legs, and arms. I love how rough his hands are and how smooth the oil feels.

I wonder if I'll ever have breasts like my girlfriends. Helena will not spend the night anymore since I tried to touch hers. She and Lenie smoke. Lenie really looks good smoking. She is Chinese and has long, slender fingers and long painted fingernails. Her boyfriend is our school's champion athlete and he is stop-your-heart-handsome. He and Lenie bicycle to school holding hands. My hands are as big as a man's. Good for playing octaves on the piano but not at all pretty for holding a cigarette.

I've been waiting by the bathroom a long time. I'm on the second day of my period. Menstruation, Mamma calls it. I hate wearing the big cloth belt with buttons for the pad made of layered terrycloth. It's no good. It soaks through in no time and it is soaked badly now. The bathroom door is closed, the light is on, but I'm not hearing any sounds. Maybe someone forgot to turn off the light. Maybe nobody is in it and I'm waiting for nothing. Better check. I turn the handle. Not locked. Open the door and … What's he doing? It's making me all shivery. That week Mamma made Uncle Willie move out.

America

Troy is doing the rounds, looking at everyone's paintings. He's considered the bad boy in art and he is teaching a class in Intuitive Painting. It is my first formal art class and I wonder if I should be nervous. We're in the upstairs corner classroom at Linekona. The sun is bearing down on the tables closest to the tall glass windows. Troy comes around to where I'm working. Squinting at my strokes, he says, "Why so timid? Where are your demons?" I quickly draw a crooked black dog with sharp teeth but Troy has already moved on and I know I was just trying to please him.

Ayako spreads her canvas on the floor so she can work walking around

it, throwing colors down at random—big blobs, streaks, circles, dots—as if she doesn't give a flip where they land. I like to work close to her, hoping to gain some of that freedom through osmosis. Last year Ayako took out every piece of art she made, all her paintings, drawings, and ceramics, and destroyed them all. She tells me I'm the color of deep salmon and that she liked me better before I started meditating because I was more honest then. She says now I'm pretending not to be angry. Ayako was four when America dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, two miles away from where she lay in bed. Her father was burned and died an agonizing death. He had given her gifts of beautiful papers that she kept in her treasure box. All of it was destroyed by the bomb, turned to ash. On my visit to Hiroshima we entered the War Memorial together and cried.

In the dojo on Maunakea Street, Shihan Kiyohisa Hirano, legendary karate master and revered founder of the dojo, is addressing our class. "Open your mind," he says, "Open mind so big, airplane can fly through. And every day eat carrot. Get big fat carrot. Is strong energy from earth." I like carrots and I like him a lot. He tells me I think too much.

Shihan again: "When you get hit, you say 'Os, thank you!' because is good thing it happen to you. You no pay attention, you get hit. And when you get sick, you say 'Os, thank you!' Get sick is because you no balance. And when you die, please, you must say, 'Os, thank you very much!' Because death is most best thing can happen to you."

A short Asian woman with bad teeth and gray hair cut like a boy's attends every class, coming early, leaving late. She stays at the periphery, doing her own thing, moving like a shadow. Even though she is a black belt and wears one as worn and faded as Shihan's, she doesn't quite seem to be all there. Or as my friend Dee would put it, "She's two french fries short of a Happy Meal." But I don't pay much attention to her. I'm too busy being a good student, showing how sincere I am in my efforts, how utterly special. If by chance I draw her as my sparring partner, I go into patronizingly slow motion to make sure I won't hurt her. So, of course, one day she got me, punched me right in the face, sending my glasses flying to the floor. Completely humiliated and shocked out of my wits, all I could do was yell. It never even occurred to me to thank her.

Daniel asks me what I did when my car got rear-ended.

"I screamed." I tell him.

"Why?"

"Oh well, maybe I'm a screamer," I answer, keeping it light.

Daniel is my naturopath. He's usually brilliant but what kind of question was that?

"You've been in several accidents, right? Did you scream with each one?"

"Four accidents over ten years, none of them my fault. Three small ones, just rear-enders, but one was really bad, a frontal collision. I never got hurt, though, not even with the bad one. Did I scream? Guess so. I told you I'm a screamer."

Where is he going with this?

"What do you remember of that big accident?"

"Oh, watching that car coming toward me, slow-motion, and then the shock of metal tearing into metal. That was horrible."

"Good," he nods, "the universe is trying to help you get back into balance by giving you the sound medicine you need."

Sound medicine? What is he talking about?

"Did you have insurance?" Daniel wants to know.

I tell him I didn't, but fortunately the drivers who caused the accidents did. Any insurance money I received I used for other things. My car was an old wreck anyway. That big accident, though, was a bonanza. I got a new car and spent the rest of the money on a trip to New York.

"Aha," Daniel smiles, "now, let me ask you, would you be interested in getting what you want in life without needing the drama of car accidents?"

Oh shit. Is that what I've been doing? I'm crazier than I thought.

"Here is your medicine." Daniel continues, "As soon as you get home, grab two of your biggest pans and bang them together as loud as you can while you scream bloody murder. Make your own metal-on-metal sound so the universe doesn't have to arrange it for you. And pay for your own trips."

Going north on H-2 from where it opens wide after the split from H-1 to the downhill bridge over Kipapa Valley is about four miles, just right for glorious non-stop, all-out screaming in the car.

"Don't forget my teeth," Mamma rasps. She has trouble breathing, but she wants to make sure she'll look good in her coffin. She has been near death so often, we all know the drill. The nurse with the oversized Okie accent, who calls all her patients "pumpkin," comes in to tell us they're ready to drain the fluid out of Mamma's lungs again. A chill goes through my body. Mamma has always been thin, but she is nothing but brittle bones now. The thought of a big needle pushing into her sick lungs is too much for me. Daniel, what can I do? What kind of medicine does Mamma need?

Two days before Mamma dies, she asks for her hairdresser. What? She wants her hair what? Colored *and* permed? Oops. You don't want to lie in your coffin with a head full of stiff curls, do you? Apparently she did. The funeral home's pink spotlight shining on her face for a more lifelike appearance makes the curls look not only stiffer but also a bright Ronald McDonald orange. I almost burst into a loud laugh. Her teeth are in, though. Mouth clenched into a tight fake smile. That's when it hits me. LAUGHTER, that's it! LAUGHTER! Mamma never laughed out loud. Ever. She

laughed without a sound, like a thief in hiding, covering her mouth and letting only her shoulders bob up and down a few times. Laughing should have been her medicine. We should have made her laugh with her mouth wide open. We should have tickled her until she gasped for air. That's what her lungs were screaming for. She should have been a screamer. She should have screamed her head off and screamed at the War and the miserable tyrant she married and the relentless poverty and the stupid TB and the goddamn lies that tore the family apart. She should have screamed out her hallelujahs and demanded to have Jesus return right now instead of waiting for deliverance, praying in the closet day after day between her polyester dresses and molding suitcases. And she should have learned to drive a car. In her time, back when we still had money, that was a cool thing to do. A woman driving a car was formidable, the ultimate turn-on. She told me so herself. So what was she so scared about? In America everybody drives. No big deal. Why didn't she? And she used to sing. She loved to sing. Why did she stop? She should have sung to the sun and the moon and the farthest stars. She should have howled at every joke whether it was funny or not. She should have cracked up laughing at all her fears about what the neighbors might say, at her efforts to control us by under-table kicks and over-table frowns, at her unwritten lists of rules, at her Food-for-Love Program, at her judgments, her endless vanity, at … everything! She should have laughed, damn it. She should have laughed.

During the War Mamma worked as a nurse in Batavia's main hospital. She bicycled to work, navigating through the city's many trouble spots, got shot at, shrapnel still in her left leg. She sold off her prized gold jewelry for food, and managed to keep us out of Japanese concentration camp. She insisted on sending me to the best Dutch schools. She tried giving me religion. She tried to protect me from sex. In the end she was convinced she had failed, that I had turned into a slut and would end up in hell, depriving her of a carefree heavenly retirement hanging out with Jesus.

"To stay well you need a dose of crazy." – Daniel

Troy is watching me work on a structure of chicken wire glued over with layers of newspaper. I've finished adding a set of bulbous tentacles that protrude at odd angles and am now oozing black paint over the whole ragged construction and mushing the paint in with both hands. The piece is getting to look really gross, even sinister. Someone is playing a CD of an obscure piece of apocalyptic opera music. The soprano's shrieks pierce the air like needles, but I don't care. I'm in the zone.

"What the hell are you making?" Troy frowns.

"Beats me. It's pretty ugly, yeah?"

Troy shakes his head, "It's so sick, it's beautiful."

“Thanks,” I smile, “must be my demons.”

Amalia Bueno

SUNDAY BEST

The well-dressed Mexicans are looking for fresh shrimp.

They trudge down the red dirt road, made soft now in some parts with the early morning rain. The heels of the best-groomed male leading the pack catch small clumps of dirt, the red mud hanging to the sides of his left shoe with every step. The sun reflects off the silky material of his impeccably tailored, silver long-sleeved shirt. The shiny shirt and the layer of pomade on his hair make him glint at certain angles as he struts down the narrow road.

His group walks in our direction toward a set of several tarps situated together ‘Ewa of a dirt lane leading to the middle of nowhere. Our tarps, arranged in a row, are separated by a jumble of vehicles. Among them is a Pathfinder, squat with its muddy tires. A humungous, shiny bad black Ford truck with tinted windows and muscular hydraulics. Off to the side—like an outsider looking in at some of the older and rusting models of Toyotas and Dodges—sits a seemingly out of place classic, blue convertible Jaguar. The car looks politely comfortable in the company of other cars of its kind.

The Mexican man smiles as he approaches us. “*Hola, amigos!*” he says to no one in particular. Nobody responds. We are in the middle of unloading chairs, tables, wooden boxes, and trays of food covered in heavy-duty aluminum foil. It was going to be a long day and an even longer night.

The Mexican gestures to what looks like his wife, maybe three brothers or uncles, and two of probably his own children. They stay a polite distance away, turning their backs to admire the mountain range mist and lush vegetation fed by the mountain stream. Their leader proceeds toward us.

“I beg your pardon? Excuse me? Ma’am?” he says, louder, placing himself directly in front of me.

“Alooooha!” I greet him with what I thought he would expect of us locals. “You lost? You looking for the beach? The big North Shore waves?” I say, in a sing-song and pleasant cadence. I always tried to be nice to tourists. No doubt this side of the island needed their dollars. And so long as they didn’t come back to buy any land, they were fine by me and could roam wherever they liked.

Jonah, my husband, looks warily in my direction and rolls his eyes. He has to set up before Mr. Lee gets here and he doesn’t have time to entertain a wayward outsider. But Jonah’s internal scanner goes on like clockwork. Anytime anyone from the outside got too close, his radar went up. After all, it was totally illegal for us to be here.

“What’s up, *amigo*?” Jonah drawls local style, not moving from where he stands. After a withering look from me, Jonah decides to walk over. He extends his hand to the stranger. “This here is the gang. Who are you?” He wants to get the pleasantries over with quickly.

“We are looking, yes? For fresh shrimp? This is the right place? Can you help us to buy?” The man answers my husband’s question with other questions in a distinctly non-local accent.

I had heard them speaking what I thought was Spanish when they were still far off. Speaking loud and in spontaneous bursts, the way immigrants have a tendency to do when they are comfortable and expressive in their mother tongue, oblivious to the English speakers who suddenly become hushed around them. It reminded me of when I used to go to Fujioka’s as a child with my grandmother. My *lola* always talked loud and gestured, as if she were angry or agitated, while only comparing the price of eggs on sale.

“How much to pay for the shrimp? You have?” The handsomeMexican holds his hands out, ready to bargain or inspect the merchandise. Jonah looks him over from head to toe, all business, unblinking.

“We only want to buy fresh shrimp. This is the place?”

A slow smile forms on Jonah’s thick lips until he is grinning wide, his white teeth stark against his dark lips.

“There’s no shrimp here,” he says, a little brusque with a touch of repressed irritation.

“Hey gang,” Jonah looks over at our group. “Anybody know where this bruddah can get shrimp?” he calls out, enunciating the word shrimp with a twang, and raising his eyebrows.

“Fresh shrimp … around hea,” he chortles, making an expansive sweep with arms and hands. All of us burst into laughter.

The Mexican looks puzzled.

Uncle Mateo, who is stooped over and just opening the pointed roof on one of the wooden triangle boxes with the neat, round holes on its sides, stops to turn and to look at the visitor.

“No mo’ shrimp, brah …” he guffaws. He brings out a beautiful fighting

rooster from the box and kisses the chicken on its beak. "…But get plenny chicken!" he yells. He offers the cock to the man. The group explodes again in a wave of laughs. When the sounds die down, everybody returns to what they were doing. The Mexican stands there baffled.

I take him by his elbow and lead him off to the side to join his family. He seems like such a nice man. When I return to the tents, I cozy up to my husband, who just shakes his head, as if I had taken in another stray cat to add to the collection of felines in our home.

"They were lost," I tell him in the most innocent voice I can make sound natural.

"Shrimp. Yeah, right. Dumb tourists. They should go back to where they came from. Not stick their noses into where they no belong," he snaps. "The shrimp must be good, cause look at the people ova hea. They *all* like buy shrimp." He pulls a cooler from the back of our truck and slams it on the grass and starts dumping ice into it.

"It's their first visit to the North Shore. They really like it here on this side," I explain, as I help with him with releasing the legs of a long folding table.

"Yeah right. They came to check out the chicken fight and get in on some insider action. You cannot be too trusting of outsiders that you know nothing about."

"Honey, nobody would come dressed like that to a chicken fight. They saw the big sign on the road by the yellow gate, FRESH SHRIMP in big red letters. So they came down."

I always liked to give people the benefit of the doubt. People like my nephew Big Boy Federico. Big Boy is a good man and I always look for the good in him. Sometimes I have to look real hard, but I can always find some in his heart.

But the one thing I realized today about Big Boy—and this hurts me all the way down to my back molars—is this: it's Big Boy's fault that his son is already swaggering, his head and nose up in the air, acting all high makamaka and thinking like he's one big shot around here like his father and grandfather.

"Only seven years old and he already stay pushing around his big sister," I tell Jonah as we continue to set up our paraphernalia for the day. "He needs to show her some respect. Small Boy's a good kid, but he needs a good slap on the head. Shame for the family when the children act up li'dat. Kids nowadays, they no more shame."

I know Jonah's listening to me while he continues to pound metal stakes into the ground. Jonah doesn't know anything yet about my secret plans. I figure now is a good time to fill him in on the details of the conversation I had with Big Boy earlier this morning.

"I told him, 'Eh, Big Boy, no be letting Small Boy wave around money like that. And he's too young to be hanging out with you at ringside.' He disagreed with me, but don't you think, Jonah, that dass not good for the boy to be so close

to all that yelling and betting?"

Jonah nods sympathetically, probably thinking that is what I want him to do. So I continue. "What is Small Boy going learn by doing stuff like that?" I don't expect an answer from him and I don't wait for one.

"And you know how Big Boy went answer me?" Jonah furnishes me with a so-why-don't-you-just-go-ahead-and-tell-me-what-he-said kind of expression.

"Big Boy told me, 'Small Boy gotta know his roots. It's good for him to start early. Chicken fights are part of who we are.' Can you believe it?"

I shake my head from side to side in silence. Jonah will have to say something soon before I start to think he's siding with Big Boy. Jonah wouldn't say or do anything to disrespect Big Boy. But Jonah doesn't care for Small Boy's bad behavior, either. So I go on, strategically unfolding my story to my husband.

"And so I told Big Boy, 'Okay, if chicken fights are a part of who we are, what exactly is it that we are? We are what, Big Boy? No respect for our elders? We are what, no more shame for this family? Is this what Small Boy learning from you?'" Jonah stops hammering in mid-air and looks at me like he's picturing me, barely five feet tall, on my tippy toes, looking up and confronting Big Boy—who is called Big Boy for a good reason.

Although I am Big Boy's aunt, he's only five years younger than me. He doesn't have to pay me the kind of respect he does with his much older aunts. But Big Boy does anyway.

"What you want from Big Boy? Why you went tell him that for? What he said?" my husband asks. I know Jonah will understand what I am trying to do. And I'm pretty sure he won't mind the change in our lives. So I continue to prepare him for what me and Big Boy discussed this morning.

"And so Big Boy went answer me, little bit shame this time, 'Aunty, I raising Small Boy the best way I know how. This is my life. This is part of my culture. I want him to learn about his heritage.' I tell you, that Big Boy, he needs one good slap on the head, too. So I tell him, 'Learn what? Learn that easy money can come and go real fast? Learn that the only thing you gotta watch out for in this world is yourself? Learn that he going turn out just like you?'"

At this, Jonah looks at me with a mixture of what looks like shock and awe. "Whoa, Minda. Dass pretty harsh, eh? What Big Boy did after you went say all that?"

"Big Boy was surprised, I think. But I know he went understand me because he no could even look straight at me. I know I getting through to him when he cannot meet my eyes." We both spot Big Boy approaching the main cockpit in the distance, his loping gait carrying his big, awkward, lumpy body forward.

Big Boy weaves through the crowd and is stopped often, especially by the breeders, who pay deference to their house manager with the typical local-style handshake. The women make brief conversation or hug him warmly. Even the children greet him. I wonder which of the people here are merely curious by-

standers or supportive family members or matter-of-factly vendors. It's easy to pick out the bright-eyed novice gamblers, who think this is all about the money, very much the opposite attitude held by the regular old-timers.

"Isn't that the family you was helping?" Jonah asks, pointing. "Look, they talking to Big Boy." I shade my eyes from the bright Sunday sun and take a good look. The lost Mexicans have obviously found their way to where the action is. Their leader introduces each of his family members to Big Boy, who shakes hands with the men and embraces the women. Big Boy has obviously met them before. "Looks like your lost Mexicans were not lost at all," Jonah comments, with a big grin.

As we watch Big Boy and the newcomers I think about how cockfighting in Hawai'i, more so nowadays, continues to draw both the respectable folk and the criminal element. It can't be helped; that's just the way it is now. Here in Waialua is the ultimate marketplace, where commodity and culture are rolled up into one lively product. The principles of supply and demand apply here and that is why cockfighting survives.

Big Boy disappears into a makeshift partition on the side of the main staging tent, probably to collect the morning take. When Big Boy emerges, there is a male body on each side of him. Gary Souza and John Peralta, former HPD policemen I recognize from the Wai'anae chicken fights, accompany Big Boy whenever it is time to make a deposit. A few minutes later Big Boy approaches us and he is alone. He looks tense.

I retrieve a cold soda from the cooler and set it across of him. Big Boy has come back to finish our discussion. Jonah takes my cue and goes to find some busy work in another section of our tent, but within hearing distance.

"I know you would raise him right, Aunty. I know you would teach him things that I cannot," Big Boy's voice trails off.

"You know he needs a mother, Big Boy." I will Big Boy to make eye contact with me. I think about Small Boy's mother, who left the family when Small Boy was two. She supposedly met a younger man who whisked her off to New Zealand and was never heard from again. Her family publicly disowned her and no one mentions her anymore.

"Josefina says Small Boy is having problems at school. He probably going to be held back first grade. Josefina can help him with homework." Big Boy says nothing.

I remember Josefina's mother, who was murdered during a robbery about ten years ago. Even though everybody in town knew who did it, the prosecutor had to drop the charges because of insufficient evidence. They couldn't find anybody to testify, I had heard.

"The kids can get to know each other like brother and sister," I say softly. At this, Big Boy's face softens.

"Not right now, Aunty. I cannot right now," he says.

“So you going to end up raising him like he’s one of your fighting chickens. That’s not right, Big Boy. He needs a normal home and a normal family.”

Big Boy takes a wad of bills from his pocket and counts out seven $100 bills. “Here’s this month for Josefina,” he says.

“I cannot give Small Boy to you right now,” he says sadly. “Maybe later.”

Big Boy stands up and walks toward the card game tents. He turns back to look at me and Jonah. It’s as if he wants to say something else, but changes his mind.

“Tell Bino I’m in the poker tent, okay?” he says instead. Jonah comes over and puts an arm around my shoulders. We just sit together, quiet.

“Looks like a lot of people this Sunday,” I comment.

“Yup, and more people going come after ten o’clock mass,” Jonah replies. He squeezes my arm playfully and starts to tidy up some trash, paper plates, and napkins that the wind has blown into our tent. “Looks like it’s going to be another beautiful Sunday in paradise,” he announces to no one in particular.

Amalia Bueno

CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN AHIKI AND MAUNAWILI

Tomorrow morning's going down.
Dawnie not eating any more shit.
Told me she going shank her
coming back from morning feeding.
Spreading rumors that Dawnie's man outside
going roll on her some more 'cause he got better stuff for do
than wait for Dawnie get out and screw him over again.
Dawnie going give that bitch exactly what she deserve.

Kimmie's back in and warden got eyes for her again.
He stay all lit up when she pass by and whack him
with her Colgate smile and sweet lips.
At least dass the only thing she gotta do.
Spider Man went send one kite to Lorraine.
He stay ready with his web and all she gotta do is show up
in the bathroom behind Central Control
for the soft, quiet deal and everybody's happy.

Shawn stay lock down in admin seg again.
Good her husband still rotting, smiling up
at the stars flat on his back six feet under.
She shoulda killed him long time ago.
Woulda save the kids from his frickin' prick.
At her parole minimum yesterday, stupid was
out of control swearing, kicking, screaming
over and over no, she not sorry
no, he deserved to die
that *pilau* dog had it coming
no, after what he did to the kids
yes, she would kill him over again.
Then she went wild, started swinging
at the staff and they had to take her down.
Now they going send her Oklahoma next week.

You know Leilani, the one who was on suicide watch
After Kelly went break up with her?
Said she never like play house any more.
Told Lei she found somebody else
to kiss her pain and rock her to bed.
Lei no could eat, sleep, or cry for three days.
She died last night at Castle emergency
belly full of downers and no heartbeat.

Saw Anna in medical yesterday.
Told me when she was
Kailua Beach community service
this one cute guy was checking her out
the second time he went jog by.
Buff chest, tight butt, and short shorts.
They all the same when they notice us.

They only see the trash, the weeds
the black garbage bags and then
our red T-shirt stencil W triple C.
They make the connection only
when they spock the single
blue corrections uniform.
And dass when they like
pat us on the head, say good job
keep it up pay your debt to society.

Screw that long, feel sorry for you stare.
Like, they, really, give, a, shit. I like yell out
Yeah, Take A Good Long Look At Me because
I could be your auntie, your neighbor, your niece.
I already somebody's sista, daughta, wife
and you know, I could, right now, just so
happen for be your classmate or cousin, asshole.

Lee Cataluna

EXCERPT FROM THREE YEARS ON DOREEN'S SOFA

Fricken Doreen didn't even stop the truck. I had to run on the side in the dead weeds and beer cans while she maybe slowed down a little bit.

I caught up to the passenger door and tried to pull the handle. Doreen yelled at me to get in the back. She had piles of dog blankets under the camper shell. Stink, damp towels with fleas and ticks and hair. The dog was riding in the front. I figured I was lucky she picked me up at all. I stuck my head out the back window for fresh air. Deep breath. Lungs filled with exhaust. I could see the dog staring at me through the glass to the cab like, "Eh, no touch my stuff." I showed finger to the dog. Doreen saw in the rearview mirror. I made like I was fixing my hair.

Maui changed plenty in 37 months. All look-alike houses came up where cane fields used to be. Ooka's Supermarket closed. Dairy Queen is called something else now. I hope they still get slush float. And the secret mayo-mustard action on the fries. I gotta get me some. I almost knocked on the glass to tell Doreen to stop but nah, she look like she super-pissed at herself for picking me up in the first place. Better not chance 'em.

Doreen, she get one good heart, her. That's her best thing and her worst thing at the same time. She get one fast mouth and one faster arm. That's what saved her all these years. That, and she like one nice life for her kids. She get dreams, her. Even now. I give her credit.

She came pick me up because she thought I could fix car. I used to fix car, kind of sort of, high school time but that was twenty-something years ago when cars could fix with wrench and WD-40. Now, need all kind fancy computer EKG hookups. I kind of told her in my letter that I learned some skills in prison. Car stuff, carpentry stuff, computer stuff. I kind of told her I could be the man around

the house for a little while, help her out, at least until I found my own place.

I did learn plenty stuffs on the inside, but mostly stuff like how to make my own ‘ukulele and how to throw in big words for when you gotta go court. I could fix her side window with some duct tape, though. I can do that. I would. For her.

Me and Doreen is brother/sister and we cousins at the same time. Same father, different mothers, but our mothers is sisters. Made on the same day, born on the same day, forty weeks after a Youth Rehab graduation party at Kepaniwai Park. We have one other half-sister who is a week older, but she’s just a sister because her mother wasn’t related to our mothers, as far as we know. As far as we know, but, she was made around the same time in the same car in the same parking lot up ‘Ïao Valley.

I met my father when I was inside. First time. I seen him in the yard and I recognized the ‘üpepe nose that I get and Doreen get and our other sister get real bad. Me and Dori’s ones maybe two-and-a-half inches across. Our sister, Taysha, she get the full three-inch wide. She had pierce ’em and put diamond. Look more big. Sad.

When I told him I was his son, he acted all proud, like I was his only kid of all his kids who “made it” to the inside. I guess he had more kids than I knew about. I think he had more kids than he knew about.

My father had rank around the prison, that’s for sure. Twenty-something years in and about that much more to go. All the *mahus* wanted to be his lady. He let ’em hang around, but only for effect, I think. Stuff got easier for me when I spotted that nose across the yard. I got all the cigarettes I wanted because of that big hand-me-down nose.

Doreen parked the truck by some brown apartments by Pu‘uone. She must be doing good these days. Section 8 and working at Minit Stop. She can afford one apartment by herself. No need one ’nother boyfriend to pay her rent, drink her beer and slap her around for exercise. Doreen had plenty of them from before time. From always. But now, look like she only get the truck, the dog, and her kids.

When she get out of the truck, I try make the aloha hug and tell her thank you but she already on me about the rules. She get rules, her. Always. Who knows where she picked up that habit because it ain’t from the grandmother who raised us and as far as I know, Doreen never did have to do no time in rehab or juvy.

I cannot smoke inside the house. I cannot swear in front her kids. I cannot go around wearing only bebadees in front the kids – gotta always put shorts and T-shirt. I cannot eat the kids’ breakfast cereal. That’s only for them and fuckin’ expensive and no drink no milk neither ’cause that cost money, too. No television shows with violences in front the kids. No bragging about jail in front the kids. No talk too loud, no breathe too loud, no piss me off when I tired. No steal, no argue, no bullshit in the house. She was going for twenty minutes.

I was stuck back on the rule about wearing shorts and T-shirt. I only had with

me the clothes on my back, my AA, NA, Al-Anon bookmarks, and the glued-together ‘ukulele I made in woodshop. I guess I can score some clothes from Salvation Army or something if I gotta make decent in front the kids.

Dori, she one good mother, strict mother, but her kids is monsters. Liko, the small one, he kinda cute but sometimes when he don’t get his way, he go off. The two older ones is terrors. The girl, Jorene, she sassy and the oldest, Kennison, he act like he one bruiser from the time he was five years old. I no mind play good fun uncle with them, but only for like ten minutes at a time. After that, I like them go someplace else make noise so I can drink beer and watch what I like on TV.

Except Doreen says I cannot drink beer in her house. Leave it to her to actually read all those rules the social worker sent her. I picture her reading all those do-nots, do-nots and coming all happy.

Her place is small and hot but she made ’em nice as she can with Pepsi mirrors she won from the county fair all on the walls and color crayon drawings from Liko taped over the places where one of her exes punched the walls.

“Nice,” I tell her. She has her hand on her hip. “You get two bedrooms?”

“You sleeping your broke ass on the couch,” she says. “And no put your feet on the pillows. That’s Kenji’s pillows.”

By the look of the pillows, Kenji must be the name of the dog.

“And no put your feet on the coffee table.” The other hand came up on the other hip. “I just got that thing new from the second-hand store.”

“Eh, like I said in my letter, it’s just for a little while. A week, two weeks. That’s all.”

“Better be.”

“For real, Dori. I got a lead on one good job. I go tomorrow go check ’em out.”

“That’s right you going tomorrow go check ’em out. I don’t want no ex-con sitting around my house doing nothing but eating and scratching. You had three years to eat and scratch. Now you gotta work.”

If she had another hand and another hip, the two would have connected right then. Just as she said the stuff about eating and scratching, I alla a sudden got hungry and itchy.

“No worry, Doreen. I going tomorrow. Stuff is all different now. I had plenty of time to think about my life, you know? Where I’m going, what I like do. I get goals now. I get direction. Not going be like before when I was just drifting. I know what I like do and I going do ’em. One day, another day, one foot in front of the other, my hard work and the guidance from a higher power. Every day is a new beginning.”

“Fuck, you talk like you been to too many 12-step meetings run by drinkers who still drinking.”

Fricken Doreen. She was right.

Afternoon time, Doreen went to pick up Liko from Healthy Start and the two

older kids came home on the bus. I heard them coming so I had time to put on shirt one fast one. Jorene came through the door first. She stopped when she saw me, one hand on the rusty doorknob, the other hand flying up to her hip. She blocked the brother from coming in, but instead of pushing her on the side, he just stood behind her head and waited for her to tell him what she was looking at.

"Eh! Long time no see! How you, baby girl?"

I tried to make my best good fun uncle voice.

"Mommy said don't put your feet on her coffee table." Kennison stood behind her like one robot on pause waiting for someone hit his restart button again.

"Oh, sorry. I neva' know."

The other hand went from the doorknob to the hip, heavy book bag and all.

"You did know. Mommy told you all the rules. Every single one. And the biggest rule is no bullshit in her house."

"I thought you cannot swear in the house."

Jorene popped her hip to one side. She had found a level of *wahine* pissed-off-ed-ness that even her mother hadn't reached.

"YOU cannot swear in the house. Me, I can do what I like because I get good grades and I not trying to un-fuck up my fucked-up life. I the good girl. You the fucked-up uncle."

She picked up her book bag and went to the kitchen table. Kennison blinked back on and came inside the house.

"Howzit," I told him.

"Eh," he said, making the casual ninth-grade-boy wave.

"You heard your sister talk to me like that?" I was looking for some *kane* back up. His eyes went down to his shoes as he pulled them off without using hands.

"Nope."

He put his books on the kitchen table across from Jorene, who was already heavy into her math homework. He went to the icebox and made two cups of Kool-Aid. I took notice he gave the bigger cup to the sister. Then he sat down and cracked open a book.

I turned the TV back on. Dr. Phil was giving one fat lady dirty scoldings for blaming her big ass on her husband's *pilikia*. He was telling her just because the husband is a bum don't mean she gotta eat every damn thing in sight. The husband was looking relieved like he was off the hook, even though he just got called a bum on national television.

Jorene snapped off the television.

"No TV until homework is *pau*," she said.

"I no more homework."

"We get."

Ho, that girl is her mother times ten. She had the mean stare down. I felt my ass moving off the couch with just her eyes. I grabbed my cigarettes and went

outside.

Doreen-them lucky. They get one nice apartment they no gotta share with nobody. Maui coming so crowded and rent so expensive, plenty people gotta move back with their parents or take in roommates or live couple families to a three-bedroom house. Coming like O‘ahu already. Coming like Kalihi. Doreen and the kids lucky get only them. Them and whatever boyfriend Doreen get at the time, which, judging by the four toothbrushes in the bathroom, was currently nobody. At least not nobody with good teeth. I had to laugh at that one. Like Doreen would ever kiss one guy with bad teeth hygiene.

I gotta remember to get me one good toothbrush. The kind the kids get, the kind look like small sneakers. Mines from jail is pretty had-it. Only good to clean the grout around the tile.

I leaned off the railing and looked down at the sand dunes and the hollow-tile apartments and the *kiawe* trees. Broken beer bottles, twisted shopping carts, small pieces of a two-by-four with the nails still stuck inside. Time to make some plans.

I was going go check out this job that this guy on the inside told me about. I was going that very next day. But all I had was my jeans and my slippers and my wrinkled aloha shirt that was donated to the Job Connections program from the family of some dead old Japanese guy. Still had his name on the inside collar tag. This my Fujinaka shirt, I call ’em. I got so fat in prison, the clothes I came in with no fit no more. Besides, the clothes I came in with was kinda stink at the time and I don’t think prison laundry do so good taking out strawberry slush-float barf mixed with cocaine.

And who would want all their clothes to go to prisoners when they die, anyway? How messed up is that?

So I figure my first step is I gotta go get some threads.

My first step before that, but, is I gotta go get some money.

I had money from my account at MCCC from when I worked in the laundry and stuff, but that was my cigarette money. Daily essentials come before luxuries. I learned that in my Household Budgeting class.

I could ask Doreen to spot me some cash.

I peeked inside the apartment and Jorene caught me looking. She showed me the finger, like she knew what I was thinking. No, no asking Mama Dori for no money. Not if I like live to see next week.

I just going have to make do with cheap clothes and a couple less smokes. I looked down at my feet. Had five butts all around my rubber slippers. Hard to imagine I only started smoking when I went in. Never had money when I was in high school. Nothing else to do when you locked up. I was screwed up before I went inside, but it was just a random thing. Now I get all these permanent screwed-up habits all ingrained inside.

That night, Doreen made chicken with cream of mushroom soup gravy. She

put little bit canned peas and carrots for fancy. I was careful to only take three scoops rice. No like take food out of the kids' mouths. They still growing. Kennison watched me eat but didn't say nothing. Liko made a line of peas on one side of his plate. I made like good fun uncle and snatched one pea from the line and ate 'em. Liko started crying. Doreen's eyebrows started climbing up her face. I scooped up as much peas from my plate as my fork could carry and put 'em all on Liko's plate. He stopped crying on a dime.

"Don't eat that, boy," Doreen told him. She grabbed the plate and tossed it in the sink. "You don't know what kind diseases your uncle get."

Before he went bed, Doreen made Liko one peanut butter sandwich 'cause he said he was still hungry. I just watched. I getting better at watching without them knowing I watching. I thought I had my technique down but this family better than most of the lifers I met.

The sofa was rugged. Plenty hills and rocky valleys. Made me miss my cot and scratchy blanket. I lay awake the whole night listening to the strange sounds breaking the strange quiet. Dori grinding her teeth. Jorene scratching the mosquito bites on her legs. Kennison trying hard not to make noise while he playing with his dakine. Liko making shishi in the bed.

I watched the clock on the oven. One o'clock. Two o'clock. Three-thirty. I probably fell asleep around 5 a.m.

Doreen left the house six-forty-five to drop the kids at school before she went work. They made plenty noise before they left. I got up an hour after I fell asleep but I kept my eyes closed so they wouldn't notice me. Too early in the morning to get yelled at for getting in the way. I had to take a piss super bad, but. Jorene was flat ironing her hair in the bathroom. Doreen was standing right behind her putting on makeup. No ways I getting in there any time soon.

I took notice had one big plastic cup hanging off the dish drainer. Barney was calling out to me.

"Let me help! I'm your friend."

Alrighty, my big purple buddy. Help a bruddah out. I grabbed the cup and pulled down my shorts. The cup was three-quarters full when Kennison walked into the room. I didn't even have to look. I heard him breathing. I just kept going. Couldn't stop even if it was Dori yelling in my face.

"I tell you what boy," I said, soft so only he could hear. "You no tell about Barney and I don't tell about you pulling taro in the middle of the night."

"Huh?"

I cannot tell if Kennison is for real dumb or only playing.

"That ain't poi on your pajamas, you catch my drift?"

Kennison walked out of the room. I had Barney emptied and rinsed before Doreen came into the parlor. I even made it back to the couch in time to pretend-sleep, but then I thought, eh, more better if I awake when she come in because guarantee she going slap my head for sleeping late.

“Everybody, eat something,” Doreen ordered. “Not you, Bobby.” I was expecting that. I just sat still on the couch. The kids grabbed Pop-Tarts and ate them raw, no toasting.

“Everybody, drink milk,” she commanded. I put my head down. She started to tell me “not you” but she saw that I knew already. She must be happy her training is sinking in.

Kennison poured milk for the sister and Liko. I took notice he used the Barney cup. I made my side-eye as side as I could. Liko had the cup. I was secretly hoping would go to Jorene.

“Mommy, the milk taste funny!” Liko was wrinkling his ‘*üpepe* nose. I shot a look at Kennison. Kennison was blank as the moon, blank as the wall, blank as the hollow tile wall in the hallway.

Doreen took a sip and spat it out. “Damn thing was too long in the hot car.”

I couldn’t believe I skated out of this one.

“Your good-for-nothing Uncle Bobby as’ why. Had to wait for him how long outside the prison. That’s why you kids remember, OK? No get into trouble because your trouble ruins everything.”

Doreen and the kids each shot me a look of disgust as they left the apartment.

“Bye. Have one good day,” I told them. The door closing was their answer. At least I tried.

I gotta get outta here. Prison was the Hilton compared to this. Living with Doreen going kill me. Or ruin me forever.

Sue Cowing

BIRTHDAY

A poem is a baby slowly forming
in the fluid inner world:
toes out of nowhere,
eyelashes out of heartbeat.
Like a dolphin, born tail first
so it won't drown
in a world of water.
Then someone, is it the mother?
nudges it to the surface, crooning
breathe now, breathe.

Tim Denevi

VICE-VERSA EDITOR'S JAUNT: THE MAGIC REALISM ISSUE

Winter has descended on Hawai'i, the valley of Mānoa a consistent and trav-eling mist, one that shrouds us now—the magnanimous Pistolero and myself—as we sit beneath a concrete slab. We are delaying within the network of garish buildings that constitute the university, tossing bottle caps into a bucket and plan-ning our next move.

"We gotta get to the ballgame," I say. Shades of people slink in and out of the evening half-light, and the mist makes me wonder what other, more reptil-ian minds might find a night like this appealing. "My blood's too thin for this weather. I'm in need a jaunt down to the baseball field, you know, to remind me of warmer times."

"Dude," the magnanimous Pistolero says, "it's seventy-five degrees out."

Something lumbers in the water-air to my left. The world smells rubbery, like the skin of fish that have long since learned to walk on land. The lumbering continues, becoming a snake-shaped shadow that turns toward us. I can hear, un-mistakably, the sound of a dragged tail. I let out a helpless yelp.

"Yo," Pistolero says to the shadow, tossing it a bottle cap. "See you at the game?"

The shadow nods and is gone.

"You gotta be more careful," I say. "This whole valley used to be controlled by water lizards. Seriously. They were excellent administrators. You wouldn't think that thirty-foot reptiles could resource an entire region's waterways, but man, I've heard things." I lean toward him. "And now they gotta be pissed off. All this concrete. Have you seen what it does to the runoff? Hell, they're just looking for someone to blame. And who else but a mainland-tasting bastard like

myself. Like *our*selves." I nudge him. "We gotta stick together."

"Dude," he says, "let's get over to that game."

I nod, making him walk ahead of me, hoping that his bulk will serve as a decoy should anything else slink hungrily from the night.

We take a side route through the university, the water eddying around us. We are heading toward a severe, five-story cliff that once functioned as a rock quarry and that now, in the present, is ringed with tennis courts, athletic fields, and a concrete parking garage so dowdy, even I want to whip my tail and topple it.

At a descent of metal stairs, I am overcome by the smell of wet coins. "We are the ones who are the quarries!" I shout ahead to Pistolero.

But he is gone, off the cliff and down the steps, the water cascading past.

I am forced to follow. From this height, I should be able to see oceanward, where the red eyes of Waikīkī radio antennas are known to blink. But our intended destination blots out all. And the half-bowl of Les Murakami Baseball Stadium, its light towers blending like a ghost-colored crown, is itself ambiguous, as if the mist, in an effort to shroud things, has the power to rearrange shapes, too.

"We gotta turn back!" I shout. "Baseball can't endure in this weather. The grass forbids it."

Pistolero is waiting for me, magnanimously, at the base of the stairs. "Astroturf, dude. The field's covered with it so they can play in the rain. You know that."

"Good god," I say. "What kind of university puts skin on its baseball diamond? No wonder these reptiles are out for blood." I pat him on the back. "Sometimes, you know, I can see their point of view. I mean, Jesus, even the grass has been replaced with plastic. Such aggression will not stand."

"Not too much further now, dude," Pistolero says. "You started a bit early tonight, eh?"

"I have clearer senses than anyone in a seven-mile radius. It's all the rest of you who accept such mist as ordinary, as if what lurks in it is natural. This place is sacred, man. Can't you smell it?" I sniff. "It smells like water."

Pistolero sniffs quietly. Then he is off again, ahead of me, unafraid of the valley and its history of lizards.

The stadium teems with light. Children cling to their parents, the elderly help one another along, and for a moment I worry that I've taken a wrong turn, stepping accidentally into the future and one of its enormous churches, a setting where grass is plastic and water itself is worshipped, the runoff a wondrous commerce along so much concrete.

I force myself to act like I've been here before, stepping through the turnstile. I imagine that the water lizards are lurking within. Why wouldn't they be? The scaffolding and size of such a stadium must serve as an artificial refuge, after so much else has been paved over.

I decide to search for them—for these immortal and reptilian family gods

I've heard so much about—and I forgo my rendezvous point behind home plate with the magnanimous Pistolero.

Creeping to the upper deck, near the blue overhang that shrouds this entire level from the rain, I can't help but wonder what Hawaiian water lizards must think of baseball, especially the metal-bat version being played here. No doubt they love it. All administrators, regardless of divinity, enjoy the ordered and record-bearing nature of such a pastime. I imagine these huge dragons hanging upside down in the crisscrossed shadows of the overhang. I swear I can hear them whispering to each other, speaking in the scaly language of lizards about the botched double plays unfolding below, the pop flies lost in the mist, and especially the strange and bristly surface that sprays water whenever a ball or sliding fielder travels along it. They know, better than the rest of us, that such a stadium won't stand forever, and I'm sure that they are planning even now how to resource its surrounding waterways, once the strangers like myself are finally gone.

A woman carrying a girl-child taps me on my shoulder, and I spin around wildly, my reverie of overhangs shattered.

"Are these your seats?" she asks in a suspicious, mother-bird voice.

Ashamed, I tip my cap and slink away, down the steep row, to the stairs and the first level where people are waiting patiently at concession stands.

But then I see it. The green head. The rubbery tail. The haunches powerful, unreal. It is walking upright, which throws me off at first, but how else would a water lizard navigate such surroundings without raising suspicion?

It is being followed by a throng of children, all of them laughing and smiling, trailing like an extended tail and chanting, happily, *mo'o*, *mo'o*.

"Aha!" I shout. This lizard is man-sized, nowhere near thirty feet, and I understand that it is a child, too, that naturally it spends its time with other children—the most popular among them, of course, on account of its divinity.

This lizard-led throng is headed for the ice cream stand, and people stream around, allowing them to pass. It is only me who finds the scene strange. And now I'm ashamed for this, too.

But I shouldn't be. I'd like to think that we must all feel like this sometimes, as people, as readers, when we stumble across situations in the world and in literature that are both magical and real—as if we have been cursed to notice such strangeness, as if perhaps the only way to make our own surroundings more wondrous is to imagine a place where people aren't bound by wonder.

This is the beauty of reading the nebulous genre called "Magic Realism," reading it in this strange new thing called *vice-versa*, even. We readers enjoy what the characters in a story or poem cannot; we bristle with wonder at events that those bound by the narrative can only address with anger, or disillusionment, or at the very most, mild bewilderment—be these events a harvest of vine-produced tractor tires; a box that opens into bird-limned silence; a sculpted and knowing glance from an orange-haired head; or a child that has, on account of

economic restrictions, been planted in the ground and grown, naturally, into a parrot-loved tree.

All of which and more you'll find within this issue.

At the stadium, I am overcome with the desire to join in the water lizard's throng, to buy it and all the other children cups and cups of ice cream, letting them know that I can be on both sides, that I understand their magical nature and at the same time accept it. And for a moment, I am thrilled to find myself with a foot in both worlds—the wondrous and the real—the vicariousness of such a sensation both absurd and strangely comforting.

A few minutes later, of course, I will find out from a smirking Pistolero that what I assumed to be a child-sized water lizard was actually Cheese-a-Saurus Rex, the Kraft Macaroni dinosaur, and the children following were simply after free samples, all of them asking for *more*.

"Jesus," he'll say. "This is Honolulu, not Macondo."

The stadium is filled with anthropomorphic advertisements, I'll realize, including a gecko peddling car insurance and a pineapple handing out prickly flyers, the detritus of such consumerism clogging the aisles and concourses, as blanketing as concrete.

And much later, when I head home up through the quarry and against the flowing water, this wondrous valley in the middle of the Pacific will seem stark, muted. The rain will ease up, the mist will be lessened by darkness, and the trees will droop languidly.

I won't even find it strange when a three-inch lizard, its neck wrenched precariously from the perch of a lamppost, follows me with inky eyes, as if it is simply assessing my presence within so many resources to be managed.

Esther Figueroa

THE REUNION

Terri was studying her face in the mirror when the bellhop brought up her bags. She blushed to be caught in an act of vanity but returned to the mirror as soon as he closed the door behind him. It was not vanity after all but mystery. Her face was a mystery to her, one that she tried to read like a map hoping to find signs to who she was and where she was going. Under her eyes showed her fatigue. She had slept on the plane which explained the crick in her neck. She had woken suddenly to violent turbulence and an irrational fear that she was about to die. This is my fate, she had thought, as she stared at the wing imagining it crumbling and her falling forever. This is my fate to never return home. And she had begun to pray. Except she couldn't quite remember the prayer and went straight to "Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death," and kept repeating "at the hour of our death" until the captain came on and explained that everything was just fine. Amen.

Terri stared at her eyes which stared back at her with the same old question, "Whose eyes am I?" She thought she had her grandmother's eyes, her eldest sister's forehead, her father's nose, her favorite brother's mouth, her fat aunt's weak chin. Her hair was graying nicely. Most of her women friends were coloring their hair to delay the gray. They all seemed to pick a kind of reddish purple that harked back to the younger days of punk, but more likely was a precursor to the pink-old-lady-hair to come. She liked her early salt-and-pepper because she was graying exactly like her mother. "At least I know what my hair will look like." She had her mother before her as testimony. Back to her face and still she could not define who she looked like. She seemed to look like everyone in her family and no one at all. "I am pieces and there is no whole, but here I am." Terri turned from the mirror to look at Diamond Head and the kites flying in Kapiʻolani Park.

Kimo was beginning to see lights flashing before his eyes and his ears were ringing, not with a high-pitched sound, but a dull roar. It sounded like the ocean and a huge crowd shouting. His muscles were cramping and his mouth was so dry he couldn't swallow the hot air into his lungs. He kept reaching forward with his paddle, pulling the water back, until he felt someone grab his arm and he felt the canoe lurch and then stop. The roar was louder but he couldn't see anything except for shapes and colors. His temples were pounding but his arms were too heavy to lift to his head. He felt bodies around him and wet everywhere. He felt vomit in his throat rising and his stomach contracting; then he was in the water and someone was on either side holding his arms as he stumbled to shore. There were leis around his neck but he couldn't remember how they got there. He smelt his mother and knew she was holding his daughter Makana. He went to kiss them as they put their leis around his neck but his knees buckled. As he fell to the sand he thought, "Wow just like me go pass out in front everybody. Big shame!"

Leilani was putting on her pancake makeup and glancing over her copy when the floor manager raised five fingers giving her the five-minute signal. She yawned to let him know what she thought about his timely information. She had her mascara to do and there was a late breaking story still being edited that she hadn't seen the copy for yet. No sweat, she was the Ice Queen, there was no disaster that she couldn't handle, including tonight's special event honoring the hundredth anniversary of her school. She hadn't given the reunion a moment's thought, yet she had this nagging anxiety in her stomach that she couldn't quite pinpoint. She was supposed to present the governor with a special outstanding alumnus award or some crap. She couldn't stand the man, hadn't liked him in school and didn't like him any better now. She couldn't remember what else she had agreed to do at the grand school shindig being held at some fancy Japanese-owned hotel in Waikīkī, built on some ancient *heiau* no doubt. She had a funny suspicion she was being honored also. And why not, she was the first, and for many years the only, Hawaiian reporter and anchor woman on Hawai'i television. She was a role model for the entire race. As she yawned to express what she thought of that notion, the floor manager gave her the one-minute signal. She pinned on her mike. As the floor manager started the ten-second countdown she fluttered her eyes and prepared her most dazzling smile. "Good evening and welcome to *News Six at Six*. Thanks for joining us." The floor manager signaled Camera Two so she turned to that camera. "Our top story tonight is the eviction of the Kahananui family from their home, which the Department of Hawaiian Homes says they are illegally occupying.

Terri had thrown all her clothes on the bed and was now trying to imagine what she had been thinking when she had packed. Nothing was appropriate for tonight's gathering. What the hell was she going to wear? Who was she trying to fool, she had nothing appropriate in her entire wardrobe. No floral muʻumuʻu, no little-girl dresses with plunging necklines, or dress-for-success suits with pumps. Did she have time to rent a tux? Not funny. Exhaustion suddenly swept over her and she found herself unable to move a muscle. She felt that familiar heavy feeling in her chest. Her throat contracted around her windpipe and her eyes welled with tears. Why was she putting herself through this? She searched through her papers for the answer, a card from Kimo featuring him and his daughter smiling at her. His daughter had one of those impossibly long Hawaiian names that had come back into vogue and she looked just like him with those big lips. Her tears were now pouring down her face as she read, "Hey tita hope you're coming home for the reunion cuz I really miss you and baby like meet her Auntie. Hear Lei is Mistress of Ceremonies you no can miss that! Mom sends love. See you soon."

Terri reached for the remote control and turned on the television. It was *News Six at Six*. Before Terri's blurred eyes was Lei live on television. She was flirting with her sportscaster. In the business they call it bantering. She was saying something like "So Greg we did it, Hawaiʻi finally gets to keep the paddling championship at home." Greg beams at her then turns to the camera and says, "Yes, Lei, we finally get to keep the Duke Kahanamoku Cup in Hawaiʻi because our boys of the ocean, Hui o Malama i ke Kai, in an exciting race today, beat those Californians and Australians who have dominated past races." There he is: Kimo, his muscles bulging with the strain, his eyes rolling in his head and the canoe surging forward to beat the Californian team with the crowd on shore going crazy with joy. And then there he is fainting at his mother's feet. What a Kodak moment. Chicken skin all up and down her arms. Terri kisses the TV and says, "Oh so this is why I'm here."

Leilani wiped a tear from her eye. "Thanks, Greg, that was great. Way to go, Kimo guys. Good job beating the … (What was happening to her? She almost said "beating the haoles" … uh … competition." The floor manager was slitting his throat giving her the cut sign. "When we come back, Lori is going to tell us what the weather gods have in store for us so don't wander off." Thank the weather gods there was a commercial break. She had never cried on television before. In fact, she couldn't remember the last time she had cried period—actually she could, but she quickly moved past that memory. Anyway it would probably improve her ratings so that cheered her up. The phone at her side began to ring. The floor manager signaled two minutes to go. Leilani felt like this was the longest newscast in history. It was the station manager on the phone. He loved the tears. He wanted her to say something Hawaiian at the end of the newscast. "You know 'Malama pono, a hui hou' something like that." She said she had to

get back on air and thanks so much for calling.

It was time for Leilani to banter with Lori, the latest cute weather girl. She had to make sure that her bantering was leveled at Lori's eyes and not her breasts. Leilani was having a very hard time not giggling. She smiled deeply into Lori's eyes, "So, Lori, what weather have you cooked up for us today?" The smile she got back was genuine and sweet and Leilani felt ashamed of herself for calling Lori the weather girl. "Lei, lucky we live Hawai'i. It's going to be gorgeous for the next few days." Turning to the camera, "For you surfers out there we have a south swell rolling in tomorrow with big sets of up to eight feet." Lori was now in front of the green screen pointing at imaginary satellite photos that showed the weather bringing the waves.

Lei took the opportunity for some extra pancake; she had started to perspire. Another first. Was she having hot flashes or was she having a meltdown? She longed for a drink. Deep in her throat she could feel the wet liquid burning on its way down. One day at a time. One moment at a time. Apparently life was supposed to be lived that way. Why then did it rush at her, crash over her, relentless and unforgiving, all at once with no pauses? She was forever fast forwarding or rewinding through her life. The moment was only a mechanism to get to some other place she was racing to or escaping from. How was she ever going to get through this stupid reunion tonight? How was she going to keep smiling? How was she going to keep sober? And then suddenly it came to her, a remarkably clear apparition, she could see the face she had been hiding. Hadn't Kimo left her a message to say that Terri was here? How could she possibly manage seeing Terri without a drink? She saw the image of Kimo fainting at his mother's feet; surely that is what she would do at Terri's.

Kimo was trying to choose between the aloha shirts his mom had picked for him to wear to the reunion. He couldn't see the difference between the three shirts. They looked exactly the same to him. They made him think of all those businessmen you see walking around downtown wearing shoes with those tassel things on top and holding on to their cell phones. He reached for a shirt that featured a pattern of canoes. He felt like he should be having lunch at the Outrigger Canoe Club with a shirt like that, but, well, canoes were his favorite thing so on it went.

After he had passed out they had hooked him up to an IV. He had been pumped full of liquids and had gotten a great massage, but his arms still felt heavy and he was having a hard time getting them through the sleeves. He had downed painkillers so wasn't feeling too much discomfort. He figured he should eat before going to the reunion, even though guarans there would be heavy pupus, but he was scared of getting nauseous again. His skin was still giving off heat and sometimes he would see shimmering patches of light. No matter how bad he felt, he was still going. There was no way he was going to miss being with Terri. He couldn't wait to tell her all about Makana. He'd promised Makana he'd bring her

back something from the party. He made a mental note to remember some sort of souvenir, maybe a pen with the hotel's name or something tasty smuggled away in a hotel napkin. "Auntie Terri," he laughed at the thought. He was not going to let Terri leave this time. She was here to stay whether she knew it or not.

The news was over and she couldn't wait to get out of there. Leilani stopped by her desk and noticed a pile of messages as well as a large manila envelope. Oh, oh, another one of those. It had been exactly a week since the last one had arrived. The phone was ringing. Greg the sports guy signaled it was for her. The voice on the phone was deep and melodic. She figured he was in his fifties and probably a chanter or a *kumu hula*. If that was the case what was he doing messed up in this nonsense?

"Ms. Anderson (he always called her Ms. Anderson, I was very moved by you tonight. You have a great power to lead our people."

Yeah right! she thought, and as usual said nothing. Why didn't she just hang up the phone?

"Did you get my latest mailing?"

"Yes I did, but I haven't had time to read it and I don't have time to talk to you right now." Before she could explain that she had a function to attend, he continued her statement for her in his measured, sonorous voice, "You have a function to attend, yes, I know. Please enjoy your evening and maybe take the opportunity to talk to the governor about this matter." She was about to object to that outrageous suggestion, when he bid her farewell, "Goodnight Ms. Anderson, I will be back in touch. *Malama pono, a hui hou*." As she hung up the phone, she realized those were the exact words she had forgotten to say at the end of the newscast.

The hotel parking structure was immense. Terri couldn't find parking. She spiraled upwards, floor after floor of sharp 90 degree turns and blind corners which confirmed her theory that parking structures are designed by architecture students who have failed every course. Finally on the rooftop level, she found a space beside a minivan with a sticker loudly proclaiming that the owner was the Proud Parent of a Straight A Student at Kapunahala Elementary. Terri walked very slowly. Drawn to the edge of the roof, she looked over at Waikīkī beach and the symmetrical break of the waves that ran the length of the shore. Squinting towards 'Ewa, she was greeted with a feeling of euphoric well being. She decided it was the fallout from the sun's setting glow. There was something sweet in the air, maybe the smell of plumeria. Terri smiled affectionately at the evening cruises positioning themselves for the best sunset photography. There was an explosion of flashbulbs over the water, which jarred her into the recognition that she was standing on top of a Waikīkī parking structure for a reason and the rea-

son was not to admire the exotic tropical display. With a genuine attempt at resignation Terri instructed her feet to carry her downstairs into the belly of the hotel. But her feet remained firmly planted on the concrete roof.

The license plate gave it away; there was no hiding the fact that Leilani was getting into the governor's limousine. The driver held the car door open with great pomp but when she got in no one else was seated. "Where the fuck is the governor? Well, of course he'd be late!" The next person to join her was Cora, the governor's wife, who looked like she had been crying. Everyone knew the two had been separated for years and on their way to divorce until the governor decided to run for office. Everyone also knew he was fucking his secretary in this very same automobile where they were now sitting. That thought made Leilani want to rush out and take another shower or at least kick the door in. Instead she took the first lady's hand and gently stroked it.

At school, Cora had been her junior by two years. They had never been close friends or spent much time together when they were young. But Lei remembered how she had been impressed by Cora's quiet uniqueness. Cora had been a serious student of hula at a time when everyone else was trying her best to be hip American and hula was not common outside of tacky tourist *lū'au*. Leilani studied Cora's hands. They were still graceful, with long tapered fingers, but her skin was starting to blotch. As Lei stroked Cora, she soaked in the intense gratitude flowing from Cora's body. To have a woman look at you with those deeply pained eyes and thank you without saying a word was something so seductive it crossed her mind that maybe the best way to get back at the jerk was to fuck his wife.

Just as she was imagining how that might play out, the governor arrived accompanied by the current president of their alma mater. Leilani removed Cora's hand as discretely as possible giving it a gentle squeeze before releasing it. She turned and kissed the governor hello, "So, Gov, what entertainment you have planned for us tonight?"

The governor smiled broadly and leered into Leilani's cleavage, "But tita, I thought you was the entertainment." The president guffawed and slapped the governor on the back. The two men snickered together—the president making a sort of hiccupping sound, the governor snorting through his nose.

Leilani joined in the laughter with great gusto. "Touché!" she said, pretending to acknowledge defeat but, as she turned from them and caught Cora's eye she thought, "Revenge will be sweet."

Despite her prowess at visual composition and the design of space, Terri had never been very good at finding her way. She was quick to reach sensory overload. Mazes were not her forté as too many choices inevitably led to mind-numbing confusion. As she walked down the vast hallway, weaving in and out of harried tourists intent on checking in, checking out, or shopping, the task seemed

insurmountable: How to find the Paradise wing of the hotel, much less find the Aloha Ballroom on the Galleria? What was a galleria anyway?

She avoided looking at herself in any of the abundant mirrors lining the hallways and elevators. The elevator door opened and she was pushed out along with the wave of enthusiastic exitees. She felt like one of those little turtles desperately trying to make it to the shoreline and swim out to sea without getting eaten by one of those awful seabirds that were flapping their wings and waiting. She wondered if the baby turtle felt as mystified as she did as to why she was performing the act in the first place. Terri pulled herself to the side of the galleria and peered around to see if she could get her bearings enough to find the Aloha Ballroom. She suddenly felt extraordinarily nearsighted. It was strange, the more blurred her vision was becoming, the more garbled the sounds around her also seemed. Weren't these the warning signs of a stroke? Terri, wishing she had mastered Braille, touched the sign on the wall with the arrow happily pointing the way to the Aloha Ballroom. Terri, following the direction of the sign, saw at what seemed a great distance three large doors from which came sounds of jubilant sociability. Near one of the doors was a long table behind which sat a line of smiling women ready to find her name tag. The question was would she remember her name by the time she got there.

> Kimo's jaw was hurting from the permanent smile on his face as he patiently accepted his role as Most Recent Celebrity. He had been regaled by the story of his heroic collapse at his mother's feet so many times during the course of an hour that he could no longer remember the actual event. He had laughed and smiled through each retelling and was starting to feel exhausted. His shoulders and back were aching not so much from the race but from the endless good-natured hugs and "eh brah you da man" slaps he had received from his male classmates. The women just sort of stared at him in awe with unnerving wistful looks on their faces. With the excuse of needing to get a drink, he politely removed himself from a group of paddling enthusiasts talking about their worst death-defying reef-smashing *huli*—capsizes. He could feel their admiring eyes penetrating his back as he escaped and he felt an old wave of shame sweep over him. When he got to the bar Kimo ordered a glass of fruit punch and a glass of water. He felt childishly pleased to find that the fruit punch came with an umbrella, cherry, and a chunk of pineapple. The water was more ice than water. With his two hands concentrating on their task, Kimo retreated to the furthest, darkest edge of the room. There he fixed his eyes on the main entrance and waited.

Terri noticed that not only was she going blind and deaf, she was also losing the gift of speech. She found herself unable to form the simplest sentences and

was reduced to a sort of pidgin sign language as response to any questions. She had actually pointed to her name on the list as the means of receiving her name tag. She had a hard time recognizing people out of context at the best of times and was sure she would not be able to identify any of the several hundred people with whom she had gone to school. She tried to not make any definite eye contact by fixing her eyes in a vague search of the horizon as she maneuvered her way into the ballroom filled with groups of people standing and talking, sitting and talking, eating and drinking. The change of light from outside to inside the ballroom made her tunnel vision worse and she was convinced she must look either drunk or loony.

On the stage was a group of aunties playing chalangalang music of a risqué sort. The bass player was doing something suggestive with her bass. It wouldn't be long before someone would get up and dance a hula. That would be fun. In her terror at having to engage anyone, she searched for the furthest corner of the room to hide, regroup and regain her dignity. Now that she had identified her goal she found that her normal eyesight was returning. As her point of destiny came into focus she was stunned to find Kimo, leaning against the wall by an exit sign, dressed in an aloha shirt of all things, with a drink in either hand and the biggest, happiest smile on his face. At the sight of him, Terri threw back her head and laughed and laughed. She was still laughing when he folded her into his arms.

The dignitaries were met at a special entrance by two perfectly attired and gracious women: the organizer of the night's shindig and the head of PR for the hotel. They were whisked to a room adjacent to the stage from whence they would make their entrance. Cora immediately turned her attention to the task of fitting as many pupus as physically possible on the small plate she had found for that purpose. The PR woman made small talk with the president, and the organizer re-briefed Leilani and the governor on their part in the program. Leilani felt the strongest urge to slap her or to at least scream at her. Her calm, pleasant, and singsongy way of talking was grating on Leilani's last nerve. Leilani turned to watch Cora's great attention to eating and imagined feeding her with her fingers. But in truth Cora's sudden obsession with food was grossing her out and she could not continue with her sexual fantasies. If she couldn't think about sex what was there left to think about? Terri?

Leilani was running through her upcoming stage routine in her mind when she felt the atmosphere around her shift. The PR woman thanked them again and said her good-byes, then the organizer led them out onto the stage. The governor kissed each auntie hello, so Lei did the same. She actually knew them all well and the *kolohe* bass player had gone to school with her mother. The organizer, now doubling as emcee, asked the audience to give the aunties a big hand mahalo. The president, the governor, Cora, and Leilani all applauded these legends of Hawaiian music as they walked off the stage. The organizer then introduced the first

lady, who thank God had stopped chewing. Cora said how happy she was to be there, what a wonderful man her husband was and what wonderful things he was doing for the state. Next, the organizer introduced the president who thankfully did not do his usual retelling of the entire 100-year history of the school but instead simply thanked everyone for sharing this historic moment together.

The organizer then escorted the first lady and the president off the stage to their table of honor. And then there they were, just the two of them, bedecked with expensive leis on a stage with outlandish floral arrangements. As the spotlight hit them, Leilani smiled her most wicked smile, exposed a bit more of her cleavage, and put her arm around the governor. "Let's hear a big round of applause for our first lady who has given so much of her time and energy to so many good works." Cora stood and accepted her applause. "And how about a hand for the man who single handedly turned this school around and has made it an educational institution we can all be proud of." The president, looking quite sheepish at the mention of "single handedly," stood briefly with a limp wave in the direction of the audience. "And now let us hear a rousing round of applause for the most outstanding graduate of our school, our very own governor of our beloved state of Hawai'i nei." Leilani bowed to the governor. The governor bowed to his standing ovation.

Terri, staring at the stage, realized that her mouth was open. She closed it but it seemed to reopen in awe on its very own. "Kimo, what is she wearing?!"

Kimo giggled, "Eh lighten up, tita. I think Lei is one hot wahine." Terri giggled in agreement. She couldn't imagine anyone on the mainland wearing what Lei was wearing but yet it seemed perfectly right for the occasion. Terri was at a loss to describe the outfit exactly. Lei seemed to shimmer and give off light. The dress she was wearing was silver and blue and form-fitting and very low cut. She had no idea from what material it could possibly be made. The governor was droning on about his vision for the state. Terri suspected that all eyes in the room were on Lei whose eyes were glued to the governor in rapt concentration. Terri's giggles were spilling over.

"Kimo, look at her! You know she isn't listening to a word he's saying."

"Who can blame her? I never can understand one word he says. Bullshit artist dats why."

Applause signaled that the governor had finally finished his speech.

It was now Lei's turn to be honored. "I would like to invite my lovely wife Cora back on stage to help me," the governor beckoned Cora back on stage. She was carrying a gorgeous lei of multiple '*ilima* strands. She stumbled on her way up the steps but the governor was a gentleman and caught her. Terri watched Cora drape the '*ilima* over Lei's neck. Shouldn't the governor have done that? Isn't it always this boy-girl thing? On these formal occasions males give females leis, and females give males leis. Cora and Lei kissed on the lips for what seemed to Terri like way too lingering a moment. Lei elbowed Kimo, "Did you see that?"

"What?"

Lei was now sandwiched with the governor on her left and Cora on her right.

"Please join me in letting our favorite TV tita know how proud we are of her. Who would ever have thought when we was back in school together that I would be making the news and she would be reporting it. Ladies and gentlemen, titas and mokes, let's hear it for the one and only, our very own Leilani Anderson." Genuine raucous applause broke out and it dawned on Terri that everyone in that ballroom watched Lei on television. Television was their religion and she was their goddess. To punctuate that thought, the lights dimmed and a video tribute of montaged images of Lei was projected onto several large screens. Terri watched as her classmates shared Lei, bigger than life, in the dark. A wave of chest-beating, foot-stomping petulance flooded Terri. **I** had her **first**. **I** had **her** first. I **had her** first … and she had me.

Jesse S. Fourmy

A JAPANESE COUPLE IN THEIR EARLY NINETIES

Wagatsuma. My goats cased them for months,
waiting for the day we'd leave town to escape
through the smallest aperture of fencing
I did not detect. I would've mended that
opening with pliers and shocked wire
strung below the lowest rung to freedom
as hidden, white light. They convinced me
for weeks, shimmying through their usual spot—
a corner of sloped yard, where a fencepost
prevents its electric ghost from haunting.
South, into the furthest orchard of lychee
& rambutan, they frolicked in sunlight,
shit out small, fruited clusters—loquat,
star apple. *Whuck, whuck*. Her machete
cursed what remained along knuckled rows
of their once carefully mastered garden.
That winter, bent beneath the mockery of rain,
yellow-slickered, she paced every handsome,
hand-tilled furrow, dropping seeds, heel to toe.
He never said a word of it. I learned it
from my neighbor, Bob, who watched
while I pressure-washed the goat-scatted boards
of my own lanai, resurrected a defeated barbeque
(all of this my goats' doing). Instead he brought me
a cradle of banana, insisted through the peel

of his gouged brow, during the year of that beast,
all is forgiven.

Clint Frakes

FLINTSTONES IN HELL

The stoneroller Flintstone-mobile descends through treacherous Chinese corridors as I watch from a plush, red theater chair. Wilma & Betty are in the back, Fred driving as always, Barney at his side—all with hands on laps, blinking, unaware they are plummeting deeper into a raging inferno. Cartoon-skinned, black-eyed & oblivious, they roll into Hell Café, feuding: Wilma jealous of Betty, Betty lusting after Fred, Fred wrathful at Barney—who is witless in his plain brown skins. They ape a bleak Cocteauean drama, unaware of their mortal sins, ignorance & aggression—trapped in Jurassic karma. I watch, no longer at a theater, but with them in the stone café, pretending to read the *Bhagavad Gita. And Betty!* I'm digging her, the only one to notice me, as I'm a semi-etheric being in their reality. She is the chance of salvation for the lot of them. A generic bartender with criss-cross stitching at his neck, a few strands of hair, blinking black eyes & blue tunic observes them from the end of a long, limey corridor: the accountant of akashic slate ledgers. *Am I their angel brought here to minister their sad delivery to Hell?* I order a muffin, brooding at my dolomite table, knowing I'm already too involved with Betty, though she's only an inken image, her spirit fastened & multiplied in my imagination from countless pajama cereal box Saturdays. Fred, forever orange-clad & angry, shouts at the root of my cortex. Barney, the suffering doofus stumbling at the quarry, confounded by the slightest complexity of cause & effect—who had the nerve to beget him, even on a sketch pad? Wilma: forsaken & jealous, German-like in her ironed white apron. I am clueless how to angel them & quote randomly from the sacred text: poorly translated maxims from a blue chariot-riding Krishna:

I tell you all the soul is uncleaveable, unburnable;

nor can it be wetted or dried; eternal, all-pervading
& immovable is he from everlasting time.

A reptilian cockatiel squawks the final hour from the cold wall. They are fit to be consumed in their own impossible religion, returned to the bardo inkwell & source-pond of all image, absolved of every fraud and pretense in the paleo buddha-fields of child memory.

Clint Frakes

CHELONIA MYDAS

1.

As the yolk sacks shrink & the young
fatten against their shells,
the egg teeth on the hatchling heads
pierce the leathery cases
& the newborns are pipped.
This prompts two more days of rest
before the marathon.
They hang their heads & flippers from cracked shells
like tenement dwellers
peeking from windows.

A single thrashing turtle triggers a tremendous
collective wriggle.
The clutch pulses in spastic bursts
as the pit gradually collapses.
Those at the top claw the ceiling while
others undercut walls;
base dwellers tamp falling sand
& the brood elevates.
A hundred hatchlings then await a thermal cue
to ascend in a final unified mosh,
the last time they behave as a group.
Refracted wavelight aligns them with their course;
if the night is dim, the beach slope guides the flurry
of seabound reptile buttons.

2.

Plunging at the shallow sheet flow of a spent wave
the hatchlings are lifted with the crash
of the next breaker,
no longer crawling but thrusting
wing-like on the littoral fringe.

With palimpsest strokes & insistent seaward bearing,
they bob below the crests,
sightless in the first frantic, unburrowed moments
buoyantly timing sea rhythm.
An integral cretaceous clock
pulls them out with uncertain yolk stores,
colliding in ouncling naiveté
with the primal power that ate
half their natal atoll
at French Frigate Shoals.

3.

A lost solitary pelagic stage ensues,
fueled at first by frenzied impulse to be at sea,
then passive migration on sargassum rafts
amid the Pacific Gyre,
nipping at snails, sponges, & worms.

4.

Her carapace spins in the relentless eddies for years.

5.

She suns occasionally on a fortuitous
bench or rise of beach.
We don't know how long she wanders.

Through olfaction or taste,
now the size of a dinner plate,
she identifies the coast of her ancestors,
as an herbivore nipping
on sea grass shoots,
aloof to her clan from the start.

6.

Some swim 1400 km in flotillas
to breed at the Shoals,
revert to carnivores on the way.
Males occasionally try to copulate with other males

or random flotsam.
Once he seizes a cow with his claw-like tail,
they float in grappling tandem for hours.

She will have scars.

7.

At the froth of the waning breakers
her leaking myopic eyes
set on a specific stretch of beach.
So much as a struck match at 100 meters
will send her back to sea.
She arches her head & nuzzles the sand
for a whiff of her natal grit,
a premonition.

Four years ago she dropped a clutch on this same slope.

Her lifting forelimbs plow a furrow;
rear limbs shove sand for a shallow body pit
so the real work can begin.
As if swimming, she hollows the nest with scooping rear flippers,
pausing to sniff the substrate again,
a slow blink & then fills the
hole with a jet of eggs
in glossy serum.

They say to pluck one right then & drink the yolk
will heal just about anything.

Kimiko Hahn

MAUDE

Red dwarfs, as reported,

are prone to giant flares (funny)
and sunspots

so a planet such as Gliese 4336 b—
orbiting around Gliese 436—

probably endures variation on its fixed, sunny side
as well, radiation showers.

I'm interested in whether this exoplanet possesses weather
as much as the next person—

but more—I'd like my daughter
to look for the wobbles

that a planet's gravity creates
in the motion of its stars

and name them after family members:

Kimiko would be a great name—
but really, I'm thinking *Maude*.

Planet Maude.

To imagine qualities would be to suggest
the obvious attributes

a daughter might bestow on her mother,

my mother. But rather than be obvious
I would take pleasure in any planet named after her—

though, if pressed,
I imagine one that is petite, habitable, remote,

and owning a number of moons.

An atmosphere surely.
There was a short time I wanted the same daughter

to go into mycology—
to name a fungus

after the men in the family.
I don’t think either would be asking too much.

Kimiko Hahn

ODE TO 52 HZ

It is almost a found-poem:
while monitoring enemy subs

in the North Pacific,
hydrophones classified a distinct

basso profundo frequency
calling with a metronome's regularity

as belonging to a whale, species unknown.

For twelve years he's been calling out to no response.
And now Mary Ann Daher,

pioneer in marine mammal acoustics

who spent years eavesdropping
on the largely hidden lives of whales,

has died. Who will listen to 52 hertz?

To what scientists suggest
is either a hybrid great blue and fin

or malformed?

Or, as my husband (who has only studied Melville),
suggests is a mutant? Me—

I first responded to a Japanese American
but we divorced.

It doesn't always work out according to species—
though I miss saying to my first mother-in-law: *tadaima*—

a frequency I've heard and cannot return to.

Of course I am being a Romantic—
thinking the whale cared.

That *it knew*. That it cried out to a human
since no others listened.

That it knew no others listened—
or feared as much.

That we think so and can feel remorse.

There's frequency and frequency—

that code
where we look for opportunities for remorse.

Marie Hara

THE BOWL

My friend who runs a restaurant in Mānoa came back from Laos where he served for a month as a Buddhist priest. Billy did this after his uncle, the head of their family, died. Wearing a yellow robe, his hair shaved, he had to stand on a road near the town marketplace, waiting silently for people who might place some kind of food into his wooden bowl. He showed me a photo of himself doing this. He laughed. "And food is my life!"

Take what is given with thanks.

But you can say, "Enough."
You can swallow up what you want
    or digest it at your own speed.
You can give it away.
You can just dump the whole mess.
You can shape it, play with it, shove it,
    rework it, write it your way, make it memory.
Remember the operating word: begging.
Yes, you have desired it, wished for it.
No lying to yourself, you asked for it.
Leave it free for tomorrow
    Clear
    Open
    Ready
    Waiting as it was from the beginning.
Whatever may be offered later

needs its own room to exist,
can’t be ignored or neglected.

It’s your bowl.
Just empty it today.

Gail Harada

THE LEGACY

It's the beginning of rush hour
on Kapi'olani Boulevard
in front of the Blue Dolfin Lounge
across Cutter Chevrolet
on Friday the 13th
when the front of my car explodes
and smoke or maybe steam
pours out from under the hood.
The service station guy I call sends a tow truck
but I can hear in his voice
that he's thinking:
What's dis wahine talking about—exploded?
Probably jes' one hose pulled out.
Exploded? Nah. She jes' exaggerating.
The next day he calls and says
"Sonofagun, it really was one explosion!
Get one big hole in da radiator.
One big chunk got blown out.
Never seen anything like it before. Sonofagun."

So I think, is it a sign?
A message from my father
via his silver Subaru Legacy?
I feel moderately guilty
even though I did change the timing belt

and I did have the CV boots replaced
and I do take it once a month to full serve.
This time it's going to be expensive.
This time it's going to cost big bucks.
The service station guy points out
"Still cheaper than buying one new car."

My anxious friends say
"Better to be safe. New cars are more reliable."
The service station guy says
"New cars break down all da time."
My friends say
"What kind of car would you get?
The Toyota Echo is cute.
You don't have to haggle for a Saturn."
But I think of the fact that my father's car
is a Subaru Legacy. A Legacy.
The name reverberates with meaning.
Did the Legacy blow up because of something I'm failing to do?
Is this some kind of car *bachi*—an admonition?
Or is it a sign that I need to let the car go?

My father's silver Legacy is pragmatic,
with reinforced side doors
and solid engineering,
the car my father took fishing,
that he could load a kayak onto,
stick a cooler into,
haul fish and *tako* home in.
When he went places with my mother
they used her sleeker Camry instead.

After my father passed away,
we found his Legacy didn't have much resale value,
so I sold my car and adopted his.
"It doesn't match you," my mother said,
turning her critical eye on me as I fastened my seatbelt,
ready to drive the Legacy away from her house.
"It's not feminine and it's not a very nice color."
"A car is not a fashion accessory," I replied,
sliding the key into the ignition.

It takes a month to fix the car this time.
The mechanic replaces the damaged radiator,
thermostat, upper hose, lower hose,

bypass hose, transmission cooler hoses, hose
clamps, gaskets, P.C.V. valve,
ignition wire set, and spark plugs,
and while testing the car, discovers
what caused the explosion—
both radiator fans are broken.
The dealer has only one fan in stock
for a 12-year-old Subaru Legacy
and special orders another fan
which takes 21 days to arrive
from Japan via California.
Is this a sign? A warning?
Let go the car or keep fixing it?
Is it a message from my father?

What would he say?

He would say
"It's just a car."

Gail Harada

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

Dad would have disapproved of the funeral service Mom was having in his memory, Penelope thought, watching her daughter Keala, who hadn't shed a single tear at her favorite grandpa's funeral. He would have disapproved of Mom's decision to have a 21-gun salute at the burial at the urging of the well-meaning aunties. He had ordered in his no-nonsense samurai way, "Don't bother people with a long funeral service. Don't even put an obituary in the newspaper." Maybe he'd forgive them if he was watching; maybe he'd know the service was actually for those who were left behind. Maybe he'd be secretly pleased that they were making such a fuss over him. The young soldier's gloves were flawlessly white against the red, white, and blue of the flag folded and tucked into its tightly perfect triangle. Penelope looked at her mother. Mrs. Miyamura's head was bowed and tears welled up in her eyes as the young soldier offered official condolences in appreciation of Mr. Miyamura's service more than half a century earlier in the hills and fields of Bruyeres two oceans and a lifetime away.

Mrs. Miyamura continued gazing at the flag in her lap. Penelope's daughter Keala kept her head down, staring fiercely at the tops of her black shoes. Penelope's ex-husband Randall had put in a brief appearance, but left early. Typical, Penelope thought, but then felt guilty for such an uncharitable reaction. He had never even attended a funeral before he married Penelope and had to deal with her family and friends. Penelope knew how hard it was for him to deal with the concrete reality of death, so she appreciated what an effort it must have been for him to come.

Penelope's thoughts wandered back to the guessing game she had played with her father when he'd take her to Scotty's Drive-In on Saturday nights when she was in elementary school. "Do you see what I see?" he would say as they waited in the parking lot. "I see something white," he might say. He always started with a color.

"Is it in the car?" she'd ask.

"No."

She'd scan the parking lot. "Is it bigger than our car?"

"Not really."

She saw someone with a vanilla ice cream cone. "Can I eat it?"

"Nope."

"Is it close to the car?"

"Yes."

She'd look at everything white near the car. "Is it part of a tire?"

"No."

"Is it a piece of paper, is it the paper cup over there, is it part of the building?"

"Nope."

The parking lot was full of white objects—a napkin, a straw wrapper, the streetlight, the lines to mark the parking stalls.

"The white line on the ground." Yes yes yes!

What had reminded Penelope of that game? It must have been the young soldier's white gloves, she thought. Penelope tried unsuccessfully not to start crying again, but couldn't help it. Dad would have thought she was silly and overly emotional, but she didn't care. The green grass, her daughter, her mother, and the flag in her mother's lap blurred as the tears welled up again.

Two years after the funeral, Keala announced she was joining the National Guard after graduation. "No, you're not," Penelope had responded firmly.

"I'll be eighteen soon and I can do whatever I want!" Keala had screamed at her. Never in her life had Penelope even considered the possibility that Keala would do something like this. The draft had ended just before Keala's father Randall had graduated from high school, so he never had to serve in Vietnam. Penelope herself had been against the Vietnam War, but was a little too young to have participated in the antiwar demonstrations back then. She remembered passing by UH and seeing the tent city in front of Bachman Hall and the weird bamboo structure that some old Japanese guy had constructed as a symbol of peace or something. She remembered her father, a 442 veteran who got his engineering degree through the GI Bill and worked for the military, had supported the war until he had gone to Saigon during one of his overseas TDY trips. He talked about it only once, and all he said was "We have no business being there." Penelope's father was the only one in the family who had served in the military, but he had never talked much about World War II, so Penelope had no idea how Keala had gotten the idea of joining the National Guard. What if the government got more involved in Afghanistan, or worse? No, she would not allow Keala to join if she could help it.

Mrs. Miyamura was slicing cucumbers for her *namasu* when Penelope arrived with the groceries from Times. "Keala's joining so you don't have to pay for college," Mrs. Miyamura said as Penelope opened the refrigerator to put away the tofu, orange juice, eggs, and tomatoes.

"She doesn't have to pay for college," Penelope replied. "Randall says he'll pay for her college tuition. She knows that."

"You think she'll let him?" Mrs. Miyamura snapped. "She's just like you. So hardhead. You think she doesn't know you ripped up all those checks Randall tried to give you to help pay for the house after you divorced him?"

"I let him help pay for her expenses. I just didn't want him to pay for my house. I wanted to take care of myself. I always let him help out with Keala."

"Hardhead just like your father. I saw how you struggled trying to get by on your teacher's salary. Bus drivers make more money than you do. You could have been anything—a doctor, a lawyer—but you have no common sense. You could have gotten alimony from that no-good Randall. You supported him through law school when you should have gone yourself. The more educated a person is, the less common sense they have. You're book smart, but so stupid!"

"Zip it, Mom. You always say the same thing. You keep rehashing the same old stuff. No wonder Dad got so mad at you sometimes." Penelope shut the refrigerator door firmly.

Mrs. Miyamura looked hurt. "Dad was such a pleasant man. He never complained and he never got angry."

Penelope looked at her mother incredulously. What planet had her mother moved to since Dad died?

Mrs. Miyamura started chopping iceberg lettuce for a salad. She was using more force than necessary. "You should have given Keala a real girl's name, instead of Keala. How come you gave her a boy's name?"

"Mom! Keala can be a girl's name too. There's lots of names that can be either a girl name or a boy name—Jamie, Stacy, Morgan, Robin, Cory, Jan, Dana, Kelly, Courtney, Drew—lots of names."

"If you gave her a real girl's name she wouldn't join the National Guard. She wouldn't surf like a boy either."

"I can't talk to you. You're … hopeless!" The cans of chicken broth that Penelope had been stacking fell sideways and rolled onto the counter.

"You the one hardhead!" Mrs. Miyamura snapped, bringing her knife down one more time on the hapless iceberg lettuce.

Penelope and Keala were having dinner at Columbia Inn. They both ordered the fried saimin with teri chicken.

"Keala," Penelope said, "I can help pay your college tuition. So can your father. We want to pay for your college. We always planned to."

"Mommy, I already decided, so don't even try to change my mind." Keala shot an angry glance at Penelope.

Okay, Penelope thought, she's only going to dig her heels in more if I try to talk her out of this but I have to try. "You read the news, don't you, Keala? Bush is going to do something horrible—look at what's happening in Afghanistan! Wars nowadays are fought over money and oil, not about ideals like freedom and democracy. Do you think the government cares about you? Look at what happened to those Desert Storm veterans who had those mysterious illnesses. Look at how the government denied them medical benefits and treated them so horribly because they couldn't prove what their illnesses were caused by. Obviously there

was something they were exposed to during the Gulf War that made them sick. It's disgusting that those veterans couldn't get decent medical care."

"Jesus, Mommy. You're such a hippie."

"I am not a hippie," Penelope's voice was starting to rise a little. "Hippies were apolitical. They didn't care about politics or what was really happening in the world. I was never a flower child type. Don't call me a hippie."

"Whatever. Anyway, it's not like I'm joining the Army or anything. It's the National Guard—I can serve here and go to school at the same time."

"Keala, you don't know that for sure. What if they send you away? What if you get deployed?"

"That's part of the deal. If I get deployed I have to go. Usually, they send the reservists and other people before they send the Guard. Don't worry so much. You always think of the worst that could happen."

"That's because I know more than you do," Penelope replied.

"What do you know? Were you ever in a war like Grandpa?"

Penelope was stunned. "Is this what this is about? You think Grandpa would be happy if you joined the National Guard and got college tuition money? You're thinking of how Grandpa went to college on the GI Bill after the war? Grandpa would want you to finish college, not join the National Guard."

"I want to do it all myself. You didn't take money from Daddy for the house. How come? He would have given it to you."

"That's different. We're not talking about that—we're talking about this fucking crazy idea you have about joining the National Guard."

"Mommy! Don't swear!"

"You listen to me, young lady, you are going to apply to a mainland college and your father and I will pay for it. You can't join the National Guard. I won't allow it."

"There's nothing you can do about it," Keala replied as their fried saimin and teri chicken plates arrived. Penelope knew Keala was right; there wasn't anything she could do about it. What could she do? Kick Keala out of the house? No, there was nothing she could do about it.

The next year seemed to go too fast for Penelope. Keala joined the National Guard in spite of her father's bribes (a new car and her own apartment, which were both refused) and Penelope's threats ("I'll never talk to you again"). Penelope was appalled at how much like her own mother she was acting, but she just couldn't help herself. Trying to induce guilt didn't work any better on Keala than it had on her either. She had implored, sighed, and cried, "What am I going to do if something happens to you?"—"All I want is for you to have a good life."—"I must have done something wrong to make you want to join the National Guard." Keala registered at Kapiʻolani Community College and progressed in her National Guard training. Then the U.S. invaded Iraq and Penelope waited for what

she had been afraid of ever since Keala had joined the Guard. Months of dread passed, and Penelope started to hope that maybe Keala would be able to finish her three-year commitment uneventfully. But one night, soon after Penelope started daring to hope that she had been mistaken in her fear, the six o'clock news confirmed she had been miserably right all along—the Hawai'i Army National Guard 29th Infantry Brigade, 3,100 young men and women, 2,000 of them local, were going to be deployed to Iraq.

Keala was out with her friends, so Penelope waited in the living room, watching the same news stories cycle over and over on CNN. Penelope found some comfort in the story of the cat that had survived for a week trapped in some airplane cargo crate with no food or water. It was a scrawny little thing with huge eyes and Penelope wished she could hold it. When Penelope heard Keala pull into the garage, she ran to the back door to hug her. "Do you have to go to Iraq? Is your unit one of the ones that has to go?" Penelope started to cry.

"Mommy, it'll be okay. Really," Keala patted her mother's back. "I have to go. Anyway, I won't be assigned to combat duty."

"It doesn't matter if you're not assigned to combat duty; you'll be in combat situations. You'll be in Bush's stupid immoral war. That liar! You could get killed."

"Mommy, I don't think I can talk to you about this. You're hysterical. The other guys will take care of me. You know, the soldier's creed: 'I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade.' The other guys will watch out for me."

"Oh my God, they've brainwashed you!" Penelope released Keala so she could look into her eyes. "They've brainwashed my baby and they're sending her to Iraq." Penelope sobbed and pulled Keala close to her again.

"Jesus, Mommy," Keala let herself be hugged again. "You're so so so … nuts."

"I can't help it. Wait until you have a daughter."

"Mommy, let's just try to have a good time until I have to go, okay?"

Penelope looked at Keala. When did her daughter get to be a grown-up, so sure of herself, so seemingly unafraid? It happened almost secretly, like a seed that you don't even know is there that germinates hidden underground, then pushes its way up and pokes its tender shoot above the ground unfolding a little leaf and before you know it, it's a plant; and then miracle of miracles, a small flower bud emerges from the tip of a stem and blooms like a white star in a green universe. Penelope started to cry again.

"Jesus, Mommy. Stop crying already. It'll be okay."

It was Saturday, and Penelope was picking up her mother to go shopping and dropping off Keala at the beach. Keala's surfboard was strapped to the top of the car. Mrs. Miyamura frowned when she looked at it.

“So, Keala, you going surfing today? You don’t want to come shopping with us?” Mrs. Miyamura said.

“Grandma, I already told my friends I’m meeting them at the beach,” Keala said. “They’ll give me a ride home.”

“So Keala, you know when you have to go to Iraq?” Mrs. Miyamura asked.

“First we go mainland for training. I think we go to Iraq in February next year.”

Penelope’s eyes were tearing up again. Mrs. Miyamura looked at her and said, “Better not cry when you’re driving. You’re going to get us in an accident.”

“Do you see what I see?” Keala asked from the back seat. Penelope could see her daughter gazing out toward Diamond Head in her rearview mirror. Keala must have played this game with her grandpa. Mrs. Miyamura was quiet. “I see something white,” Keala continued.

“Is it inside the car?” asked Penelope.

“Nope.”

“Is it bigger than this car?”

“Yes.”

“What shape is it?”

“Mommy, you know you have ask a question that I can answer with only ‘yes’ or ‘no.’”

“Okay, is it round?”

“Not really.”

“Is it man-made?”

“Nope.”

“It’s a cloud,” Mrs. Miyamura said suddenly, surprising both Keala and Penelope. “The one over there, over Diamond Head.”

“Wow, Grandma, you’re right. How did you guess?”

“I knew,” Mrs. Miyamura said. “Just like I know that Grandpa will watch over you no matter where you are. Because he was a good man, and he wants you to come back to us.”

Penelope looked in the rearview mirror at Keala. Penelope had not seen Keala cry at Grandpa Miyamura’s funeral, but now Keala’s eyes were moist with tears. Keala dabbed her eyes quickly and composed herself. “Ho, Grandma, I never knew you was one psychic!” she tried to joke.

“I know more than you think,” Mrs. Miyamura said gravely.

“Mom, you miss Dad, don’t you,” Penelope said, turning left past the zoo and heading for Keala’s favorite surf spot.

Mrs. Miyamura nodded, “Sometimes I think he’s still here.”

“We miss him too,” Penelope said softly, “Don’t we, Keala?” In her rearview mirror, she saw Keala, who appeared to be looking at the sky above Diamond Head, nod in agreement.

Penelope pulled over so Keala could unload her board. Keala leaned toward

the front seats and kissed her mother and grandmother. “See you about 7:00,” she said. “Maria will bring me home.” Keala undid the straps and lifted the surfboard, tucked it under her arm, and headed for her spot.

Penelope looked at her mother, who was watching Keala stride away from the car. “It’s going to be okay,” Penelope said suddenly, not knowing exactly what she was referring to.

“Of course it’s going to be okay,” Mrs. Miyamura said, “but not if you sit here going nowhere. If you don’t hurry up, we’re not going to get a good parking space at Kahala Mall.”

“Okay, okay.” As Penelope drove down the street, she glanced at her rearview mirror and saw Keala turn down the right-of-way to the beach. Then Penelope looked toward Diamond Head. She could see the white cloud was drifting toward the ocean and wondered how many surfers were out today, bobbing patiently on their boards waiting to catch whatever the ocean offered them, perfectly aware of the rocks and razor sharp reef below the surface between them and the shore. What did they see as they rode that glassy curve of sheer fluid power, propelled by an ocean they couldn’t control? Penelope saw a break in the traffic and turned, merging with the other cars traveling beyond the Diamond Head lookout points, all headed for undisclosed destinations.

Mari Hatta

CREATING *FISHBOWL*

from the journals of Kayo Hatta

Dedication tie the
"FISHBOWL"
film project:

a dedication to capture with exuberant
joy, DA KINE PIDGIN ENERGY —
THE SOUL, THE RAP
THAT IS

FUNKY HAWAII
at it best —

a dedication to speak truthfully
from the heart the experiences
of growing up 'small kid
time' in hawaii.

a dedication to express my own
vision without limits,
to allow myself to go all
out in this expression
of the voice of

HAWAII'S SOUL.

Born in Honolulu, Kayo Hatta was the director/co-writer of the widely ac-

claimed film *Picture Bride*, a love story set in plantation-era Hawaii. One of the first independent feature films to be made in the islands, *Picture Bride* won the Audience Award for Best Dramatic Film at the 1995 Sundance Film Festival and was an Official Selection at Cannes. Distributed domestically and internationally by Miramax Films, the film went on to become a best-selling video in Hawaii, and is now a regular part of the educational curriculum in many schools and universities in teaching ethnic studies, women's studies, labor history, and Hawaiian history and culture.

After graduating from Stanford, Hatta received her MFA in film from the University of California, Los Angeles, where she won numerous awards. At UCLA, she produced, wrote, and directed *Otemba* (*Tomboy*, a narrative short that won a CINE Eagle award and was broadcast internationally; she also began work on a documentary idea that eventually turned into *Picture Bride*. She later served on the faculty of UCLA's Department of Film, Television and Digital Media and at the Art Institute of Los Angeles, and lectured and gave workshops at numerous colleges and universities.

Shortly before her death in an accidental drowning in July 2005, Hatta completed what would be her last film, *Fishbowl*. The 30-minute film was based on sections of Lois-Ann Yamanaka's first novel, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (1996, a comical coming-of-age story set on the Big Island in the 1970s. The film focuses on the rebellious and conflicted 13-year-old Lovey Nariyoshi (played by first-time actress Mie Omori, who was a writing student of Yamanaka's and her best friend, Jerry.

In October 2006, Kayo's sister and lifelong creative partner, Mari Hatta, who co-wrote *Picture Bride*, was invited to participate in a panel discussion at the Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute on the making of *Fishbowl*. Following a screening of the film, *Fishbowl* producer Eleanor Nakama-Mitsunaga moderated a panel discussion with Mari Hatta and Lois-Ann Yamanaka. Mari presented excerpts from her sister's journal that chronicle the long process of bringing *Fishbowl* to the screen. This article was adapted and expanded by Mari Hatta from that presentation.

* * *

When we get to the porch, there's a fishbowl full of dimes. They sparkle under the light. A sign says, *Happy Halloween. Please take one*. Jerry looks at me fast. I already know what he's thinking. "No, Jerry. Don't," I say….

"Hurry up," he tells me. "Take some more. Ten make one dollar. They so damn stinken rich here. They not going even care if we take the whole damn fishbowl." Jerry takes two handfuls, sticks his tail and pillowcase under his arms and runs down the long sidewalk. I take a handful and run too.

Jerry runs like a crazy person. All of a sudden, he trips. His pillowcase

opens all over the lawn, Doublemint gum, jujubes, Big Hunk, everything. His fists full of dimes open, dimes flying in front of him.

From "Fishbowl and Some Dimes" in *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*, by Lois-Ann Yamanaka:

* * *

Right after Kayo died, I went through a few of her papers and notebooks very quickly, wanting to find out more about her state of mind at the time. It was a forensic journey, an attempt to forestall any acceptance on my part that she was gone. But it was too painful an assignment, and I quickly abandoned my investigation.

In late 2006, a little more than a year after Kayo's death, one of the producers of *Fishbowl*, Eleanor Nakama-Mitsunaga, contacted me and asked if Kayo had kept notes on the creative process of making the film. She wondered if I would be willing to share some of those notes at a writers' conference being organized by Bamboo Ridge Press.

This time, in revisiting Kayo's notebooks—and she had many of them, piles and piles that she kept over the years—I had a purpose other than the personal: to discover what lay behind my sister's journey as a writer and independent filmmaker, beyond the polished onscreen result. So I began to go through her most recent notebooks for passages that specifically addressed the experience of making *Fishbowl*.

The development of the film took place at a time of great struggle, spiritual change, and hardship for Kayo. The journals show that the evolution of *Fishbowl* mirrored her own quest to find her way as a practicing artist and to create something that authentically expressed her vision.

What also comes across: How extraordinarily difficult it is to be an independent filmmaker. I recently read that poetry is the most intimate of the arts: unlike music that you can play in the background, or a painting or sculpture that you might essentially "get" after a brief glance, to read a poem demands engagement; you must enter the individual vernacular of the poet. But in terms of execution, film—particularly independent films, which are not financed by a Hollywood studio—is perhaps the most difficult of all the arts. To be an indie filmmaker, you can't just be a creative visionary, you also have to be an entrepreneur and drill sergeant, good at raising money, good at persuading people to help for little or no pay. I began to think of it as the ability to hypnotize dozens of people—your crew—to fall asleep at the same time and have the exact same dream—your dream.

The Story of *Fishbowl*

Sometime in the late 1990s, Kayo first read Lois-Ann Yamanaka's debut novel, *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers*. She was captivated by the rawness of the Hawaii that Yamanaka depicted and the rough music of the characters' pidgin dialogue. The wistful longings of the novel's heroine Lovey Nariyoshi resonated deeply with Kayo's remembrance of Hawaii as well as her memories of growing up as an outsider among haoles in New York City.

Here is the way Kayo summarized the plot and context of *Fishbowl*, in a description she wrote for one of the film's funders:

> Halloween, 1975. For Fishbowl's heroine, thirteen-year-old Lovey, it's a chance to dress up and be someone different. For this rebellious, sensitive outsider who lives in the poorest part of a rural plantation town, life is more than a bad hair day, but a daily challenge. In the schoolyard, she is regularly bullied into silence by her nemesis, the smart and seemingly perfect Lori Shigemura, who is the head of a popular girls' club, the Rays of the Rising Dawn. Rather than fight back, Lovey is prone to escaping into fantasy scenes, where she turns into the popular and courageous girl that she wishes she could be. Even in the classroom, Lovey doesn't have it easy. There, she, along with the rest of her class is terrorized by her teacher for using Pidgin English, a Hawaiian-style patois that's considered an inferior

form of Standard English.

Lori (Jordan Mukai) and Lovey (Mie Omori)

Her only ally is her neighbor and best friend Jerry, a talented, effeminate dancer who dreams of becoming an honorary member of the Rays of the Rising Dawn. His groveling causes Lovey much anguish even when he assures her that once he makes it, he'll get her into the club as well. But it's Halloween, and Jerry's immediate goal is to win the annual costume contest where the $10 prize seems like all the money in the world. Under Jerry's artistry, Lovey and he are transformed into their pop heroes, The Captain and Tennille. What happens next becomes a testing ground for their friendship and Lovey's struggle for self-acceptance.

A big fan of Yamanaka's work, director/writer Kayo Hatta had long dreamed of bringing the author's debut novel to the screen in a feature-length motion picture. The critically acclaimed book had already been adapted for the stage by the Hawaii-based theatre group, Kumu Kahua and ended up being one of the company's most successful productions ever. Local audiences were hungry for the stories that Yamanaka captured with such insight and humor. Written in raucous Pidgin dialogue that seemed to fly off the page, Hatta knew that this would be yet another side of "paradise" that few had ever seen. Shortly after the success of Picture Bride, she unsuccessfully shopped the Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers novel around Hollywood studios for two years.

In 2002, Hatta finally decided to once again take the independent route and do a short film adaptation of the novel using three chapters from the book, "Obituary," "A Fishbowl and Some Dimes," and "Blah, Blah, Blah."

> It was hard for Hatta to choose from the rich selection of adventures and misadventures in Lovey's futile attempts to be someone she's not, but she finally settled on these chapters as they captured the essence of what she felt was a poignant and powerful portrait of adolescent friendship.

Kayo's notebooks and meticulously organized production binders show how driven and determined she was to make her film. At the same time, she was plagued with doubt and anxiety about the possibility of realizing her vision. Since *Fishbowl* is set in the 1970s, Kayo faced the formidable challenges of making a period piece—as she did with *Picture Bride*, which takes place in 1916. She also was working with child actors who had never been in a movie before. But like so many artists, Kayo knew that her biggest hurdle was not external. She saw that in order to keep going, she had to step over the creature closest to her, which was her own relentless self-criticism and fear.

I doubt Kayo ever thought these notes would be seen by others. But I think she would have been happy to know that what she wrote might be helpful for all of us who believe in the possibilities and necessity of making art despite our inner obstacles.

The journal entries presented here are mainly those that focus on the process of making *Fishbowl*. Most personal notes not related to the film have been omitted. The text has been edited for clarity in some cases and most abbreviations and misspellings have been corrected, except for those that give a flavor of how Kayo wrote. Some references are explained in brackets. A few names have been omitted to protect the individuals' privacy.

"Something Trembling in You Like You Are in Love" — March 2001

A year before she decided to produce *Fishbowl* as an independent film, Kayo highlighted a quote in her notebook that seemed to operate as talisman for her vision. The quote came from a torn-out section of a magazine interview with the director Agnes Varda (*Vagabond; One Sings, the Other Doesn't*), whom she greatly admired. (The underscoring below is Kayo's.)

> "If you call yourself an independent filmmaker, you first have to have an independent mind. Independence is very difficult because family, school and religion teach us not to be. In terms of the industry, it means being able to do cinema out of the mainstream, apart from the big studios that don't care about us. To be an independent filmmaker, try to be independent in your mind. Try to open yourself to others. Be curious all the time. If something tickles you, enrages you, you have the beginning of inspiration. I have never done a film just because people asked me to do so. <u>You need some-</u>

thing trembling in you like you are in love. If I don't have that, I don't work. That's why I did so few films. I made very few films for 46 years. But that's okay. That's okay."

Confronting the Written Story — 2003

In 2003, after a series of proposed film projects following *Picture Bride* failed to get funding from the major Hollywood studios, Kayo was trying to focus on new directions. At the time, she was working on the sets of the television series *ER* and *West Wing* as a directorial fellow. I remember we would talk about the many different ideas she had for creative projects, and how she did not need to focus on just making "a big film." One idea, mentioned below, was "the restaurant story," a long-discussed concept Kayo and I had for a film based on the adventures of our father as he journeyed from being a Buddhist minister in Honolulu to opening one of the first Japanese sushi restaurants in Manhattan in the 1960s. The other was a story based on the work of Lois-Ann Yamanaka.

Mid-2003

Children's book projects, small films, short video pieces—are these taking away from the energy of doing something big? I went from intrepid indie filmmaking to TV, and haven't really thought about the next project. But as I said to Liz, I want my next film to reflect more of what I am going through now….

This is making me realize I need to just sit and hash it out at the laptop, issues and worlds I want to put out and explore on film. But I have to cherish the experience now of West Wing, *to see the process and watch and craft a scene, how it's covered and played out. On my own I need to keep going deeper into myself and explore personally things I want to craft into a story….*

On the one hand it's the restaurant story—on the other, it could well be that that story is a segment.

What I also have to return to and create the indie biz way is the small story of Fishbowl and Dimes, *and create that small. The visual detail and setting needs to sing in every frame—a chance to show another part of Hawaii and to bring it to life via the small story. Memorable characters, to capture what it is that the world of the plantation workers represent … but not to get too much into identity and social politics, but to let that all happen to be the setting.*

What I need to do is work like hell on deepening and enlivening the script. To take the time to build the beats that will tell this story with a powerful dramatic punch, so powerful, so hard hitting that the intensity of this universe and dilemma will shock and delight audiences. For Lois-Ann's work is not *sentimental.*

3/28/03 Getty Museum

[Here] *to see the Bill Viola exhibit. Images in a virtual reality kind of setting, white marble/granite, perfect light, soft colors of the people and it is Kids Day so everyone is here with children …*

Boys run & pull at the lower branches of the weeping willows that grow by the fountain….

The cycle of life & death—the Middle East, all with harsh rock & desert, the point of death; the volcanoes in Hawaii the rebirth—and how the energy generated by both are part of the fuel that we need for the birth process … that which sustains the growth and change as we come of age to propagate …

— little children dance to the music

— good films—when they take you through a range of INTENSIVE experience of true emotions—and how those emotions are evoked—the narrative story has to have a moment of powerful journey and shape that takes the audience to experience what they relate to.

— a good story needs to take people through the experience of emotions, or else it's just melodrama. It did not allow you to experience the exquisite joy and pain of the transition from one to the other.

— such an intense scene of life here, a glorious LA day; people at this museum enjoy paradise; and children dancing to the music not dodging bullets and starving = such an intense extreme. Life thriving, everyone "in" it; experiencing fully, totally present—I guess at a museum, where "awake" people arrive and experience consciousness at a very high level.

— such different nationality groups parade by; I sit facing east; under an umbrella; the light at 2 pm perfect on them—a soft wind, blue skies …

- A Pakistani father & daughter dancing

- A chubby white woman in big hat and long cotton jersey jumper dances, silly motions, around a little girl—her daughter.

- When people are with kids, they lose self consciousness.

Self consciousness—
Consciousness of the MIND, which creates the "self," which is usually the "not self."

5/21/03 Honolulu, HI
Starting preproduction on Fishbowl*—after two weeks here, finally a day of relative calm and equanimity. Beautiful sunset as I jogged and did yoga at Ala Moana. Felt great to RUN. Getting in shape. Focusing finally, after much aggravation about my living situation!*

5/18/03
Casting session today.

Trying to write a bit every day and get into a more disciplined routine. Part

of the calm yesterday I felt had to do with getting things done. When I'm not working, my engines lie idle and anxiety builds. The generator thing.

Trying to get into my Vision for this film … need to sit at Ala Moana, get a chair. Do yoga at sunset and WRITE & THINK.

5/24/03

I wonder now if my finding the nest with the two dying mynah chicks was a metaphor—the creative birth—so delicate, can die if not nurtured and handled with love and attention—and discipline.

I keep seeing mynah birds in pairs in Honolulu. I keep being reminded of the two mynah chicks and that amazing nest I found.

5/28/03

Dream last night. I'm on the shore and Carrie [the youngest of Kayo's three sisters] *is next to me. The wave suddenly, a large one, washes up and sweeps Carrie into the ocean. I jump into the crazily churning waves trying to save her. I call for help before waves toss me around.*

Went biking today. Biking makes me happy. Should do it more. Wondering why I don't do the things that make me feel better more.

Then yoga on the beach near Kapiolani Park. The softest grass near the ocean makes the most exquisite yoga mat. Feeling stronger and more toned.

Then giving thanks to all thte people who grace my life….

Sitting at café in Waikiki and [watching] *two Japanese tourists in front of the Halekulani. The woman takes a pic of the man in front of the* [hotel] *sign. The man stands there, posed, pointing to the sign, as if to direct the viewer's attention.*

Later I see two tourists—Japanese tourists—taking photo of two Western tourists. They are pros—the Japanese woman holds her left hand up to signal she's timing the camera, she leans on one leg, the other straight out. It will probably be an amazing picture—perfectly composed. A nice flip side of the caricature. We see now the intensity with which they photograph. I thought of them in a film—earlier caricatures, later craftsmen who we admire.

6/1/03 [Mexico]

… [We] *were at a café when the owner started talking about the amazing Cecilia Amaro—a poet/painter/singer who at 50 with three kids, started an amazing career—talked rapturously about her work—and made me wistful and longing for contacting my own creative juices. Still trying to connect with that. Wonder sometimes if I'm after something that is not in me? Or if I've just not tapped into the right part of my nerve circuitry. We are all creative, so they (who) say. Starting on* Fishbowl *has been fraught with anxiety; back in town with the same set of issues; wondering if I'm ready to shoot or if the script is ready….in tears, so miserable—mainly because staying at mom's place which had been hard on me. No sleep, loud t.v., no privacy. Need to start standing up for my needs & know that if I have those basic needs, I can do so much—and that's my responsibility … to be*

the vision and energy behind the project …

In the telling [of *Fishbowl*]*, from the point up to where Jerry falls & from when Lovey wins contest—is powerful & clear. The clarity is lost when I'm trying to convey what happens—Why Lovely decides to give Jerry the coins*. [An earlier version of the script had Lovey winning ten dollars in a Halloween costume contest and converting the money into dimes, which she leaves at Jerry's doorstep. The final version of the film took a very different course.]

* * *

Opening: need to make sure kids who ad lib the Halloween dialogue are talking true authentic pidgin to the point of being comical. Find good bit players who can pull this off.

Connecting with the juices so what I write has resonance with what I'm feeling inside … such a task for me! In editing, I feel connected … maybe that's where I can feel my creativity best … but it has to be my own images, and a cosmic reflection of my eye. And how in Fishbowl *each moment must resonate into infinity. Each frame SINGING with truth, humor & love & irony.*

What I need artistically to accomplish before returning to Hawaii:

- rewritten script

- vision notes—pictures, photos, books, videos as reference

- blocking notes

- dialogue with DP [director of photography]*—camera, film, equipment package*

- notes for each department—costume, props, set design

6/12/03

Hard to be at a party and to keep smiling when inside one is hurting and in pain. Such was the case last night. Hard to not feel lack and want in the presence of such sweet abundance.

Trying to find my groove and my passion, but hard to fake it….

A weekend of fights and strange tension…. In any case, I know I have to exercise; as Mari says we have do things that we don't want to do, just GET THROUGH & TOLERATE & OBSERVE those brutal feelings of negativity.

Exercise makes such a difference—especially yoga. It's that BIG hurdle of getting into the work.

The same with my work and how hard it is to rouse myself to do the work I need to do in Fishbowl*. And lately the strangest omens …*

Bob said something interesting last night. I said I wasn't feeling great about directing—he said I was one of the most talented … to which I said no, & I was thinking I'd give it up. Instead of protesting, he said, "Yes, maybe you have to give it up, for it to come to you …"

6/28/03

The dance between Lovey and Jerry is that they constantly mutate moment to moment—& that's the energy and feel of their friendship I should try to capture—the back and forth dynamics of who they are—a constant power shift—and what we live to feel is that moment of change—and surrender.

What I'm trying to see is—what this shows me—that what I show of each universe, has to be intensely what it is!!

And the worlds can be visually delineated, and drawn cinematically and dramatically; then half my work as a cinematic shaman is over.

Shadows and light.

Each has a place.

The everchanging landscapes

I see them talking nonstop

As they descend the hill towards school and they turn around each taking turns to be led. And in taking turns they are each in the other's shoes—

The moment when Lovey is being taunted by the others,

Where, pray tell, is Jerry? He is busy kissing up to the Rays …

So he doesn't come to her rescue because he's limited—

Whereas—
In the beginning Lovey adores Jerry's cool, hip energy

That's what I have to show—is how much Lovey adores Jerry for his style, and hipness—and of course the reason is because he's gay and can stay in touch with the feminine.

So through Lovey's eyes, Jerry's hip incarnate—The only thing is, he loves boys. So she can only partake indirectly. And letting him go—that's what Lovey in a way always does—and in feeling the solitary loneliness of his own world, he comes to see who he loves so deeply and that's the mutual acceptance that is the beauty of their friendship.

And when they try on the costumes is where we can hear some old Captain & Tennille songs. Funny, Jerry wants to feel like the Captain & Tennille, but as Tennille how to do this without stereotyping? But it is not really about whether it is stereotyped, but how tenderly, respectfully it is done without the old ways it's been approached.

To understand this relationship between Jerry and Lovely has been the difficulty in your connecting with that person.

Let it flow from the sacral center—the dance between Lovey and Jerry should be palpable. Show Jerry doing a funny dance step—before they enter [the place where the Halloween costume contest will be held]*—and then how different their demeanor is after they come out….*

The trauma of the classroom, and how [the teacher] *made them feel spills over into the energy of the bus scene—the pecking order gets played out and for Lovey that is the power structure—is what she resents—that's the hypocrisy that Lovey is trying to penetrate.*

So I'm getting color and texture in their friendship—& the joke between them is that he's going to be Tennille.

When they're caught—part of the humiliation is they're caught, but more bitterness at losing the contest: because the outfit is ruined.

It's kind of a newsreel when Lovey's imagining herself in the "died and gone to heaven" scenario—her ultimate place with a devoutly & intensely holy grandmother who feels passion so strongly…. She is complex and fascinated and I know that Mie [Omori, the lead actress] *can do it because she's FUNNY and "gets it."*

7/4/03

How do people who don't have children feel complete? This longing that I have in reading about the human experience, how to connect that to that vast experience…. Am I doing this in my work? Are my films my kids? Or is that a fallacy, a way of making oneself feel better?

Am trying to write now. Precision as I map [the] *story into the real world and get collaborators to help construct that dream—or that "reality" into the dreamworld.*

7/10/03

Kawaikui Beach Park. 7:30 pm. Streak of pink across the sky; breezes, windsurfer in the distance, a 3/4 moon and clouds above calm waters. Yoga session on beach grass under trees, in that flying space ... lying down and looking up—looking up is looking down as I fly.

Thank you for the challenges that I've been faced with—opportunities to grow….

Past days of hell with making of Fishbowl*—lost in the mind—very scary, but just is. Not to judge myself for it. Something to feel fully.*

I'm trying to move conscious of "the flow" and be smart about how the current flows.

7/21/03

As I read Joseph Campbell today, I felt a surge of hope & courage—and how developing courage means to see obstacles & barriers and the abyss as a potential place of wealth….

I realize that I need to be in the office every day at PBS Hawaii to write.

At the end of the summer of 2003, after conducting countless auditions, rewriting and finalizing the shooting script, traveling around Hawaii location scouting, and constantly trying to raise money, Kayo and her producers had to make a difficult decision to delay the shoot for a year because of a lack of funding. This was a low point in Kayo's life, but with her recurrent sense of optimism she eventually decided to take a less costly approach and shoot the movie on video, rather than on film, and to take a fresh approach to the *Fishbowl* story.

New Notebook, 2004
First page:

Dedication to the "Fishbowl" film project:

A dedication to capture with exuberant joy,
DA KINE PIDGIN ENERGY—
THE SOUL, THE RAP
THAT IS

FUNKY HAWAII
at its best—

a dedication to speak truthfully
from the heart the experiences
of growing 'small kid
time' in Hawaii.

a dedication to express my own
vision without limits,
to allow myself to go all
out in this expression
of the Voice of

HAWAII'S SOUL.

3/11/04

My goal when I direct is to make each scene sing with integrity and truth … whether it's just a building block moment or a key climax … to pick the magical part and make it happen ….

4/30/04

Script outline revision …

Need the open[ing] *to grip the viewer … an image, a situation to startle the viewer awake that this is going to be 30 minutes worth watching ….*

Two outsider kids in Hawaii in the 70s. Write a shooting story about an incident that includes the following:

Halloween

Classroom pidgin

Fishbowl of dimes

Harassment

Halloween

Pidgin Scene

Pidgin Revenge

Rays' Harassment

↓

Halloween

↓

Pidgin—Train Wreck …

↓

Pidgin Revenge

What does Lovey strive for when the stakes are high?

Revenge, Self Respect

Loyalty from Jerry


9
7

5/14/04.

faced with the final rewrite of FISHBOWL – want to start afresh. and let the new vision and video vitality of the project come through...

if I can write so that it's not the final thing, as my kents it, but the blueprint that will be filled in with the vitality and energy of the kids, then I won't feel such a need for it to be such literary visionary perfection – to accept that the rest of the film still has yet to be made.

the process of telling a story is about the journey of the human heart –

- how closed it is .... to start
- how the mission comes to start its flowering.
- and how it struggles to open and we see why its afraid – WE UNDERSTAND & connect to her dilemma....
- BUT SHE BLOSSOMS – and its the climax as her heart opens up!! (& why she gives up/surrenders to open)

Hence, the more improvisational approach to the telling of the story.

A set of scenarios, and as director, let's say I'm giving directives ...

So, the first setting:

a classroom ... Let's have American flags, chalkboard, etc.

seems like Anywhere, USA.

But we see, gradually, that it's Hawaii through dialogue.

Conflict:

There's the teacher saying that the kids can't keep speaking pidgin ... and the

kids are just being themselves.

-the teacher is trying to get them to learn Standard English

-Lovey sees his POV and tries, but she feels most comfortable with the pidgin.

-Got to get the kids more rebellious and active. What can the kids do in the face of this …

→ and we see what people are so afraid to give up.... and the funny dance that people do when they won't surrender

- the moment of surrender, should be sweet when we see Lovey give up her resistance — and she can see her own beauty

the beauty of ~~yo~~ cheap kine bo ovayle candy wrapped in wax paper!

Fishbowl is a love poem to where you grew up.. where we come from.

So how to set up the dance of surrender for Lovey:

ACT I
HEART CLOSED

Lovey is berated by Mr. Harvey (Bill Ogilivie), her teacher, for using pidgin English

Start off in the classroom—
—she's getting it from Mr. Harvey…
—closed heart … where Lovey secretly reveals her true desires …
HEART STIMULATED
5/2/04
Revelation last night about Lovey & Lori—how they are one person. Lori is Lovey's mind talking. Her own worst enemy in the form of a projection of herself.

Imagined the opening shots—& throughout, I have to maintain tension of Lovey's discomfort.

And the delight of peering into another world. Very American. But clearly another subculture.

My binder:
-SCRIPT
-Storyboards
-Props list
-Photos of locations
-To do list
-Vision notes—do for each scene …
-Video list. Visual references. Watch the videos.
-Shoot schedule.

Improv
Staring -

Lovey and her nemesis Lori in the film's opening scene

Dominance of Lori over Lovey
-Work with the looks of each girl—play with the submissiveness of Lovey in the pecking order when she lowers her gaze. Lori openly aggressive.

Vowels -
How adolescent girls play with vowels.

Status -
- Give people status—low or high.
- Give each kid in classroom a position—not all dominated/passive makes it realistic
-e.g., Jerry's all about status—going up & down on the ladder, trying to ease his way up to Lori.
-Show how status keeps changing according to situation
Rehearsal plan
Jerry - work with him on character
Do exercises with him to help him relax and get into exercise
How to focus on the action
To understand the process
-know the character really, really well …
-understand the story completely.
In directing him, tell him the importance of listening well, focusing on Lovey. Once he understands character he won't have to "act" so much. His natural in-

stincts will come out.

→ = a shot idea ☐ = to follow up

Flow of Story

How does the story flow?

Transitions between moments—be open to them in rehearsals …

- Silence.

- Looks, exchanges, glances.

SCHOOLYARD -

The opening of the film -

- To show Lovey in her true form

- To show Lovey being cut down

- To show Jerry not defending her

- To show bond between the two

→ *CU on Lovey*

As she tells the story, she's playing "numbers" w/Jerry …

→ *CU on their faces and hands* ☐ *find out about other games*

Shows the bond between them!

→ *CU on Jerry; uneasy; admiring; hopeless*

→ *Establish schoolyard*

Establishing shot …

When Jerry can't come to Lovey's rescue …

We see him admiring Lori…

→ *Need to establish that he's a schemer—to set up the dimes …*

7/19/04 [Honolulu]

Stressful setting in Hawaii with no car and noisy crowded apartment of mom.

Trying to practice flow and gratitude—and letting trip unfold.

Want to stay balanced—realization that all will not be as it was at home, and to maintain focus and grace …

later …

fatigue … this hot weather! Why do films in Hawaii? Was thinking how my romance with the Islands is waning. A strong association with family and Picture Bride.

How I entered into Picture Bride *in the wrong way—not knowing who I was.*

Such a struggle to make films

I know (I hope) this is just an emotional adjustment I'm going through …

The wisdom now is though the mechanism is [the] *same, I can watch and not let it take over and become personal …*

Tonight at Tokkuri Tei [a Japanese restaurant in Honolulu] *where I took mom and Carrie, mom said she would not come to my wedding if I got married in Cal-*

ifornia.

Made me feel old and that this ritual was no longer important for someone so old … sad.

But again: I observe and feel the sadness—but just observe, not wallow and lose myself in it.

It's accepting the good and bad … the totality.

7/20/04

A better day:

Waialua with Lisa Asagi—great to hang with her. We got a lot done!

A true sister. Yay.

Food shopping, then to mom's.

A better place to eat and bond over. Nice talk with Carrie, finally.

Some crises, SAG, etc. but am settling into my office space … time to come home to the project!

As production time approached, Kayo went into her "action mode"—legendary among the friends and family who had witnessed it on previous projects—which was a state of constant activity catalyzed by a looming deadline. This was a time when she worked closely with her producers and crew, and put together voluminous production binders, scene lists, storyboards, and schedules—all the enormous amount of detail that goes into shooting a film, whether it is 30 or 90 minutes long.

7/22/04

-Started blocking—MUST do this more! CRITICAL.

-Interview w/ PA's [production assistants]

-Looked at Morning Glory Japan accessories.

-We found a sound man!

-Went to state library and Bishop for research.

Tired now, but it's natural.

Walked out of library at 7:30 … the crescent moon, a purple sky through the lace of tree top.

Amazing finches at the school.

Remember to practice stillness to allow creativity to flow.

7/26/04

Almost one week here now.

Saw "Before Sunset" tonight—beautiful film, kind of grows on you, a hypnotic conversation with a lovely slow build. Made me think about my own life. Identified with so much of the woman, Julie Delpy's character—the pieces of a person that are clearly what makes them who they are.

—getting lost in the miracles of everyday life … dreamy quality.

I so admired

—her beautiful apartment
—singing and songwriting ability
—her, the character's, passion—an activist, world traveled, deep
—a deeply romantic film—that made me see how I want to shoot many of the scenes in Fishbowl*—a giddy, joyful quality …*

7/27/04

Dad's B'day.

A hard day. Worked with the kids—Mie and the Rays. Seeing the pitfalls of the script—and had a crisis of confidence in the story. Very distressing.

We worked on opening scenes and had this sinking feeling. Where is the interesting thing here? Up to me and my vision to pull this story out onto the big screen—to make each moment count—& SING.

I can't rush it—I have to dig deep into each scene for the gold.

I have to break down the script—

I need to do my homework—so I can pull this off …

So tired.

Making films is so hard… I have to remind myself what a great learning experience & ADVENTURE this is.

In Waialua, directing Billy Lam (Jerry) in his dance scene
photo by: Julie Kim

Embrace it.
Be Here Now….

Trying to keep up the spirit today in the face of tough situations …

If only we had the right Jerry … [One of the great challenges was finding a replacement for the actor originally cast in the critical role of Jerry.]

8/1/04

Waiting for Billy Lam [who eventually was cast as Jerry] *—and fingers crossed that he will work …and trying to focus and calm myself ….*

Two weeks. Now I need to relax and focus even more—be clear and focused & not let myself think too much about "What if" this doesn't work?

Hard to have fun when I'm so serious about everything; I should just have fun and play with the story.

Once I do, the cast can relax and take chances—

What a strange, intense phase—am I cut out for this anymore?

I have to give it my all before I can begin to even answer that question …

(L-R) Mie Omori (Lovey), Billy Lam (Jerry), Director Kayo Hatta, & Director of Photography Cameron Pearce
photo by: Diane Mei-Lin Mark

The actual production and filming of *Fishbowl* occupied the next two weeks. As with most films that are shot on location, it was a grueling experience, made all the more challenging by the setting of Oahu's North Shore and hot, unpredictable weather. On a very tight budget and with limited time, Kayo, her producers and crew were under tremendous pressure to work quickly and limit the number of retakes of any scene, even it did not seem quite perfect. There were the usual pitfalls of location filming when you can't afford to close off a large area: sudden airplanes and helicopters, roosters crowing, and running out of daylight. But after long days of driving back and forth from Honolulu to the North Shore and shooting from dawn to dusk, Kayo finally completed the shoot.

8/26/04
On plane homeward bound.

I want to focus on the great feelings of completion and abundance I had [at thte production wrap party] *as I stood next to Gary Omori* [father of lead actress Mie Omori, whose family was tremendously supportive of the project]—*and soaked up all the good vibes. The kids' positive experiences, their gratitude, and*

Jonah and his brothers [child actors in film] *singing the Hawaiian song of thanks, the positive feelings I had.*

I should be thankful that it all turned out as well as it did.
I should be proactive in the editing phase—and work on my tendency to leave the power to others.

Part of abundance is embracing power and knowing how to use it. It's not about egos but about using power to accomplish a divine deed, to help the larger good.

My mind was on a repetitive anxious loop about this and the wonderful joy I felt in completing the film receded.

I now want to bask in the positive vibes—and see the totality of the experience—how it was good and bad—and how it all unfolded in the way it was meant to unfold.

Back in San Diego, Kayo now entered an intense phase of viewing and editing hundreds of hours of raw film footage, putting together many rough cuts, and arranging for test viewings. I visited Kayo several times to help her with the final edit. I have vivid memories of her hunched in front of her computer for hours, with intense focus and discipline, shaving or adding seconds, even half-seconds from or to a scene so it would hold just the right amount of tension. Working with Kayo to shape *Fishbowl* turned out to be the last time we worked on a creative endeavor together, and I'm grateful I had that final opportunity to witness her skill and devotion as an editor and storyteller.

After making the always agonizing decision when to "lock picture" and cre-

ate the master file for the film, Kayo completed *Fishbowl* in late 2004. The film received its premiere at the 2005 Asian American International Film Festival, in San Francisco.

3/13/05

Midnight

Gratitude for the beautiful weekend, the premiere of Fishbowl*—and being with the family, cast, friends … Celebrating and basking in the abundance of love and kudos. How sweet it all was—though how anxious I was before the screening. We were late and my anxiety spread to poor Mari. (We made the realization that we're so in tune with each other … that when I clear, she clears.)*

5/2/05

Saturday April 30 was [the Los Angeles] *screening of* Fishbowl*, and it was great to feel the appreciation of the audience to the film. True enjoyment and the power of laughter, how in a crowd laughter draws people together so powerfully … a genre that really works on a large screen with a large crowd. How gratifying it was, how much gratitude I felt.*

It burst the dark morose cloud I fell into after finding out I didn't get into the Seattle Film Festival. It undermined me completely, made me question my work, and I only felt dread as the day of screening approached.

Ultimately, it was the relief of having had a good festival experience that saved me. How glad I was that I did not decide to stay home as I had originally almost done (at least entertaining the idea).

The outpouring of felicitation was so healing. The rest of the evening was a delight hanging with friends….

I can at least say I know my film is good—as good as I thought it was … sure, I know it won't please all, but I know it is a well made piece.

Kayo died on July 20th. In October, *Fishbowl* was featured at the Honolulu International Film Festival where it won the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences Hawaii Film & Videomaker Award. The following spring *Fishbowl* received its national screening on PBS as part of the prestigious *Independent Lens* series. In 2007, the film received a Northern California regional Emmy Award.

Kayo would have loved the October 2005 Hawaii public premiere of *Fishbowl*. The film was scheduled to be shown on Waikiki Beach as part of the city's "Sunset on the Beach" series. Due to torrential rains, the screening was delayed twice, which was very disappointing to the cast and crew. But because of those delays, *Fishbowl* ended up being shown during Halloween weekend. It was one of those perfect synchronicities, given *Fishbowl*'s storyline, and I like to think that it was one of Kayo's final directorial orders from the beyond.

To learn more about Fishbowl *or to purchase a DVD of the film, visit*

www.fishbowlfilm.com or contact the Center for Asian American Media at www.asianamericanmedia.org.

Kayo and Mari Hatta

Ann Inoshita

SINGING OLD SONGS

Her legs stretch
above her shoulders
like words
to a forgotten song.

He leans over her
and slips slowly
illuminating her.

Breaths move quickly
as the bed dances
to the sound of coil springs.

Skin talks to skin
and lips reacquaint.

It has been a while
since this room
was so warm.

Ann Inoshita

A DOZEN FLIES

Flies know
a healthy body
held by thoughts
of decay.

A fly kissed me.

Then there were a dozen
that kissed
clothes, hands, legs.

I removed my jacket.
Let them taste.

Darlene M. Javar

THE GROWING OF HOPE

Removed from a highlighter,
the yellow felt tip immersed in water;
the plastic drinking cup,
latex gloves, straws, antiseptic wash
outlined Mom's private room basin.

The liquid too pale,
shell of the pen opened,
a longer cylinder of felt
brightened the shade.

Paper towels from a metal dispenser
were folded, added to the dye.
Sunshine absorbed,
dried under fluorescent lights,
the paper towels
were torn—
lengths of ragged edges—
were layered—
petal upon petal—
were gathered and twisted—
roses, carnations, hibiscus.

The quick dip of a blue felt pen tip
in the yellow mixture

created a subtle shade for greenery,
a lovely bouquet.

Borrowed from the nurses' station,
a roll of white tape fastened
the flowers into gardens of life
blooming on the bulletin board and wall.

With the minerals, vitamins, saline solution,
sunshine through glass windows,
the gardens kept growing
as Mom got better that particular season.

These pages are blank because we were unable to obtain signed permission from the author Kealoha to include his work in this digital archive.

Brenda Kwon

ANGRY WOMEN

It's not the first time I've heard it, that
women are crazy—
that unlike guys, who'll get into fistfights
then buy each other beer,
we hold grudges.
It's also not the first time I've heard that
it's much better to piss off a guy
than a woman because women?
Women are mean.
Translation:
Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.
It's nothing new,
these attitudes, these platitudes
all telling us we've got no right to get mad,
and if we do, we're doing it wrong.
When we wanna say that something's not right,
they tell us
with women the heart argues, not the mind.
In other words, we're not logical enough
to go around clocking each other
whenever we've got bones to pick.
First of all,
when was the last time you told a girl
it was okay to deck someone when she was upset?
You can't take away a woman's fists

then punish her for using the things she's got left,
like her words,
her feelings,
and her power of eternal memory.
Would you really prefer that we make you bleed?
As if the world doesn't have enough of that.
See, every twenty seconds here in paradise,
a woman gets hit.
And every three seconds here on earth,
she's beaten, raped, or killed.
So maybe we're too damn tired of it
to inflict it on someone else.
And besides,
anger is anger
and maybe you should question the source,
not assign it a gender.
I see angry men starting wars,
killing our children,
and destroying our earth.
But I also see angry men
marching for peace,
shouting for justice,
and surviving their fear.
And maybe all I want is the right
to get mad at the wrongs in our world
without being called those things meant to shut me up:
like hysterical, irrational, illogical, psychotic,
man-hater, male-basher, feminazi, or bitch.
When I think of anger that comes from sisters,
I think of anger that comes from love,
of Nigerian woman workers
on strike at Chevron-Texaco,
demanding jobs for their sons,
schools and hospitals for their town;
of Dolores Huerta,
founding UFW
getting rights for farm workers
when she saw their kids
going to school without shoes;
of Iraqi women visiting Colin Powell
to insist on health care and human rights;
of Joanna Macy, who testified at the

World Uranium Hearings to plead
for the protection of earth from the "poison fire";
of Wilma Mankiller, who united the Cherokee Nation
one-hundred-fifty-seven years after the Trail of Tears;
of Mililani Trask, who studied the rules of the system
so she could fight it to help all indigenous people;
and of Kim Hak Sun, who broke a forty-year silence
to talk of her rapes during World War II,
then sued Japan's government in a call for justice
to comfort her fellow sexual slaves.
Maybe Lord Byron got it right when he said
sweet is revenge—especially to women.
Because the things we avenge are the crimes that
transcend time,
transcend nations,
and yes, transcend this battle of sexes,
because *a free race cannot be born of slave mothers,*
and all of us here, we all come from our mothers,
and so yes, our revenge is sweet
and yes, we hold grudges
as our way of saying we will not forget
how you destroy our children,
and send them to die for money,
we will not forget these things that hurt you
as they hurt ourselves
because all we want,
all we want is a little bit of peace,
a little respect,
a little safety for this traumatized world.
So the next time you face an angry woman,
make the effort to see what causes her pain,
knowing that we, like you, reserve the right to get mad
for any number of a thousand stupid reasons.
But if she asks that you see her as a human being,
and if she will not raise her fists to say
that she will not stand for your denying her right to be your peer,
then show her you know how to speak her language
and hear her words for the sake of their speech
knowing *a bird doesn't sing because it*
has an answer;
it sings because
it has a song.

Brenda Kwon

CENTURY'S LULLABY

One hundred years ago,
Hawai‘i was just a dream
of lush green fields of pineapple and sugar cane,
of warm tradewinds licking dry your skin
damp with perspiration,
of sand that looked like cream dissolving beneath
the transparent blue waters separating
here and there,
Korea, Hawai‘i,
this pacifying ocean
five years later separating
occupation and freedom,
beckoning for you to leave home
because home was burning in the rising sun,
home had lost the morning calm
and so you rode those waves
unsure if they were pulling you forward
or sucking you under
until they pitched you
to a rocky shore
where you planted your roots
in someone else's yard
bent double in the heat so strong and merciless,
you wondered how the rising sun so far away
could still singe you black on this tropical plain.

And one hundred years later,
Korea is my dream
of blue-mist mountains
and the smell of pine,
the insistent chanting of monks
and drum beats, of wooden beads,
long glinting spoons and silver chopsticks like jewelry
dipping into stone bowls of vegetables like
the colored ribbons of *hanbok*

as women spin in dance,
each turn a revolution back to tradition,
each rotation a recognition of Seoul,
this city of concrete and glass,
of marble floors and violins,
of cellular phones and subways snaking underground,
of neon red and pop music
and the steam of street vendors sheathed in plastic,
this city of excess and perpetual motion,
this city in which,
one hundred years later,
I cannot find you,
Harabuji.

You died only months before my birth
meaning you were always theoretical,
the cord between us imagined,
braided by photographs of you,
photographs of me,
wishing I could cut and paste us together
if only to pretend we shared the same space
for one sacred flash of the camera,
you, the paper grandfather I would never meet,
I, the granddaughter you saw only through
the stretching flesh of my mother's belly,
time and her skin the things that kept us apart.

And as I walk these city streets,
I still feel time and my mother's belly flesh
encapsulating me from this place of my ancestry,
this place in which I do not belong,
this place in which *i hankuk saram*
do not recognize me,
call out to me in *il bon mal*,
konnichiwa,
always surprised when I say,
aniyo, hankuk saram ye yo,
kurigo Hawai'i ae seo wasseoyo,
kureondae, hankuk saram ye yo,
and that vague suspicion
that perhaps I am confused or refusing them the truth.

Harabuji,
hankuk saram ye yo,
but in this place of my ancestry,
this place in which,
one hundred years later
I can find no trace of you,
my blood is theory,
my home time and the flesh of my mother's belly,
my home in someone else's yard
the product of this country's rape,
and so you see why I find it ironic
when asked
il bon saram ye yo?
because, in truth, maybe I am a child borne of the rising sun,
or at the very least, its shadow.

But *Harabuji,*
hankuk saram ye yo.
tell me,
hankuk saram ye yo.

Because just as I fought to see your face,
one hundred years later,
I will escape the skin that keeps me from you,
leave familiar walls to labor through
passageways into this place of your birth,
this city of strangeness,
this city estranged,
until I hear it call me *hankuk saram,*
until I feel it embrace my foreign birth
until I feel your hands cradle my infant head—

like hours of innocence
in the morning calm.

Brenda Kwon

EXCERPT FROM MOTHER TONGUE

I listen to photographs.

For most people, the image is visual. They witness how the camera seizes moments violently, wresting them from oblivion or memory, or whispers secrets about small instants otherwise lost during the blink of an eye. Then there are the poses, anticipated and rehearsed, nevertheless betraying their subjects. You stand together, position your lips just right, perhaps squint slightly to avoid looking shocked when the flash goes off. You do your best to control the impression, you freeze yourself before the camera does it for you, but it never works. Look closely at any picture and you see behind the façade: *Do I look thin? Why am I always at the end? Does he still love me?*

There are voices in every image.

It's not the old woman asleep on the bus so much as it is the *clunk-whirr* of the bus propelling itself forward, the squeak of the brakes as the bus lurches to a stop, the hiss of the door as it opens, even the smallest hint of a snore when the woman exhales. It's the tinny treble of the music coming from the Walkman of the boy sitting behind her, the one who gazes out the window. It's his sigh.

And it's not the man leaning over to talk to the woman next to him but the sound of her wineglass as she sets it down on the café table, the reverberations of its clink muted by the gloved hand that holds it, the gentle vibrating *hmm?* of her response, almost buried by the sound of Paris traffic behind her, the rumbling motors nevertheless failing to hide the scrape of his chair leg against the pavement as he moves closer to her, a louder version of the whisk of his tweed sleeve grazing the tabletop.

I pore this way over photos, listening. No one guesses. Instead, I let people think I really want to see snapshots of their trips to Disneyland, their weekends in Hale'iwa.

No one knows I listen. Whenever I resisted having my picture taken, like the time my father wanted to test his new Polaroid camera, the evidence of that day being a sobbing and red-eyed child sitting on the lap of her father, they never suspected I was afraid that someone would see my picture and know everything I held inside, the secrets not yet ready for confession.

Instead, they called me shy.

It was easier this way, to let their words drape over me, *such a quiet girl, so serious*. Their speech fell on me like a cool sheet, wrapping me in my world of sounds, in that world of confidences and secrets, where if I only listen, voices

grow from what seems to be silent.

* * *

*The newspaper crinkles in her grasp as she hugs it tight to her body. As she shifts her weight, the smooth sheets brush against her bare arm, a light hushing sound that she would have noticed had she not been waiting for her next task. "Oma," she begins to ask—the click of the shutter—"*moe hae*?" Her high girl's voice is slightly scratchy at the beginning of her sentences the way a well-rosined bow first aches a note from the violin string it has gripped below it. Water drips from the wet clothes hung over the basin behind her, the steady tapping erasing itself from her attention with each predictable drop. Her mother is beyond the frame. The girl sways back and forth, her legs the clapper of the bell of worn cloth of her skirt, each movement singing the brush of fabric against skin on a hot summer day after the bombs fell.*

The girl is not my mother, nor anyone she knew. The man behind the camera is no one she'd ever met. But somewhere in an invisible radius from this moment, my mother is a fifteen-year-old girl, not yet having any idea that nine years later, she will marry my father, move to another country, her home a chain of islands in the middle of the ocean that hugs her birthplace, though when she settles, she will feel that there is nothing that connects the two places. She will not see how a body of water this large links; only that it separates. And having seen division upon division, her country, how she leaves her family, it will not occur to her to have two tongues.

So she will choose one.

Like a good daughter, a good wife, a good American, she will raise her child with her Western tongue.

"Such a good mother," they will tell her. "Your daughter will be smart, go to private school."

She will forget her first tongue enough that she will eventually stumble over it. But she can never let it go because it has colored her blood for too many years. Sometimes she will want to say things to her daughter, but the new words won't always work. She will think furiously how to translate what she wants to say, but nothing will feel right. She will begin to speak, but never finish. She will feel, for decades upon decades, that she is caught mid-sentence.

Later, when her daughter grows, shows a love of the adopted words, she will accuse her child of using them unfairly, a native speaker's advantage over her own forked tongue. How can half ever beat a whole?

But she hasn't understood that even her daughter's tongue is forked; one side strong, dominant, like the muscles of a leg that compensates for its amputated twin. Each powerful movement atrophies the other, and even in her most

eloquent moments, she feels like a cripple.

She doesn't see this. Her daughter has one, strong tongue. She possesses two weak ones. This is evolution, she thinks. My daughter will be more than I. My daughter will take these words and bend them like hot glass, fashion them into whatever she wants, whatever she pleases. My daughter will say all the things I never could.

Oma, moe hae?

* * *

Her hair is fine because she thinks too much.

Sometimes I look at her and see the ocean in her head, her thinking like so many waves. She is lucky, I told her. I always wanted to live in another country. She says I do, but that's not what I mean. She thinks she is going to be all alone, but she doesn't know how many people are waiting for her.

She worries enough for this whole family.

When Mina was a baby, she almost never cried. She would look at Harry and me, and we knew if she was unhappy, or happy, or hungry, just by watching her. We thought maybe something was wrong with her because she didn't talk much, but the doctor said she was okay, nothing wrong. She didn't like using her voice, but she would do other things, scrunch her fists together, scratch her head, squeeze her eyes shut, and we learned how to tell what she wanted. We had to watch her all the time. One time, when she was playing with the neighbors, she stopped just like that and then sat in the corner. I went over to her and when I touched her, her skin was burning hot with fever.

"Why didn't you say you felt sick," I scolded her, pushing her out toward the garage so I could drive home.

But she just leaned against me with her eyes closed.

I have to watch her to see what she needs, since she won't say.

For one month, Mina's been making a pile of things to take to Korea. She has boxes of tampons, bottles of shampoo, her makeup, all of the brands she thinks she can't get there.

"Seoul is modern," I told her. "They have almost everything."

She just made the pile bigger with vitamins, hairspray, lotion, laundry detergent.

"Where are your books?" I asked. "The school isn't going to care how good you look if you don't have books." Every day until she left, she added something else.

Mina makes me scared with all her packing, like she is getting ready for war. Each thing she takes means she has to go outside one less time, talk to people she doesn't know, ask questions. The pile is like a fort for her. She thinks it shows

her preparation, but it doesn't. It grows, just like her fear. I told her, "When you have children, you will understand. When they're happy, you're happy. When they're sad, you will feel sad. When you worry, I worry too. You have Auntie Eun-Young and Auntie Moonsu, and Auntie So-Hee said she would drive from Busan to see you. They are all waiting for you. My friends will take care of you."

But Mina still thinks she will be alone.

She doesn't know I see how she talks all the time, inside her head. Sometimes I say, "The words gotta come out," and she looks at me like she doesn't know what I mean.

I want to tell her, "You are always alone anyway, always inside your head so much. In Korea, it's same thing. What's the difference?"

But still, she worries.

* * *

Months before I decided to go to Korea, my mother wanted me to watch the soap operas that chained her to her television every night at 8:00, 7:00 on Sundays. It only got worse when I had my ticket in hand.

"This is a good way for you to learn about Koreans. The stories are so real—just like real life! Too, they have subtitles, so you can tell what they're saying. The one right now, so true. This girl, her husband's mother thinks she's not good enough, and so they fight, and the mother, she blames the girl for everything …"

"Mom, I don't need to learn how to say, 'How could my son marry you!' or 'I'm going to kill myself!' I need to get around."

"You will. Don't worry so much. But the shows can teach you what Koreans are like. At UH, there was a big thing. All these professors came to talk about them," she said, vindicated.

Whenever she started in on the dramas, I let her talk for a while and then changed the subject by asking her some practical question, like whether it would be a good idea to take my cold remedies with me or just buy them in Seoul, even though I knew that American products were a luxury item in Korea and that unless I wanted to pay almost double, I had better make a trip to the drugstore. But sooner or later, she'd be back on the subject. I stopped answering her phone calls at 7:59 to tell me to turn on my television.

Once, when she came over to give me some boxes of dark chocolate to take to her friends in Seoul, she took a stack of DVDs out of a plastic grocery bag dangling from her wrist.

"Here, I brought these. This is a good one. This boy and this girl, they think they're brother and sister, but when his sister was born, she got switched. He likes the girl and she likes him, but even though they're not related, they feel bad about falling in love."

She sat down, popped in the disc, then worked her way through the menus until the show began. She gazed intently, absorbed by the screen even though she knew what was going to happen.

A soft focus shot of a man holding a boy stretched over the screen. As he spoke to his son, words flashed on the bottom. *That's your sister, isn't she pretty?*

"This is just the beginning," she said impatiently, squinting at my remote control to skip ahead. I never got over my surprise at how adept she was with electronic devices. While her friends struggled with e-mail and cell phones, my mother figured out how to text me, especially when she knew I was busy and wouldn't pick up.

Suddenly distracted by the sound of wailing, I turned to see a girl, her round, pale face contorted by sobbing. Her dark hair was pulled back into a ponytail that strained the skin by her temples, and her mouth formed an uneven oval. Over and over, she cried, *Oma, Oma, Oma,* and bottom of the screen, in yellow letters, were the words, *Mother, Mother, Mother!*

I started to make a joke about how I already knew what "oma" meant so I didn't need a soap opera language lesson, but the sight of my mother stopped me. She was chewing the inside of her cheeks, something she did when she was concentrating. I could almost hear the clink of her teeth, the dull crunch and rip of flesh tearing away in her mouth.

I turned back to the television. The girl was now in the background, with a woman crumpling to the ground before her. As the woman sank in tears, so did the girl, their faces mirrors of each other.

"Mom," I began.

But when I looked at her fixed on the scene before her, I knew she wouldn't hear me.

"Why do your folks like the dramas so much?" I once asked Val, whose Chinese parents became so addicted that they often ordered entire series, with Cantonese subtitles, online.

"Well, they think Koreans are really good-looking, and the stories are tragic. God, it's insane. I can't stand being around when they watch. They start yelling at the TV."

"It's crazy, though. Everybody watches them like it's crack. Maybe it's cathartic. Maybe the characters do, say, and feel what no one else feels comfortable doing, saying, or feeling," I suggested.

"Yeah. My mom thinks Bae Yong Joon is hot. She has a keychain with his face on it," Val said.

When I decided to go to Korea, it was as if the only way people could relate to me was by talking about the shows.

"Oh, I love *Winter Sonata*! Bae Yong Joon is so handsome! Are you going to go to that Namiseom Island where they filmed it?"

"No, I'm going to Seoul."

"Oh, well, you should ask people about the actors. Maybe they know where they hang out!"

Other times, I'd get a dreamy response of "Korean women are the most beautiful women. I could watch those shows all day."

At moments like these, something came over me. I wanted to spit out plastic surgery statistics, talk about how it was a rite of passage for Korean teenagers to get their eyelids done, mention that plastic surgery in Korea was the most advanced in the world. I wanted to tell them that the men and women they all thought were so beautiful had manufactured their looks, carved-up victims of a Westernized beauty standard. I wanted to tell them how they chewed up and spit out Korean idols, but instead, I would smile, say I should really start watching the shows, and then let the conversation drop.

When I was a kid, no one really liked Koreans. One of my best friends, who was Japanese, never had me over to her house because her mother thought Koreans were dirty. Maybe things had been changing all along, but I couldn't get used to what seemed like an overnight obsession with Korea, what my friends and I called yobophilia. Suddenly, everyone wanted to eat Korean food, learn how to speak the language, travel to Seoul. At the Korean film festivals, there were more locals than Koreans. At Daiei, the small video store inside sold calendars, key chains, coffee mugs, all imprinted with the faces of the latest stars. Tour companies offered trips to Korea so that visitors could see the places where their favorites series were filmed.

It was so different from the Korea I studied, the Korea I carried with me—my mother having to speak Japanese in school, shamans dancing in white, the three million Koreans who died during the Korean War, my grandfather abducted and killed by Japanese policemen.

I wasn't sure what I was looking for. I had gone there once before, five years ago, on a two-day stopover to Bangkok. I loved walking through temples and palaces, seeing the paintings, the cultural villages, things that I claimed as my own. I bought brush paintings of horses, celadon cups, a *hanbok*. It didn't feel like consuming. It seemed like reclaiming. The two days didn't feel like enough, but still, I hadn't thought of staying longer.

This time, one week before my departure, I started having dreams. In them, my bags were packed and everyone would be waiting for me to lock up and get in the car. I would be standing at the entrance to my apartment, refusing to leave. My arms would be braced against the doorframe. I would be trying to say I didn't want to go, but no words would come out of my mouth.

I wasn't used to having such obvious dreams, dreams I didn't have to work at. The thought of being in another country whose language I didn't speak terrified me.

My mother knew this, which is why she began pushing the dramas on me.

She kept insisting I would be fine, as if speaking Korean were a dormant characteristic in me just waiting for the right conditions to burst out and mature. She had never spoken Korean to me unless she was upset, but I could sometimes tell by the tone of her voice what she was saying. The words themselves were empty and always had been.

She didn't understand why I was having anxiety dreams.

"Stop worrying so much. Lots of people go to Korea and not all of them speak Korean. Why are you so scared?"

"You know how to speak Korean," I retorted. "You wouldn't be afraid of going because you know how to tell them you're lost, that you need a doctor, that you're looking for the subway station. All I know how to say is hello, yes, no, rice, and thank you. And mother."

She'd been so dismissive all along, like she thought it would be as easy for me to go to Korea as it would be for her. It's like she had forgotten Korea was her home once, that Korean was her first language, and that it was never my home, my tongue.

She had looked at me with a furrow in her brow. It took me a few seconds to realize that she was surprised. But a moment later, she said confidently, "Koreans will understand you if you speak slowly, show them what you mean. These days, it's different. Not like before."

The furrow disappeared back into her skin, like a pebble sinking in water.

* * *

Whenever Harry used to tease me about my "f's," I wanted to hit him. What did he know about speaking another language? He grew up in this place, never needing anything else.

"Honey, da 'telepone' stay for you,'" he'd say whenever I got a call.

He didn't know I used to laugh because I was embarrassed, not because he was funny.

When he talked to his friends, he used so much pidgin, "Wat, you like one nadda one?" or "Try give 'em."

"My English is better than yours!" I once yelled at him after he'd made fun of my accent. But whenever I got mad, he called me a "*yobo wahine*," saying, "Das da *yobo wahine* temper." It was always joke, joke, joke for him.

"Do you make fun of your mother too?" I used to ask him. She had a Busan accent whether she spoke English or Korean. I barely understood her sometimes. I wondered how Harry and his brothers did. Their Korean was terrible.

Harry was dark, strong, a little loud, maybe someone I wouldn't have liked in Korea. But in Hawai'i, he fit. He looked like everyone else. He wore rubber slippers, dragged his feet when he walked. On weekends and when he came home from work, he threw his aloha shirt and pants into the hamper and put on shorts

and a T-shirt. When we went out, he poured his beer into a glass of ice. Sometimes I doubted people would ever guess he was Korean. Even with his last name, Chun, people thought he was Chinese. To everyone, he was local.

He knew I didn't like when he spoke pidgin, especially around Mina. He even used to knock on my stomach when I was pregnant and say, "Eh, small baby, dis yo daddy. You need one pillow in dere?" just to irritate me. But then I would hear him talking to his workers. His voice was haole.

"How come you don't talk that way all the time?" I asked him. "You sound important. Respectable."

"Nah, das for work. Da guys, dey gotta know who's da boss, you know what I mean? But heah, you know I da boss, so no need!"

Always joking, my Harry.

When I was pregnant with Mina, I would sing to her. Having her in my belly made me miss home, my mother. I would tell her stories in Korean, wanting her to hear what it was like since she wasn't there. I told her the story my mother used to tell me.

A long time ago, a frog lived with his mother. He would never do what she asked. If she told him to go right, he would go left. If she told him to wake up, he would go to sleep. Each day, she wondered what to do with her son who would never listen to her.

One day, she knew that it was time for her to die, and she wanted to be buried in the mountains. But knowing her son, she told him she wanted to be buried by the river instead.

"Son," she said, "I am going to die soon."

The frog began to cry. He was very sad.

"Son," she told him, "I have one last wish."

"Yes, Mother," the frog said. "Anything you want."

"You must bury me near the river. You must not bury me in the mountain. I only want to be near the river. Do you promise?"

The frog looked at his old and dying mother and said he would do as she wished.

When she died, the frog cried and cried.

"I have been a bad son," he wept. "My whole life, I have never done as you asked. Mother, this last time I will listen to you."

That day, he buried her in sand next to the river. He was happy that he had for once done what she wanted. But that night, it began to rain. The frog sat helpless, watching the river rise. Soon, the river overflowed and washed his mother's grave away. The frog, terrified and in despair, sat near the water and sobbed as he watched his mother float away.

And this is why frogs always croak next to the river and especially when it rains.

It was a story all Korean mothers told their children.

“Mina,” I would whisper her as I carried her in my stomach, “you should always listen to me. Don’t be like the frog and cry your whole life because you didn’t.”

When it was time for me to give birth, so much water gushed out of me. Mina wasn’t any trouble, just slipped right out into the doctor’s hands. If it wasn’t for the cord, maybe she would have slipped away. She looked so much like Harry that he couldn’t stop laughing when he first held her. “Das my baby girl,” he said proudly, giggling like a child.

The nurses called her a princess because she had so much hair when she was born, and long eyelashes, too. She was pretty even though most babies are red and wrinkled. They liked her because she didn’t cry and didn’t fuss when they held her.

“What a perfect little girl,” they all told me.

That afternoon, as I was resting at the hospital, I remember looking out my window at the ocean, how blue it was. I thought of how I crossed all that water and came here.

I held Mina in my arms, watching her tiny fingers open and close. *We are both travelers*, I thought. *I wonder if she will leave her birthplace like I did*. I looked out at the water again, how peaceful it was with the sun shining, the boats bobbing in the basin.

When I looked at her sleeping, I saw a little Harry in my arms. Like Harry, she belonged here. She wasn’t dark like the sun made him, but she had his wide-set eyes, his lips, the lower one curved like a bow. She looked so comfortable in my arms, even though she spent so many months inside I thought she would have gotten used to it. Her chest moved up and down fast, breathing so much air.

In my head, I had the words of the song I used to hear my mother chant to me to make me sleep, *chal ja, chal ja, chal ja*.

“Mina,” I whispered as I rocked her back and forth, “sleep good, sleep good, sleep good.”

Michael Little

SEVEN WAYS TO TELL IF YOU MARRIED A COSMO GIRL

#1: The Monthly Greeting

Hopelessly innocent, not suspecting a thing, I walk into the living room and call out my usual "Lucy, I'm home!" No, not *that* Lucy. I've seen a few of the *I Love Lucy* reruns on cable, and my life is nothing like that show.

From upstairs comes a familiar voice, "I'm in the bedroom, Ricky!" No, not *that* Ricky. Besides, Lucy Ricardo would more likely be in the kitchen, trying to hide the latest disaster from Ricky. Fred and Ethel are not our neighbors. My Lucy and I got kidded a lot about our names, from the beginning, but we just laughed and fell in love anyway. Now, a year after the wedding, we are still in love, but finding out new things about each other. Mostly I'm finding out new things about Lucy. New and disturbing things.

For example, once a month when I come home from work Lucy will be waiting for me in the bedroom, her body stretched dramatically across the bed in a way she has seen in a magazine, wearing a comically seductive grin and not much else.

It took me a while to realize that the sensual-bedroom-greeting day always coincides with the day of the month when Lucy's new copy of *Cosmopolitan* arrives in the mail. I'm slow that way. The clues are always in plain view, like the purloined letter in Poe's story, but what guy notices a woman's magazine lying on the night stand? Not me. Not at first anyway. Once I caught on, however, I noticed that the new *Cosmo* was always open to the latest sex instruction article, usually about "know his moan zones" or "handle him like a pro" or a "stunning new position" invented, apparently, by a sadistic contortionist.

Even after it dawned on me that *Cosmo* is responsible for Lucy's monthly

friskiness, I can never remember, or calculate, when the new issue will arrive. All I know is that the mail arrives in the morning, Lucy has all day to study the latest sex techniques, and I arrive home at the end of a hard working day, needing to unwind first. The moment I step into the bedroom, however, I'm a goner. Dinner will be delayed for an hour, or two. I will emerge a physical wreck, although more highly educated than before I entered the bedroom.

And so it is that once a month I am reminded that, yes, I have indeed married a Cosmo girl, one who knows my moan zones, handles me like a pro, and believes that it's a good thing when people imitate pretzels in bed.

#2: The Reference Library

Before I go any further, in the spirit of full disclosure, I have a small confession to make. A year ago I *did* know I had married a Cosmo girl. When we started going out, Lucy was always having me take the boyfriend tests in *Cosmo*, just to make sure that we were compatible. She would whip out the magazine in a restaurant and I would have to take the latest test before I could eat. She had a large stack of the magazines in her bedroom, in plain sight, her handy reference library. Lucy was, without a doubt, a Cosmo girl.

But I just assumed, silly me, that all the *Cosmo* nonsense would disappear after we were married. I had passed the boyfriend tests. I was attentive and well groomed and had a good job, one that would allow Lucy to quit her job at a cosmetics counter and have more time for shopping after we were married. I had proposed, in a suitably romantic manner. I had showed up at the altar, scrubbed and sober. Mission accomplished. *Cosmo*'s work was done. Time for Lucy to throw out the magazines and become a married woman, move on to more, what, sophisticated magazines.

Lucy, nevertheless, ever faithful to *Cosmopolitan*, hooked on the tests and beauty tips and bedroom secrets, remained a Cosmo girl. On a fateful day two months after the wedding she took the telltale step: she renewed her subscription, checking the three-year option. Nothing changed. If anything, she became *more* of a Cosmo girl. The stack of magazines in our new bedroom grew higher. They would continue to grow, like a slick paper beanstalk. I can see myself at some point having to build a shelf to contain them. "Yep, that's Lucy's *Cosmo* collection," I will tell visitors during house tours; "it's quite a reference library, don't you think? My wife's a Cosmo girl. I built the shelf."

#3: The *Cosmo* Tests Never End

On Lucy's nightstand, right next to the latest *Cosmo*, a pocket calculator waits at its post, ready to add up the results of the latest test, and the tests never end. One month it's "What Kind of Sexy Are You?" (I already know the answer

to that one: Lucy is dangerously sexy. The next month it might be "Do You Feel Sexy?" (and if she didn't feel sexy when she started the test she's guaranteed to feel sexy by the end of it.

Just last month the test was "Are You Drawn to Drama?" Now I have never thought of Lucy as a drama queen. That's not her style. She gets enough drama from the two soaps she admits to watching. After taking the *Cosmo* drama test, however, Lucy must have been intrigued by some of the dramatic possibilities, behaviors she had never tried before. Like the articles that reveal the amazing bedroom secrets, of course, the tests encourage trying new things. So Lucy did. All I know is that the day after she took the drawn-to-drama test I came home to a suddenly more dramatic Lucy.

"Lucy, I'm home," I called out.

"I'm in the kitchen, Ricky," came the reply. The kitchen? Not the bedroom? Were we going to have dinner first, preceded by a sophisticated cocktail hour and intellectual conversation? Was my Lucy finally changing?

I strolled toward the kitchen, suave as James Bond, wishing I were wearing a tux, imagining an icy margarita awaiting me in the kitchen (my drink, not 007's), Lucy eager to tell me about how she had visited Barnes & Noble that morning and discovered that there were magazines other than *Cosmo*, and what did I think about this global warning thing, and showing me the real book she had actually bought, and starting to read it to me and … then I reached the kitchen and my fantasy burst.

"We need to talk," Lucy said. Uh oh. Instead of a margarita and a book, she was holding … the large kitchen knife? My first thought was that the knife had something to do with salad. But why was it pointed at my heart? I kept my distance, foregoing the usual homecoming kiss.

"Talk?" I said. I looked at her face for clues, then at the knife, then back to her face. Both looked serious. I glanced quickly at the counter. No signs of a salad.

"Yes, I found out something today. Something …" She looked at the ceiling. Was she searching for a word, or was there something wrong with the ceiling? It looked all right to me. No cracks. No leaks. Then she looked back at me.

"Something *disturbing*," she finally said. She nodded slowly, waiting for me to react. I looked back up at the ceiling. I wanted to talk about home repair issues, make some silly remark like Tim Allen, but I don't think the audience was looking for comedy. Instead I began to nod with her. I felt like a bobblehead.

"Disturbing?" I said, still nodding.

"*Very*," Lucy said, chopping the air with the big knife. One quick chop. Vegetables and husbands kept their distance. Actually the veggies were better off than I was at the moment, safe in their cool bin in the Amana.

"What's wrong, darling?" I asked. The concerned husband. Clueless as usual, but showing concern. The "darling" part was good to throw in at such mo-

ments, of course. I saved my "darlings" for special occasions, and this seemed like one of them.

Lucy moved closer. I backed up a step, but was stopped by the counter. She moved closer. She lowered the knife, away from my heart, but now it was pointed at a delicate spot, just below my belt. I began to feel less like James Bond and more like a zucchini. Still handsome, but green and vulnerable. Lucy leaned in and whispered in my ear. "I found out that someone is *cheating*." Then she moved her face in front of mine, staring into my eyes, waiting for my response. I stole a quick look downward and saw the point of the knife no more than an inch from my fly.

Think fast, I told myself. Let's review. Someone is cheating. That's not good. Normally I try to agree with Lucy whenever I can, to keep things smooth and calm. But what now? Was I supposed to confess? I had nothing to confess. I wasn't cheating. Maybe with my eyes, but don't all guys do that? Okay, I flirted a little with Danielle at the office, but that was completely innocent. Cheating? Not me. Think, dammit, think! What would 007 do now?

"Well?" She was still waiting. Then she raised her eyebrows. "Ricky, you're sweating." It's true. I was.

"It's the knife," I said. It was burning a hole in my pants.

She ignored me. A drop of sweat dripped off my chin and onto the knife blade. I thought about zucchini again, how it looks all sliced up and ready for the pan, its length no longer so proud, reduced to a supporting role in a meal that nobody will remember for long.

"Don't you want to know *who's* cheating?" Lucy said. When she said the words "who's cheating" she got this deliciously wicked look, like one of her bedroom looks, although the bedroom, at this point, seemed miles away.

"Of course, darling," I said. I was using up my "darlings" fast. Soon I would have to switch to "sweetheart."

Lucy turned sideways, showing me her profile. She held up the knife and studied its edge. I thought of Glenn Close in *Fatal Attraction.* I was no longer James Bond; now I was Michael Douglas. Except that I was *innocent*, damn it! Lucy paused, then raised the knife. She had my full attention. Then she lowered it … onto the counter. She smiled, an evil little smile. I felt sweat stinging my eyes. I looked quickly around the kitchen to see what other weapons were available to my darling. Ice pick? Blender? Nutcracker?!

Lucy moved in closer now. "It's *Craig*," she said.

"*What's* Craig?"

"Craig is the one who's *cheating*. Keep up."

"Oh, it's Craig." Phew. God help Craig. Was there a nutcracker in his future?

"Who's Craig?" I said.

"The dreamy guy. I told you about him."

"I don't know any Craig. Who's he cheating with?" I didn't care what Craig

did, or who he did it with, as long as he was the one in trouble and not me.

"Jennifer. Craig's cheating with Jennifer. And Madison just found out."

"Jennifer? Madison?" Who were these people?

"Ricky, don't you listen to anything I say? I told you about Madison just last week. Well, today she found out about the cheating. And tomorrow she's going to do something about it, but she ran out of time today."

"Ran out of time?" The sweat was slowing down, but now my head was spinning. Lucy had placed it in the blender and pushed the slow speed button.

"Sure," Lucy said. "They only get sixty minutes a day. She'll have to wait until tomorrow."

"Oh," I said. The blender stopped, mercifully, but my head felt grated. "One of your soaps then."

"Of course, silly. What did you think I was talking about?" She didn't wait for an answer. For the next half hour I listened to, and watched, Lucy's dramatic retelling of *Days of Our Hospital,* or *The Young and the Horny*, or whatever it was. The ice pick and nutcracker stayed in the kitchen drawer. The zucchini lay peacefully in the fridge, in one piece, at least for now. The only ones who had to tremble now were Craig and Jennifer. Madison could do what she liked with those two cheaters. I was off the hook, although technically I had never been on it. I looked forward to the rest of the evening with my Lucy. Maybe we would have margaritas before long. Isn't that why God gave us the blenders?

#4: The Tests Must Be Passed Before Bedroom Secrets Can Be Demonstrated

I had survived the "Are You Drawn to Drama?" test, but, as we've learned, the *Cosmo* tests never end. Yes, there are rewards for being married to a Cosmo girl—educational rewards and entertainment rewards, not to mention the bedroom rewards. But not so fast—first you must pass those damn tests. Dangerous tests, like "Is He Only After Your Bod?" and "What's His Intimacy IQ?" Yikes!

I've always hated IQ tests. I had to take one in school, but I refused to look at the results. If the score's high, you're going to be an IQ snob for life. If it's low, you're going to feel intellectually dysfunctional, and I don't think they have an IQ Viagra pill for that. I desired only to have an average IQ. To this day I don't know my IQ number, but I act as if it's normal.

Lucy was the one taking the test about my intimacy IQ, of course, so all I could do was sit there and await the results. This was before we were engaged. Just a couple of months into the dating phase of our *Cosmo* life together. We had been intimate, several times by then. If anyone had asked me, I would have said that my intimacy IQ was normal, average, acceptable. The *Cosmo* test thought otherwise. I quickly discovered that my intimacy IQ was not acceptable. My mistake was in believing that intimacy was all about being close physically, es-

pecially in bed. But no. "Ha!" the *Cosmo* test results shouted at me, "you poor misguided male of the species, intimacy is all about *talking*, and talking about sports doesn't count!"

Talking. Communicating. Everywhere. That means at home, away from home, in the car, in the driveway, at the front door, in the hallway, in the living room, in the dining room, in the kitchen, in the shower, in the bedroom. Before sex. During sex. After sex (and don't forget the snuggling. The only time you can forget about the talking is while sleeping, and then you'd better *not* talk because you don't want to be moaning and calling out the names of other women in your sleep. Once you wake up, however, be ready to talk. Don't just lie there, communicate!

Fortunately for me, Lucy let me retake the test, once a month, until my intimacy IQ was acceptable. I've learned all kinds of things from the *Cosmo* tests. For example, did you know that talking is mostly listening? Sure, you have to open up and share some things, personal things, not the cool stuff you know about the Super Bowl and Peyton Manning and the Colts offense. But repeat after me, you have to *listen*. Lucy told me once that God gave us two ears and only one mouth. I had no response to that.

The other *Cosmo* test that Lucy trotted out early in our relationship was "Is He Only After Your Bod?" I remember sitting on the sofa of her apartment, me on one end and a very serious Lucy on the other end, her bod at a safe distance from mine, while we took the test.

"Okay, first question," Lucy said. "Ready?"

"Sure," I said, "but I can save us both some time. I'm not *only* after your bod. I mean I'm *not* after your bod. Not that there's anything wrong with it. I'm not *not* after it. What I mean is … I like your *mind*." I smiled hopefully and looked at her eyes, careful not to let my gaze wander to other parts of her bod.

"That's sweet," Lucy said. "We're taking the test anyway."

"Okay."

"It's important," she said.

"I know." I straightened up and put on my most sincere look.

"First question. 'Which does your man do more often? (A) Squeeze your tush, or (B) give you hugs?'"

"Am I your man?"

"Hush. I'm checking 'give you hugs.' You did squeeze my tush that one time."

"You didn't seem to mind." She chose to ignore this fact. She was holding the *Cosmo* up to her face, her pencil at attention. "Tush" is a funny word. I thought I had squeezed her ass, but I guess *Cosmo* either prefers the cuter word or doesn't want to offend its more conservative readers.

"Next question," Lucy said. "'The night you met the guy you're currently dating, he: (A) kept looking you up and down, saying you were the hottest girl

ever, or (B made tons of eye contact with you and wanted to know where you worked, who your friends were, etc.”” Lucy puzzled over this one, then finally said, “I’m going with A.”

“No way!”

“Of course you did. I saw you checking me out.”

“But you were wearing that short black skirt. And that top.”

“What about my top?”

“You had forgotten to button the top two buttons. You were open for inspection. You had everything but an arrow tattooed between the buttons, and a treasure map.”

“But you *were* checking me out,” Lucy said.

“I admit that, but I did *not* say you were the hottest girl ever.”

“Well, no … but you were thinking it.”

“Damn.” I had to give up on this one. “You win. It’s A. Next question.”

The rest of the questions did not go much better. But I did pick up some valuable tips so I would pass the test the next time. For example, I learned that I should be just as attracted to Lucy when she’s “chilling in jeans and a T-shirt” as when she “sports a sexy outfit.” I kind of like the chilling look anyway. I get into trouble with the sexy outfit, as was clear from the earlier test question. So I passed the test the second time we took it, and totally aced it the third time. I was grateful to the teacher for giving me another chance, and by the time I took the bod test a third time, I truly loved Lucy, including that zany Cosmo brain of hers.

#5: Some Bedroom Secrets Are Better than Others

If you’ve married a Cosmo girl, you have discovered that some bedroom secrets are better than others. Let me warn you about the ones that scare me, beginning with “The Sex He’ll Die For,” one of the many alarming *Cosmo* headlines. I saw that one right on the magazine cover. When Lucy wasn’t looking, I read it, in self-defense.

Another article covered the topic “The Sexiest Things to Do After Sex.” Suffice it to say that falling asleep is not one of them. At any rate, be prepared. Pace yourself and save some energy for the after sex stuff.

One month *Cosmo* revealed “How to Have Sex in a Small Space.” I noticed Lucy reading the article and promptly hid in the bedroom closet. Then I thought better of that plan and retreated to our large living room. We found ourselves on a jet soon afterwards. Lucy made me nervous; she kept looking at me, and then at the restrooms. I pretended not to know what she was proposing, but the third time she signaled I gave her a sexy look and then pointed up at the overhead compartment. She cringed and went back to reading her *Cosmo*.

Another article I’ve tried to forget was “Chick Behavior That Baffles the Hell Out of Guys.” This was the scariest. I read the whole thing, twice, and I’m

still baffled. The sad fact is that guys have absolutely no control over the baffling chick behavior. Just know that it *will* happen, you *will* be baffled, and there's *nothing* you can do about it. Don't try to understand it, just try to get through it. I find that thinking about Peyton Manning and the Super Bowl helps.

I can't omit the one bedroom secret that took over our lives for a whole week. This was seven months into the marriage, at a time when our bedroom rendezvous were still enjoyable but had settled into a predictable routine. We needed something new, and preferably something that didn't require me to imitate a pretzel. Not to worry. It turned out that all we needed was the next issue of *Cosmo* to arrive in the mailbox.

There it was, "Talking Naughty in Bed." "Talking" was in the title, so that would help my intimacy IQ. There was "bed" in the title, so I knew that I was safe from bedroom closets and airplane restrooms. And, of course, there in the middle of the title was "naughty." I like naughty.

When I look back on the disaster that was that week, the week of talking naughty in bed, I find several places to lay the blame. Lucy is at least partly at fault. She refused to let me read the article. The first night, she was too eager to talk naughty to lie there while I read about this latest bedroom secret, so I was flying blind. The rest of the week she hid the *Cosmo* so I couldn't read it. I suspect that keeping the techniques to herself gave her an irresistible sense of power. Perhaps I should have dashed to the supermarket to speed-read the tips in the checkout line, but I was afraid that someone I knew would catch me. What would I say, "I have to learn how to talk naughty in bed because Lucy says I'm not doing it right?" So all that week I avoided the temptation of the checkout lines.

Cosmo is also to blame here, obviously. Why, dear God, does *Cosmo* make life so difficult for men, a life filled with tests and challenges, secrets and contortions, month after month? But don't get me started. The doctor tells me I have to watch my blood pressure.

Finally, I acknowledge my part in the fiasco that was The Week of Talking Naughty in Bed. I should not have laughed so often, and at the most inappropriate times. Lucy was devoutly intent on doing her best at talking naughty. I, on the other hand, had trouble taking it seriously. From that first night I was confused. Were we supposed to talk naughty or talk dirty? Was there a difference? Was it all right to say "squeeze my tush" but not all right to say "squeeze my ass?"

I made an honest effort to get it right. Together we found many words to say the same thing. English is so versatile, after all. When Lucy said "I want you to squeeze my tush," the word "tush" made me laugh. Her ass I could squeeze without laughing, but not her tush, even though it was the same anatomical part. I would even gladly have squeezed her butt, but by then we had moved on to other naughty things.

Lucy at one point suggested that we whisper in each other's ears what we wanted to do to each other. Aha, one of the naughty *Cosmo* tips! I said fine to

that, and I would go first, but she wanted to go first, and then I sulked a bit, and she told me to stop sulking, and I suggested that we both whisper at the same time, but she said that would be too confusing, so I said that she could go first if it meant that much to her, and she said it did, and then she whispered in my ear, "I want to make your zucchini feel good."

Now normally "zucchini" is a funny word, especially when you're talking naughty in bed, so you might have expected me to laugh, but I didn't. All I could think of was the dramatic kitchen scene, when Lucy held the large knife perilously close to my own zucchini while I tried to remember if I had cheated on her, and if I had cheated, why I couldn't remember it. Lucy noticed my fear and said, "Why are you scared? I won't hurt it." So I took a deep breath and said go ahead with the zucchini business, but she said no it was my turn to whisper in her ear what I wanted to do to her, and I asked whether we were ever going to actually do the things to each other that we were whispering, and she said of course silly but not at the same time because it's too confusing, so I whispered in her ear, "I want to spank your ass," at which point she pulled back and said, "what?!" and I said "not hard," but she still looked shocked so I said quickly "your *tush*, I want to spank your *tush*," hoping that was the correct naughty word, but I couldn't help laughing at "tush," and then she said you're not doing it right, so I suggested that she could have my turn and whisper in my ear twice, but she said that would be too confusing, and just when it looked as if our naughty rendezvous was about to go down in flames, Lucy sighed and put her lips near my ear and whispered, very softly, "You can spank my tush, but not hard."

A week later, by mutual consent, we abandoned the great talking naughty in bed experiment. There were other bedroom secrets to explore, other romantic adventures awaiting us. I could hardly wait.

#6: Pretending to Be Mr. Right

If you've married a Cosmo girl, you must pretend to be Mr. Right. There it is, short and sweet. You may not *be* Mr. Right. There may *never* be a Mr. Right for her. But for now you're it. Play the role. That's what I do. At first all the Mr. Right articles in *Cosmo* intimidated me. What kind of pressure is that to put on a boyfriend or husband?

Fortunately there is help available. *Cosmo* provides that special helping hand, each and every month (and I can consult Lucy's reference library for back issues. It's called "Cosmo For Your Guy." Everything you need to know about playing Mr. Right is in those articles. Lucy made sure that I knew about "Cosmo For Your Guy." It's required reading. After months of dating Lucy, and a year of marriage, I *am* Mr. Right. I know this because I say it to the bathroom mirror ten times every morning, when Lucy's not listening. Gotta do your reps.

#7: Cosmo Girl Invades Your Dreams

I settle my tired *Cosmo* husband head into the soft pillow, my body and mind drained from another long day of work, the evening hours with Lucy blurring into one giant collage of *Cosmo* magazines lying on the nightstand and stacked in the corner, bedroom secrets shared, pretzels imitated, kitchen knives returned safely to wooden blocks, zucchinis cool and whole in the Amana, blenders awaiting the next margarita fiesta, and Mr. Right, his intimacy IQ buoyed by sufficient talking and listening, drifting into a well earned sleep, deserving sweet dreams. Maybe a Super Bowl dream. Maybe …

I see myself reclining in the big leather chair in the living room, my feet up, the widescreen TV twice its usual size, filling the entire wall with high definition sports, and yes! it's the Super Bowl! and there's Peyton guiding the Colts down the field, dancing around in that wild no-huddle offense and confusing the Bears and … oh my God this is guy heaven. All I need now is beautiful woman bringing me beer and nachos.

Just then here she comes, the bod I'm always after (along with her mind, my Lucy, chilling in jeans and T-shirt, the Corona she holds along her thigh chilled perfectly as well, a large platter of nachos in her other hand, the cheese still bubbling, the aroma of wings drifting in from the kitchen. Thank you, Lord. Thanksgiving was months ago, but I am deeply grateful for all my blessings.

"Hey, babe," I say, trying to watch her and Peyton at the same time.

"What you watchin'?" Lucy says.

"Super Bowl," I answer. She's not into sports. Not much time for it, what with the shopping and all those *Cosmo* tests and secrets.

"Who's playing?"

"Colts and Bears," I tell her, my mouth half full of nachos. So patient with her.

"Which ones are the Colts?"

"The white uniforms with the blue trim," I explain, then take a long swig of the cold Corona.

"And the cute horseshoe on the helmet?"

"Yep."

"Who's the guy who's jumping around and pointing?"

"That's Peyton Manning," I say. "He's the quarterback. What he's doing now is—"

"He's *cu-u-ute*," Lucy says. I decide not to tell her everything I know about the Colts offense. She sits down near me, watching Peyton and feeding me nachos. She drinks some of the Corona and hands me back the bottle. Life is good.

"Ricky?"

"Yes, darling?"

"Let's take the new *Cosmo* test. You can still watch the game. I'll do the reading and the scoring. Let me run up and get the calculator."

Before I can say a word, she's halfway up the stairs. Soon she's back, a stack of *Cosmos* in her arms, the calculator and pencil resting on top of the magazines, her smile blissful. On the screen Peyton is dropping back to pass, the Bears defenders rushing to destroy him, his arm moving forward at the last possible second, the football sailing in slow motion toward the end zone, Marvin Harrison at full speed reaching for the ball as it descends to the goal line, and then, and then …

I feel a tugging on my arm. Slowly I return to the land of the living. Lying next to me is Cosmo Girl.

"Good morning," Lucy says. She puts her index finger on my lips. I am not to speak yet, only listen. Now what? I wait.

"Ricky?"

"Yes?"

"What were you dreaming? You had a big smile on your face."

"Oh." Peyton and the Colts sprint out of the room. "Well, we were eating nachos and taking a *Cosmo* test." I've edited the dream. Lucy is happy with this version. She moves closer, looks soulfully into my eyes, and then nibbles on my lower lip. That was page 49 in *Cosmo* last month. I like to keep up.

Mary Lombard

THE VASE

It came as a blast. So abrupt in the quiet house that I woke instantly, leaping from my chair, heart pounding, thinking "Gun!" But it was only the vase. Now a dozen jagged pieces of shiny pink on the floor. I guess I'd nodded off. And I was supposed to be watching the kids.

Nasty little brats sneaking out of bed again, hiding when they knocked over that stupid vase. And they called this job "sitting." I'd spent half the night running after two boys who would bob up as soon as I got them down. I'd drag Skipper to bed, promise to tell him a story about Superman when he was a little kid if he'd just *please* stay put and then, while I was looking for Chipper, Skipper would disappear. Skipper and Chipper, believe it or not.

We were living on the Big Island at the time, when it was still a territory, and I was nearing the end of my freshman year at Hilo High. The olden days, I guess you'd call it. Still, the names Skipper and Chipper remain indelible in my memory. The house has stayed with me as well, its smell of mildew, its sounds, its bleak view of night beyond.

I'd missed the bus that day and had to walk two miles home from school. Then I found I had to babysit. That very night. It was all settled. By my mother.

So there I was, watching a sixteen-month-old baby and two demon boys because my mother felt sorry for the "unfortunate Mrs. Uhrey." "Sure, Winnie can baby sit," she said, "as long as she's home by midnight."

Then the vase.

At the moment, though, the place was quiet. Maybe it's not the kids, I thought. Eyes wide, I listened intently. But heard only the scratchy beat on the radio cutting through static. A grim sound. But one I preferred over the utter silence of a Hilo night, which was unlike any silence anywhere else and came with

a faint ringing, as if the night pulsated around me. My legs were pulsating, too, throbbing. I hadn't worn shoes and my feet were cold and it felt late. If there was a clock in the house, I didn't know where it was. I only knew it felt later than midnight.

It's so easy to leap to conclusions at night. So easy sitting under the glare of a bare-bulb ceiling light to imagine some stranger lurking in a dark corner, ready to spring. So, reluctantly, finally, I crept into the hall. The house was one of those old plantation models ordered by number, from American Factors, I think, and shipped by Matson to Honolulu and transported by Dillingham barge to the Big Island, a two-bedroom model with a corrugated tin roof to catch rain water, single-wall construction, a plank floor showing through in places under a gritty linoleum, lots of termite damage. The floor creaked, so I tested each step before putting my full weight down. I didn't want the hall light on, so I felt my way to the boys' door, which was off its hinges and leaning against the wall, where I paused, to breathe and adjust to the darkened room and the distinct boy smell—dirt, I thought, or wet dog, and something like motor oil—before going in.

But they were fast asleep, much to my relief, their heads side-by-side in the single bed and looking peaceful. Which was deceptive. I'd had to pull them apart earlier, appalled at their fierce aggression over a stupid little weenie. Raspy breathing from the older one. Okay, I thought, so far so good.

In Mrs. Uhrey's bedroom I had to hold my breath. The baby had diarrhea oozing out of his diaper, his stomach looked swollen, bloated, and it would kind of float from side to side at the slightest motion. But he slept quietly, still on his back, in his crib next to the bed as he'd done ever since I'd given him his bottle earlier. Without an inkling of what I might do if this huge baby did wake up, I hung over him briefly, fervently hoping, praying, that he wouldn't wake up. "Don't wake up," I whispered. "Just don't wake up."

Not long after Mrs. Uhrey had driven off, this baby had begun to fret. Not a real cry, just a kind of bleating. He didn't respond when I cooed at him. He just lay there gazing up, undemanding, inert. It occurred to me that I didn't know his name, but as soon as he finished his bottle, he fell instantly to sleep, so there was no problem. If this is what babies are like, I remember thinking, then I sure don't want one.

He was still a mess, but I hadn't been able to find any diapers. There were no drawers in that house because there were no bureaus. There were boxes but most of them were taped up. Which let me off the hook. I'd never changed a diaper, and my stomach churned at the thought of changing this one. I couldn't help it if I couldn't find any diapers, could I? Besides, he was asleep. Everyone knew babies needed a lot of sleep.

"Hey, that's okay," Mrs. Uhrey had said when my mother mentioned my lack of experience with babies. "All you do is, you park him in his crib and hand him a

bottle and zonk, he's out. I'm not kidding, that little monster just loves his sleep." And she was right: once that baby had drained his bottle, that's all he did that night—he slept.

I peeked into the kitchen and bathroom and then turned off the lights to stare out the windows. At massive darkness. Utter stillness. No sign of an intruder. Of course not! There was nothing worth stealing in that house, least of all a dumb vase. And no reason to break in. The vase simply fell. These things happened.

The place was depressing even with the lights on. In the living room a knothole opposite the chair I sat in felt like the big black eye of night boring into me. I stuffed it with a sock. The furniture consisted of unpacked boxes stacked against the wall, one overstuffed chair, a couch that smelled of urine, and a small end-table piled so high with magazines, second grade workbooks, crayons and so on, and the vase, that there wasn't room for anything else.

Some months before, the house the Uhreys were renting had burned down. Except for the car they were using when the fire occurred and the clothes on their backs, they lost everything they owned. They had been Hilo residents for only a few years, with no family in the islands to help them out, so our church gathered up a few pieces of furniture, linens, kitchen items, and so on, to give them a start, and Doc Lilybridge got them this place for a low rent. Then Mr. Uhrey got a job in Guam and left the moving up to Mrs. Uhrey.

I liked the sound of rain on a tin roof, but when it stopped, the night silence seemed to thicken, to close in upon me, so I turned the radio back on and crawled over to pick up pieces of vase. The magazines that had also fallen I stacked on the floor next to the table. Then I picked up the larger pieces of vase. These I took to the kitchen, endured the scuttle of cockroach feet when I turned on the light, shoved back the clutter and made a neat line of shiny, pink pieces on the kitchen counter. I couldn't find a broom, so I scooped up the bits with a magazine.

Then I washed the dishes, except for two pots I left to soak on the stove. The crud on the floor, along with the vase bits, I pushed neatly into a far corner. The kitchen looked a lot better. This was bound to please Mrs. Uhrey, I thought, and put things into the right perspective.

I didn't see how I could have broken that vase. I wasn't even near it. I was asleep. Had I thrashed out or something and knocked it off the table? But I didn't really sleep in that awful chair, I'd merely nodded off. The vase was on the edge, it was tottery, so it fell. It couldn't have been valuable. I couldn't even remember what the thing looked like. Tacky, a piece of pink junk piled on the table with all the other junk. Not my problem.

I had other problems. The Uhreys had no TV. That was my biggest problem just then. The only time I got to watch TV was when I babysat or spent the night with my friend Leimoni, who not only had lots of comics but also, naturally, a TV.

And we didn't. No wonder I was the outsider at school—I had no idea what

the other kids were talking about. My mother would say, "Good grief, Winnie, Leimoni may have a TV, but do I have to point out that we have a baby grand?" My father would try his brand of humor. "Well, my dear, the last thing Lucille Ball is going to do is walk down a street in Hilo. But look at the bright side—you can now shed the burden of recognizing her." Which was my old-fashioned father, as usual, *refusing* to grasp my point, on purpose.

We didn't have a TV—that was the point. People like the Uhreys didn't have a TV. Which stamped us both with a "poor" label. This was the late '50s, after all, when pride of possessions had reached some kind of peak. When friends would trot out the new Vacuum Cleaner with its dozen or so attachments or point out the new Television or lead us out to the garage to rhapsodize over the latest in Freezers or Station Wagons.

I felt better about the TV, though, as soon as my eye fell on all those trashy magazines. So quickly, while I had the chance, like a greedy little kid, I devoured one confession after another. It was late, however; an eye had begun to twitch, I lost the sense of what I was reading, and many confessions blurred into one long confession that never seemed to end, and I nodded off.

And the vase fell.

With the kitchen clean, I no longer worried about the vase. The ache and boredom of the night were pressing me down, and even though more time meant more money, I wanted to go home. But I couldn't find a phone. I searched in every likely and unlikely place in the house, frantically, unable to comprehend that I had no way of calling Time. No lifeline to home. I'd ooze tears, then nod off. I'd jerk awake, jump up, flail my fingers, guess at the time, sit, wait, cry, doze, jump, flail, stretch, and wait. I prayed for Mrs. Uhrey to *please* come home and I waited. Nothing in Hilo stayed open late, so where *is* she? I'd ask the air. What'll I do if she doesn't come home? If she crashes into lava and kills herself and *can't* come home? Does that mean I have to stay here all night long? In this house? Breathing in this foul smell of diarrhea?

Consumed with the thought of time, I stood at the window searching the darkness for car lights, the sky for the first streaks of dawn, thinking, "School's starting pretty soon, I've gotta go." I'd forage in the fridge, pushing aside baby bottles and oleomargarine, in a futile search for something edible. I'd pace aimlessly, the gunky linoleum cold and slimy against my bare feet. I'd guess at the time and count up the money I was earning hour by hour. I found more black eyes peering through more knotholes. The creaking now came from all over the house: walls, roof, floor, the plumbing for all I knew, and it was loud, and it sounded like groaning.

Then—someone laughing. A scratching at the front door. I jumped to my feet. Mrs. Uhrey. Leaning against a man. Both laughing. "We're kinda late," she said, "but hey—I don't hardly ever get out and that's the truth." And to the man, "You got a li'l ole ciggy-butt for me, hon?"

“Hey, babe, anything for you.” From his shirt pocket he took a pack of cigarettes, shook one out, lit it, inhaling deeply, and grinning, passed it to her. “You want one, hon?” he asked me.

I shook my head.

“Okey-dokey, so how’d it go?” She tossed her purse on the couch, blew smoke from both nostrils upward and pinched a shred of tobacco from her tongue. “This here’s Mike, hon, he’s my hubby’s pal from the Navy. Hubby’s off in Guam right now, an’ Mike’s in town right now sellin’ lotta construction equipment, so we had us a toot, if you know what I mean. Guy wants to drive off to Kona. God—Kona! I sure was tempted, though, hey, you bet I was.”

It was fatigue, probably, that kept me on course. “The baby has diarrhea, I couldn’t find any diapers, I don’t think he’s feeling so good.”

Mrs. Uhrey flapped at her smoke. “Man alive, Mike, don’t you know about filters? That diarrhea is God-awful, hon, it goes and then it comes back. It’s that damn machine. Thing just up and quits on a full load, and I’m the one hasta wring it all out.”

“The boys had a fight. And Skipper, the oldest one?—well, he’s wheezing or something, like he’s having trouble breathing?” Out of the corner of my eye I saw Mike pull a bill out of his wallet. My heart sank. One dollar? All my work and only one dollar?

Mrs. Uhrey said, “Mike’s gonna take you home, hon. You hurry up, now, Mike, I’m gonna fix us a real nice snack.”

Well, good luck, I thought, I hope you find something to fix.

“Hey, hey, hey, girlie, not so fast, not so fast, okay?” Mike said, and pressed the wrinkled bill into my palm.

I smoothed it out. A twenty. Twenty dollars? Stunned, I said, “Gosh, this is too much, I mean I, I don’t have change.”

“Naw.” A grin spread across Mike’s face. “We’re late, see, we had us a great night, so you just put this away now. Go on.”

I hesitated, and clutching the bill, remembered the vase. “But, oh, gosh, um, we had a slight accident, I guess. The vase, the vase that was sitting on that table there? Well, it fell.”

“God, hon,” Mrs. Uhrey said, giggling, “I’m just hopin’ we got us some eggs in the fridge. At least the fridge works.” She started toward the kitchen and then paused in the doorway. “The only thing, I gotta tell you, hon, it’s okay—but I’m sure gonna miss that vase, you know? It’s kinda like havin’ insurance. Know what I mean? Just in case. And now it’s gone, too, along with everything else.”

“Oh gosh,” I said, “of course! Take a few dollars out of this bill. For the vase.” But, because that didn’t sound so good, and because I’d begun to have doubts about my appraisal of the thing, I added, “Ten dollars? Will that cover it?”

Folding her arms, she leaned against the door frame. “Now that’s real nice of you, dearie, but heck, it’s not the money. That vase has this value ’cause this dear

friend gave it to me outta the kindness of her pure heart. She has cancer, see, and her neck is all swelled up and turning purple from treatments, and that vase, well …"

I was numb at this point, I just wanted to go home, so I held out the twenty dollars. "Oh, gosh," I said, "here."

"You kidding?" Mike said, swiping at my hand, "I'm not on this expense account for nothing, you know. So relax, girlie, and let Mike fix it all hunkey-dorey. Go on now, stick this here bill in that cute little hip pocket of yours, an I'll just drive you home."

"The only thing," Mrs. Uhrey said in a quivering little voice, "that vase was the only pretty thing in this house." With that, she disappeared into the kitchen, where I heard her banging around.

Mike pulled her keys out of her purse and tossed them. "Okay, girlie, we're off," he said, winking at me when I slid the bill into my pocket.

I knew they'd been drinking, but I would never have hesitated to jump into that car just to get home. I knew that the Uhreys were poor. But, after all, I reasoned, it wasn't as if *she* had shelled out. And, feeling generous with the twenty in my pocket, and, thinking it would be nice to extend some kind of gesture, I blithely offered to walk home.

"You sure?" Mike said, a huge grin brightening his face.

Mrs. Uhrey appeared in the doorway again. "Gee, I donne know now, I donne know what the mom'd say. 'Course, it kinda depends, don't it, on how far, I mean …" Beehive hairdo oversized for the small, compact body, dark smudges under the pale eyes, pink bra strap slipping down one arm, she looked wan and worn and sounded vague. Or maybe hopeful. She stood leaning on the door frame, glancing back at him out of the corner of her eyes, and he was grinning at her, and I was caught between them in a kind of sluggish current, a breathless hush. A confusing moment, embarrassing.

In view of my discomfort, and the fact that a so-called valuable vase had broken under my care, even though it hadn't been my fault, I thought it behooved me to appear sincere, and so I said, "Oh, sure, I don't live far from here. About a mile. I guess." Which was supposed to give them the option of refusing to allow a vulnerable, fourteen-year-old girl to walk through the dark Waiakea Town section of Hilo late at night.

The plain truth, of course—though I was too gullible to see it then—was that they could hardly wait to get rid of me. So I walked home.

We were then nearing summer, a year or so before statehood. I'd been sitting since the previous summer—not because I liked little kids, but because we were *poor*, and I needed the money.

Several months before, my father had quit his job as vice president of an insurance company because his boss had persisted in opening *his* mail. He was now eking out a "temporary" living as auditor for a hotel chain, with consider-

ably lower pay. My parents were then discussing putting our modest little house up for sale. So we really were poor.

But after that night, I never again complained about our house. At the sight of the warm, steady glow out of the darkness that was our porch light—left on for me, I knew—I burst into tears. And when I found my mother asleep on the couch—waiting for me, I knew—I began sobbing in earnest.

"What? *She let you walk home?*" She flung her arms around me, and then she began to cry too. "Oh, Winnie, I'm *so sorry*! I tried to call you but that woman's phone is '*no longer in service.*' I was going to wait one more hour to call the police and then I fell … Winnie! *Do you realize it's two, no—heavens!—it's three-forty-five in the morning?*"

"I'm okay, I'm okay," I said, subsiding at her outburst. "I don't think I'll be able to go to school tomorrow, though, my legs hurt." But then her soothing voice came into my ear, she led me off to bed, rubbed my legs with alcohol and then, as if I were still a little kid, tucked me in, kissed me and turned out my light. I just had time to mumble "Guess what—Waiakea Town isn't one bit scary at night" before dropping into a deep, untroubled sleep.

I told Mother about the diarrhea and the vase, and she told me that as soon as my father got home with the car, she would certainly run over to confront that woman. I was also told that, since I appeared perfectly rested after my long sleep, a little practice on my new Chopin etude wouldn't hurt me. My mother had piano students coming at three so I had to do it right then. That was the only time I can remember staying home from school without being sick, and I had to practice.

That evening my father returned from Kona in time to have dinner with the family. He spent four days a week going over the books at the hotel there, where, even though he could eat all the steak he wanted, free, he never did because we couldn't. We never ate mahimahi when he was at home because he was sick of it.

"I understand that, how miserable you were and so on," he intoned, looking at me. "However, while you seem to have recovered, your mother continues to blame herself. From now on, therefore, it will be *your* responsibility to decide for yourself whether or not you will babysit and for whom. In addition, you will need to follow your mother's rules while making certain that parents who need your services understand them as well." I could see my mother nodding at this.

"Sure."

"If Mrs. Uhrey calls before your mother has a chance to talk with her, you will have to tell her that you are not allowed to babysit there any more. Do you understand?"

"But she got twenty bucks!" my brother cried. "You can't beat that anywhere."

"It's time you got to your homework, David," my father said.

"Twenty dollars?" my mother gasped. "Heavens! Really? Of course, she did come home dreadfully late. She missed school today and, well …"

"I don't have any homework tonight, Dad."

"Until you improve your grade in math, you have homework," my father said. "You're excused so that you can do it now."

David clumped off, and my mother began to clear the table. This was usually my job. I sat a little straighter.

"Mrs. Uhrey didn't pay me, Daddy." I could hear David down the hall humming a piece he was working on. By Tchaikovsky. The one that sounds like a funeral march. "Mike did, this friend of hers. It was twenty bucks, but he *made* me take it."

"Dollars, Winnie. But good lord, twenty dollars. That's very generous, I'd say. What do you usually earn for—what was it? eight hours?"

"Almost ten, by the time I got home. Fifty cents an hour. That's five dollars, but I've never done it practically all night before. David says 'bucks.' How come I can't?"

"David is not the issue. Your mother tells me that you broke a vase."

"It just fell, I didn't even *touch* it."

He gave me the look my mother called his "level, patient look" and cleared his throat. "As I understand it, Winnie, you were hired to look after the household, which means that whatever happened under your charge was your responsibility. You paid for the vase, I hope, or, if your funds were insufficient …"

"I tried to pay, Daddy, I offered *twenty dollars*, and Mrs. Uhrey said not to worry. She had her mind on eggs. It wasn't her money, anyway. She got that vase free with flowers in it, and she tried to pass it off as priceless or something, and it wasn't worth *anything*."

"Priceless? Did she say that?"

"Not exactly, but that's what she meant." I knew my father, this kind of argument was not unfamiliar to me. I knew. So I'd begun to squirm.

"Perhaps, she meant some value other than money. Do you know?"

"I don't know. Well, she said it was pretty, the only pretty thing in the house, but it wasn't, Daddy, really, it was ugly. She really wanted the twenty dollars, but Mike wouldn't let me give it to her. He said …"

"Mrs. Uhrey is very poor, you realize that, don't you?"

"So am I," I shot back. "We're poor, our whole family is *poor* even though you graduated from *college*!"

The pause that followed my remark seemed to last forever. "You seem to be unaware," he said finally, and very quietly, "of the vast difference between our circumstances and the poverty that appears to be grinding the Uhreys down—that's what worries me. I'm amazed that you don't understand this. And I'm—disappointed."

"I do understand." I felt his eyes boring into me and through me all the way down to my raw little soul.

He shoved his glasses up onto his head and pressed at the bridge of his nose,

which meant that he had a sinus headache. I remember noticing the red dents on each side of his nose, the tender look around his eyes, how naked his face looked without his glasses. Yet he sat straight in his chair, his long, unbending arms anchored to his knees. A solid rock that nothing could dislodge. I slumped down and fixed my eyes on the salt and pepper shakers still on the table.

"No, you do not. You don't comprehend what is crucial here—that to Mrs. Uhrey it was 'pretty.' One small thing in her house that we can assume was not there out of need, possibly the only item with no utilitarian purpose to serve. Just pretty. A luxury, in other words. Only the poor can appreciate simple luxury, Winnie. If you can't understand that, why then, you are not poor. You are twenty dollars richer, in fact. Perhaps that's your problem."

"I *earned* it, Daddy," I raged, "I worked really hard, I worked all night, and Mrs. Uhrey can't even bother to wash her baby's diapers, and he has diarrhea, and I did *not* break that ugly, *pink* vase, and then I had to walk all the way home *barefoot*! Through Waiakea, in the *dark*!" I jumped up, knocking my chair over. "*She* broke it, she put it on this stack of slimy *pink* magazines, and I couldn't help it if they were slippery."

"Winnie, I don't want to hear you talking like that to your father." I started, seeing that my mother was now sitting across from me at the table. So, I thought, she's on his side.

"Pick up your chair and sit down," my father said. "You know what I'm talking about. And I'm sorry that you refuse to understand. It would make returning the twenty dollars easier."

"I won't!" I stormed. "How can I return it? I don't even know Mike's name. He doesn't even *live* in Hilo."

My father cleared his throat. "Perhaps I misstated your mission. You will return to Mrs. Uhrey's house and apologize and give *her* the twenty dollars. Tomorrow. It's Saturday tomorrow, you'll have time to think over the situation, and to correct it."

"She'll have time after she practices," my mother said.

I stamped down the hall and lay on my bed fuming, determined to get out of it, planning. It was ridiculous, it was grotesque, I wasn't going to do it.

The next day I knew I had to go to the Uhrey house. But who said I had to knock? If they asked, I'd say, Sure, I went, it's over and done, now leave me alone, and I wouldn't have to lie. If they grilled me, I'd think of something.

I got the bike until four that afternoon, when David had to use it for his paper route. They said I seemed mighty cheerful, and I answered, Would they please just let me go and get it over with. And off I went, reversing my journey of two nights before, this time enjoying the glint of sun on Hilo Bay at the bridge and my shadow below me skimming gravel bumps and pot holes half-filled with rainwater, thinking of my bill safely tucked in my hip pocket while congratulating myself on how easy it was turning out to be, after all. I spent a dime for a shave-

ice at Matsuda's on my way and took my time eating it.

Then, as I neared the Uhrey place, passing auto repair shops, a lumberyard, weedy vacant lots with lots of rusting cars and appliances, and a series of empty houses like the Uhreys', my confidence gave way to tension. The area hadn't recovered from the 1946 tsunami, and in the glittering light of day, it struck me as dismal. I slowed to a wobbly walk and finally hopped off and pushed the bike. At the Uhrey house, I stopped. There was no foliage to hide behind except a gray leafless plumeria in front of the living room window and a chain-link fence. I felt exposed. The place was dead quiet. As solitary and forsaken as the other houses on that street. Not even a toy in the yard. They weren't home.

With time to kill I rode up to the library to see if *Catcher in the Rye* was available. It wasn't. At home I didn't wait for my parents to ask me anything. I said, "I went to the Uhreys, I don't want to talk about it," and they nodded. They trusted me.

My father said, "I'm proud of you, Winnie. You're feeling better about it now, I hope."

"No," I said, truthfully. "Just leave me alone. Please."

A week passed, maybe two, and I still had the twenty dollars stashed away in my jeans, to keep it handy. Then, after dinner one night, my mother directed me to the obituary section of the *Hilo Tribune Herald*. And that's when I found the name of the Uhrey baby. "Nipper."

At first I thought it was a mistake. 'Nipper,' I read. 'Survived by his father, Aron Uhrey, his mother, Yolanda Uhrey, two brothers, seven-year-old Skipper and six-year-old Chipper, and a twelve-year-old half-sister presently residing in Seattle.'

"I know it's a shock, honey," my mother said, but these things happen in life, unfortunately. "He'd been running a low-grade fever for a while, you know, and then he drank his milk and went peacefully to sleep. Anyway, I'm so glad you returned the money." Giving me a tight squeeze, she added, "I'm proud of you."

When Saturday came, I grabbed the bike while my brother was out and pedaled all the way up to the library, several miles at least, but I couldn't find a single book that looked interesting. On my way home I found myself on the Uhreys' street. The boys were out playing, so I had to stop. "Hi," I said. "Hey, I'm really sorry to hear about your brother, about Nipper. Are you guys okay?"

No answer. Skipper ran into the house and appeared with her, with Mrs. Uhrey. She smiled but looked different. Old and blotched in shorts and a pink blouse stained under the arms. I took in the limp hair and lumpy thighs.

"Oh," she said. "So, what can you do me for?"

I missed the joke, a little unnerved by the smile coming out of the ruined face, and told her that I was very, very sorry about Nipper.

"He had this fever on account of this infection, but it was so low, we didn't even know. At least he didn't suffer." Turning, she added, "It's real nice of you

to drop by, though, I sure do ’preciate it.”

“Mrs. Uhrey.” As she pulled the door open, I leaped up the steps. “The baby … I wanted … I didn’t want Nipper to wake up … but not … I mean, I didn’t want him to *stay* asleep. That night. I mean, I sure didn’t mean *forever*.” Quickly, then, reflexively, I dug the bill out of my pocket and thrust it at her.

“What’s that?”

“I don’t know. Twenty dollars.” I was so mortified that I just stood there for a minute, staring into the torn screen trying to avoid the ravaged face, whiffing her fruity odor, too close for comfort. “I’m so sorry about the vase.”

“Now listen, dearie.” She pushed the bill back and crossed her arms. Dimly, I was aware of beads of sweat sliding off her face, a boy wedging himself between us to hang on her leg. “I don’t want your money, we don’t take charity off nobody.”

“It’s for a vase, with flowers in it …” I thrust the bill blindly at her and ran to my bike, falling over it as I jerked it up, and pedaled off as fast as I could. A wind had come up, which made pumping difficult and further infuriated me. But it was that anger, or fear, perhaps, or humiliation, that pushed me home.

For a moment, then, the world spun. Everything was in motion. The shower trees on our street bent and swayed. Our yard was a turmoil of tossed branches and flickering white. Blossoms as white as snow glittering in the hazy sunlight, whirling all around me.

I was lightheaded from my hard pedaling. The ominous beauty. The slap of something cold, the wind, maybe. Or blossoms blowing my way. It’s what I remember about that time, anyway, that day—standing very still in the middle of it all, knowing that I could step out of that white chaos and into warmth and order inside, but delaying, just standing there for a long time, waiting for the world to clear.

Carlos Andrade at Päkalä, 1967
photo by Kit Boise-Cossart

These pages are blank because we were unable to obtain signed permission from the author Gerry Lopez to include his work in this digital archive.

Carlos Andrade at Päkalä, 1967
photos by Kit Boise-Cossart

These pages are blank because we were unable to obtain signed permission from the author Carlos Andrade to include his work in this digital archive.

Carlos Andrade at Ala Moana, 2005
photo by Jaime Ballenger

Wing Tek Lum

DRAFTING ANOTHER POEM

(Author's Note: On October 14, 2006, at the last Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute, I participated in a panel entitled "Three Poems and Their Drafts" with Michael McPherson and Joseph Stanton. I did not feel that my presentation turned out very well. I hope the following is more articulate in revealing the process of how I came to write my poem.)

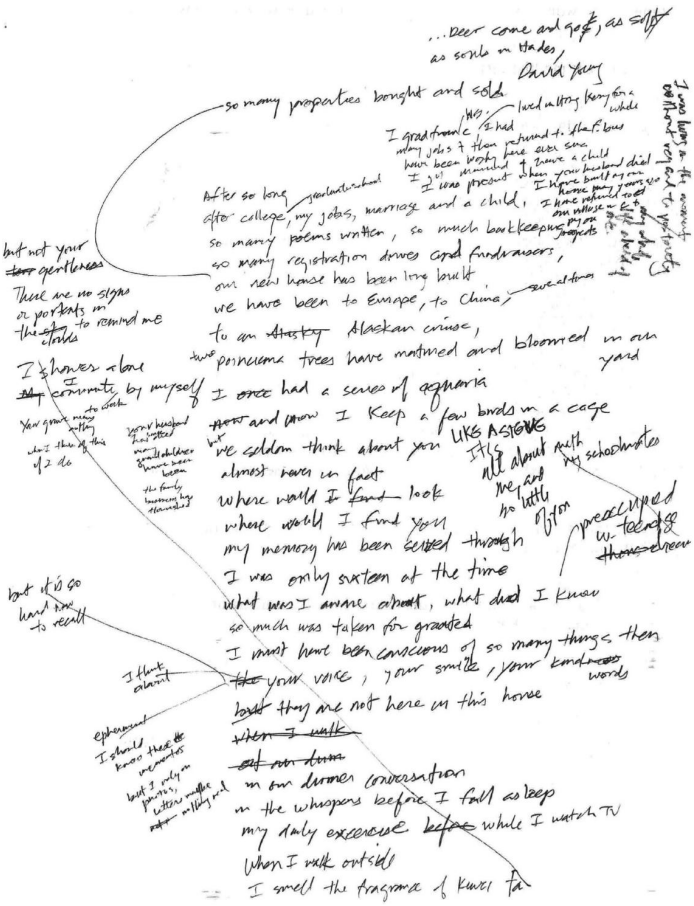
> "Let us say that poetic autobiography begins in apology, in the need to 'explain oneself.'"—Stephen Owen, "The Self's Perfect Mirror: Poetry as Autobiography"

In 2004, I read a poem entitled "Chloe in Late January," written by David Young (*The New Yorker*, March 1, 2004). It described in precise and luminous details the world about the poet's rural home, and the intimations of a visit by the spirit of a loved one "some nineteen years since cancer took [his/her] life." One image in particular moved me deeply:

… Deer come and go, as soft
as souls in Hades …

It inspired me to try to write a similar poem about my mother, who had died when I was 16 years old. Or rather, as my first draft developed, I started to write about me and what had happened to me since my mother had died. Strategically, my initial idea was to list subsequent events or accomplishments in my life, a kind of summation report addressed to my late mother, and then to undercut all of these milestones with an acknowledgement, at the end, that without her something was still missing in my life.

My first draft of this poem was for me a long one; it was handwritten and a copy of it is reproduced on the attached page. My talent is usually limited to shorter spurts of creativity, a dozen lines perhaps, which if I were able to continue to be inspired I would later add on to with more short spurts of more lines, more images. But in this instance I really got carried away, especially logging so much personal history, both trivial and grand. Some of the handwritten lines were as follows:



After … so many poems written, so much bookkeeping

I got married & have a child
I was present when your husband died

I have returned to our village in China to pay our respects

we have been … to an Alaskan cruise …

two poinciana trees have matured and bloomed in our yard

… I keep a few birds in a cage

This first draft then shifted focus, following through with my original poetic intention to undercut my list of achievements. The next lines were as follows:

… but we seldom think about you
almost never in fact
where would I look
where would I find you
my memory has been seived [sic] through

Ironically, this turned out to be the opposite from David Young's poem. Where he sensed his love one's return, I lamented on the infrequency of my thoughts about my mother, as follows:

… your voice, your smile, your kind words
they are not here in this house
in our dinner conversation
in the whispers before I fall asleep
my daily exercise while I watch TV
when I walk outside

After a few tries, after filling up most of the page, I ran out of gas. And I did not know what the whole point of this draft was. To me, I got bogged down too much in the crowing about my achievements; I was too self-centered, and with too much whining. I could not figure out what more to say or how to edit what I had written into something of use; there was no purpose. It felt to me like just one more attempt with a dead end. So I put the draft away.

A short while later, I took out this draft but still could not do anything more with this initial idea. Instead I honed in on the single image out of those forty-odd initial lines, namely, "my memory has been sieved through" (spelling corrected, or as I also wrote beside that line in all upper case "LIKE A SIEVE." Somehow I took another tack deciding to simply detail the image of "sieving"—the everyday act of sifting flour. I am not sure why I chose to do so, and I must note that I do not cook (relying on my master chef of a wife for sustenance. But I recalled how I did sift flour as a child, helping my mother when she made her famous almond cookies. My idea was to take the concrete narrative of the sifting and by another poetic device I sometimes use, then undercut it with a sneaky ending revealing the poem to be a metaphor about the loss of memories. So I wrote this second

draft, though in the third person, as follows:

The cook is sifting flour for a cake.
He takes his five-pound bag
and scoops flour into his hand sifter
and then with his free hand
lightly taps gently taps the sifter
so that the flour unclumps
through the wire mesh.
And he keeps
with each tap more flour drops
only what remains are clumps
smaller and smaller
just as with each day each year
I savor fewer and fewer nuggets
of memories of you.

As can be seen, the general idea in this draft was how our memories, like flour, get sifted out as time goes by, until a few precious ones remain. It could have been a neat little poem, but the language was for me somewhat prosaic (as opposed to luminous. I know I felt bothered that the actual description of sifting flour was not detailed, not authentic enough. In short, it did not sing. I briefly toyed with the notion that I should go to our kitchen to look for a hand sifter and some flour to gain more firsthand insight as to what to write about. Instead, I eventually concluded that I had reached another dead end.

After another period of time, I took up the poem again but decided to drop the sifting flour metaphor. I still retained the idea of memory "like a sieve," and came up with this, my third, draft, also with some later revision possibilities on the right, as follows:

A memory is like a sieve	
only a few coarse grains left	I will place under my tongue when I am buried
caught in the wire mesh	
kernels of whatever happened	
now burnished like pearls	conceal
these jewels I treasure	precious jewels which I hide under my tongue
until I die	to burnish them
which I will carry	They are without taste
which I will	which I take out in a private hour
garland in	to feel its special weight, its glitter
necklace I will	though now so infrequent
wearing them like a necklace	
that I will be buried with	sour
	taste some bitter and shame

some with joy and awe wonder gratitude
which courses through my blood my being

under tongue gives off sweetness bitterness
taste of regret grief
taste of awe wonder

which courses through my veins
through my pores
that when I kiss my daughter
your sweet essence lingers
in her breath
your whisper lingers

and in my kisses
to my daughter, eyes bright glistening

In reviewing this new version I can see that the first three lines worked off the sifting flour image of the second draft. The next three lines were an extension of the ending of the second draft, elaborating more concretely on how precious my memories were; there is the added hint of actively burnishing those few treasured memories like an oyster with its pearls. The rest of this draft is more of a rift, evidencing my struggle to move the poem along. The ending is interesting though, adding the idea that certain memories of my mother can indeed be retained, though unfortunately after I die they will then be forgotten—the human condition.

In the first possible revision, found on the right, I combined the ideas of "jewels" and "burial" together with "under my tongue," hinting of some ancient funerary rite. I extended this image in the second set of revisions elaborating on "tongue" with the sense of "taste." The last three lines of this revision went further using a metaphor to describe how one recalls and then savors a specific memory; there is a hint of sadness however in the phrase "though now so infrequent," underscoring the notion that as one gets older, one retains fewer memories, so that those that are retained are treasured like an oyster's pearls.

Although in the previous revisions the memories/jewels were "without taste" in the next two revisions I turned around and went in the opposite direction—again improvising with a variety of "tastes" suggesting that some memories are good and others bad. The line "which courses through my blood" went even further, exploring an ingesting of the "tastes," which I then amplified in the next revision. By "coursing" I acknowledged that my personal history, including what I remember, was what has shaped who I am now. (I must, however, point out that the word "courses" was probably not born from a deliberate or conscious decision to "ingest" memories. Rather, there was likely a much more mundane

reason, my coming up with this word through simply picking up the echo of its homonym "coarse" found in the second line of this draft.)

As I worked through this part of the poem I serendipitously came up with the image of kissing my daughter in the next revisions. It was this image which crossed the line for me, gave me hope that I could finish this poem, that I finally had something to say. The idea of passing my memories, my history, on to the next generation added an element of hope; it became an antidote, an alternative, to the original direction of this third draft, which had ended in burial and loss.

All of the above observations may not really have been conscious to me at the time. Just the same, as can be seen, I kept pushing and pushing—what I like to call "punching out" into new, heretofore unknown areas. The poem advanced little by little, a sort of Robert Frost–like "way leads on to way," and here and there it took shape, found a purpose. It was not the vomit of accomplishments like my first draft, nor the concrete but bland image of sifting flour of the second. Rather, it crept into a world filled with magical realism, which I rarely do, but which also excited and challenged me.

At this point, with these new directions, I decided to start a new draft on a new piece of paper. What I tried to do was just consolidate the initial thrust of the third draft and the revision possibilities that seemed likely to fit. This fourth draft turned out as follows, also with some later revision possibilities found on the right:

FORTY ONE YEARS

My memory is like a sieve
only a few coarse grains remain
caught in a wire mesh
these original kernels now burnished
over the years
now jewels I treasure
which I savor under my tongue
some tasting bitter with shame
some others though
sweet with joy and gratitude
all coursing through my veins
seeping through my pores
so that when I kiss my daughter

when I hold them in my hand
in a private hour
assaying their special weight, their glitter
then concealed under my tongue
leaving a taste
some bitter with shame
some others sweet with joy and gratitude
slightly sweet

What is interesting to note is that almost all of this last draft as well as the revision possibilities can be found in some way in the previous drafts. I have underlined in only seven places words or phrases that are at this point significantly new. The only major revision idea that I seemed to have discarded is "your sweet essence lingers/in her breath." So in this fourth draft it was essentially a recasting,

notwithstanding with a radical structuring, presenting a skeletal road map of my train of thought for the whole poem: the sieving the grains through a wire mesh, the few kernels remaining metamorphosing into jewels, which I privately assay, and which I then taste and ingest, and later pass on via a kiss to my daughter. These elements formed a critical mass of a narrative, which from this stage on I could amplify with more ideas (what I call quantitative improvements) and/or refine with more precise details (which are more qualitative improvements).

One of the new additions deserves special comment. I finally decided to write down a title, "Forty One Years," for the poem, an idea that I had been percolating in the back of my mind since the first draft. It is a title that of course referred to the period since my mother's death. It echoed David Young's poem, but even more importantly echoed an earlier poem of mine entitled "Twenty Two Years" (published in my first volume of poetry, Expounding the Doubtful Points). This earlier poem took the concrete image of a half-smoked cigarette, its cylinder of ashes, and turned it at the end into a metaphor for "my memories of you." The "you" in this short poem of 15 lines was not actually made clear, though in the context of the other poems in that section of my book it referred to my deceased mother. At this stage of the creation of this new poem I was still debating on how clearly or ambiguously I wished to connect this poem to my mother. For me, it was definitely essential, at a minimum, as the impetus to my sitting down to write the first draft (responding to David Young's poem). But at the same time I did not think it necessary for my readers to know this; in a finished version, sometimes less is better.

My early drafts of poems are always handwritten; my pencil in hand records my stream of consciousness, free association, thinking faster than my typing. These lightning strikes of inspiration are so fleeting that if I do not write them down immediately they disappear just as quickly, and more often than not turn out to be very difficult to be called up again. But once there seems to be a possible poem taking shape, after forming that critical mass, my proceeding to typing a draft helps me see what it looks like in print, including the sequence of the lines and the line breaks. So for the fifth draft I typed it as follows, again with some later revision possibilities found on the right:

FORTY ONE YEARS

"… Deer come and go as soft
as souls in Hades …"
--David Young, "Chloe in Late January"

My memory is like a sieve
with only a few coarse grains remaining
still caught within a wire mesh
these original kernels burnished over the years

meager jewels I treasure now and then	into
when I hold them in my palm	
in a private hour	
assaying their special weights	and colors
their glistening in all their facets	*see A below*
then concealing them under my tongue	
a taste slightly sweet	suggesting
but with remorse that lingers	
but that leaves a craving	
spreading through my veins	fingers and toes tingling
saturating my pores	sorrow penetrating my pores
so that when I kiss your granddaughter	her cheek so soft and wet
she can sense your smile	*see B below*
your soft-spoken voice, your blessings	*see C below*
that are what we carry with the generations	*see D below*

A: their shimmering like tears in the moonlight
tears shimmering under the moonlight
that I conceal

their colors in the face of the sun
glittering in the face under the sun

B: the odor of your hair freshness fragrance

C: your benevolence
your voice in a hush the bell of your voice

caresses her envelopes embraces
as it did me

D: —what we carry across the generations
what we bear

Once more, I have underlined the major new words or phrases from the previous draft (though "lingers" actually was somehow a resurrected word from the third draft).

As can be seen, including the possible revisions, my ideas blossomed like a tree once its roots and trunk were firmly planted, its branches and new leaves sprouting *kapakahi*, in a myriad of directions. The new last four lines and its revisions (*B, C,* and *D*) are a good example of how I amplified the poem with more specific images of what I had been able to remember about my mother and then transmit to my daughter. Other examples are the addition of "and col-

ors," "fingers and toes tingling," and "in the moonlight." I also tried to refine the images more precisely by replacing "fragrance" with "freshness," and "seeping" with "saturating." The words "meager," "weights," "tears," "remorse," "craving," and "sorrow" in the middle section of the poem, it seems in hindsight, all carry a somber connotation, underscoring the sense of loss. This was, I felt, balanced at the end by the words "soft and wet," "freshness," "bell," and "caresses/embraces," which would suggest some sense of receptive innocence and new hope. (As an aside, my kissing "her cheek so soft and wet" was essentially a phrase lifted from an earlier poem about my daughter, entitled "Kindergarten," published in *Bamboo Ridge* #36, where I described her instead kissing me with a kiss "small and soft, and slightly cold and wet.") In this way, the poem moves both physically and psychologically through dealing with a private reflective mourning, and into an active shared celebration.

It is with two crucial revisions in the ending that I luckily found a way to articulate for me (even more so than for anyone else) what this poem was finally meant to be. First, I changed the phrase "I kiss my daughter" to the (albeit more convoluted) phrase "I kiss your granddaughter"—and as an attendant consequence revealing more overtly the relationship between the "I" and the "you" of the poem. Then out of the blue I was able to insert the additional phrase "as it did me," which more concretely acknowledged my role as the transmitter, or better yet the fulcrum, between the generation before and the generation after. This was a significant breakthrough for me personally; when I came up with this line I knew I lucked out again. Who my mother was, or at least who she was within my meager remaining memories, did not have to die with me. There was a way to keep her alive even after 41 years. Though technically not really a resurrection, there was at least some kind of consolation. There was a way to overcome the loss of my mother, the loss of my memories of her, and even my own eventual death. We can conquer death through love—from mother to poet, from poet to daughter.

It did not take much to move to the sixth and final version of this poem. I came up with a few changes, and tightened up the diction. Notably, the earlier "bitterness" and "regret" turned into "sorrow," and then into "lament," which I then qualified as "white"—the color of death. I also concluded that "linger" should be dropped again. Then, at the suggestion of a friend, I broke the poem up into stanzas, feeling that it somehow needed to "breathe." Thematically there seemed to be three roughly equal sections, and I decided, thinking it would be neat, to shoehorn the lines around to create equal stanzas of seven lines each. Once I finished fiddling with the three stanzas I sensed it was the right time to stop. This poem can now be seen on the following page.

Wing Tek Lum

FORTY ONE YEARS

"… Deer come and go, as soft
as souls in Hades …"
—David Young, "Chloe in Late January"

My memory is like a sieve
with only a few coarse grains remaining
still caught within the wire mesh
these original kernels burnished over the years
into meager jewels I treasure
when I hold them in my palm now and then
in a private hour

assaying their special weights and colors
tears shimmering under moonlight
which I conceal under my tongue
suggesting a taste slightly sweet
but that leaves a craving
a white lament permeating my pores
my fingers and toes tingling

so that when I kiss your granddaughter
her cheek so soft and wet
the freshness in your hair
the bell of your voice, your benevolence
embrace and comfort her
as they did me
—what we bear with us across generations.

Ian MacMillan

KAI

excerpt from *In the Time Before Light*

This excerpt takes place in 1786, according to Fornander, the year two ships visited the islands, the first such visit by Westerners after the death of Captain Cook. In this fictionalized version, a third ship visits the western coast of O'ahu, and during this visit, its sailors observe an execution about to take place. The book's protagonist, Pono, is about to be killed by warriors of an ali'i *named Muapo, overseen by his priest Kahimoku. They "rescue" Pono from this execution by killing Kahimoku and a warrior, and abduct Pono to their ship, which sails away, leaving Pono's wife Pekau, his parents, and father-in-law Manomano behind. The narrative is Pono's, rendered in 1824 to a British traveler and an American resident of Honolulu.*

Gentlemen, this narrative must now advance as a summary, for it concerns a string of days in which the distinction between one day and the next has been lost to my memory. Some of these days stand out in my memory, for example, the day we sailed, and I was released from my cage. The cumulative distinction, however, is clear: we were at sea perhaps forty-five days, the *ali'i* Roger wishing apparently to cross great distances in a two-day span, then changing his mind and resting for two days, the great sails rolled around their poles and the cords slack in the wind. I believe that because of the general lack of activity for the men during the majority of these days, I quickly learned how to speak their strange language, twisting my mouth and tongue into awkward and unfamiliar positions in order to imitate their phrasing, the most difficult of which are the sounds 'th,' 'g' in its soft manifestation, 'sh' and most difficult, the 'r' sound, particularly in

the middle of a word, as in 'barrel.'

Amidst the pastime of the naming of things: 'sail,' 'boot,' 'pants,' 'wood,' and so on, was my frequent inquiry: '*Aha?*' or '*I ke aha?*' in its various forms in my language. But the abstraction 'Why?' was lost on those who were so busy shepherding me into the intricacies of their language. That first day, after perhaps seven hours of movement under sail, I endeavored to make clear to those men who one by one came to my cage with new and more clever means of the naming of things, that I had to relieve myself. This was communicated to them through a series of gestures and mimicking: pointing to my '*ōkole* and gesturing as to the issuance of material from therein, pointing to my nose and sniffing with an expression of distaste on my face, until one of them, the tall man who bore himself with a moody, distant demeanor compared to the animation of the others, seemed to understand, at which he communicated to Roger. The *ali'i* then came to my cage and mused over some decision he was apparently in the process of making.

Then did he draw from his blue cloak a strange twig that I understood was of the same material as the poles of my cage. He raised it just out of my sight and I heard a clicking sound followed by a soft squeak, at which the entire line of poles before me drew open. Roger backed away and stood watching, as did the other men. I moved out of the enclosure and stood up straight, my back somewhat stiff, and there got a better view of the canoe. I must say that it startled me at first: the wood under my feet was smooth and swept off along the shiny gunwale back perhaps thirty paces, while in the other direction it swept for perhaps ten. Over the rail, the water was the distance of three men's bodies down, and instead of a *manu* at the front, there appeared to be a great pole jutting up and outward, like a giant *pololū*. I turned and again beheld what I assumed to be the rear portion of the canoe. There, sitting above the curved rail on the fattest part of the canoe, was the house. And then above me rose a riot of cording, poles and cross-poles, what I assumed to be more, many more of the same sail I had seen part of from my cage.

Uncertain as to what to do next, I took a step toward two of the men, who warily drew back, as if afraid of me. I looked down, and mused upon the observation that, unlike the rest of these men, I was naked but for my *malo*. They stared at me, Roger still contemplating something. Then he uttered a string of sounds to someone I could not see, and shortly the same old man who had fed me emerged from a hole in the deck of the ship bearing *kapa* of various colors, which he held out, approaching me. Still uncertain, I held out my hands and he placed these things in them. The material was soft, and I raised it to my face and sniffed, and there arose from this material an odor not of cooked meat or human filth but a dry, nearly sweet smell. I was to don these things, I understood, so that I might resemble these men.

The process of my reasoning out how to put these things on brought from these men a merriment that shamed me somewhat, until I had successfully slid

these fabric tubes up my legs and over my arms, at which Roger approached and put his hands to my chest and then slid round shell ornaments already attached through tiny slits in the fabric, thus enclosing me in this material. He then pointed down, at which I understood that I was to do the same with that open part of the fabric covering my *malo*. It took me some time to accomplish the process of sliding the round shell ornaments in their places. Finally, upon my looking down at myself once again, the men produced a collective barrage of laughter and clapping of their hands.

Then Roger held his hands up and quieted the men. In the silence that followed, he walked to the rail, put his hands together, and then mimicked jumping over, as if to dive into the water. Then he waved his finger before my face and said, "No." I understood this and said, in my language, "No, I will not try to swim back to my home." Satisfied, he nodded slowly and ushered me to a wall, a man-sized portion of which he pulled open, to reveal a tiny room with a plank across the back, that plank centered by a round hole. I was to use this to relieve myself. He pointed to a fat bag of some sort hanging to the right of the hole. He turned a tiny device on the bottom of it, at which water streamed forth. Then he mimicked cleaning himself with his hand rubbing in his crotch. I understood this, and went inside the tiny room, and he closed the door.

As for the succeeding days, I should say that my facility with their language advanced with a pace that seemed continually to interest, and sometimes apparently amaze, the men who were teaching me. '*I ke aha*,' was the question I held there in my mind but, as I said, such abstractions would have to wait. 'How are ye today Pono?' 'I am well.' 'Which of those is the mainsail?' 'Sir, this is the mainsail.' 'Are you quite full? Or would you like more?' 'I am full, sir, yes. I am satisfactory.' 'Satisfied.' 'Yes, I am satisfied, sir.' 'Remember?' 'Yes, the mainsail is satisfactory, but I am satisfied.' And the one word we had in common: '*ae*, in my language means 'yes,' while 'yes,' in their language was expressed with 'aye.' 'Pono, this is our chicken coop, but our chickens have died.' 'What is a chicken?' 'Cluck cluck cluck arr-a-roo.' 'Yes, *hale moa*. This is the house of the chicken.'

I slept in what was identified as a 'hammock,' which in my language might be '*kōkō*,' or a cord net usually used to carry the very old. Roger and two of the men took me, that first day, down under the deck, where I beheld a most complicated and fascinating arrangement of tiny rooms, large rooms, a kitchen with a large fireplace and crowded with many gourds, or I should say now, pots and pans, and crockery. I was being asked where I felt I might feel comfortable sleeping, but the atmosphere of the dark bowels of this ship made me frightened, as if I might become lost there. Amidst various gesturing and questioning expressions, we settled upon a place outside on the deck, very near the cage I had occupied the day before, and the men worked at rigging my hammock in place, so that I might sleep under the stars, and if rain should come, an overhanging plank would keep

me dry.

And so I did sleep, and in those waking hours before sleep and before rising, I waited for Manomano to speak to me, but he did not. I waited for Pekau's whisper to make its way over the water to me, that *he'e*-enriched breath, but it did not. I was lost, and without mana. This death, however, was one in which I remained sentient, and I labored over certain ideas: if these men had sailed to my world and now had sailed away, would they again sail to my world? I envisioned Pekau and the children, and my parents, living in the mountains, and cultivated the thought that if I were blamed for Kahimoku's death, then Muapo's warriors would go up the mountain to find me, and if not me, then Pekau and the children. If Pekau knew of this danger, then they would go farther up the mountain, up into the clouds if necessary.

So went the days, and I continued carrying with me the '*I ke aha?*' It may be that the rapid advance in my facility with the language was driven by a desire to have this question answered, and after that, have answered the other questions: Would we return? If we would, when?

By the twenty-fifth day of our sailing, I had begun to memorize the parts of the ship, had begun to practice climbing up the mast pole, had learned the names of those on the ship, the ones whom I associated with most closely, a man called 'The American,' whose name was Dick Burrows; Owen Bew, the old man who had first fed me and who was cook, physician, and elder statesman of the ship; and Don Bentley, an Englishman who was described by Bew as a 'malefactor and cutpurse;' and Ben Fowles, the 'carpenter.' There was also a group of five men referred to by the other sailors as the 'gentlemen of leisure,' which would take me some time to understand. They were gamblers and now, on the ship, spent their days grouped around a small table upon which they placed, while others they held, small square pieces of bark adorned with pictures, and they would spend entire days doing this, or if not this, then they would group themselves around a wooden board with squares on it, upon which they placed tiny statues that they would study for hours on end. By this time, the concept of 'why?' had formed itself, for I had observed the men using this word when one did not understand the motivations of the other, and the word interjected would cause the man to halt and explain 'why' such and such was being done. So '*I ke aha?*' was 'why?' What, sir, motivates you to do this? Why?

That day I believe was perhaps the fortieth of our voyage, I was on the deck eating with the other men, and Roger ate with us, enjoying a fair day with the beginnings of a golden sunset. A small group of men were dividing up a strange dark moss, or perhaps dried and chopped leaf of some sort, which they then pressed into tiny wooden gourds with long handles jutting from their bottoms, the ends of which they put in their mouths. Then did they draw on these handles and puff out smoke, which had a peculiar, rich smell. "Backy," Dick Burrows said to me. "We're out of it, and need more." I did not know what he meant, and

turned again to Roger Beckwith. I put down my 'bowl' as I now knew it to be, and stepped before him, and said, "I am on your ship. You have put me here. Why?"

Then did Roger put his bowl upon the rail and think, staring at me. "Pono," he said. "If you would labor to understand me, I shall tell you." The men turned, one saying "Aye," and others moved toward us. One of the gentlemen of leisure leaned up from the little table and looked in our direction, and then went back to the staring at the table.

"Labor?" I said.

"Try," he said.

"Sir, I shall try," I said. "I shall labor to understand you."

So he told me a story. There was much in the way of interpretation, translation, and mimicking in this process, provided by the men who, upon hearing that Roger would explain the '*I ke aha?*' to me, gathered around and prepared to listen with great interest.

In favor of making clear what motivated Roger Beckwith to become what he was, and what motivated him to take me to his ship, I translate this tale into a smoother narrative than the much mimicked and obliquely explained tale he told me that first time, for I was to hear this story again more than once, after having mastered the intricacies of your language.

Roger Beckwith sat and thought, and placed his hands upon his knees. The men watched, remaining silent. "My father and I were held at Newgate Prison and condemned to death as petty criminals," Beckwith said. "It was all because of a cane. I'll allow that my father may have committed other minor crimes that justified our condemnation, but the matter of our landlord's cane tipped the balance against us. Our trial, if the farce that it was could be called that, lasted but a few minutes: Mr. Bowley testifies that his cane was quite valuable, the handle made of pure gold. 'No,' my father said, 'it was not gold.' 'Show the court the cane in question and the matter shall be settled.'

"But Mr. Bowley says he no longer has the cane. 'You were in his house, sir, and ye be accused of being a footpad.'

"'He needs only to produce the cane,' said my father.

"'He no longer has the cane, testifies that it was again stolen, perhaps by you, the thief of same the first time. Ye be footpads.'

"At length I, at a mere fifteen years of age, did raise my hand and claim that I took the cane, at which the judge, irritated at the proceedings and perhaps hungry for his noontime meal, said, 'Then ye be footpads the both of you.' The jurors nodded, and I surmised that at my young age, they might take kindly to me. But they did not.

"'Then be ye the spawn of Beelzebub,' said the judge, to the affirmative grunts of the jury. We were sent to Newgate and placed in what was called 'The Lower Ward,' amidst filth, darkness, creeping insects, a place peopled by the

worst ruffians and scoundrels, drunks, malefactors of all kind. So dark was this dungeon that the lighting of a candle did hurt my eyes. The smells of tobacco, liquor, human waste, piss, and sickness assaulted our noses, and because we had no money, we had to beg from the ruffians any scrap of food they found unpalatable to their own detestable taste. I chewed on cold gristle that smelt of rot. I ate bread that had fallen into human waste. We drank water that came from a putrid stream that ran under the prison, and we both became ill in our insides, puking and shitting thin gruel, our stomachs twistin' with an awful pain.

"This, my brothers, is the England of our time, the England of great poetry, of elegant refinements of life, of enlightened philosophy and advanced science. This is our England, a great sea power, a place of lords and ladies, of great musers on the perplexing questions of life. But it is a place in which a poor man and his son can be condemned to death over a dispute involving a worthless cane, a lie concocted by a landlord irritated with the presence of that father and son. It is a place in which life itself, at least among the poor, is of no value to anyone but for the spectacle their deaths might provide.

"I'll allow that I fumbled and was unable in ways to perceive the reality we were faced with because as a boy I was a dreamer, but after a week in this detestable place my father and myself, and seven other men, were ordered to stand together near the heavy door of the ward, at which a man appeared, and raised a parchment before his face, tipping it into the faint light of the dungeon so that he could read:

"You prisoners that are within, who for wickedness and sin, after many mercies shown you, are now appointed to die tomorrow. Give ear and understanding that tomorrow morning the great bell of St. Sepulchre's shall toll for you, in form and manner of a passing bell, as used to be tolled for those that are at the point of death, to the end that all godly people hearing that bell, and knowing that it is for you going to your deaths, may be stirred up heartily to pray to God to bestow His grace and mercy upon you while you live.

"One might have imagined that some mercy would have been shown us during that day and night, our being notified of our deaths known to the ruffians in the ward, but indeed they jeered and laughed at us, some singing, 'Ye be turnin' off the cart tomorrow, me gentlemen, off the cart ye go under the Tyburn Tree, ye be messin' yer breeches 'fore the crowd, me gentlemen, yer limbs twitchin' and jerkin', me gentlemen, off the cart ye go!' My father became numb to it, sick as he was, and I, dreamer that I was, did not perceive my death as any more than the next thing I would do in my life. Would I go to God? Would I see my long dead mother there? Would I be issued, in this wonderful place, clothes that did not shame me?

"And so dawned the day, unseen by us the condemned because of the darkness of the ward. I was relieved of my filthy clothes and given a foul-smelling woolen smock, as law had it that those turned off the cart must wear wool to their

deaths. And behind us as my father did also don his smock a ruffian called out, 'Ye gentlemen goin' to the Tyburn Tree, ye be a surgeon's toy now,' for he was referring to the probability that our bodies had already been purchased by a surgeon and anatomist for use in teachin' the young learning the physician's trade, us toys to be a-sliced up for their practice. I believe this was all lost on my young dreamin' mind until those great doors did open, and oh my brothers, we walked out of that darkness into a day so blindin' in its beauty that I couldn't open my eyes for it. A length of rope passed under those blazin' slits of vision, and then did I feel the prickle of the noose around my neck, and I believe there understood, finally, that I was to die, and when I did open my eyes, oh my brothers did I behold one of those days in England that makes all look up, so beautiful and blue was the sky, with immense, gorgeous clouds a-lined up on the horizon, and blinded as I was for a while, I allowed myself to adjust, and then did see this day, and it was unlike any day in England I had ever seen. So beautiful was it that my father prayed, his hands clasped under his chin, the rope a-hangin' down his back and lyin' on the cobbles, and thus did we drag our ropes to the carts.

"We were pushed up into the cart, the third man in ours my father's age, with a gleeful grin upon his dirty, pockmarked face, and he says to me, 'Boy, there isn't a soul here to pray for us.' And I said, 'We are poor. No one prays for us,' to which this man smiled at me, showing gaps where teeth should have been, and said, 'Then boy, I hope what you did was worth this.' I wanted to say I did nothing but felt the cart jerk and then move, for we were on our journey to the Tyburn Tree. And oh what a gatherin' of the curious and the devout we drew, the old and the young, the children laughing and pointing and singing and runnin' alongside the three carts enjoying that beautiful day, a-followin' us along toward the Tree, for they were going to watch us die and celebrate. Boys mimicked the twisted faces of the dyin' and holding a fist to the side of the neck emitted awful chokin' sounds and pointed and laughed. And there, I think because of how pleasant the day was, I understood, and then did I begin to tremble and weep. And the way I was standin' there with that rope prickling my neck, the cart did bang my hip again and again, and I laughed, because I knew now that pain was an affliction of the living, and I was to die. And as if to let me know there was not the least chance that this could turn out in my favor, the great bell of St. Sepulchre's tolled, and then the carts stopped, and the bellman leaned over the churchyard wall and called out, 'All good people, pray heartily unto God, for these poor sinners, who are now going to their death, for whom the great bell doth toll. You that are condemned to die, repent with lamentable tears. Ask mercy of the Lord for the salvation of your own souls.'

"And so did the carts proceed toward the Tyburn Tree. In that last stretch of bumpy road, the cart banging my hip and me now silent, staring ahead and stunned into a fright, for a great gathering was afoot, hundreds of people all waitin' around the Tree, just beyond which was a gallery of seats already fillin'

up with gentlemen of wealth who paid for the privilege of watchin' us die. I tried to understand it, my brothers, to find one kind soul in that rabble, but a kind soul there was none. For me, a boy who could weep at the death of a small bird, this was a revelation. I had lived, without knowin' it, in a world without human kindness, and now was to leave it. A blankness and a tremblin' serenity overcame me, and I beheld ahead of us in the next cart a man bein' read to from a Bible by a holy man in a gray frock, and the man stared down, and dressed in a fine suit he was goin' to his death. And then did I look to the side over the heads of the runnin' children and the hobblin' of old women hastenin' to the Tree, and saw there a strange, hooded man on a horse, a-canterin' along and watchin' us carefully, and the man did frighten me, for I thought he must be the hangman, but he was not, for the hangman was in the first cart, which had stopped now just past St. Giles's Church and was offerin' to the condemned a last drink, the benefits of which was denied us in the last cart, much to the leering displeasure of the third man, who adjusted his noose as if it were a cravat that irritated him. 'Aye, so they ignore us,' said he, 'the blighters. Are we not to imbibe a last time, or are we just not worth the trouble?' Apparently we were not, for the carts rumbled ahead to the Oxford Road, and again I watched that strange man, dressed dark and hooded he was, and wearing what appeared to me an awful, black military uniform of some sort, and he had stopped studyin' the others and had apparently locked his eyes in on me. Perhaps, thought I, he is the anatomist looking after his surgeon's toy, and the fright I felt was at the picture in my imagination of that hooded man cutting my innards out for study.

"And oh did the rabble become loud and joyful upon our approach to the Tree. It put me in a fog, it did, the women sellin' fruit and the men slakin' their thirst with liquor and the screamin' and yellin' and the children laughin' and pointin' at us who was to die, the whores plyin' their trade at the fringe, and ahead the hangman lightin' his pipe by the Tree, the magistrate's officials a-readin' papers and announcin' the names of the soon to be deceased, and then did the first cart move under the tree, for it was wide enough with its three legs and its triangle of beams atop and so were three ropes attached, one to each beam, and I closed my eyes to it and waited, the screamin' increasing until there was a brief hush, and I heard the quick clatter of wheels that was drowned out then by a collective gasp, for the spectacle apparently did captivate the huge audience with awe, so that the gasp did then recede into a sigh of pleasure that sounded to me like the practice of an untrained church chorus. And I opened my eyes to see the man swingin' closest to us with his bulgin' eyes and tongue stickin' out and his mouth stretched in a shocked leer, whereupon a woman, his wife probably, did run to him and hang on his legs so that I could see the rope crush in on the man's neck and vanish under his jaw and he was kickin' and jerkin' as she tugged down on him to hasten his death, and the air was fouled by the smell of excrement which had burst from his body and run down the inside of his pant leg onto his wife's

dress. Then did our cart move again, toward the Tree, and off to my right, just below me, a woman was yelling at a man for having stolen a biscuit, whilst other men yelled at her to hold her tongue. And a man was laughin' and gropin' his hand under a whore's skirt whilst she stood, eyes open and mouth agape with pleasure.

"I was then shocked to see how close we had come, now, to the Tree. A space had been cleared for the official announcements, that space ringed by those who had rights to the bodies, and near us stood a woman finely attired, and what appeared to be her son, who stared up at me flat-faced and contemplative, and I did not understand why he was staring at me until I saw his right leg, an awful growth of some sort on the outside of the knee, and I knew their reason for being there. The woman did then whisper to a rather imperious gentlemen flanked by younger men, all of whom stared at me as if assessing a purchase, and I understood then that I was looking at the anatomist, whose claim to my body was evident on his face, the woman and her son beside him mere irritations. The woman was displeased with him, and just below the gabble and the jostling and the sounds of people yelling out at the edge of the crowd and the activity of other men dragging off the bodies of the first 'anged, I saw her lean toward the imperious gentleman and then heard her say, 'You'll get him when we're done. I paid good coin.' I understood then, for I had heard of this: before he could claim me for his experiments and teaching, she would be allowed to hold my twitchin' leg on the boy's wound for a cure, that is, after I was cut down and the life choked out of me, for it was believed, and may be still believed, that the twitchin' limb of a dying felon held against an affliction of a like limb on a living person might effect a cure.

"Again did the cart lurch forward, for it was now our turn. My father was praying, as was the leering gentleman with us. They had escaped inside themselves, and I longed also to do that. I was trembling and breathless, my heart high in my chest, the prickle of the rope now burning my neck. And piss did run down my legs. Above me I saw, sitting in the gallery, an array of fine gentlemen, wonderfully attired and enjoying the beautiful day, packing their pipes and slaking their thirst, and laughing amongst themselves.

"The woman and her son followed the cart these last few paces, as did the anatomist and his students. On their faces was the expression of a proprietary smugness, as if the good coin they had paid rated deference toward them. Under the Tree the cart moved, the hangman up on one of the beams a-waitin' to tie us off. Then came a hubbub of some kind down on the ground, for the strange man on the horse had advanced through the crowd, and upon seeing him I began to shake with such a fright that I lost my breath. 'What business have ye here?' yelled the hangman, whilst others in the crowd did protest and jeer at the horseman, as if he had wandered out upon a stage while a play was on, and the horseman drew from his cloak a folded up piece of parchment, which he then cast to the ground, saying, 'This!'

"In the confusion of people moving to pick up the paper, the sheriff's men did then advance, shouldering their way through the rabble, but before they could make their way to us, the horseman knocked the anatomist aside and swept by the back of our cart, and I felt a powerful jerk of the rope on my neck, and fell off. I would have fallen to the cobbles but a powerful arm did catch me and slide me upon the great sweating haunches of the horse, and with the rope in one of his hands, he both kicked the horse and jerked the rope so that my head slammed against his back, at which the horse rose in a powerful surge, and amidst the yells and hoots of the onlookers, it galloped out of the crowd, my face banging against the man's back.

"We rode at a brisk pace for some time, myself aware of the strange, hooded man looking backwards, for we were being pursued by the sheriff's men. But the horse, its powerful flanks surging under us, carried us away. At length the man slowed the horse down. I was aware that in my fright and sickness I had a fit in my bowel, dirtying the horse as we rode. 'Sir,' said I, 'I have befouled your horse.' And he said to me, 'Boy, my horse befouled by a corpse would irritate me, but you are alive to befoul my horse, are you not?'

"We arrived in a wood. The horseman stood for some time, my rope in one hand, and studied the surrounding countryside. Satisfied that no one followed us, he looked at me and removed his hood. I beheld there a countenance that bespoke a peculiar contemplation, as if he were wonderin' why he'd done what he'd just done. 'Let me remove this,' said he, 'on one condition, that you do not run.' I said I would not, and thus did he remove the prickly rope and cast it to the dead leaves of the woods' floor. 'Why have you done this?' I asked. And he said, 'Because it was my desire to do so,' and then did he laugh. 'And what will you do with me?' I asked. 'You are going away on a ship, to see the world,' said he. 'Aye,' he went on, 'you shall live to see the world, as I have, for once a long time ago a man did the same for me, did cheat the rope on my behalf.' I thought him daft, but was aware enough to be grateful. 'Yes,' he said, 'the captain of my ship, Edward Morley collects the condemned, and then do those condemned become students of the world.'

"Daft though I thought he was, he packed me once again upon his great horse and we rode for some time, so long that I felt myself bruised from bouncin' on the horse's hot, rippling haunches, but at length it slowed down to a rhythmic walk, and then its hooves did clop on cobbles, and indeed ahead of me I beheld, my hands locked around the horseman's trunk, the top rigging of a ship. The horseman turned to me as I gazed at it, my heart pounding and my mouth unable to form a word, for the blazing sunlight and the huge, voluptuous clouds behind that shimmering riot of ropes made the ship appear to me as a bright, rippling dream. I did then understand what had happened, and drawing my eyes down to the dark fabric of the horseman's tunic, I could no longer control myself, and wept."

So affected were the men by Roger Beckwith's story that they mused in si-

lence, or went to the rail to gaze at the sunset over the water. Some talked softly amongst themselves, nodding and seemingly affirming that story's content to one another. I believe that my memory is perhaps fogged as to how much I understood of this story, but I did understand the connection between myself and Beckwith, who, upon finishing his tale, went also into a contemplative musing, shielding his eyes from the sunset.

"These men," said I. "Have these men all cheated the rope?"

"Aye," said he. "It is my life's work. We are here to study the world's design."

Chris McKinney

SNOOZE BUTTON

> "The writer who cares more about words than about story—characters, action, setting, atmosphere—is unlikely to create a vivid and continuous dream; he gets in his own way too much; in his poetic drunkenness, he can't tell the cart—and its cargo—from the horse."
>
> —John Gardner

Writing is unique—it's the only activity I can think of where you constantly get better as time goes on. There are no real physical constraints as you get older, unless you eventually suffer from things like arthritis, blindness, or senility (not that these things have stopped some of the best writers), and you learn more about the world and writing as you age. For example, I've written three books, and if memory serves, all three have either some clumsy, in-front-of-the-mirror, physical self-evaluation scene, or a shower scene involving wet moments of self-contemplation, or a woken-by-the-digital-alarm-clock scene, or an overkill descriptive eye-color scene, scenes I regret writing, scenes I now know are cliché and should be avoided. I did not know this until I read more on fiction and read more and more student stories that portray the exact same things. The mirror, the shower, the alarm clock, and description of human eyes—things to be dodged when writing, without a doubt.

So all seems hunky-dory in the world—as you age, you get better at writing. Or at least, you get better at knowing what not to write. However, the catch is, you may get better at writing, but you can get worse at storytelling. It seems a simple thing, telling a story: eye-catching opening scene, rising action filled with crisis, climax, and denouement, but to do this in a fresh and original way—not so easy. If I give someone a pork butt, Hawaiian salt, banana leaves, and liquid smoke,

and tell them to cook me *kālua* pig, the experienced cook will give me something decent while the inexperienced won't, and chances are no one will cook it and get the reaction of "Wow, that's the most *ono kālua* pig I've ever had." If you're a storyteller, people expect you to do more, even though you're working with the same ingredients as everyone else. So you try to cook the thing in all sorts of weird ways, maybe even going so far as chopping up banana leaves and serving them marinated in liquid smoke. You can get yourself into real trouble trying to be original and forgetting what your job was in the first place—to just cook a goddamn tasty pig.

I've read books that suck the very joy out of story with pork butt pâte or salt-crusted banana leaf balls, and in many cases the writing was brilliant, but I could never help but think, yea, I get it, you're brilliant, now move on with what happens next. I think I get what good writing is, and I get it more and more as I age, but as I get older, something has not changed—I just want to hear a good story. This is not to say writing quality is inconsequential. I doubt most writers re-read their old books, as I do not unless I begrudgingly agree to do a reading, but as I recall some of the sentences in *The Tattoo*, I suspect that irritating writing in the form of an overabundance of adverbs, melodramatic description, and general wordiness can be found there. I'm sure the writing errors turned many readers off. At the same time, the story was a good one, so I figure I came out ahead with that book.

People occasionally ask me if I'm currently working on a novel, and I guess what I'm getting at, in a sort of long-winded way, is that although I have a decent amount of confidence in my current writing skill, somewhere along the way, I lost my confidence when it comes to storytelling. What paralyzes me is not so much that I can't start with a family of three living in Mililani Mauka and spin it into 200-300 pages; it's more of why would I want to tell that story in the first place?

Middle-class angst—it's been covered. Romantic entanglements involving three people—done every which way. Corrupt cop with a heart of almost-gold? I swear I've seen movies on this very thing. Lord knows I've pretty much exhausted all I know and care to know about prison and strip bars in Hawai'i. If I can't tell a story above the run-of-the-mill, why tell it? I could justify such an exercise with the idea of self-improvement, do so and I will get better at writing, but self-improvement has always struck me as self-indulgent. There is too much interest in the self there, and I have ceased to find myself all that interesting years ago.

Not being all that interested in myself has helped me as a fiction writer, but what is hurting me now is that I find other people (people being the driving force behind any good story) uninteresting as well. In fact, I sometimes ask myself if I ever found people that interesting to begin with—all three of my books are tied

by the idea, or the question of, what has to happen to push people into ludicrous acts, normally acts of violence so extreme that the act itself begs you to become interested in the person. In other words, maybe characters of mine have to go nuts first in order for me to find them interesting at all. Or maybe I instinctively follow the advice of Raymond Chandler, who said, "When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand."

Luckily, I still find the world interesting, Hawai'i specifically as well. It's interesting that pidgin is dying, that my noobie freshman students write better than they did, say, five years ago, that these kids are reading a lot whether they know it or not—only the text is on a computer screen hooked up to the Internet. I find it interesting that there is a stunning homeless problem on the Leeward coast, that Kamehameha Schools was a step away from having its admission policy reviewed by the now conservative-controlled Supreme Court, that the inevitable sprawl of America is covering this state with a fog that can no longer be denied. These are interesting times in Hawai'i, and maybe just plopping a character in the middle of these things is a good start when it comes to starting another novel—but that alone isn't quite a story, is it?

I'm not sure, and ironically, this little essay is approaching lines of self-indulgence, but bottom line—no, I'm not actively writing at the moment because of a few big factors: 1) I'm lazy. 2) I don't think I really have a good story to tell right now. 3) I'm content—I am content being what I am—a middle-class guy with a wife, kid, and house in Mililani, steady work and an unhealthy interest in computer games. Not being interested in myself and self-loathing are two different things. I like myself. I like the nice neighbor across the street, though I find neither of us all that fascinating. Unfortunately for my writing, nothing pushes me harder than being in a state of discontent. Make me unhappy, and I will give you a book, no problem. Yes, I am the type of person who, when he stubs his toe, punches the object as if to punish it for his own clumsiness. For better or worse, grasping my toe and writhing in silent pain is not my style.

I am hardly the example of great success in novel writing. None of my books flew off the shelves, teaching has always made me more money than writing did, and doing a brief interview on Seattle radio or speaking at Portland's Wordstock Book Festival was probably my crowning achievement as far as non-print media coverage is concerned. But people still come up to me and say, "I don't like reading, but I read *The Tattoo* and loved it." My second book, *The Queen of Tears*, the more mainstream one, was picked up and published by a New York publishing company, and they will publish *The Tattoo* as well, and *Bolohead Row* is still the best title for a locally published novel, ever. I'm fine with these small distinctions. I'm thirty-four now, old for a professional athlete, but still youngish for a writer. And despite the fact that I am not working on a novel right now, I am comforted by the words of Stephen Leigh, who wrote more than twenty books:

"You may be able to take a break from writing, but you won't be able to take a break from being a writer."

I'm just on vacation. Soon I will wake up to a blaring alarm clock, take a shower and spontaneously come up with a story idea, look at myself in the mirror, closely inspecting my dark brown eyes, then decide my atrophied muscles could use a workout—dig an *imu* maybe, cook *kālua* pig, stub my toe on the rocks, invite my boring but likeable neighbor over for dinner, and a few years from now realize that ending a piece of writing in a forced, circular fashion is bad writing. Waking up, showering, and looking in the mirror—the reason you should not write about these things is because these are activities we do to get ready—story is not about getting ready, story is what happens after we leave the house.

Michael McPherson

EXCERPT FROM MANUELA BOY

Still Jon-jon dreams. Shunned from the group down the mountain in Hilo for unrepentant recourse to pharmaceuticals, and as ever afflicted by lasting vertical images of his garish urban sea life fake art, all those gifts of his youth purloined for travelers the globe over to cover their mouths, pinch their tiny umbrellas and snicker while they chatter gibberish not unlike the babble of indistinguishable voices behind that mud brown gate laden with vines in his dream a few years back. The morning brightness sparkled outside beyond the talking wall where Jon-jon lay sprawled deep in his subconscious. He began to feel light. He was lifting, as if to leave his body there behind and below him. It continued. He was not afraid. He felt bliss, an utter absence of care. Higher and higher he rose till flickers of white light began to emerge and he summoned his will to find words in his mind saying, "take me, I'm ready …." but then a voice in English clear from above and behind the gate chided him:

"YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING."

And thus he woke. A child grown awkward into middle age, he has stamped early expiration on his physical being with heroin and its lesser inorganic counterparts. He wants to be dead. He does. Because he's a rat, and he knows what comes from that. He gave up his friend instead of his time. His little drug collar was nothing but they wanted Ridley who shot that cop coming out of the Queen's Surf robbery three decades before. Kui was singing, the room went black, Ridley was in and out fast with $41,000 cash from the safe, all planned but the inside man, the Polynesian bouncer lost his nerve and called CIU before the lights came up again and outside on The Beach it happened. It wasn't supposed to but it did, and the detective was dead right there on the sand.

Billy's brother was the sergeant. He was across town in Kalihi on another

call. It so easily could have been big brother Alphonse oozing blood into The Beach that moonless night in 1962.

"Bruddah, I not goin rat on you, but if you shoot my brother, den what I goin do?"

"You're right. That would be the end of our friendship."

Billy then fled to the mainland, trapped between loyalties in a life he couldn't fathom Billy bought a ticket and jammed on a plane to L.A. and who was getting on that flight beside him but Jon-jon, naturally. They were surfers. They knew each other from Ala Moana in high school. Back then they could sit anywhere on a four engine jet to Califrisco, a nine hour ride. Billy was a rugged buggah, famous for fighting anybody anytime, but he never wailed on Jon-jon haole looking or not because the bleached out kid could surf. That was his privilege not to be beaten.

So life was then, the times of surfing for Jon-jon and little else, more or less oblivious to dark shadows of Hawaii's criminal underworld itself partially spawned on The Beach, faded black and white photo of Frank Sinatra, Ava Gardner and somebody with a hat later identified as Sam Giancana in an outrigger canoe with a wide grinning Hawaiian beachboy their steersman high in the stern. Billy kept his secret, hiding out in and around L.A. for nearly a decade, sanding surfboards for the Patterson brothers at Hobie, working the door at The Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach where the jazz legends gigged, riding frozen and sloppy beach breaks a galaxy removed from The Beach where from childhood he had lugged on his back rental boards for the beachboys so they'd loan him one to ride in the dwindling hours before the green flash. But Billy was no rat.

Jon-jon, however, Jon-jon the dreamer who has difficulty making out a future and given one chance would paint over the past in the thickest bright oils he could mix and not spare a lick whether Volcano Man sneered again or not, is soft in the belly. He's not made for the cage. Nor is he gay like the late Prince Samuel Crowningburg Amalu for whom prison was like Brer Rabbit's briar patch. Jon-jon's ghastly tall whales measured against Barrett Kondo's *ohia* trees lost in vaguely concocted not even recollections of fog he never walked between except on a Fulbright in altogether another life span no longer have a shred of relevance. This is what boy should not know but does.

Ridley now an old man, plagued with Hep C from needles and whores in Asia during the war, who also quietly protected Jon-jon during his art school years when the young fool supplied cocaine to the *yakuza* in his penthouse at Hawaiian Village and whose white 450SL was bombed in the garage so he bought another identical for cash, the man with the astonishing tattoo whose business was women, pale women from Nevada into Japan and Asian exotics back into the sole U.S. venue where flesh traffic is legal. Jackson Wataru Inada was the name he traveled upon, he wore white linen suits and underneath where a short sleeved shirt just would cover was a tattoo ornate beyond description, but on his

back a *bushi* held his *katana* ready and as the song lyrics said, "his hair was perfect." In that penthouse the transient softlings languished but Jon-jon couldn't be bothered, went instead straight into the bathroom with his split and his syringes. When Jackson and his lady friend were found cold with one each in the head there was a tiny notice in the newspaper but not even a hint of investigation. The short swords from home had come and done Hawaii a public service.

The millennium is upon Jon-jon, and Ridley, and Billy. Back in Hilo in a garage with plastic chairs around a wood table covered with pupus, and twelve packs in coolers beneath in easy reach where friends gather as locals have done as long as our generation remembers, laughing and talking story, punch lines accumulating to spill over again as joyous collaboration continues, suddenly Jon-jon knows. Alphonse, who wasn't there but whose partner was killed, quietly adds pieces to the puzzle. The doorman who buckled. The suspect (not Ridley, another Polynesian strapped that night who later succumbed to cancer. This is coming too close now. Hint of darkness in Billy's eye while his brother laughs and spins this tale. Only some old local people sitting to eat and drink and live yet again those magical island ways.

Alexei Melnick

CLEAR

My dad said get dat shit out da house. Me and da clear, out da house. Good for him ah, you saying, be strong wit your boy maybe Jesse get chance still. Now you gon try for sound educated, say one ting you read in da pepa, go, go head, I no care. I found out da secret truth you wasn't ever supposed to know. So, listen dis cuz you not gon ever read um again on one pepa—If god made one more pure thing than clear he kept it for his-self. You not gon know how you wrong either.

You get one little guy guarding your brain and when one thing you not supposed to know try for sneak in there, da little guy go grab um and toss um out like one bouncer. Fuck da little guy.

Bring um here your mouth. Hold dat glass, dat fire hose, dat devil's dick. Watch da clear melt, blow soft just for spark it, now go, go. You caught um good ah, dat clean draw, dat crisp rip, dat whack to the forehead and da little prickles everywhere. You just wen plug into da ten-million-watt clear generator so go head, get amped bra, get stupid you, beat-um-your-chess-gorilla. You no like eat or sleep now, Bu, so you wondering if you still made from flesh and blood cuz it no feel dat way.

But no you never would take whacks, you not gon know how you wrong, not in dis life. So go tell my dad one real educated thing for explain what happen to his little boy Jesse. Be sure you get one pie chart in there.

When I was ten, my dad took me to da harbor for work tugboat night shift with him. I was in my orange life jacket, watching how da water was chugging out da motor, thinking about all da hammerheads in da harbor. He let me steer um too, for little while. He held me up by my armpits for pull da foghorn everything, was like sandpepa my dad's hands. Da boat had one name too: Atlis. My dad said just like how Hawaiians get gods, Atlis was one god too. He was da god dat carry

da whole world on his back.

"Hard work boy, dat's da meaning of life. If neva was for us tonight, and dis boat, nobody would have any kind food for grind tomorrow."

At first I was just tinking how I was gon tell Kua them: "Ho, my dad is superman cuz, me too!" But then I seen da next boat my dad was pulling in. There was choke people up on top da boat, dis huge white boat. There was all kine music, all kine drinks, guys laughing, looking down at my dad, tugging them along. All my family is tugboat drivas. Not cuz they was stupid or lazy, just cuz they never could find they way onto dat other ship, and even if they did, they wouldn't fit in at one shatty party like dat. Me? I stay in da harbor water Brudda, with da sharks.

I went to live with my other family: Derrick, Mikey, Dingo, Killas. Before Derrick died we used to barbeque it every night, no more dis bullshit captain crunch all da time. I was sixteen maybe, getting blind, da house about to fall down kine parties.

All kind girls we never knew was showing up like: "Who's those guys?" And guys was like: "Dat's Derrick Wells and Jesse Gomes." Then it was like: "Oh, *dat's* Derrick Wells." All shnob girls dat never drank was getting high and loving it, fists in the air: "Wooooo!" Like: fuck tomorrow. Like: take bowls, take lines, bang rails, get bumped, take whacks, cut up da Vicadins and rail it like you never knew what dat was … fear. If you could sniff it, stick it, or smoke it, you could get in at our house until you drop dead on it and tell God you like go back, cuz heaven never felt so good.

Derrick was like one celebrity host at our house, cracking jokes, da tat he just went poke in his neck was one sick smiley face with da words: Laugh Now Cry Later. He wore dis red shirt sleeve like one bandana. Derrick was da kine guy where da girls take da flower out da left ear, put um in da right ear when he come around. Derrick was one handsome buggu.

I ran up behind Mikey and dis girl he was walking with and tell him all soft: "Don't use my room dis time, Mike." Mikey was all-whatever.

Da cops showed up for protect da quiet, but they couldn't find one parking space outside, so they just say on da loudspeaker: "If you guys want to get arrested, keep making noise." And we had some haoles there and every-kinda-people there. But whatever-kine noise you could make, everybody made it all one time, just for show the cops who rule da night. Then, like it was one miracle, bra, they drove away. 'Sucken kids,' I knew they was thinking.

Around four o'clock, everybody was dropping dead in our living room, sleeping on da floor in one big pile of bodies and I was one of them. About five, around there, Derrick was kicking me.

"Wake up you slut," he said, "let's go." He dropped dis one pair boots down by my head and threw one trash bag on top dat. I couldn't open my eyes and my mouth tasted like fire.

"Fack um," I said. I put da sleeping bag over my head. He started again, with

da kicking. I was all "alright fuck," and he handed me one beer.

"Nothing wake you up like one red-and-white firecracker Budweiser," said Derrick.

"What is dis Derrick?" I said. "What is all dis boots for."

"Jesse, Jesse, Jesse. Close um your twack. In half hour when you climbing around in cow shit you gon be like: 'tanks ah Derrick, you da man ah Derrick.' Now go throw up, I no like stop on the way." I wen throw up for little while until I fell asleep again in there and suckin Robby came in and went kick me again … in my stomach.

We was walking out the house when I seen Mikey, on da porch. He was sitting by his-self in da dark, like how he did all da time. Hardcore tweakers no really sleep, they like vampires, just silde up somewhere stone cold and tweak.

"Where you guys was going?" he said.

"I gon take da rookie out for pick," said Derrick. "You don't wanna be there bra, it's gon be messy. Why, you wanted for shoot with us, Mike?"

"Noh," said Mikey.

We was drinking through da hangover in da car on da way to Kualoa Ranch. Derrick was telling me how guys on da Mainland would pay choke for Hawaiian shrooms, cuz shrooms up there was all hydro-grown.

When it just rains little bit, but there's not dat much clouds so da sun can hit da cowshit first thing, that's da prime time for pick. But you gotta get there before all da hippy fuckas come over shnag um all.

Dat's one other thing. When you pick shrooms, it's not like you can just "pick" da fuckas. What dat really mean dat: 'picking,' is ripping up big bricks of cowshit with your hands trying for not hurt da shroom. Soon enough da guard dogs started for chase us into da trees, all barking. Derrick was yelling at da dogs: "Dog! … shhh!" hanging there in da tree like one monkey, yelling at me for not drop da stash.

When we got back to da house it was almost seven already. We came in with da two bags bra, we were all brown, all kind thorns in our shirts. Sloshing around, da boots was all water-logged.

Dingo was trying for evict all da nonresidents: "All right, everybody. Get da fuck out time, go find one shelter or something." Then he seen us taking da shrooms to da bathtub for wash them. "You guys smell like shit."

"Not," said Derrick, all sarcastic. He was still salty cuz I went drop my bag when we jumped over da fence. I never said nothing. I just took off my shirt and went to my room. But after I seen my bed bra, I yelled out: "Mikey, what da fuck Mikey? Other room, I said, other room!"

I never had time argue, I could feel my ears starting to pop just from not sleeping. I went out to da couch where dis one haole girl was taking up all the real estate.

"Time for dis bitch re-locate," I said. Then I went drag her ass all da way

down to da other side. I did one belly flop onto da couch and dat was it, lights out, I fell asleep on my arms. I could still feel da girl's red hair on my feet but I never care.

After little while I heard all kinda commotions around me. I heard Dingo yelling out: "Mikey!" I heard Mikey's heavy feet on da wood floor and Derrick turning off the faucet in da tub, telling everybody keep it down. I never open my eyes but. I heard couple words here or there: "load," "overdose," "snot bubbles," and I could hear Dingo whining about something and everybody telling him for shut his ass. And then da blackness took over again.

"Jesse, wake up," said Killas, all shaking me around. I sat up and then I seen her face, da haole girl.

"She's still alive Jesse," said Dingo, "tell them bra, tell them she's still alive. See look … you seen dat Jess, she was moving!"

"Mikey know what he talking about Dingo," said Killas. Da girl's eyes wasn't moving and her makeup was all smeared, her eyeliners like dat. She had dis milky looking snots all over her face too. But yah, I seen her arm move. It was more like one jolt but, one spasm.

I never gave a fuck if da girl was dead. I'm sorry for tell you dat. I never knew her, none of us did. I lay back down again trying for get back to sleep. But I could hear Mikey's voice with all da deep bass: "Dingo, sometime da body never like die for a while, even when everything else dead. Dis girl went die hours ago already. Only one thing for do."

Dingo wouldn't hear it but. Da 'only one thing for do,' was drop her ass off in da dumpster behind Aikahi Park Theaters. No more cameras over there. I was half sleep still but I heard Mikey asking Derrick if he went tag da girl dat night. Derrick said no. But Mikey took off all her clothes anyway, for burn them, just in case she had any kind fibers or whatever from da house. He cleaned out her fingernails, and even … well … Mikey made sure da girl was clean before he rolled her up in da carpet. I just tell you I guess, he wen fill her up with da kine Ajax. Derrick woke me again.

"She's alive," said Dingo, still yet.

The wind was keeping me awake, riding in da back of da El Camino, sitting on da girl for keep her ass from rolling around in da carpet. She was squirmy as fuck for one dead girl, and like halfway there she went shat all over da carpet. All day already I was smelling shit.

Mikey was picking his teeth, riding in back too, for make sure everything like dat, keeping one eye on her and us too. Mikey had da fat I-no-give-a-fuck-long-time-already kine tweaker face. He had real green eyes too, like voodoo charms. One hard look from him guys was just planted. Dat guy was one for life tweaker, he seen it all before already. Dat's why he took charge with dis, not Derrick.

When we was by da theaters, Mikey got out for check everything real fast and open da lid. It was strange but da girl got da most nuts when we backed up

behind da theater and Mikey was about to take her to da dumpster.

Ho, we was all relieved driving home. It was over with. Killas was gon make hamburger steaks when we got back with all da leftovers. I could feel da bed already. We was gon watch da game later, go beach in da afternoon. Nobody was gon talk about no dead haole girl.

And then her phone rang. Her ring sound was da song "Play Dat Funky Music, White Boy." For some reason I still cannot understand, I went inside her purse and answered da phone.

"No, Jesse!" said Mikey. But it was too late already. I was holding the phone up but I never said anything. Derrick stopped da car and everybody was just staring at me bra, mouth open.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello?" said da shaky voice from one older haole lady. "This is Charlene's mom. Can I talk to her, please?"

"Oh," I said, "I d … I dunno."

"Can you tell her to call home?" Da mom sounded all sick.

"Charlene. I dunno …" I said. Mikey took da phone and put da receiver to his chest.

"Who dis?" said Mikey.

"Da mom," I said. Mikey started to make da sound with his lips he always make when he thinking. Mikey had one voice dat he only saved for girls. It had some special power too. It was all slow and soft, but you could feel all da horsepower in um. It made girls feel safe.

"Dis Charlene's mom?" said Mikey. "Dis her new boyfriend. Me and your daughter, we going up to da Mainland for start one new life up there. You can come up visit us when we ready, but you no can talk to her now." I could hear da mom going off at Mikey.

"I sorry but, I still cannot let you talk to her. You gon tell her come home and I cannot have dat. I gon take good care her, no worry k." Mikey hung up and slapped me in my head.

Derrick wen smash da girl's phone, took out da sim card and threw all her shit down da gutter by da side of da road.

"We gotta go back get da body now," said Mikey. "One haole girl like dat, da leus would all come out serving old warrants, raiding houses until they found us. Plus, before dat even, somebody dat knew her dat was there last night gon talk to somebody."

"No," said Dingo, "fuck dat, we never did nothing."

"Doesn't matter," said Derrick, rubbing his eyes. Even dat guy was getting tired now and Derrick was thug for life.

Da dumpster was making noises. Loud noises. We was waiting there for little while just watching out, making sure nobody was around. I fell asleep on Killas for little while.

“Get off me Jess, you smell like shit, cuz,” he told me.

Mikey threw open da lid from da dumpster and all these cats jumped out and took off.

Da girl was still twitching all the way up to da place where we buried her (I no can tell you where, sorry). But there was trees everywhere, pine cones, and nobody around. I tell you dis but, I never cared at all. I promise.

I was da guy had to dig da hole too, cuz I was da genius who wen pick up da phone. Da naked haole girl was blinding she was so white, staring up at da grey sky. Every time she wen jolt her arms, or when her fingers would lock up or something, Dingo would jump too. But she was more relax now, out there by da trees and da cool wind. Killas and Derrick was throwing da football around. Mikey was taking whacks in da car, the ice smoke keeping him warm. I started for see all these wavy lines.

Da girl had one little dolphin tattoo on her ankle. I never cared but, about da little dolphin. Even though I knew her Mom never was gon see her baby again and I was sleeping right by her when she died da night before. I was just thinking how hard all this digging was, I was all sweating through my shirt, and how dat girl was just lying there with dat stupid look on her face, not doing shit. I got all pissed off thinking dat, so I made pretend I was digging da hole for me.

Even when I was throwing da brown dirt all over da pale skin on her tits, I was thinking dat was me. I was da one with da warm dirt covering me up like one blanket, little by little. I was gon get to sleep, finally, with no noise anywhere.

Da football landed in da hole and just wen miss her calf. I was so red I wen pick up da ball and punt da fucka into da trees. Derrick came up to me smiling, all slapping me around just play-play kine, trying for get me to smile too.

“Last chance Jesse,” said Derrick, “last chance for finally get some. Got hit dat real fast nobody gon watch.”

Derrick died the next year from one ice heart attack. When I think about it now, Derrick’s dead body looked way more worse than da girl … Charlene. Sometimes guys ask how he wen die from one ice heart attack when I was right there and how come I never did nothing for save my best friend. Sometimes after one hard night drinking, swerving all over da road, I ask him too.

“Derrick,” I say now, “how come you wouldn’t take da Nyquil for tell your heart relax um? Why you had to be hard li’dat, you never let me take you hospital, let them save your life?”

“Jesse,” he says even though he not there really there, “why?”

Ursula Pflug

KAOLANI, FROM KAUA‘I

We spent another week together after we camped in Haleakalā, staying in the spare room of a tin-roofed, one-storey house on a back street in Lahaina; one of those gravel streets under bedraggled coco palms, poi dogs asleep under cars, a corrugated tin wall around the yard you'd throw your laundry on to dry, after you'd washed it by hand in the empty lion-clawed bathtub that sat in the centre of the yard. I asked you why you didn't just take it to the coin wash, and you said you hated laundromats; the reason being you used to go to the post office in Kaunakakai, years before when you lived on Moloka‘i in the Hālawa Valley, to get your mail and read it while the laundry spun but nobody in your family wrote to you anymore, none of your friends back home in Canada, where we were both from. And so now laundromats reminded you of not having mail, of your abandonment.

The house belonged to a new acquaintance; you met Michael at May's and an hour later anyone watching the two of you talk would've thought you were the oldest of friends. Michael was hardly ever home, and gave us the room happily and for free, or else you offered a little work in exchange. You had nothing either but you knew how to trade. Because of this he respected you. Just like May, or is that Mei—the Chinese woman in the restaurant who gave us free food because you'd repaired her door.

It was in the fancy Lahaina bars that people sneered at your dirty bare feet although lots of people in there had plenty worse. Maybe those waitresses wanted to sleep with you and you wouldn't, and if that was the case I couldn't really blame them.

You'd come in on a sailboat days before, up from Tahiti. Your friends were taking their boat from Lahaina to a dry dock in a hick town on the ‘Īao side to do

necessary repairs to the hull; unlike sailing from Midway, they could do it two-handed. Why didn't you and I hike through the crater, you'd meet your friends after, I could come along if I wanted, re-caulk the boat with the three of you; it was up to me.

Michael was half-Portuguese, half-Hawaiian. He had a fishing boat, but he didn't go out every day, and made the other half of his living by odd jobbing and barter. In his yard he had a pomelo tree and an avocado tree, and he didn't eat from either of them. We went to the park and collected fallen mangoes. Michael laughed. "Mangoes for the pigs, avocados for the dogs." He had a friend across the road who used to take them to feed his animals. One night he came home with fresh mahimahi; you sliced it up sashimi-style and mixed wasabi for it, and I made a big bowl of guacamole out of Michael's avos, first going to the store and buying tortilla chips and tomato and garlic. I'd meant to buy lemons too, but found fallen limes in front of a tree on the way. A Chinese woman came out of the house and I felt bad, but she said, "Take them all; they'll just rot," and was only a little bit condescending.

We drank Primo and smoked local *pakalōlō* which Michael had. We felt lucky: usually people smoked imported Mexican; the Hawaiian was so costly most of it went to the mainland or else you couldn't afford it; Mexican was cheaper. I hated Primo and went back to the store for Kirin, using up almost all of the rest of the money I'd made working on the poultry farm with Lulu, but it was a celebration, although I'm not sure what we were celebrating. I suppose because we could. So quickly afterwards, celebration was no longer possible. Almost certainly, you knew. After we'd smoked I sliced up the sweetest mangoes and even Michael liked them, and after that he ate pomelo and avocado every day.

"You have to eat the healthy food," you said to him, "not the junk food," and I wondered if you weren't being a bit patronizing.

When Michael was home with his girl we'd go out to May's restaurant. She had a backroom for people like us or, at least, people like me: May understood immediately that you were different. I wonder how she did that? Maybe it was just her age—she was over forty and could read people as I couldn't. All the young backpackers would chat and gossip in the back room; Lulu had discovered the place.

It was all a game to me, an As If. I wasn't really living my life. But it's as though I left a part of myself in that time, waiting for the moment when I could become a part of a community, have a sense of belonging. And that time is now. But I'm afraid of failing again, just like I did then, at the difficult task of being human.

I'd tried, of course, thinking, "This is just like high school …." and ordered tea and enormous almond cookies like everybody else, and maybe, I think now, I was more successful than I thought, coming at the difficult problem of being human. In that room, before I left, I reached across the table and took the hand

of the dark-haired girl you'd slept with even though we were ostensibly together, and smiled.

I'm grateful; you were witness to the brittleness of my youth; how vulnerable I was, wearing my solitude and harmed quality on my sleeve in place of a heart. That you got to see that side of me I will never be able to forgive you. It is better to have the distance, to write to you. It is so easy to idolize the past, but perhaps all I say here is true.

I'm on holiday with our old friend Lulu, on my first island, Kaua'i, and not Maui, where you and I spent time together. Still, just being in Hawai'i reminds me of you so much I feel compelled to write. Hawai'i has changed, much of its wildness paved over by indistinguishable malls and hotels, even on the outer islands. The old Japanese men no longer sit in the beach parks, playing *hanafuda*. I wonder where they are now? Remember we sat with them once and asked them to teach us how to play? We got the basics that afternoon, under the tattered palms, sitting at the name- and fire-scored picnic table. But the nuances were endless. They finally got rid of us by threatening to play the next game for money, and we ran off, needing what few bills we had for takeout tempura and Kirin beer.

I unfold the page, look at your drawing I've kept all these years. The mouse is still so lifelike, but it doesn't move. I'll keep it forever; I'm already forgetting what you look like, except that your forehead was broad and tanned and high, and your big knotted hands much gentler than my father's.

Before she left for her solitary hike through the Alaka'i Swamp, Lulu looked at me. "Did you call?"

I shook my head. "I have to write, try and sort it out one more time."

"Don't write too long," Lulu said. "You know what the verdict was, not so bad."

"That doesn't mean he was innocent; his lawyer might've just been good."

"Tomorrow is his release date. If you don't call today he might be gone. There's no harm in it. If he's not what you thought, you can change your mind."

I do not know how to tell this story. Hence I will try writing it as if it were a story, in third person, with made-up names. For write it I must. If I don't, I won't be able to decide.

* * *

His brown eyes met hers across the yard, across the fairy tale crowd at the free temple dinner. She had gone inside to help in the kitchen, but just as she looked towards the door she saw him coming out. He was deeply tanned and wore a white cotton shirt, loose and unironed. She noticed him immediately. They passed each other, but he only glanced at her. In the temple kitchen she arranged fruit on platters: lemons, apples, papaya, mango, pomelo, *liliko'i*. Apple bananas, each banana the size of a thumb so that a bunch of bananas, a hand as they are

called here, really does look like a hand, being almost exactly the same size. Guavas. Small as tennis balls, they fit in your hand, brown on the outside, green and slushy on the inside. Strawberry guavas which are smaller, perhaps the size of huge farm-grown strawberries, scarlet and smooth-skinned. She took the platters out and set them on the table and looked for him but he was gone. After the dishes were done she caught her ride back to Baldwin Park, where, as most nights, there was a fire and drumming as Scorpio appeared in the sky. She watched the fire and then him, standing directly across the flames, noticed how his forehead was so smooth and large and his hands were large too, but very gentle as he took an offered drum.

He came to her campsite that night, a secret campsite Lulu knew, under ironwood trees a quarter mile from the park.

"Hello," she said.

"Are you awake?"

"Yes."

She turned on her flashlight. He had come through the woods without one. She was glad. She didn't want anyone knowing where she was camped.

He showed her a drawing he had made, of a mouse.

"How did you know I was here?"

"I just sort of knew."

His mouse was very mousy. It had soft brown hair and jumped off the page and under the covers with them. They made love right away, in silent relief. Afterwards they went to the Chinese restaurant to eat, walking across the cane fields to get to town, because it was shorter than taking the road. She didn't even wonder how May's restaurant, which was usually in Lahaina, was now in Pāʻia. Or perhaps they'd walked the dirt tracks through moonlit cane fields for hours, and it only felt like minutes. Maybe it was because the mouse came too. The mouse was a very good supper companion, making them like each other and feel good without saying very many words. They ate in the shadow of the mountain.

Hitchhiking up the mountain the next day, they walked between rides, along an unpaved road, a gravel track really, covered in yellow crescent-shaped leaves; neither of them knew what the tree was called. She walked beside Jim; she didn't know him very well although they were new lovers; the leaves were like the fingernail clippings of a family of giants. She wanted to say something important to Jim, something that would make him remember her. She hadn't eaten any mushrooms herself. It began to rain. They were hungry and, passing through a village, went into a café to eat. The proprietor scowled at Jim, more than at herself, but served them coffee and fried egg sandwiches nonetheless.

She'd feel this peculiar chagrin in restaurants with Jim. It was the only time they were ever in public together. The Chinese one in either Lahaina or Pāʻia was the exception. Was he barefoot? Did he smell? She didn't much care, but it was tiresome and she didn't understand it. In May's restaurant the mouse had tea with

them; in other restaurants it stayed in his pocket. It's always a tea party when you have a mouse along, even if you're not wearing your mad hat. She and Jim talked about nothing, and she talked about nothing, both careful to obscure their pasts, to cloud their trail. But that wasn't it; it was as if they really didn't have pasts. On Maui, she often found herself telling people she was from Kaua'i, and realizing, in a shocked kind of way that it was true. She'd been on Kaua'i for eight months and then met Lulu; they'd come here together. She'd been in Hawai'i almost a year altogether. When you're so young that's a long time, and each experience in that year so vivid her father paled behind it, grew ghostlike. But not entirely.

She realized, years later with Lulu in Kōke'e, that she'd loved Jim, even though she hadn't known it at the time. She'd liked him a lot, the sex had been great, and she'd felt like they'd known each other, which almost never happened to Tanya. Somehow, though, she hadn't put this together as love.

* * *

"Every time I bend over I have this major realization," she said, pulling her head back out of the waterfall. On a stone lay their toothbrushes, the expensive health food store shampoo. Her one luxury.

"Like what?" Jim had made a campfire and she was drying her hair after swimming. They were going to eat breadfruit and coconut, both of which Tanya had found. Tanya could tell by looking at a coconut what stage it was inside, milky or hard, or the puddingy in-between stage called "spoon meat" that some people loved.

They'd done their hike through Haleakalā, and now, on the way back out, they'd left the trail and were camping on parkland, or maybe it was private land; they didn't know; it was such a vast tract that nobody could possibly find them. Waterfall after waterfall came splashing down the mountain like a stairway from heaven; mist and rainbows crowning the treetops of the rainforest like damp halos. They had been there for three days; the crater hike itself had been another three.

"What if he kills me?" she wondered aimlessly, and reached up onto the cliff ledge and took down the rubber cervix-covering item and put it in.

"Never say how long you were anywhere. It breaks the spell, the way an alteration of memory can redeem everything," Tanya said, and Jim smiled.

She took off her sandals she'd wet getting out of the pool. They were leather huaraches; she put them by the fire to dry. She had nothing on. She dried her hair, which was long and thin and brown, with the blue towel and then sat down at the fire and took over cleaning the seeds out of the dope, some kind of Maui Wowie given to her by one of her young Hawaiian buddies. She had impressed Jim with this, that she knew how to score local dope from locals, although he'd pulled off the same trick, meeting Michael within days of his arrival from Midway. He'd

explained he'd once lived on Moloka'i, most of his friends there had been Hawaiian.

They made love and lay in the sun and baked and swam in the pools beneath waterfalls and occasionally Tanya wondered when, as it must, it would end, and vaguely, whether he would kill her, although he had never given any indication. Perhaps she'd just seen too many horror movies as a child, horror movies on television and the other kind, the kind she hid in the laundry room to escape from. Now, here, it was only at this moment that they passed through her skin, her outer membrane, that they made her truly fearful. The terror she'd had to suppress at the time.

What if he kills me?

Yet even still she missed her father a little.

Jim gave her enough pleasure to match the pain, an equal and opposite force, until she was filled. Then the pleasure ousted the pain. You have to be filled with something. It's one or the other. Nature abhors a vacuum.

They collected avocados on a rainy day. Jim climbing high up into the tree and shaking the limbs, and Tanya standing underneath to catch them so that they fell, one after another, plump and somehow obscene, green and huge, fleshy and woman-shaped, into her hands.

The sky came down and settled on her shoulders and she cried. They went back through the forest to their camp.

Jim asked what was wrong. "Hey babe, you haven't missed your period, have you?"

She almost punched him. Anyway, it wasn't logical. They'd just met. And she never hid her birth control from him. She didn't point any of this out.

She looked at Jim's hands, so much larger than her own, large and strong and hairy and yet oddly gentle and she thought, they are like my father's hands.

She didn't tell him. It seemed like a terrible thing to tell him as if it was some awful secret, and he would be mortally offended, and he rolled another joint and then she couldn't talk anymore even though it sat in her throat like a fat white dove struggling to break free: your hands are like my father's.

And they were: she'd always dated young men before, barely out of high school. Jim was in his late twenties and had sailed from Tahiti with his friends, who, he always assured her, they would go meet soon. He had a sailor's hands, rough and knotted as, well, knotted ropes.

She cried.

It was obvious to think of the waterfalls, pooling in pools and then hurrying in streams to rattle down cliffs and eventually empty into the sea but she thought of it anyway.

"After we've finished patching the boat we have to go," he said.

"Where are you going?"

"B.C. The Queen Charlottes maybe. You'll love it. You'll learn how to sail

well enough to crew anywhere."

Maybe there didn't have to be an ending. But she liked the way he left it open-ended, too.

After you spend this time with me, you'll be able to go anywhere, for free.

"Your friends won't like me," she said, knowing perfectly well what she meant was: I won't like your friends.

At last her father's voice when it came was an exception, rarely interjecting. It was a place he couldn't easily come, a place she was inviolate. For she'd always belonged to him; he was always in her head, telling her just that. That was Jim's gift to her: to almost silence her father's voice so that she felt for the first time in her life free of him, and could be herself instead. Whatever herself was. A friend of Mouse.

Jim poked the fire with a stick. He took her face in his hands and kissed her, apologising for his lack of tact, her tears that had prompted him to ask the one question his own fear had demanded of him. He read his book, Mark Twain or Tom Robbins or someone, he rolled another joint; he tried to make love to her; finally he went for a walk up the valley by himself to get oranges, Valencias, he said, that legend had it some Mexican *paniolo* had planted at the turn of the century. Or was it Spanish?

She loved those stories everyone was always telling in Hawai'i, about history, even if only half of them were true.

She realized her father was always there with them, just as the Mouse was. And what her father said was this: he isn't good enough for you. And, astonishingly, this was just what her father had told her, when, in spite of everything, she'd begun dating, the year before both she and her mother had left, setting off in opposite directions. Two years ago precisely. Her mother was living in the 'peg. Tanya herself had drifted around Canada and then come here. Someone had told her the living was easy, but more importantly, it was geographically as far a distance from her father as it was possible to get.

She kept hearing him say it, over and over and over again, a hoarse yet insistent whisper, so that finally she got up and followed Jim up the pig trail to the orange tree. At last she motioned him down and climbed the tree herself, thinking this effort would silence her father's voice; and, throwing oranges like little suns down into Jim's waiting hands, big as baseball gloves, she wondered, what can my father possibly mean, what can be better than this? And then she wondered again whether Jim might kill her. They were camped in such a remote spot no one would ever know. Perhaps that was what her father meant.

Over roast breadfruit she forgot her irrational fear. Mouse helped feed the fire, and she lay on her back, staring at the stars peeping out between the gaps in the canopy. Nothing of this would be possible without Mouse along. Mouse washed the dishes, he sewed, repaired her jeans she tore tree climbing.

The next morning after her swim, she sat at the edge of the stream, watching

her reflection in the clear water, her image streaming away. Carried by the currents and eddies like the many tiny yellow leaves. She sat with no clothes on, just the piece of blue cloth wrapped around her hips, while her shirt she tore climbing a food tree was being mended. While she was being mended.

"My mother wants me to go Winnipeg and live with her, you know. Finish high school and so on."

"How old are you?"

"Seventeen."

"Jailbait."

"I'm Canadian."

"Me too."

"So you should know age of consent is fourteen there."

"Do you want to?" Jim asked.

"Want what?"

"To live with your mom."

"No. But I feel sorry for her all the same."

Jim didn't pry, said only, "Don't let your compassion get in the way of your wisdom."

She didn't ask how old he was. Twenty-five? Thirty-one? It could've been either.

She looked down at her body. It was very brown, graceful, very young. She looked at it in a kind of fascination, as though she couldn't believe something so beautiful could be hers. She wore their only towel, the blue one, as a sarong. She remembered how she found it in the bushes at Seven Pools, gave it to Lulu to take back to the laundromat in Pāʻia when they got back. She and Jim made love on it that night they met, spreading it on the ground over the prickly layer of ironwood needles, soft as a bed, everything fine except for the palmetto bugs, huge tropical cockroaches scurrying over and sometimes into her sleeping bags; hence the big towel only. She hated the cockroaches, although in the forest they seemed almost benign, living in a relationship less parasitical to humans, no longer an indicator of their own failures: to be clean, to keep their lives in order, to hope for the future. In Hawaiʻi they were just beetles.

On the hike back down towards Hāna she quailed from the sudden heat. They were unsure of the streams because of packhorses using the main trail sometimes. Jim gathered *lilikoʻi*, a type of passion fruit. They were perfectly spherical, their bright yellow skins the consistency of plastic. She'd always found them disgusting; their insides, while sweet, were also almost impossibly acidic and resembled in appearance and texture, tapioca. That day she ate seven.

* * *

Later, hitchhiking up the ranch side of the mountain again, after the scene

at the courthouse, the landscape itself seemed buttoned by the same buttons that closed her soul, made it seem foreign even to herself. Except for the blooming jacarandas. How could anything be that purple?

"When will he kill me?" she remembered thinking. After he was gone it seemed funny. Yet those thoughts had occupied a space in her, space that had left no room for him after a time. Now, having thought them so often, they fluttered away, little bats. Too bad it was too late. As before, Tanya was alone. Her natural state. Except they hadn't left yet. She could still go find him, agree to sail to Vancouver, whether his friends proved irksome or not. She ought to turn back. It was ridiculous to hike through the crater again so soon, and alone, although that wasn't the part that scared Tanya. What if he sailed away before she got back? She crossed the highway, faced the opposite direction.

She stuck out her thumb as the first car appeared. In her mind's eye Jim was wearing the red paisley shirt she didn't have the money to buy him, the one in the window of the store in Lahaina, so expensive it was frequented by visiting rock stars. He wouldn't have killed her, she thought. It would be as impossible for him to hurt her as it would be for Mouse to do so.

After their camping trip, Jim went to visit his sailor friends at the dry dock up island. Again, he invited her to come meet them, but Lulu was at Baldwin Park, and so Tanya hung around there for a few days. Already Lulu felt like an old dear friend. A sober young American woman, twenty-one years old, her buddy. The one she would turn to if she was in trouble. The one she talked to about what was really going on. Sometimes the irony of it struck her; for a best friend she had a woman she'd known three months to talk about a lover she'd had ten days. It heightened her sense of strength, and also fragility. There was no one in her present life who knew her from the previous years, years in which she had been known always by the same others: her parents, her siblings. Her old friends too: if they hadn't known her for years, they'd known someone who'd known her for years.

"We are a composite picture which is passed on to and entered into by any new person we meet, who may change the image but only in infinitesimal ways," she'd told Jim under the waterfall. He'd smiled.

Anyways, here all of that broke off with a snap.

And she didn't know herself anymore, who she was. She could say anything, and no one would think it out of character. She was Kaolani, from Kaua'i.

"Don't think you know me," Jim had said, an edge to his voice, after he'd finished smiling. The only time there had ever been even the slightest edge.

I wonder when he'll kill me, Tanya had thought in reply.

Try and kill me was better. It wasn't as if she didn't intend to fight back.

* * *

There was no one like Lulu for doing her laundry. It was Tanya who didn't mind still wearing her grubby camping clothes even after her return. At last Lulu lent her a clean dress and took Tanya's as well as her own; they caught a ride from the park into Pā'ia. Tanya left her friend in the laundromat. Instead of helping she looked for May's restaurant, hoping to find Jim. She didn't find it; maybe it was in Lahaina that day. She went and sat on the courthouse steps and cried. Jim walked by then and looked at her as though she was someone he didn't know very well, and finally, as if only after some hesitation, came and sat down beside her on the stone steps. He put his hand over hers, tentatively, almost shyly, as if their hands didn't know each other so well. "I wish I could help you," he said. "What is wrong?"

She could only shake her head mutely: no no no, no no no. I cannot speak it; it cannot be spoken.

My father my father my father.

And even if she had spoken what would she have said?

It is he who has cut out my tongue.

"I'm hungry," Jim said. "Let's go eat, and then we can talk."

"I'm hungry too." But she'd started to cry again, and pushed Jim away, physically too, until at last he'd gotten up and walked away.

She assumed he'd gone to his friends again and the next day hitchhiked up the mountain alone and changed her mind and turned back. Two days later in the rich kids' Lahaina bar with Lulu he'd appeared. "I have a house for us," he'd said, and even though the bouncer was trying to kick him out for some reason Tanya didn't understand, Lulu had smiled encouragingly and so Tanya had gone to their new house with him.

They couldn't make it together in town life, were both too conscious of being with someone weird, an outsider to the human flock. You need at least one who swims with the school, who has the right protective colouring, Tanya thought later. They were both from the UFO, problem was. It all fell apart after the party; they'd slept together in Michael's spare room; she'd thought they'd make love but they hadn't, and it had been her turn to ask what was wrong.

"I have something I have to tell you."

Her heart had begun hammering, for no reason at all.

She didn't ask, and he didn't tell her. At some point, they found itchy uncomfortable sleep. Just before she drifted off, Tanya thought, there's no stitching it back together.

The day after she was back on the courthouse steps, crying again. It had shown promise, she had to admit. Lulu had come to the party too, and slept on the couch. They'd all almost felt like a family. That night Tanya had even changed her name back to Tanya from Kaolani, because Michael's lady really was Hawaiian and it seemed dumb.

No matter how long she sat on the stairs crying no one passed by: not Lulu,

not Jim, not even Michael or Plumeria, which wasn't Michael's girl's real name either, but it suited her long black hair.

She hitchhiked back to Baldwin Park alone, before dark. She didn't mind hitchhiking alone, but not at night.

At her old campsite under the ironwood trees she found a little note, again with the same drawing of a mouse. "I'm sorry you're sad, little sister. I wish I could help you but I don't know how."

Had he seen her crying on the courthouse stairs again and, feeling helpless, not spoken to her this time? What else could the note mean? Or had it been here since before they'd moved into Michael's? Tanya didn't know.

After you spend this time with me, you'll be able to go anywhere, for free.

She was barking up the wrong ironwood tree. Maybe there was still time.

* * *

Three days later they were drinking coffee and eating almond cookies in the back room of the Chinese restaurant in Pāʻia. Lulu paid; Tanya was out of money and thinking of applying for food stamps. Most of the restaurants took them. She needed very little; the food stamps would feel like wealth.

"Do you know where that dry dock is? I know he told me the name but I can't remember. No one I've asked knows. It's not the kind of thing people like us know. I should ask Michael, or Joey." Joey was her *pakalōlō* connection; he lived in Makawao, where a lot of Hawaiians lived.

Lulu didn't hear. Passed her the front page of the Honolulu paper. "Isn't that him?"

There was a full-page photograph of a man diving off a pier. To one side, she saw ʻĪao Needle. She remembered they'd thought of going there; no one hiked on mysterious ʻĪao. They'd be cooler than everyone else.

But it was him.

Tanya passed the paper back. "You read it," she said, "I can't. What sit say?"

"They stole a fancy sailboat on Midway. They killed the owners, probably. They caught his friends, but he got away. The Ala Wai in Honolulu was the boat's home marina. What were his friends like?"

"I never met them. I never even saw the boat. He invited me, but after we went camping, I hung out with you instead of going with him. Remember?"

Lulu narrowed her eyes for a moment, and then kept reading.

"It was an unusual looking boat, kind of like a little galleon, wooden hulled, double masted. I guess they thought if they did their repairs here, the boat wouldn't be recognized. But as it happens, a friend of the owners had the same idea. Take their boat out of the water at the little dry dock, ʻĪao side, way cheaper than Oʻahu. No radio contact since Midway, six weeks ago. No SOS, nothing. Too fishy so the guy called the cops before even going on deck to see what was

up."

"He told me he sailed from Tahiti with friends. He said his friends were working on the boat and he had to go help them. But, until we came back from camping, he kept putting it off."

"To be with you."

"He did go for a few days to help after we got back from the crater, but then he came back and we moved into Michael's house for a few days. Remember?" She didn't mention the scene at the courthouse in Lahaina.

Lulu nodded. "The party was nice. It felt like we were a family. I've never felt that, and I've been travelling for years."

"If he'd helped them full time they might've been done before now."

Lulu folded the paper shut, glanced around the restaurant, lowered her voice. "Let's finish this conversation somewhere else."

On the beach Lulu said, "Imagine getting away from cops by diving off a dock and swimming." She laughed a little. "Who else could pull that off?"

"Everyone knows what he looks like now," Tanya said.

"He's at large. He might come looking for you. What will you do if he does?"

"It won't work. Even if he goes to the airport he'll be recognized now. He can't go to May's, anywhere."

"You don't know May. She's slippery. You could ask her."

"No. It's the same. Everyone saw us together. They all know I was with him. I have to leave."

"Why not wait and see if he makes contact?"

"No." Tanya took the folded up piece of paper out of her pocket, unfolded it, showed it to Lulu.

"The mouse is back on the page. I knew the moment I saw it, everything was over."

She and Lulu lay low at Baldwin Park, expecting the police to appear at any moment. But they didn't. Probably because, two days later, Jim was apprehended, boarding a boat in Lahaina, as the owners prepared to leave for San Francisco. Offering to crew for nothing.

* * *

Just as Tanya had thought, everyone in the restaurant stared and whispered. May gave them a corner table, said softly, "They were watching. They knew he was a sailor, could crew for other people. That it would be how he'd try to avoid airports."

She offered no judgement either way. Tanya was grateful, ate enormous almond cookies and sipped green tea. When they tried to pay, May waved their money away. "The police won't bother you now. Also, you don't know. See how the trial goes. They say they didn't kill the owners, that they found the boat aban-

doned on Midway, the dinghy overturned on the beach."

"It doesn't make sense. They should've radioed the harbor master in Honolulu. The boat's papers would've said the owners' names, their home marina."

May nodded. "They said they were too afraid. Their own boat was damaged; they barely made it from Tahiti. They were afraid to tell anyone, wanted to get here first."

Tanya nodded. "It's stupid for them to say so much before the trial."

But perhaps that meant they weren't real criminals.

Just inept thieves and murderers.

"It's not true," she told Lulu when they got to the beach. "If that was true they would've sailed her into the Ala Wai. He told me once the repairs were done they'd go to northern British Columbia."

"I don't want to know these things," Lulu said.

And then, "Do you wish it had gone another way? If all of you had worked on the boat you might've been done and gone and in B.C. by now."

Tanya nodded. "The Queen Charlottes or somewhere even more remote."

"You didn't answer."

"We'd have gotten a few months, is all."

"Maybe years."

"Why are you and May both speaking in his defence?"

"You were a different person after your time with Jim. You were so obviously fucked up before, everyone noticed. Now you're kind of all right."

"Maybe I was his penance. Maybe after what they did on Midway, he knew he needed to help someone. Buy his life back from God. He wasn't a killer, in spite of his record."

"What was it for?"

Tanya had been reading the papers too. "Possession. Grand theft auto."

"A logical progression from there to grand theft boat."

"Am I supposed to laugh?"

"Do you good. What say you we blow this pop stand, fly to Seattle? I can borrow the money. I have a friend with a restaurant there, we can work. Even you, if I ask nicely. Unless you want to wait, see how the trial turns out. Visit him in jail. Where is he?"

"Honolulu. No bail. Trial's not for months."

"Maybe his friends killed them, not Jim."

"Maybe."

It was possible. But she remembered again all the times under the waterfall when she'd wondered if he'd kill her. Maybe she was picking up on the boat owners' fear, their last thoughts clinging to him, ever since that rainy night on Midway when they'd lost everything.

"You know when we were camping and we got high I always worried he'd kill me, even though he seemed like a kind man right from the moment I met

him."

"Where'd you meet him? You never said."

"At the temple feast. We didn't talk even though I noticed him right away. And then I got back to the park after and there was the usual fire. I was staring into the flames and then when I looked up, there was his face. I thought I was imagining things," Tanya laughed. "Anyways, like I said, maybe what I heard was their feelings coming off him, their fear of him, the couple who owned the boat. I always thought I could tell a killer, they'd give off a vibe. The thing is, even though we broke up, you're right, he was good to me. He got through to me like no one ever has, not even you, Lulu. I feel so much more myself than I did before. And no matter what he did on Midway, you can't take that away."

Tanya remembered now, how just before he'd walked away from her when she'd sat on the courthouse steps crying, he'd reached into his pocket, come out with Mouse, offered her the little animal.

"You take him," she'd said.

"I can't."

"Why?"

"He's not the seafaring sort." He'd kissed her on the forehead. "Perhaps it's better this way." What did he mean? She hadn't asked. "No matter what happens, don't think too badly of me. I'll remember you always."

She remembered how complete strangers so often seemed to hate him. It wasn't just that he was unkempt and wore torn clothes; lots of people did that. Maybe they could smell it on him, what she couldn't. Grand theft boat. Murder. Almost all had looked at him this way, as if he weren't fit for human company. Except for May, and Michael, and Lulu, and Plumeria. But he'd had a chance to charm them, as he had her. Or else they'd been part of his penance too, part of his desire to take a new tack at this difficult problem of being human.

After their talk Lulu had gone into town again, back to the laundromat to fold, first telling her not to run away, but it was silly, really. Where was there to go? Tanya left the beach for the fire pit in its scraggly patch of lawn, started the night's bonfire. The backpackers would be arriving from their day trips soon, and those who knew who she was would want to ask her questions. She got the drums out of their hiding places in the bushes. Tonight, she'd drum so loud she wouldn't hear a thing.

* * *

The door bangs; it's Lulu, returned from her hike.

She looks at me, questioning.

I put down this pen, pick up our room phone; Kokee Lodge has room phones now, as it didn't back then.

The mouse jumps off the page while I wait for someone to pick up.

Or we could go there together.
It's not too late to learn how to sail.

Kathy J. Phillips

TRANSFERRING THE WILLOW

In this painting, Kuan Yin occupies a tiny island, with just enough room for four bamboo stalks behind her. Her right foot is tucked under the left knee, while the left foot hangs over the side of the island, to rest on a red lotus. In her right hand she holds a willow sprig; in her left, a vase, into which she is about to slip the fresh-cut branch.

To transfer Dad's medical insurance from New Jersey to Hawai'i, I call the Hawai'i Medical Service Association. An HMSA worker, Harriet, sends me six booklets to choose from, each fifty pages. Hazarding the "65C Plus" plan, I fill out the application, which asks for a copy of Dad's Medicare card. He says it's in his wallet. I unfold the dilapidated leather and find a picture of Mom from half a century ago, wearing bobby socks and a tight sweater; a picture of me as a baby, wearing nothing; ah, a card with "Horizon Medicare Blue" blazoned along the border. I saunter to the copy center, tape the image to the form, and pop the envelope into the mailbox.

Kuan Yin sits at ease, her foot still propped on a glowing red lotus. Other lotus, red and bluish purple, poke up behind her, the same size whether in front or back of the island. Under the bamboo, some unidentified spheres stand spitted like shish kebobs. The outline of the tiny island forms the bottom half of a circle which continues above Kuan Yin's torso and head, a kind of spotlight, with only her foot dangling beyond her private bubble. The willow in her right hand hasn't moved any closer to the vase in her left.

Weeks later, HMSA sends back my application, rejected: "The card you submitted is not a Medicare card."

I call Harriet. "Dad's card says Medicare."

"It's not Medicare."

"It says Horizon Medicare Blue."

"Blue is different. A real Medicare card has a red stripe." Harriet pauses. "Is your father an American citizen?"

"Yes."

"Is he past 65?"

"He's 78."

"Then he has a Medicare card." Wrong lotus.

Kuan Yin sits on her island. Her turf offers just enough room for four bamboo stalks, creaking in the breeze. The lake with the red and blue lotus completely encircles her bubble, and the expanse of water has its own horizon at the top of the painting. In her left hand she holds her vase of water. In her right hand she trails the willow branch, looking bedraggled.

"Is this the Railroad Retirement Board? I'm calling about my dad's Medicare card."

"Retirement number, please."

"----------."

"Ah, he has Horizon Medicare Blue."

"I know that. It's the wrong lotus."

"Well, try calling Horizon."

"Dawn speaking." No, Dawn has never seen a lotus. She suggests I call the Railroad Retirement Medicare Office.

"Ted here."

Ted has no record of Dad's Medicare number.

"Try our Old Medicare Office."

I repeat my mantra: Medicare, Medicare. The twelfth person I talk to gives me a phone number, which I recognize as that of the first person I called. Kuan Yin's bubble is round, the lake is round, and we're up to the thirteenth moon.

On her island in the lotus lake, Kuan Yin sits relaxed. She sports jewelry on both wrists, both ears, her neck. She's wearing harem pants, as her right ankle rests fetchingly under her left leg. I could do with a pair of harem pants. I could do with a harem, some nice women to talk to, a pasha to cuddle up to, now and then. In her right hand, she flicks the willow branch. In her left hand, she's tilting the water vase. Has she given up transferring the willow?

After six more weeks, I manage to extract from the Railroad Retirement Board a Medicare card with a glowing red stripe. Harriet has insisted so religiously on this stripe that I ask the worker at the copy center, Clifford, to Xerox it in color. He looks at me suspiciously. "We can't do that," he says, as I try to stamp the moon in the water. So I tape the black-and-white version of the red-striped card onto the rejected application and hike the envelope to the mailbox.

Kuan Yin's willow hasn't moved any closer to the water in the vase. I know I've seen prints of that willow *in* the vase, on the ground next to her, as she sits on her embankment. But wait. Here it says the willow and the container were

originally separate, unrelated. The willow isn't just sitting there, static decoration. Instead, it's busy whisking away disease (and, presumably, warding off the bills of illness). What I thought was a vase is a bottle, pouring the water of Contentment Anywhere.

Harriet calls: "You sent the page that says 'patient's copy.' We need the one that says 'HMSA copy.'"

"They're identical," I say.

"But you sent the page that says 'patient's copy,'" Harriet reminds me.

"*Cross out* 'patient's copy,'" I venture to suggest, "and *write in* 'HMSA copy.' Everything else is identical."

"No," says Harriet, "you'll have to file a new application."

Well, I can do that. After all, I'm wearing my harem pants, chatting with Harriet and Dawn and Clifford, eating my shish kebobs, and touchtoning innumerable numbers on my lotus pad, connected to the circling worlds.

Kathy J. Phillips

KUAN YIN SHOPPER

Sitting on her tiny island, Kuan Yin has four bamboo stalks behind her, sometimes three. Inspect dozens of scrolls; you'll find four stalks, four stalks, four stalks, three. This island is kind of boring, Kuan. What, you don't think so?

After Dad loses control of his excretions in July 2004, shopping for supplies changes the whole meaning of "necessities." Basically, we need Longs-brand underwear, 16-count, large. I can take the #6 bus from school, get off after the Japanese Cultural Center, and walk to Longs Mōʻiliʻili. I can't purchase too many supplies at once, though. With just two packages, I hardly fit on the bus. Even at seventy-eight pounds, I'm now a "wide load," as Dad would say. And when the bus is crowded, forget it.

Sometimes generous friends offer to pick up supplies for me. But it's better to go with them, because giving instructions is more esoteric than preaching the sutras on a mountaintop. For example, get "underwear," not "briefs." Get "16-count," first choice, "18-count," second choice. No, don't get 18-count AT ALL if it says "super-absorbent." The 16-count is already thicker and more absorbent, for nighttime, whereas 18-count is less absorbent, for daytime. But some 18-count, with a yellow stripe, pretend to be "super-absorbent" too, even in the daytime. They're not "super." Why? Because they gap open at the legs. Why does that matter? Because the *shishi* runs out. What, you no know not'ing?

Get Longs-brand underwear, not Depends. No, not dependable. They gap at the legs too. We know what that means.

Get some underpads. Get Longs-brand, in a dark red package. Sulky red. Get "extra large," not "super large"! "Super large" is larger than "extra large," but "super large" is more square. "Extra large" is more rectangular. A rectangle reaches across the bed better than a square does.

Also, you could get a package of blue, non-Longs-brand underpads, "regular size." Regular is not big enough to be a real underpad, but it's a cheaper way to put a little extra protection under his back, in case the *shishi* soaks upward on his shirt.

Who'll take me for supplies? A couple of times, Chong. Occasionally, Val. A number of times, Judith. Innumerable times, Suzanne. During the two months of summer when she's here, Perle. My colleague Ruth gives us the maxim for all this: "It takes a village to care for an elder."

Where shall we go? We used to like Longs Mānoa because the green Mānoa hills soothe us all. But Longs Mānoa stopped carrying Longsbrand adult "inconti-

nence supplies." (Word "diaper" not in use.) So we go to Longs Mōʻiliʻili. What? All out of 16-count! Is someone hoarding? Is the barge late? Ask the clerk. No, nothing in the back. Well, at least get these sulky red packages of Longs-brand underpads, extra large.

What else sits on Kuan Yin's island? A jar. Jar with willow. Jar without willow. Jar on ledge. Jar in hand. If you want a jar to drink out of, it's sure to be filled with greenish water and willow stems. No, thanks.

Want to try Longs Kaimukī? Off we go. Ah, Longs Kaimukī has 16-count. Wait, what's this? Longs-brand 16-count "reclosable." "Reclosable" means two sides to wrap up and a Velcro patch to close them; they're not the pull-up kind. Simmy (Dad's most recent and truly wonderful helper) can use the reclosable ones okay when I'm at school, but I'm not good at getting them on right. Okay, get *one* reclosable.

After one whole year of buying a forest's worth of expensive diapers, a Longs clerk asks me, "Do you want to apply for a Longs discount card for seniors?" Silent gnashing of teeth, audible "Yes, thank you." Six more weeks for the card.

Kuan Yin is checking the inventory on her island. Three bamboo stalks, one jar, no willow, and—yes!—one cellophane bag of Pui Mui from Longs Mōʻiliʻili! What, you no know Pui Mui? Crack seed. Okay, it's Chinese preserved plum. Mmmm!

But don't get the package in a net bag, with the Pui Mui strung together as a lei. Too dry. Get da kine, you know, plum with licorice, TRIPLE-wrapped: first in clear paper, then in white paper, then in purple, with twisted ends, THEN all the individually wrapped Pui Mui in a cellophane package. Well, yes, there is a pit in each one; just be careful not to chomp down on it. But do gnaw every last scrap from the pit! And for toothless Dad: one pint Häagen-Dazs vanilla.

Elmer Omar Pizo

VIAGRA

What good does it do to a man,
69 years of age, widower
for the last 10 years, retired
from his full-time job building
houses and part-time job
customizing cabinets and fences,
walking with the help of a cane
(rheumatoid arthritis hasn't
stopped from stamping its
authority over his left knee),
to get back to P.I. to marry
a lass 40 years his junior,
defying in the process all kinds
of pointed questions and hassles
from the U.S. Naturalization
and Immigration office *needing*
proof the marriage isn't fixed
or for convenience, and that
their union is consummated before
he can bring his girl back to Hawaii
after a 3-year-and-a-half wait?

For Heaven's sake!
More often than not, the story
of this kind of marriage

doesn't end in *"And they lived happily ever after."*
"See you in court!" is the usual line after the girl has secured her much-coveted prize, 3 years after her permanent resident status changed: a U.S. citizenship.

II.
Getting to the core of his action, either by prying into or by furious digging of how things are now unfolding in his personal life right after his good friend set him up for that girl, it remains difficult to understand why this *"being taken advantage of"* stuff isn't his main concern.

Aside from reaching that stage where he doesn't know how to handle the romantic side of love anymore, like giving away small packages of sweet nothings with a couple of light kisses on the forehead and cheeks, one of his main tools of the trade *(as he considers it as such),* once formidable and up to par in meeting any kind of challenge and doesn't pass too often any window of opportunity, sad to say, it's reduced to a *"jack"* that can no longer lift!

Him, indulging in bowls of shark fin soup and "Soup No.5" *(a concoction of stewed testicles and penises of sacrificial goats),* tons of live oysters, crushed

Spanish fly and powdered Korean
ginseng roots—
not to mention those reams

and reams of x-rated magazines
and used DVDs—yet, all these
failed in their collective effort
of resurrecting the *dead*!

III.
Just a day before his much-
anticipated trip, one of his closest
friends, concerned so much about
his well-being, brought 10 packs
at 6 each of the blue pill for him
to take once he's in P.I.
facing the inevitable.

The following night, at his rented
room in Kalihi, 3 hours before his
scheduled check-in at the airport,
his will, too weak to reign in his
curiosity, *"The hell with it! Come
what may!"* he said, tearing up
one corner of the packet then popped
not one but two pills into his mouth.
*(If only he took the time and paused
for a moment to read the* **Warning**
*portion printed in lower case, all
could still be well with him.)*

Before he could swallow the pills,
regret stepped in and blocked his
throat with such force, he almost
choked!

At 50 mg a pill, absolutely,
they're very potent.
Though he's able to spit them out,
the pills' coating already melted!

His tongue, at first, felt numb.
After a few seconds,
like an overfed cucumber, it
grew swollen,
erect
and stiff.

When he attempted to say some
words, nothing came out except
a garbled kind of sound
and those unexpected showers
of spit!

IV.
How messy and quick
the succession of events was
as panic made its move
to take over.

Running outside the house
barefoot, in his loose underwear
and muscle-hugging shirt,
his trembling hands pointed
at his exaggerated tongue
sticking out of his mouth,
coated with saliva foaming
from the back up to its tip.

All that you could hear
from him a monkey-like
uh-uh-uh-uhh sound
punctuated by his billiard-ball
eyes popping out of their
sockets!

Onlookers were at a loss,
couldn't figure out what
exactly was going on with
him.

Him, being in that altered

state, and me, being of no
help to him whatsoever even
with the sweating bag of ice
I intended to wrap around
his tongue to ease out its
suffering, I can only say
with much regrets, his stiffness
lasted for hours and his cries
for help lasted for almost
forever!

Normie Salvador

MOVING MOUNTAINS (TO FIND THE PERFECT GIFT)

Yes, money. Okay, calm down. I realize that this isn't the perfect gift. The last time I spoke to you, you probably got the impression that I had the perfect gift. And if you remember correctly, you didn't want me to tell you what it was; you wanted it to be a surprise. Well surprise! … Look, this is what happened and if you don't think that it was a good enough reason then by all means kick me to the curb.

For our fifth anniversary, I had this idea that grew until it filled my head. No, it wasn't wood; accessories to the house are an acceptable fifth anniversary gift, I looked it up—oh, ha-ha, you funny. Anyway, it had been percolating there for some time now and the pressure was going to blow my mind. I had written nothing down, everything was memorized. I didn't want your cute li'l button nose sniffing out the surprise.

Now as the day approached, all I had to do was to find it in the real world. This proved more difficult than I had originally anticipated. I went to Waikele; Waipahu, which everyone knows is just a big strip mall; Pearl Highlands; Waimalu; Pearlridge; Pearl Kai; all of Ward; and finally, the Holy Grail for all Hawaiian shoppers, Ala Moana. Nothing, nada, zip, a big nene goose egg. No gift I saw came close.

Okay, okay, I'll tell you what it was, it was *yamakei*, and I've also heard it *yamasai*. I cannot count the number of strange looks—more than usual anyway. You would think that in an age of pierce this, brand that, and tattoo this, people would be a little more blasé.

I would enter a store and try to explain what I was looking for. I could see realization breaking over their faces like waves, but then they would say, "Oh, you

mean *bonsai*." And you know the only proper response to that is a head drop and heartfelt groan. I mean really *bonsai*, or *bonkei* is a small plant in a tray; *yamakei*, that's a small mountain in a tray. How could anyone possibly confuse the two?

I know you love mountains. The panoramic shots of mountains that you used as a frieze, *Into Thin Air* and other mountain-related coffee table books, and dragging me to the Imax three times to watch multistory-high men climb Everest were a bit of a hint.

I thought *yamakei* would make the ideal gift. Granted they can't be climbed or hiked, but it does bring a little nature indoors. I couldn't decide whether to get you a miniature Everest or a volcano. It's not at all difficult to carve an Everest facsimile. Anyone with a chisel and hammer can do it, but the true test for you would have been glaciation. I've read that a glacier even an inch long takes forever to create and Hawaiian winters wouldn't have helped any. And shepherding the glacier so that the little valley it carved out conformed to the design? I've heard that's really satisfying; some of the guys I spoke to looked like they were having a religious experience. But the problems with this type are that they grow fairly slowly—one guy showed me a mountain in his family for five generations and I know how you feel about kids—and they have a tendency to range if you don't cleave away the growing bits at its flanks. The majority opinion is that while ranges are breathtaking, they're nothing compared to just one stunning specimen.

But then I thought about getting you something volcanic. Unfortunately, shield volcanoes are never on the market. I thought it'd be nice to get you the Hawaiian type; we do live here after all. Every enthusiast I spoke to said that the shield type is no longer commercially viable. It got banned after that idiot dumped his excess stock at Waimanalo Gul—I mean—Volcano. Personally, I think don't think it's so much the environment as it is Pele. But then who wouldn't be? Setting one of those things up they said would be like saying, "Hey Pele, you like come live with me?"

The only other type, the available one, is the high and very symmetrical cinder cone, somewhat similar to Mayon or Pinatubo in the Philippines, before … you know … they blew up and, ahem, destroyed the surrounding countryside. But I digress … they are aesthetically pleasing, though a bit harder to maintain as they can go dormant at the slightest thing. Of all the *yamakei*, volcanoes are the most finicky. It's possible to keep them indoors if you don't mind the constant fumes and the occasional pyroclastic flow, which'll no doubt set off the smoke alarm and ruin the carpet. I heard of one enthusiast that wanted to simulate an island scene.

The beach sand forming a skirt wasn't a problem; the seawater he added was. It was Krakatoa, Yellowstone, and Mount Saint Helens all in one. Last I heard he was doing fine; you can barely see the scars now. His eyebrows are finally growing back too, I think. He didn't do his homework and I've done mine and I know

you have to start out with a tray at least nine inches deep to even get that pillow lava forming up nice, twelve if you want an atoll at the end and fourteen if you want a seamount. Coral reefs are much more difficult though.

These were my trains of thought as I stood in Kunia Wal*Mart—it really does have everything, which is somewhat disturbing. I know you like things small and I did keep in mind the bulk—a cubic foot at most—and the weight—volcanoes weigh only fifty to sixty pounds, but the more conventional mountains top the scales at a hundred pounds or more, not including the reinforced trays. And I knew I'd be the one moving it around. But unfortunately, none of the Wal*Martians—what? I can call 'em that, I worked there the summer before I met you—anyway, none of them had tended to the *yamakei* properly. One had excessive glaciation, scoring the flanks something fierce; another had erupted, leaving just a caldera; and someone had carved the last into what I would've aptly named Petit Tetons.

The only other thing I could find were the volcano starter sets for grade-schoolers, for their science fair projects. They've gotten better since we were in grade school, but they're still only good for a few demonstration eruptions. I don't think their hotspots are of good quality. So in the end, *yamakei* were the not-so-perfect gifts. Money it was to be then.

I realize many people think that money requires no thought at all. For me as you can see, this is not the case. I put in a lot of thinking, walking, and driving before I resort to money. Seeing as how money is so versatile—it can be for romance or practicality—perhaps it is the perfect gift? And besides, with all this researching and searching I've developed my own love of these things. I'd be glad to go mountain hiking with you on your birthday, if you'll still have me.

Susan M. Schultz

EXCERPT FROM DEMENTIA BLOG

Monday, October 16, 2006

—No Imperial Mints in Chiswick. Arc of empire turned down like a collar against the gloam. Capital's the problem, as there's no audience for Cambridge Marxists. The revolution started, but none saw it behind the stone wall of Gonville & Caius. (Even the spelling is capital.)

—"He made the hair on the back of my neck stand on end." "I took one look and wanted to say: you are not who you think you are; you are a fraud." "He had the worst body odor of anyone in England." Keith said it had to do with class.

—*This is the church and this is the steeple. Open it up, and see all the people.*

—One of these poems moves from the inside out, and the other from the inside in. Do you mean to say that only one of them appropriates?

—I surfed the bathroom floor for 20 seconds at least. And then another one came.

—She kept breaking down. She said it was nerves, but each time her voice broke she'd said the word "Iraq." We live in space but we feel most deeply in our sound. The quaver of her voice altered our positions in the room. We moved forward and then away, as if she were the murderousness she decried. Dead from injuries sustained when a roadside bomb exploded next to his convoy. We are told of a place. But we are told in words. The sound of aftershock. "It's coming again, I feel it."

—Wallace Stevens is green on the book's front cover. The fuse that drives the flower's cash.

—Compare physical to moral discomfort. Which figures the other?

—The congressman says Abu Ghraib was a "sex ring." The commentator says they were fraternity pranks. At least no one died, one said of the anti-pe-

dophile pedophile's acts. Instant messaging makes a text of sex. *My master's eyes are nothing like this screen*.

—Three Americans sit face to face at a pub with three Brits. Two of the Brits and two of the Americans talk about 9/11 (11/9). So many more have died who have not been acknowledged, says Brit #2, a blonde. It's sheer manipulation of grief, says American #1 (bald), as #2 (dirty strawberry blonde) nods her head. American #3 (short cut brunette) falls silent. Brit #2 asks why. American #3 refuses to say. Minutes pass. Question rehearsed. American #3's voice breaks (see above, though it is not the same voice). She was on a bridge, saw the second plane turn. She cannot talk so casually. Not a question of content, but of degree. *Do not tell me what you feel, but where you feel, how you feel it.*

—She writes too much. He writes too little. She alludes too much to Plath, he to Petrarch. She's a witch, he's an arrogant prick. She's too obtuse, he's too clear. She's like O'Hara, he's like Oppen. Once named, allusion shuts down its line. He got the one about the world to stand on.

posted by Susan at 1:01 AM 3 comments

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* * *

Saturday, September 30, 2006

—The lyric in wartime. If stealth bombers are honu, what are the honu? If surf sounds like artillery fire, then how is artillery defined? If there is beauty in war, war is still not "natural." If the point is that we cannot not see the war before us, then how to reconcile (that's not the word) beauty with disgust? *There is one at-*

tack every 15 minutes against Americans in Iraq. Polls indicate that 60 percent of Iraqis favor attacks against Americans.

—I have not translated the word honu.

—She looks wonderful; she had her hair done, I'm told. Friendly and talkative. "I'm still looking for a ride home," she tells me. Our conversation a constant diversion away, and then again, "It's hard to get anything done here."

—The chair of the committee that protects children from sexual predators on the internet was himself a sexual predator on the internet. *We're secret agents*, Sangha says.

—When he was confronted with the failure of his policies, the defense secretary said *you wage war with the army that you've got*.

—The green trees blaze in yellow light, the purple clouds. Frog song cedes to dove song.

—*He was just shot*, says the contractor in the video, of his colleague. We are shown a steering wheel. No one to drive the car. School principal killed by student. Two 13 year olds arrested for arson in Wai'anae. The sexual predator had a list of the girls' names. He took his hostages, killed one before turning the gun on himself. This is how our fairy tales end.

—When should we refuse translation? When is the refusal to translate unethical?

—*These are terrorists who want to kill Americans. They are the lowest of the low; they are scum*. All evidence collected by a) water boarding (picture of a table and a bucket at Tuol Sleng); or b) sleep deprivation (photo of a stereo system), shall be used against them. The president is arbiter of this, as all things. He is not a man who uses vague expressions, like "inhumanity" or "human degradation."

—Angelina Jolie looks pregnant again.

—The Critic arrives, armed with a quiver of Judgments, and wrestles my language to the floor. She says the author speaks from a position of privilege, one that blinds her to realities that cannot be contained in lyric or in ironic poems. Irony saves the Poet from 1) the horror and 2) any beliefs that might mitigate 1), which she does not recognize but intuits. Note that "intuition" is an issue to be raised at a later time.

—The insurgent must be put in prison.

—The insurgent hates Americans.

—The insurgent will be dealt to a third country, which has fewer qualms.

—The critic must practice crying. She must talk on a subject about which she is especially arch, but she must deliver her words in such a way that she cries. She will be denied access to Kleenexes or handkerchiefs, and will have no right to leave her podium. The critic may not employ artificial substances in her efforts to cry. She must rely on her own emotions, her own physiology. She must do this before an audience of at least two dozen of her colleagues, those who least expect her to react in this way.

—At Jesus camp, children cry. They pray for the president, and they pray to become warriors for the Lord. At Jesus camp, the children speak in tongues, they dance, and they repeat what their spiritual leader says. At Jesus camp, the children learn to be parallel insurgents. At Jesus camp, other cheeks are not turned, except toward the echo of gunfire. Jesus also wandered the desert.

—I envy the lyric poet. The lyric poet still sees the sunrise, still marvels at the thrush in the doorway, still calls out the names of artists. The lyric poet sees through perversity, knows the true forces are natural ones. She knows Bush is not the sun, Rumsfeld is not the moon, and Cheney is not the tide.

posted by Susan at 11:11 AM 1 comments

* * *

Monday, September 25, 2006

—*The former president lost his temper*. Loss of content in our public life. Only forms remain, intonation, affect. *Why did you yell in my mom's house?* Radhika asks our neighbor.

—*She sounded like she does when her hands shake*. She does not want to be there. Bryant calls to ask about her things. A tape on osteoperosis. No. Foundations of Economics (from the 1930s). No. The Soviet shelf. No. The Nazi shelf. No. The Greeks, the Moslems. No. The speech and drama shelf. No. Encyclopedias, no. Check registers back to 1964. No. Harry S Truman, no. Mrs. Ike, no.

—"Was her reading too intense?"

—Grief is excess of sound. Anger is excess of form. Sadness can lack, or still exceed. Excess is overtone, the note beyond the note you sound. Without the tone, there is no object. *Did I kill bin Laden? No. But I tried*.

—My task is to inventory sentences, place them in order, box them up and ship them in a container. They are a sturdy furniture, haphazard art. They are boxes of papers, bills, pieces of a dissertation. A computer shopper magazine (discard). Titles whose aura was a life, or two, or three. The house is now full of light. A girl wanders through the rooms, trying keys at the windows. My mother knows none of this.

—My father might be in the garden, or the scarecrow that wears his hat. Let him wander the house this last, inspect the plumbing, lights, air conditioning, the rows of beans, sort through medals, papers, release them as excess.

posted by Susan at 12:44 PM 0 comments

* * *

Friday, September 22, 2006

—The words bear weight, but they are light! Apish, accidia. Push outward, against. *They will be tried with "evidence" they know nothing of. They will be interrogated with "methods" approved by the commander and what they say will be held against them*. This is "compromise."

—*We do not compromise our beliefs* is a phrase that is now "inoperative."

—How does the torture bill make you feel? And to the Dalai Lama (Ted Koppel): *do you and the pope like each other?*

—A young couple, speaking Spanish, went to pick up a bed and a desk. A neighbor went to see Mom, who was "pleasant." Not a word given the question of when to stop a project, how to keep it going, or when to say what it is.

—If it no longer matters if we repeat the words, mark them with quotations, italicize them, hurl abuse at them, stencil them on sidewalks and tread on them, obstruct them with typos, yell "halt" at any who read them too quickly, offer extra credit to students to vote in the primary ("what's a primary?"), what shall be the form of our resistance? How do we spell "defence"?

—BONE. GOES. MULE. CLOSE. THOSE. THESE. *I got it right*!

—The words bear weight, but they are light! Where first shall we turn the light? (I'm offered "fireplace" for "first.")

—Irony. The I ron ron, the I ron ron. Irritant. Party of opposition in name only. No words. They lose, and yet they fear losing again. Define "loss."

—She is in a cottage that floats. I hear a dog bark. It's a large dog, she says, Saint Bernard in the mix. She has her father's ashes. He was last well (*I hate your use of the word "illness"*) in Canada, and now he's back. She thinks he's better now. Ashes in her backpack. We can at least work on the dead, recover them for happiness.

posted by Susan at 1:03 PM 0 comments

* * *

Thursday, September 21, 2006

—Encrusted object. Vessel emptied, by chair and by bed. Emissaries. Movers, shifters. A house holds its objects as a sentence does its punctuation. Where there is sentiment, install a comma, semicolon, period. I *have to remind him at the end of every sentence to add a period, or he simply doesn't do it.* Attention distilled, distracted. Where there is only object, dash.

—Write a fast poem and a slow one. Then switch.

—He will be last of us to sleep there. *Take the pokers, the carpet, the rocking chair. The painting upstairs, the beds, the sofa, the wrought iron chairs and table*. Consumer chronicle. We refuse the spell because we know they're trying to sell us something. Alliteration fails any more to seduce. The car in the meadow is not

a Romantic poet, contemplating the language of cloud and tree whisper. The lawn is not a meadow. The sounds of grasshoppers have been exhumed, but not yet re-assembled. Suburb is imitation, mimicry, artifice.

—The form is sturdy, "well built." No broken tower, gravel cascade. She planned the house herself, its fixtures, appliances, the wallpaper. The form was convention, but it was chosen by her. I will leave blanks in the lines for you to fill in. In the suburbs we do not leave our comfort zone. One neighbor tried twice to kill himself. The second time he "succeeded."

—*The USA is more nuts than I am*.

—CIA agents refused to interrogate prisoners in the secret prisons, for fear they'd be prosecuted. A "compromise" is due on the torture bill. Bush says Geneva Convention language is "too vague." Sangha writes his spelling words three times a week.

—According to Neruda, the poet is like the baker. They are not "mini-gods." Your responsibility is to the family recipe. No solitude is insurmountable. None is to be desired, except in shifts. *I promised myself I would never in my life vote*.

—When a neighbor went to see her, she was in the beauty shop. She wonders whom to hire to get her home. She wonders why Joe hasn't called; he was 12 years older. She has made no friends because the people there are all old. She keeps our photos in the drawer because otherwise she's too homesick. They walked around the garden, stopped in the gazebo. She looked good.

—"The coup has already happened."

posted by Susan at 1:50 PM 0 comments

Eric Paul Shaffer

THE SPRING

The taxi driver cursed suddenly and slammed on the brakes. Tires screeching, the car skidded and swerved to the left.

Caught completely unaware, Kevin Henderson shot forward from the rear seat, barely raising an arm in time to stop a slide to the floor of the taxi. The cab lurched to a stop, rocking in the middle of the mid-morning street. Even as surprised as he was, Henderson remembered to speak Japanese, although he did forget to be polite. "Damn, man, what the hell is the problem?"

"Her," said the driver, motioning with an open hand at nothing that Henderson could see in the glare beyond the hood of the car.

Henderson looked around the sunny street and realized he'd been daydreaming. He had been adrift in the dreamland of Japanese fairy tales, his primary literary study at Uruma University, and now saw he was only a short way from his apartment. If he climbed the steps winding up the hillside between the houses, he would reach his door faster and arrive without having to direct the driver through the narrow maze of streets to the top. He decided to walk the rest of the way.

"This is fine," Henderson said, again in Japanese, "how much?"

"Two thousand, two hundred yen."

Henderson handed the bills over the seat and waited for his change. He glanced through the windshield again, but the glare from the hood was too bright to see through. The driver returned a large handful of coins. In a country where the denomination of the smallest bill was worth ten American dollars, Henderson's pockets always jingled with shiny circles of silver, copper, brass, and aluminum.

For Henderson, Japan was a nation of circles. And since he had come to Japan, he thought constantly of the round. Everything seemed to travel in circles

here. The seasons were a steady cycle of rain and sunshine, and the classes at Uruma University came and went as reliably as the tides. Henderson filled out the same paperwork with the same information at the same time each year, and even the photograph that appeared in faculty guides, directories, and news releases was always the same. It was as though traveling in a long lazy orbit around the familiar took the bite out of duration. He saw circles everywhere, and he never expected to go anywhere in Japan but around and around.

"*Daijoubu*?" said the taxi driver, regarding him curiously. "Okay?"

"*Sumimasen*," Henderson excused himself and nodded as the driver tilted his head. Yes, another crazy foreigner, thought Henderson. He grabbed his briefcase and stepped out of the car.

Okinawa was hot for ten months of the year, and this was one of the hottest. After the icy air-conditioning of the cab, Henderson felt sweat dampening his shirt already and loosened his tie. The driver pulled away, and Henderson finally saw the reason for the taxi's sudden stop.

Seated on a short three-legged stool on a manhole cover in the street was a tiny old woman in a worn and shapeless blue-gray dress, threads shiny with wear. She was bent over, her legs crossed at the ankles, her arms crossed on her knees, and she held over her head a new peach-colored parasol edged with lacy fringe. The contrast of the parasol and the stooped old woman in her faded dress was sharp enough to make Henderson smile. The old woman was talking to herself, or maybe she was talking to people, gods, or spirits who were not visible to Henderson. He recalled from his college mythology text an illustration of Greek women who served as oracles at Delphi, sitting on similar stools over vaporous cracks in the earth waiting for inspiration.

Henderson walked to the old woman. The stool was well into the street, in the middle of what would have been the right lane if the street were wide enough to have lanes. Two cars traveling in opposite directions could probably pass on this street, but the drivers would have to wait behind the various telephone and power poles for one another if they arrived at the same place at the same time.

Henderson looked down at the woman. He asked in his most polite Japanese, "Are you all right?"

She tilted the sunshade back and looked up from under the frilly edge. She grinned at him absently, apparently unperturbed by his six feet, two inches. The old woman squinted and answered Henderson in *Uchinaaguchi*, the Okinawan language. He didn't understand a word. Figures, he thought, learn a language called Japanese, come to Japan, and you're not able to talk to the natives.

The old woman, still looking up at him, smiled again. There were wide spaces between her front teeth, a few were missing, and farther back, gold glittered in darkness. She was centered perfectly on the metal disk, and Henderson noticed for the first time that the lid was decorated with concentric circles of the raised figures of fish, open mouth closing on the tail ahead all the way around,

each ring traveling alternately clockwise and counter-clockwise. The hungry fish were driving and devouring each other in a great round ring of wheels within wheels that he knew many people were not pleased to recognize as the circle of life. He'd been in Okinawa for five years, and he'd never noticed the vicious circles of fish on the manhole covers before this little old woman had centered her seat on one in the middle of the street. There's always more to see where you've already been.

"Mother!"

Henderson turned toward the sudden sharp voice behind him.

The woman walking toward them had called to her mother, but she was looking at him.

"Hello," Henderson said in Japanese, "I was just asking your mother if she is all right. The taxi—" He bit off his words as the woman strode past, ignoring him completely after a brief but significant glare.

The old woman saw her daughter and surprised Henderson by also speaking Japanese, though barely loud enough for him to hear her words.

"No, Rika. No, Rika, no."

Henderson watched as Rika approached her mother and spoke to her in an aggravated and impatient tone. "Mother, please, you can't sit out here. It's too dangerous. Come home with me now."

The old woman seemed to shrink on her wooden stool, refusing to look up at her daughter walking quickly toward her in the street. She continued her litany, "No, Rika, no, Rika, no, Rika, no."

Rika gripped her mother under an arm and helped her stand, grabbed the stool with her free hand, and began to walk the old woman back the way she had come.

Henderson stepped forward and asked, "Can I help?"

Rika ignored him once more, but her mother graced him with a vague gap-toothed smile and bright eyes. Henderson wondered if the old woman was senile or simply old, and he was annoyed at being ignored, so as the two women passed him, he asked, "Why does she sit in the street?"

The mother and daughter simply walked on, one silent, and the other talking to people who were nowhere in sight.

After his odd encounter with the old woman, Henderson found himself fascinated by the manhole covers on the street. When he began to look closely, he realized he'd overlooked not only the strange design on the lid, but the remarkable number. He counted the ones along the twisting two-tenths of a kilometer from bus stop to apartment, and there were fifty-five of them, ranging from half a meter to over a meter across. Always circles. He briefly envisioned Okinawa as an island of round holes held together by the tiny bits of solid ground between, an exotic place of perforations like those on the edge of a postage stamp licked and

pasted in the upper right corner of the East China Sea.

Henderson smiled. Godzilla could rip the subtropical isle of Okinawa from end to end simply by tearing along the dotted line.

What was going on under all those covered holes in Japan? He glanced at the traffic-burnished metal circles as he passed. On a few he could read the kanji characters. Some were for storm drains, others for the telephone company. Many, the ones with the rings of fish, for water and sewage, and there were a few that he couldn't figure out at all.

Every day now, when he walked back from the bus stop, he looked for the old woman on her favorite metal lid in the street. Often, she was there, and he would say a few words of Japanese to her, but her responses were always in Okinawan, although he knew that she understood him. She was friendly, if a little vacant, and a few times when the old woman and her stool had created a bit of a traffic jam, Henderson motioned the cars around her. All the drivers pretended they didn't really see him, in spite of his size and height, but they followed the directions he gave as he waved his arms around over the bent gray head of the tiny old woman folded over her three-legged seat in the busy sweltering street.

Henderson waited on the street gazing thoughtfully at the manhole cover where the old woman usually sat. Eiji Goya, one of the junior professors in the Department of Foreign Languages, was picking Henderson up for one of the many official academic functions, a retirement party for one of the oldest professors at Uruma University.

Kevin Henderson and Eiji Goya had begun a friendship on the day of Henderson's arrival. Goya-sensei was the friendliest of the professors who had met his flight from the United States and given him a ride to the apartment that the hiring committee had arranged for Henderson. Goya had spent nine years in America. He loved the Midwest and was always looking for a reason to return. In Goya's car, a Volkswagen bug that stuck out in Okinawan traffic like lederhosen among the kimono on Japanese Coming-of-Age Day, the two had discovered a shared passion for yakuza films. They would watch them together occasionally, and each dropped by the office of the other on a daily basis.

As Goya drove Henderson to the party, they began once more the familiar discussion of the Hollywood versions of Japanese culture in *Black Rain, Mr. Baseball*, and *Rising Sun*. Not until he was in the ballroom among the rest of the faculty gathering for the celebration did Henderson realize that he had no idea who the retiring professor was. The man's name was Senbaru, but he had never seen the sensei until that evening, when the old man stood, short and stooped, and whispered a very long speech of the most courteous Japanese into a microphone. The delivery of the speech was accidentally comical. Nakama, one of the youngest of the junior professors, had neglected to adjust the stand properly, and Senbaru was forced to stoop lower and lower as one rod slid slowly into the other

under the weight of the microphone. The professor resignedly followed the microphone down as it sank. Henderson, after too much beer on too little food, could barely suppress a smile.

Nakama, red in the face, bowing and apologizing, finally stepped up to the dais and quickly raised the microphone again. As he did, the bulb thumped the old sensei squarely in the forehead. The sudden sound-burst from the speakers made most of the men jump. Fortunately for the old professor, the impact was only surprising, and Henderson coughed vigorously to cover his laughter. He looked around and not another man in the room was even cracking a smile. This was serious. The bowing and apologizing continued long at the front of the room. To prevent a new rush of suppressed amusement at recalling too vividly the sudden thud and the shock on the professor's face, Henderson turned to Goya.

"Who is Professor Senbaru?" Henderson managed before covering his smile again with a beer glass.

Goya spoke as he watched the bowing reach its climax, "Senbaru Ichirou was one of the first professors at Uruma University when the Americans founded the school. He has taught for forty years, but I don't think he has taught a class since before you came to Okinawa. The senior sensei think it is best for them to show their respect for him in this way."

"Ah," said Henderson, sipping his beer as the speeches began again. He looked at the old professor standing uncomfortably on the dais as the senior men gave their long laudatory speeches, and he thought of Professor Senbaru sitting in his office every day with nothing to do. Henderson wondered whether some of his colleagues dropped by Professor Senbaru's office occasionally to sip some green tea with the old sensei.

At a table ranked and rowed with tall bottles of Orion beer and dozens of tiny glasses, Professors Toyama and Nakama were standing with an older man Henderson had never met. The man was a guest of Professor Toyama and introduced as Tamashiro, one of the city engineers who had built the system of drainage culverts in Naha and the surrounding areas.

Henderson had been drinking even more, and when he heard that Tamashiro did construction for the city, he was just drunk enough to raise the question of the manhole covers, "What is it with all these Japan-hole covers anyway?"

Toyama stared at Henderson, and Nakama actually gaped. Goya quickly came to Henderson's rescue.

"Henderson-sensei has noticed many manhole covers in the streets."

Henderson watched the faces of the other three men, and not one appeared to have the slightest idea of what Goya was talking about. There was a conversation in Japanese so quick that Henderson knew he wasn't meant to follow the rapid exchange. He sipped his beer and tried to look drunk enough to miss the fact that he had suddenly been excluded by this small circle of his colleagues. Syllables

shot back and forth.

The echoes of "*ne*?" and "*ah, so ka*?" finally faded, and Goya turned back to Henderson to say in English, "Sorry, Kevin, 'manhole cover' is unfamiliar term." In switching from one language to the other too quickly, Goya always lost the articles first.

"That's all right," said Henderson, "but what about the lids?"

Tamashiro, the city construction engineer, spoke. "When I come to work for Naha city, there was no pave road, no sewage system. Many things must be rebuilt. I work first on drainage. Many, many rivers were. We dig deep. Stop flood in rainy season, and, *eeto*," Tamashiro arrowed out his arm for dramatic effect, "we make rivers *straight*!"

Henderson considered the face of the city engineer who had turned the creeks and streams of Okinawa into concrete culverts. In summer, the streams trickled and stunk, the unscalable eighty-degree slant of the walls slimed with brown and green algae growing under bubbles of detergent in gray water. In the rainy season, the same culverts churned with muddy runoff washed from the thousands of working construction sites of any normal day in Okinawa. The water emptied into the sea and left a ruddy brown margin stretching a mile from the beach into the bay that Henderson could see from his office window.

The exaltation of the Japanese engineer over linear drainage struck Henderson as a fundamental error in perception. Any line on the surface of a planet eventually completes a great circle, and a short section of any circle looks straight. *Maru desu*, thought Henderson, it's a circle. A circle stands for nothing or for everything, depending on whether one looks at or through the figure. Endless, yes. Empty, no.

As Henderson and Goya prepared to leave the party, nodding and smiling at professors all around the hall, Senbaru-*sensei* suddenly appeared at Henderson's elbow.

Goya bowed, but Senbaru turned to Henderson and shook his hand.

"*Hajimemashite*," Henderson introduced himself, "*Hendaason desu.*"

"I am happy to meet you at last," said Senbaru.

"*Watashi mo*," Henderson expressed mutual pleasure, "*Douzo yoroshiku*."

"Oh, your Japanese is very good," said Senbaru, "do you study Japanese?"

Henderson relented and spoke English. "Yes, I've studied for three years, but my Japanese is not really very good."

"On the contrary, I hear that you do quite well." The professor spoke much louder and more clearly in English.

Henderson nodded, "And your English is also very good."

Senbaru smiled, "Berkeley, soon after the war. I was a bartender. I had lots of practice." He paused. "So, you study Japanese fairy tales? Do you know Urashima?"

"Yes," said Henderson, "the poor fisherman who spent three nights in the Palace of the Dragon King and returned home to find three hundred years had passed. All of his friends and relatives were gone, as I recall."

"Yes," said Senbaru, "I know him."

Henderson thought of the possible interpretations, the difficulties of translation, and the questions such a statement raises. Still, he could think of nothing to say.

A knot of professors crowded up to Senbaru, and he turned to them, nodding and smiling, and then touched Henderson's arm, "I don't suppose you practice much."

"I don't understand," said Henderson, aware of the sudden and complete attention of all of the Japanese professors around them.

"Well," Senbaru smiled again, "I'm sure you don't get much practice speaking Japanese with everyone practicing English on you all the time."

Henderson laughed, and the professor was engulfed by the rest of the faculty wishing him well. As Henderson stood there in the crowd of sensei, he suddenly realized that even though he had only just met him, he was sorry to see Professor Senbaru go.

The next afternoon, Henderson met Goya at the bus stop by the east gate of Uruma University and invited him to his apartment for a beer.

"Are you hungry, Goya-san?" asked Henderson as they walked up the street toward his apartment. "*Goya*," Henderson joked, "Isn't that a vegetable?"

Goya smiled. "People from Yamato say *nigauri*."

"How about some *soba*, Nigauri-san?"

They were walking along the street toward Henderson's apartment when he saw the old woman seated in the shade of her peach parasol on the familiar round metal spot.

Henderson turned to Goya. "Listen, can you help me for a minute? I want to ask this woman something."

"Do you know her?"

Henderson shook his head, "Not really, but I've asked her a few questions in Japanese, and she won't talk to me."

Goya looked doubtful as Henderson led him over to the old woman on her wooden stool.

"*Konnichi wa*," the two professors greeted the woman. She gazed up at them dreamily for a moment and then laughed.

Henderson smiled, "Ask her what her name is."

After a few attempts, the old woman finally focused on them for a moment and said, "Kame."

Henderson frowned and looked at Goya, "Isn't that the word for a cooking pot or a pan or something?"

"*Hai*," smiled Goya, "*mukashi wa*, ah, in the old days, girls were named after many things in the house. What is it? Maybe domestic tools."

"Wait a minute," said Henderson. "Women were named after kitchen utensils?"

"Yes," Goya nodded, "and animals for farm. My grandmother was Ushi. Cow."

Henderson bit his lip and silently considered family traditions and farm animals, and Goya turned back to the old woman and spoke rapidly in Japanese. After many questions, he discovered that Kame had lived in the area for most of her life. A few times, she said Yamato, the ancient name for the eight islands of Japan, and mentioned something about spinning thread that Goya didn't understand, but he was certain she had been raised in the neighborhood.

"She says she was born in this village," said Goya. Henderson tried to imagine the apartment buildings and concrete houses crowded along the narrow edge of the street as a village, and Goya continued, "I don't really speak Okinawan dialect. I haven't heard it much since my grandfather died. He spoke only Okinawan dialect, and we did not really talk. I understood him and did what he said, but that was all." Goya frowned, "She is not very … I don't what the word is."

"Lucid," offered Henderson gazing at the old woman's face, "clear."

"*So, so, so, so, so*," Goya agreed nodding his head enthusiastically. He spoke to the old woman again in a rough halting mix of Okinawan words and Japanese.

"She is talking about water and, what do you call them, buckets. No, maybe, pails."

Henderson didn't see much of a difference between buckets and pails and said, "Why is she talking about pails?"

"*Chotto*," Goya raised a hand to halt Henderson's questions and said, "*Izumi wa naka aru no desu ka?*" When Kame nodded, he looked down at the manhole cover skeptically, and Henderson could wait no longer.

"What?"

"She says the spring is down there."

Kneeling at the low table on the worn and shiny *tatami* mats of the restaurant, Henderson and Goya sat back as a woman brought their steaming bowls of soup from the kitchen. She bowed slightly, scooped her shoes back on her feet, and headed for the next table. Henderson smiled and nodded at her. Goya was already tilting his bowl for a taste.

"Did she mean *spring*, like 'April showers bring May flowers'?"

"No," Goya gave a puzzled smile, "the spring is water."

Both of the young professors had ordered *soki soba* at the restaurant, and Henderson dropped his chopsticks in his soup. "A spring like a well? A fountain?"

Goya, his mouth full of noodles, nodded, and pointed at Henderson with his chopsticks, "*Unn*."

Henderson sipped green tea meditatively. “There’s a spring in the sewer?”

Goya swallowed and sipped his own tea. “Yes, under the—what is it? Manhole cover. Yes, there is a spring, a fountain, where the villagers once gathered water.”

“Are you sure?”

Goya lifted another tangle of noodles to his lips and sucked them in. He shook his head.

“No?”

Goya shook his head again and continued chewing.

“You don’t know?”

Goya swallowed. He looked at Henderson seriously and said, “Yes, I am not sure.”

Henderson smiled, “Now that is truly second-language interference.”

Goya frowned and pointed at Henderson’s bowl, “You should eat. *Soba* is not good when cold.”

That night, after walking with Goya to the bus stop, Henderson stood at the top of the steps that led down the hillside from his apartment. In light reflected from a nearby vending machine, he saw the metal gleam of Kame’s manhole cover.

In one hand, Henderson held a flashlight, and in the other, a large screwdriver.

I must be crazy, he thought, but Henderson knew he would keep wondering about it, and finally, without actually making a decision, he started down the steps to the street. The night was quiet and hot. There was no breeze, but there were scents, good and bad, in the air everywhere. Bugs were buzzing around his head, and the banging of insects on the glass of outside lights sounded like someone rapping gently at a paper door.

Henderson checked his watch: 1:37 in the morning. There was little traffic this late, and he walked over to the manhole cover and flipped on the flashlight. The metal lid gleamed, and he thought briefly of what was in the ground beyond the round entrance, recalling Yomi, legendary Japanese Land of the Dead. The silence in the heat and the night was complete. He squatted in the street and shook his head. There are probably a billion cockroaches under this lid, Henderson thought, but he shoved the blade of the screwdriver between the rim and the lid and pried up the cover. Sliding it aside, he picked up the flashlight and pointed the beam downward.

There were plenty of cockroaches scattering in the light, big, but not as many as he expected as he played the beam around. The smell was musty but not too rank. He bent lower and looked around below the metal rim and stopped.

Henderson would not have believed it if he hadn’t seen it, and he still wasn’t certain he did believe it, even though he was looking right at it. There, carefully

constructed in a narrow little corner within the sharp angles of the sewer, was a shallow little concrete box about the size of a case of beer. The hand-fashioned walls of the basin were brimming with dark water sparkling in the light as the spring gently rippled the surface from below. A steady silver stream poured from a notch in the lip of the box, blackened with mold, into the dirty trickle through the sewer.

To Henderson, it looked as though the sewer had been built around the box, and he meditated on the little mystery as he gazed into the hole.

Once there was a spring where villagers had come to fill their buckets with water, now there was a manhole cover in the street over a fountainhead of fresh water welling in an unused cistern emptying into a sluggish stream of dirty gray water. Kame knew, and she had come every day. Henderson sat and stared, pondering what the old woman knew. The city planners had ordered a village spring walled in a sewer, the engineers had designed the drains, and the construction workers had done the job, and Kame had still come every day.

In October, the tassels atop the tall stalks of *susuki* silvered in the setting sun. The hawks returned to Okinawa, but Kame came no more to sit on the manhole cover in the street. Henderson never stopped watching for her as the days turned gray and rainy for winter, but he never saw her again. By May, Henderson was sure the old woman was gone. In the newly opened supermarket, three gleaming stories high in a field where sugar cane grew the year before, he saw Kame's surly daughter, but he never spoke to her. Rika refused to acknowledge him, and he never asked what had become of Kame.

Henderson contemplated the shiny disks in the street as he walked back to his apartment with the thin straps of a flimsy white plastic bag of groceries cutting into the fingers of each hand. Circles. The round was the heart of Japan. From that rainy season, he never passed that metal lid without imagining the red circle on the Japanese flag as a brightly painted manhole cover set securely in asphalt under the swift noisy narrow traffic on the streets of Japan. Below the wheels, beneath the clatter of the metal lid shifting in the rush over the road, within the musty dark below, clear, fresh water rose bright and sweet from the earth and seeped silently into sewage.

Moriso Teraoka

LET ME FIGHT CHICKEN

"*Aisose! Putagenamo*," Benny De Coscos cussed his son while Junior was holding a fighting rooster. Benny was doing a bit of stitching on his champion fighter.

What happened? I wondered and walked across the street to their side.

"Junior never hold my rooster good, and I wen poke the needle in my hand," Benny said.

Benny's champion rooster sustained a slash the day before while fighting a challenger somewhere in Waimanalo. The cut was on the right breast and was deep and required suturing to prevent infection.

"What happen to the other rooster?" I asked.

"My bird was real lucky yesterday. I thought he was going die," Benny started.

"How come he was lucky? I thought the chicken was a good fighter," I asked.

"Yea, my rooster, he good fighter, but he was lucky anyway. The other chicken was little bit more big, but I wen take my chance for my bird to fight him. I wen think that if we win I going get rich."

"But how come he was lucky to win?" I pressed Benny for an explanation.

"Dad, tell Papa how our chicken won," Junior interceded.

"Okay, okay, I tell you the whole story. The place in Waimanalo where we fight chicken no have a pit, but the chicken fight on top of a stage about two feet high."

"Why like that?" I asked.

"So that everybody can see the fight. Otherwise, only the guys in front can see what happen," Benny said, and continued. "Well anyway, the first time the chicken went for each other, you know how they fly high with the legs in front

and the knife tied to the leg—the other bird wen cut my bird here…" he pointed to the slash on the breast.

"I wen think my bird was going to lose, but the next time they went for each other, the other bird was near the edge of the stage, and when he wen fly up and came down, he miss the stage and wen land on the ground. The bird wen get up and was flying up to the stage.

"That is when my bird wen get lucky, and he was smart too. When the other rooster wen fly up and was near the top of the stage, the head was just showing when my bird wen fly up and slash the neck and the blood wen fly all over the place. My bird wen cut the main blood vessel. The rooster wen die right away," Benny proudly retold the event.

"But …" Benny paused, "my bird was weak from the cut on his breast…and the only way my bird can win was to peck the other bird. The other bird was dead, and mine was still alive, but the judge not going to say who the winner was until the one still alive can peck the other bird. Anyway, the rule is that the owner of the dead chicken suppose to pick up his dead bird and give the winning bird the chance to peck his bird. I had to wait five minutes before my bird wen find the strength to peck the dead bird. I tell you, that five minutes was the longest five-minute wait for me. But at last, my bird wen peck the dead bird and the judge said that my bird wen win the contest. I wen win plenty money."

Curious, I asked Benny if they were ever bothered by the police raiding their chicken fights. Benny almost braggingly replied, "We pay for protection, and we never get into trouble with the police. And anyway the guy that boss this place have his friends watch the road, and if somebody they never see before drive up the road, they get on the cell phone, and let the boss know right away. That way we stop the fighting and take the knife off from the chicken leg."

"You know, Benny, when I was small kid and live in the plantation camp, the Filipinos fight chicken every Sunday in the volleyball court. Sometime us kids see the detective walk through the Japanese camp. When we see that we run to the Filipino camp, and they stop everything. The policemen never catch anybody. The Filipinos use to buy soda water for us when we help them."

"So you see chicken fight too?" Benny asked.

"When I was small kid in Wainaku Mill Camp," I replied, and continued, "other Filipinos came from other camps in the plantation and brought their fighting chicken. Wainaku Camp II, Amaulu, Piihonua and even the Filipinos from Papaikou, Pepeekeo, and Onomea use to come to our mill camp to fight their chicken.

"The men that ran the chicken-fight was smart too. They hung the volleyball net over the court to make believe that all the guys came to watch a volleyball game. They never fool anybody.

"Another thing I remember was that Naguwa-san from the Japanese camp use to make knives that was tied to the chicken leg. Naguwa-san used worn out

flat files and had the file annealed so that he could shape and make the knives. Many Filipinos bought the knives from Naguwa-san because his knives were very sharp.

"By the way, Benny, the winner get to take the dead chicken home to make *adobo*, right?" I asked.

"No, we cannot eat the chicken because get steroid, and the meat is contaminated," Benny said. "We just bury the dead chicken," he added.

"I know the winner use to take the dead chicken and make *adobo* and eat the chicken when I was living in Wainaku," I said.

"It is in my blood, after all, this is a cultural thing, and I am not a Filipino if I don't like to fight chicken," Benny said.

Benny raises four to six roosters at any time. He gets his fighters from a friend in Waimanalo. His fighters are well fed and get their steroid injections regularly.

Fully aware that cock fighting is illegal and a person can be charged with a cruelty to an animal offense, Benny and his peers are careful that outsiders never witness their events.

"I don't know why this cock fighting is bad. We take care the birds, we feed them the best chicken feed, and this is what us Filipino do best. We no bother anybody, and we no make trouble for anybody," Benny defended his passion and felt discriminated against.

"Anyway, we never give anybody trouble. We only fight chicken among ourselves, and we bet only with each other. This is almost like people playing poker and playing to win with money, and this thing called social gambling is not a crime? I don't understand."

As his rationale continued, "Everybody not suppose to bother us with their ideas. The Humane Society thinks we bad people, but we not bad people. People think we not civilize because we use knife and have them killed. I don't understand. This thing is in our blood. Our culture. Anyway, we not going change in another thousand years.

"And the state government, they make law that we cannot send for fighting rooster from the mainland, but you think this goin stop us?

"One thing for sure, Albano, Bunda, Cayetano, Cachola and all the guys from Kalihi, Ewa, and Waimanalo better not make law that going to stop us from raising chicken. They make law that the rooster cannot cock-o-do-da-do five o'clock in the morning because they going wake the city folks.

"Good thing the roosters, they don't know how to read."

Lee A. Tonouchi

DA TREE UPRISING

(Dis poem inspired by true story is dedicated to my friend Jolynn wea in one alternate universe dis all fo' really happened. Fo' really.)

Wen I wuz young
I thought I could count
at least up to
UKUBILLION
… times ten
but den
I found out
in math class
I could only count
up …
to two.

See, cuz I dunno why
but one day
I wuz starting for sing
dat counting song from *Sesame Street*
y'know da one dat goes,
"One-two-tree
fo-fai-six
seven-eight-NINE-ten.
Ten-nine-eight-seven-six-fai-fo-tree-two-one."

So dea I wuz
counting
jus to myself,

"One … Two … Tree."
And das wen Mrs. Ritchey heard
and she came ova
for tell me, "WRONG!"

"Fo." "WRONG!"
"Fai." "WRONG!"

And it's not like she
wuz even familiarize wit
dat *Sesame Street* song,
so I nevah catch
why she
wuz cutting my
line.

"It's
one
two
tHHHree
fouRRRRRR
fiVVVVVVVVVe,"
she wen tell
wit her full-on enunciations
and facial dramaticalizations
like she wuz going for one Oscar
and we not talking
like da one from da rubbish can.

And
so from dat day on she
decided for go make da rule
whoevah sed tree,
tree times
for our math class
had fo' stay and pick up rubbish
aftah school,
which to me wuz kinda funny

cuz most-a da rubbish
wuz by
da tree.

Pretty soon I came
Mrs. Ritchey's fav-orite
student
for pick on—
ne'mine I had highest
on da testeses she gave.
She nevah care for my questioning
her questions
about how come HER questions
is always about
trains we nevah had,
snow we nevah seen,
birds we nevah even heard of,
and stuff
most of us
couldn't really relate to.

Eventually she came tired
of me and all my
HOW COME DIS
and HOW COME DAT kine questions,
until eventually she wen ask
if I ever learned da word "WHY?"
So I said, "O, how come?"
which for some reason made
her SHNAPS—
"If you don't know HOW
to ask a question,
maybe it's better if you
don't ask
at all."
So I pretty much kept quiet
most of da time.

One day
I wuz keeping MY questions
to MYself, but
Mrs. Ritchey already had me down

for two trees
which kinda upset me
cuz I was talking to my friend
and I wuz really wuz talking
about trees
and how come
if wuz supposed to be autumn
den how come our leaves
wuz all green
and not orange
like how dey had ’em
in da word problem.

I toll Mrs. Ritchey
but she nevah believe.
So I couldn’t take it anymore,
I wen decide for take one stand
and raise my hand
for volunteer da answer
to her question.

“Mrs. Ritchey,”
I wen tell.
“Hundred divided by tree
is tirty TREE
point TREE
TREE
TREE
TREE
TREE
TREE …”
and pretty soon
wen I said “TREE”
da class sed [cue da call & response] “TREE”
“TREE” “TREE”
“TREE” “TREE”
“TREE” “TREE”
and if
we could’ve gone on forevahs,
we would’ve won
cuz Mrs. Ritchey,
she wuz kinda old

so she probably nevah have
dat much time left.

But pre-soon da math class next door
heard our class
and pre-soon dey wuz doing ’em too,
and den da next class,
and da next class
and even da students from da next buildings
even though those classes
wuz all English and social studies,
until eventually people could hear
from all da way up da mountain
to way ova in da next valley,
you could hear
our whole school
chanting
TREE
TREe
TRee
Tree
tree
along
wit me.

And now you know da story
of how come
everytime you go
Punahou school
da campus always clean.

Jean Yamasaki Toyama

RECIPROCITY

Mamoko slid the slender ink stick forward then backward making sure that her even strokes made no ripples in the jet black liquid in the shallow well of her ink stone, just like he had taught her. Energy forward had to be balanced with a gentle backward force. She tried to remember how this motion was to smooth out her own edges, the inner side of her so often criticized by her grandmother. The back and forth was to silken and soothe in preparation for the characters that were to flow from the tip of her brush. That's what he taught her, wasn't it? Writing had always had a calming effect on her, a means by which she stayed connected. Her calligraphy tools were among the few things brought from Japan that had any meaning. The black *sumi*, the stone *suzuri* and *fude* and, of course, the paper, her modest supply of paper, made by her sensei. She had been a good student, assured of a future as a teacher in spite of her grandmother's misgivings. Her sensei had praised her. He urged her to write. Now thousands of miles away she read the words she had just written.

> I dip my brush
> into the ocean
> I write your name
> it tastes of blood.

Her *fude* ran swiftly up and down the handmade paper. For one final time she dipped her brush into the *suzuri* and let the excess ink spill from the tip of her brush into the well. She heard nothing, saw nothing but the strokes rising from the page.

> After my bath
> I see steam rise

from the skin
you touch no more

You said, don't speak,
with your eyes
so I fell silent
and sang like the autumn
crickets
my legs against yours

No, this is bad, very bad. He would have denounced these images, railed against the rhythm. Too many syllables. Condemned the images. Foreign, absolutely strange. She brushed aside a flake of soot that fell from her hair onto the white paper. A black smear appeared. Soot from the sugar mill everywhere, she thought, as she noticed flakes on the floor she had just mopped. She felt a twisting inside.

"Not here," Mamoko whispered as Tsuda grabbed her breast. "I don't like the smell of the stink." Tsuda held on to her. "What do you think I am?" she said as she pushed him away. Tsuda looked befuddled. She had pulled him into the shadows, now she pushed him away. He let go.

She saw him look at her when the whole camp had gathered to pound *mochi* for the New Year. Unlike the other women dark from toiling in the cane fields, she had just arrived, skin pale as her white muslin dress, attire which made her more striking. She came to marry Yamazaki, a suitable match according to her grandmother. She thought otherwise. But last year the Yamazaki patriarch had acted as go-between for her own mother's belated marriage, a fortunate event for her family but not for Mamoko, the illegitimate daughter raised by a wary grandmother. Masaru was from the farming side of the family. He looked the peasant, not like Tsuda, handsome in an arrogant, less eager to please way.

As the sharp odor of uric acid penetrated her nostrils she smiled to herself at the small irony dictated by chance. She had waited for a chance to see Tsuda alone. Now they were in one of the dark stalls of an outhouse. "Masaru has to go to Līhu'e tonight. He won't be coming home till tomorrow night. The lights will be out."

That day was the first time she had addressed any words to Tsuda. There was no coyness in her voice. She wondered at her own directness. Perhaps her grandmother was right.

Marriage to Masaru Yamazaki was neither more nor less than she had expected. He acted awed by her education, her calligraphy, and her books. He seemed not bothered by her wayward past, but perhaps he did not know. The go-between may not have had to disclose everything; after all, her education and

her status, however marred, were still higher than his. After her sensei had found another student to teach tanka and haiku, to fill another head with forbidden aspirations, Mamoko had come to her senses and her education would not go to waste. Her grandmother had been persuasive. There was no future for her in Japan. As Masaru became accustomed to her ways and she was able to maintain a measure of her self, she accepted her fate. Before long she became a kind of camp scrivener, writing homesick letters, arranging for brides, pleading for more time to pay debts. Not everyone was illiterate, but there were enough people needing her services to keep Mamoko and her husband in fresh eggs and vegetables. She performed her kindnesses like any good neighbor, but everyone knew that the small services required a similar gesture, if not in kind, certainly in value. So a dozen eggs would be acceptable for a letter to a future bride but some fish or a cut of pork was to be added for a petition to a magistrate. Mamoko's poetry may have turned foreign, but her ability to calculate and keep accounts remained fiercely Japanese. She knew how to maintain the balance between dark and white just as she managed the spaces in her calligraphy. Too little here meant more there.

Before the evening sun had set, Mamoko walked to Māhāʻulepū, where the edge of the cane fields met the cliffs overlooking the Pacific. A small jut of land broke into steep cliffs. A few months ago she had thought of jumping but according to her calculations that act would have been unbalanced. Instead, she now decided to throw her *suzuri* and brushes off into the blue waters. She even smashed her ink stick into shards. Her last poems had frightened her; she had lost control over her words.

Returning home she saw the soot-covered dirt around the bathhouse. Mamoko stopped and gazed beyond the cluster of houses into the sugarcane. The bright orange nasturtiums growing on the stone wall between the cane and the house stood out against the prickly green leaves. Last night Tsuda had slipped into her darkened bedroom as he often did during Masaru's absence. He told her how beautiful she was, so different from the others, how he had wanted a bride but had no money to bring one over, how he had been amazed by her invitation. Mamoko listened, while the wheels of her internal abacus whirred.

Squatting down in front of the blazing bath fire, Mamoko clutched the precious calligraphy paper he had made for her. It was rolled up and tied with a red kimono cord. She carefully released the knot, and it unexpectedly unfurled onto the sooty dirt. A fine dust floated up. She let out one gasp and then without a glance crushed the first sheet of cursive writing into the flames. She didn't read the words or even look at the graceful curve of characters in the white spaces. Her husband would be returning soon, and he would want to bathe.

Joe Tsujimoto

ALL HALLOWS' EVE

Sometimes it is difficult to say with any conviction that, like a dream or wish or reverie, something actually happened; that your recollection had substance, like a bruise or a burn; that your memory, at times as elusive and deceptive and fleeting as sleep, was genuine witness to a physical past, like the film in a bank or a courtroom camera…the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you, God.

I was with Adrien in his 11th floor apartment in Butler Hall on Morningside Drive overlooking the dissolving white rooftops of Harlem. Fog. Thickening fog. Curling and shifting and expanding in all directions like ouzo or milk softly immersed into a glass of water that was the sky. It was dusk, the rooftops steaming with gauze, silent as a city recently sacked, like Rome, like Carthage, the streets smoking; and I knew, soon, the demons and ghouls and fairy tale princesses, Snow White and the Mummy and Frankenstein, would populate the streets; and the long fog, palpable as wool, would seep into the nostrils and the mouths and ears and eyes, diminishing distance and sounds and smells and proximity; and the one color would be the vague orange of jack o' lanterns and lamp lights and flashlights and headlights aglow in a halo of watery tomato soup, swirling, rising, like damp steam from gratings and gutters and sewer covers and the wet streets cracked open like blood red pomegranates.

Fittingly, Adrien had lit dozens of red candles and propped them here and there throughout the living room, on coffee and side tables, on the bookshelves and the radiator, on the floor and window sills, as though it were a wake in memory of the dead, his living room a chapel.

"It's a sign," Adrien said, almost in a whisper, as we watched the rising, wispy trails of fog and the frayed edges of cloud wrap themselves around anten-

nas and chimney pots.

"A sign?"

He was full-blooded American Indian, or at least his mom was. She was a single mother, a cripple, her left arm rounded off half way down her forearm, her hair thick and black as licorice, always remonstrating, reminding Adrien of something or other in a scolding voice. His mother was always aloof with us; we never saw her smile. While all the boys craved Adrien's sister. In my dreams she always appeared in braids and moccasins, otherwise naked, but in silhouette, dancing in front of a fire. Her eyes, like Adrien's, were black as night and just as intimidating. It was like she dared you to speak. Bruce and Donny and the other big boys in the neighborhood would always fight with Adrien, who always seemed to instigate the fights, who seemed desperate to prove something to someone, who, though a good boxer, always seemed to fare the worst. Secretly, I always rooted for Adrien to win. He was different like me, only he was more different.

"An omen."

"An omen of what? What're you talking about?"

"It's Halloween."

"So?"

The fog was creeping through Morningside Park, rising, climbing with wooly feet the stone walls, crawling over the black iron fencing between the pillars, soon meandering across the Drive, scaling the sides of the buildings as if climbing the fire 'scapes. Adrien was staring through the window at the darkening fog, his eyes cold, colorless, fixated on nothing. He seemed to recite from memory something that, perhaps, was drilled into him, becoming a mouthpiece, for the voice was not Adrien's. He never spoke like this before, not with this voice, not with these words, some I never even heard before. I mean, he was just sixteen, only a year and a half older than me; he could have been a shaman or witch doctor.

"The dead rise to visit the living. Curious as wolves. Late tonight, swear to god, pray to god, you will hear them howl, blaspheme, and screech, venting their succubus souls, pent like nuns and priests in the basement of churches, hungry for chocolate and viscera."

"C'mon, cut the crap," I said with mild trepidation.

"Once a year, in the safety of pumpkins, we choose, like candy, our own aberrations, play out our secret perversions in the sweetest of grave clothes—"

"You're sick, Adrien."

"Chalking our faces, we rise, like violet gas, from crypts and sepulchers and parade as spiders and walking trees, hoisting illuminated baskets of marzipan skulls."

"Where'd you learn this stuff?" I said, my voice rising. But he wouldn't turn his face from the window. "*Hey*, you hear me?!"

"Under a hunchback moon, we chirp and gambol in cartoon fright, paying

reverence to the dark, to the neighbor, Mr. Kenji—" he said, turning his head to me upon a swivel, "—ignorant of his guests, that Mr. Kenji, too, is among the dead, that we are his escorts. For starters," he gestured flamboyantly, as if ripping off a mask, "I open my face and show him my brain!--hahahahahahahahaha!" He laughed hysterically, then coughed uncontrollably, as the fog appeared at the window like ectoplasm.

"You're crazy, Adrien," I said, anxiously.

"Hahahahahahahhahah," he laughed, eyes watery, saliva collecting at the corner of his mouth, trying to catch his breath.

"And damn stupid."

"Look at the moon," he said. It was hidden behind a shroud, barely glowing, like an orange-yellow hall light in an old, musty, dilapidated apartment smelling of old people and decrepitude. The glow seemed more frightful than the darkness. "Tell me *that's* not weird," he added.

"*You're* weird."

Then he turned to look at me; he seemed to have regained his self-possession. But, odd, this Adrien was different from the Adrien I knew, even the Adrien that just chanted about Halloween. Though usually serious, this Adrien was a stranger, someone remote from me, peering at me darkly from a distance as if trying to figure me out, trying to place me; his face and eyes, void of any intimacy, any familiarity even, told me that I was not his friend, that I had never been his friend, that he had no friends, that he was both puzzled and suspicious of my unaccountable presence, that in fact he was annoyed with me but would suffer my company in his living room out of spite. It was as though he had wakened from some hypnotic state and things had gone awry, and he had changed personalities. This was no joke; he wasn't given to joking. Nor was he an actor. This was more than spooky, I wanted to go home. But there was no graceful way to take my leave, and I didn't want to rile him. I kept hoping that Sully would show up as he had promised. There seemed something ferocious just below the taur, tawny skin of Adrien's face that frightened me, that threatened me, that at any untoward movement, any hasty glance, any unexpected look or intake of breath would unleash, in a flash, savagery.

I sat tensely in an overstuffed chair, measuring Adrien's profile, the sharp, high cheekbone of his Indian face. Then suddenly it didn't matter if I was there at all, here in this suddenly foreign, suddenly crowded room. And I knew my nerves could not endure very long at the edge of his indifference; I wanted to slap him hard across his face, cut his cheek and bloody his nose, growing in savagery myself. *Hey, remember me?!* Make him assume that familiar boxer's pose, jab me in the arm, in the chest. Whatever, but I just couldn't sit any longer, I had to move, had to get to my feet, as Adrien stared at the window—when he said, in a whisper, "It's dark now—"

When the door bell rang.

Hope it's Sully. "I'll get it," I said, suddenly relieved.

"Wait, take that basket of candy with you," he said matter-of-factly. He seemed to be himself again, though bloodshot and tired. "Probably some trick-o'-treaters. Little kids."

When I walked into the kitchen, I said to Adrien, "Some big kids, too." Sully and Joe were at my elbow, Sully sucking on an orange lollipop, Joe lifting from a paper bag a bottle of Chartreuse, a green liqueur of cloying sweetness. Before the long night would end—or was it the next night?—all four of us would get sick-to-our-stomach drunk, retching and heaving ourselves dry.

"This should clear the fog from your head," said Joe. Adrien was by the counter beneath the glass shelves, filling the floppy foot of a long, black sock with all-purpose flour. You'd whip the loaded sock around like a sling and, whap, you'd thump people on the head, on the shoulders, across the back, and the poor victim, smarting from the blow, would be covered by a cloud of white flour, humiliated at the same time. We were hoping to ambush some Harlem Baldies or Sinners from 104th Street, the Puerto Ricans from whom we learned the trick the hard way.

"Where's mine?" said Sully, peeking over Adrien's shoulder.

"This is it. The rest are on the kitchen table," he said, motioning with his head.

We nestled our weapons in our sweatshirt pockets, pulled hoods over our heads, and descended in the elevator, Joe and Sully getting off on the first floor. We'd meet them at the corner; we would flash our torches toward them twice. Adrien and I pushed open the elevator door into the dimness of the basement and the damp smell of garbage, masonry, and the stone corridors that, in my mind, led every which way beneath a convolution of various pipes, to the waste room, the humming boiler room, the coal room, mysterious rooms behind black iron doors, Adrien leading the way, trying one door after another like a burglar or grave robber in the underground vaults of an old church. Adrien was moving swiftly now, while I dawdled at the threshold of one door after another, wanting to see for myself the dusty tools and spare parts in the workroom, the black cat, the count chained to iron staples in the rough hewn wall—when I opened the door to a room full of cigarette smoke and several old Asian men playing cards, who stopped to stare at me, frozen at the door. *What the hell? Who were these people?*

I closed the door and saw Adrien's leg as he turned the corner at the end of the corridor. "Wait!" I called. I had to hurry.

I could hear the faint sounds of music, rock 'n' roll, growing louder as I rushed down the corridor and turned the corner into a low-ceilinged, darkened room, where two or three shadows slow danced to music from a boxy record player. Bridget? Fernando? The basement air was heavy with musk and perfume and perspiration. And I was thinking, *How come they didn't invite me?*, when Adrien waved to me from the opposite door. No one greeted me as I wound my

way across the floor; I got the sense that this wasn't a happy gathering.

Along another corridor, I stopped before a door left ajar and peered around it to find myself facing the foot of a brass bed in which an old man was covered up to his chin, his head sunk on several pillows meant to prop it up, his eyes closed. Another man, dressed in a white smock, approached the bed from the right, as if from off screen, and placed a drinking glass upside down over the man's nose. From my position I could not tell if the glass fogged. When the man in the white smock said, without turning his head, "If you'd excuse us, please," I shut the door as quietly as I could, then ran down the hall in my sneakers as fast as I could to tell Adrien, and burst out the door into the alley, into the street, Into the endless fog. *Adrien*.

But I lost him. I mean, you couldn't see six feet in front of your face, so thick was the fog, while shining the flashlight made visibility even worse, constricting the space before me as though I were in a cocoon, my lungs constrained; it was hard to breathe, like tasting fleece or breathing chaff.

"Adrien!" I half shouted, as though he were close by. "Adrien, where the hell are you?" I was stumbling about blindly, tangled in the fog, whose density, like damask or corduroy, muffled my floundering. My god, I couldn't see my own hands. I then remembered and flashed twice in the direction I thought was the corner, where Sully and Joe were supposed to meet us. Orienting myself with the hard edge of the building and the faint glow of the street lights along the Drive, I flashed twice again, but again there was no response, even after calling their names, which the fog seemed to swallow.

I walked toward the end of the building, sidling along the wall, which seemed interminable. And slowly my head was filled with fog, a down counterpane comforting my brain, so that I felt a kind of equilibrium between outside and inside and I felt oddly calm. Then a voice within my own skull began whispering to me, as if the speaker and myself were sharing the same dark alcove at the far end of my consciousness, someone whispering to me in Japanese, I thought. And the idea rose in my mind, like a ghost, that the speaker was my father, who had been dead now for nearly three years. But the voice remained an incoherent whisper, though it grew in its insistence, and as it grew, I grew in my fear that I was growing mad, going crazy, until another voice intervened. It was my maternal grandmother, who was also dead, only more recently, and she was speaking to me in Japanese, and somehow I understood that my father loved me very deeply, that I was the most important thing in his life, that my father, not one given to words or talk, wanted to tell me that he always believed that I would thrive in this world and would be worthy of this life given to me and that I no longer needed his assurance; that, also, I would not feel saddened when, in the pursuit of my own life, with her blessing, through the years we would be apart, my mother and I would grow estranged, an idea that frightened me, and I could feel myself shaking. Then I could hear Adrien.

“I told you to keep up,” he said. I was fending off the light with my right hand.

“What happened?” Sully said, switching off his torch.

“I guess he tripped,” Adrien said.

Joe and Sully got me to my feet. “You okay?” said Joe.

“Yeah, yeah. Just got this splitting headache,” I said, roughly pushing his arms away. “Just give me some room, already.”

“Wo, hold on, Kenj,” said Sully, about to put a hand on my shoulder, then thought better of it.

Then I stared into the night, watched as the fog, from moment to moment, receded down the Drive, then retreated around the corner, and I caught myself. “Hey, look. I’m sorry. It’s just this head, man.”

“Forget it,” said Adrien. “Pick up your sock. The night’s not over.”

“It is for me,” I said. “Look, I better go home.”

“C’mon, Kenj,” said Sully.

“Seriously, I gotta go lie down.”

And I did. And for the longest time before falling asleep, I replayed that voice in my head, remembering what my father wanted me to know, and I would replay it again and again throughout my youth. There was nothing I could not do.

Forgetting my mother would come years later.

Cedric Yamanaka

THE SINCEREST FORMS OF FLATTERY

One Night

You know this is gonna be a bad idea, Baby.

You should never have agreed to attend your ten-year high school reunion. The plan has bad news written all over it. But your agent, Natalie Boucher, insisted. It'll be a great public relations move, she said. It'll show the world that you—Ernie Pacheco—have not forgotten where you'd come from. Sure, you had to cancel a couple of choice gigs, hot parties, big money opportunities, to squeeze this trip in your schedule. But Natalie said it'll be worth it. So here you are, flying in from Las Vegas. You haven't been back to Hawai'i in years.

You won't have much time in the islands. You'll hit the reunion, shake a few hands, then hop back on the first plane home.

Heck, Baby, you have things to do.

(Now and Then There's) A Fool Such as I

The reunion is held at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in Waikīkī. You dress low key—black shirt, pants. The emcee is none other than Tito Nakata—former quarterback—now some disc jockey at a Jawaiian radio station. He calls lucky numbers, tells lame jokes, tries to force the crowd to sing the alma mater. Everyone eats it up. You have only one question.

Where's Asa Furtado, your old flame?

Knowing Asa, she has to be here somewhere. She wouldn't miss the class reunion for the world. You wonder what she looks like now. Is she married? Does she have kids? You wonder where she works. She always wanted to be an astronaut.

Slowly but surely, folks walk up to you.

"Eh, Ernie," they say. "Long time no see. So what are you doing now?"

"I'm in the entertainment business," you say. "Vegas, Hollywood …"

"Haolewood? No act, Bull! Whoah! What are you? A movie star? Singer? Porn star?"

"I'm an Elvis tribute artist."

"Say what?"

"I pay tribute to the King. On stage."

"You're an Elvis impersonator? You heard that, everybody! Ernie is a fricking Elvis impersonator!"

Some of the assholes actually have the nerve to laugh. Do they think it's easy being an Elvis Tribute Artist? Hell, no. It's hard work. You gotta stay in shape if you want to honor the young Elvis, stay out of shape if you choose to memorialize the later Elvis. You have to remember words to a large catalogue of songs, feel comfortable with karate choreography. And last, but not least, you gotta know where to purchase the right accessories. The wrong jump suit will make or break a tribute.

One moron asks you to sing. Soon the whole mess of them are whooping and hollering. "Sing, Elvis!" they scream. You politely decline. But they won't take no for an answer. Finally, you decide to give them a treat. You get up on stage and hit them with a dose of "Blue Suede Shoes." Do you resemble the King? Not really. But folks say during your performances—as you wiggle your hips, sneer and flash shaka signs—you slowly but surely morph into The Man.

On stage, you search the adoring masses for your missing Asa. You don't see her. But at one point during "Love Me Tender," someone throws a hotel room key at you. Pay dirt! This could've only come from Asa!

After the concert, they show a slide show about your class. There is not one picture of Asa. You find this odd. Not one picture of the Senior Class President, National Honor Society President, track star? How can this be? It's like she never existed.

As you try to make an early exit from the festivities, Bruce Lim—wrestler turned comptroller—stops you.

"Eh, look averybody," he says. "Elvis is leaving da building!"

Are You Lonesome Tonight?

But Bruce is mistaken. You're not leaving the building. You're heading for room 1412, the number on the key thrown at your feet. That is one of the perks of your Elvis gig. Back when you were just Ernie Pacheco, living in a duplex near Kam Bowl, nobody threw keys at you. You lived in a dump. For some reason, the house next door always seemed to smell like fingernail polish. Your father said a beautiful girl lived there, a manicurist who modeled her fingers for fashion mag-

azines. You never saw any beautiful girls around that house.

"Howzit, handsome."

You walk into the hotel room. A hot chick sits on the bed, removing her stockings. It isn't Asa.

"Sweetheart," she says. "You remember me?"

"No, ma'am," you say.

"Ma'am? Ooooh, you're so polite, honey. Just like Da King. I love Da King, you know. Come closer, darling. My name is Denise."

Denise grabs your hand. She has the softest hands. Hands, you imagine, that could've belonged to the manicurist, finger model next door. You kiss. Her lips are soft, inviting. She tastes like Doublemint gum.

"I don't remember a Denise in school," you whisper.

"That's because, back then, I was Dennis."

"Dennis Correa?" you say, pulling back. "Math League Champion?"

"That's da one, Studly," says Dennis. "I bet you're probably wondering where Asa is. You two were quite da couple. Then you dumped her for the bright lights of Las Vegas. Ain't that right, sweetie?"

"Yeah. Afraid so. So what happened to her? Where is she?"

"So you never heard?"

"No. Heard what?"

Denise leans over and whispers in your ear, dramatically. Her highlighted hair smells like Vidal Sassoon and cigarette smoke.

Don't Be Cruel

You guess if you must blame somebody for this fiasco, you might as well start with Elvis. Elvis and your Dad.

As a kid, you tried everything to impress the Old Man. You got good grades in school, worked as the editor of the school newspaper, was named treasurer of the Key Club.

"Key Club?" you remember Dad saying. "What da hell is that? You guys pick locks, or something?"

Needless to say, he was not impressed. That was the problem. Nothing impressed him. Actually, you take that back, one thing did impress him. Big time. Your Dad worked as a security guard. You remember the night that forever changed his life. And yours, too. He worked the big Elvis concert at the Honolulu International Center and came home singing Elvis songs. He went to the old Kress at the Kamehameha Shopping Center and bought all his records, hung posters on the wall, sat hypnotized in front of the TV during reruns of *Blue Hawaii*.

You realized Dad liked Elvis better than you.

That's when you came up with your plan. If you became Elvis, Dad'd like

you, too. Mom didn't want to become Elvis to win Dad's approval. She just up and left, hooking up with a mailman who didn't give a rat's ass about Elvis.

"Son," said Dad, one day. You were in Dad's car, the one with the KISA bumper sticker and the dice dangling from the rearview mirror. You sang along with an Elvis song on the radio. "Heartbreak Hotel." "You're pretty good. You sound like da King."

And that's all it took.

Dad signed you up for singing lessons, taught you how to play the guitar, enrolled you in karate school. He combed your hair like The King, bought you your first pair of bell-bottom pants.

"You have a gift," he said, one night, as the fingernail polish smell from the house next door drifted into your living room. "A special talent."

"Is the manicurist lady working on her fingernails again, Dad?" you said.

"Never mind, son."

Memphis

Things to do in Memphis:

1) Graceland
2) Beale Street, birthplace of the blues
3) Barbecue

One day, Dad came home with the biggest smile on his face. Bigger than the time he won four hundred bucks shooting craps with Reynold and the boys.

"This is your lucky day, Ernie," said Dad. "We're going on a trip."

"Where?" you said, excited. "Disneyland? Magic Mountain? Dodger Stadium?"

"Better. We're going to visit Elvis's home, Graceland, in Memphis."

"Oh. Uh, thanks a lot, Pops."

So Dad and you flew to Memphis and took a bus to Graceland. You walked with other tourists through Elvis's living room, music room, kitchen room, trophy room. The place didn't do much for you. All shag rugs and mirrors and funky couches. After the tour of the house, Dad told you to follow him.

"I want you to meet somebody," he said.

"Who?" you said.

"Da King."

You thought Dad was actually gonna introduce you to Elvis. What would you say? Instead, you both wound up standing in front of Elvis's grave, in a place called the Meditation Garden.

"Elvis is dead?" you said.

No one else was around. It was just you, Dad, and The King. You wondered why the other tourists in your group declined to pay their respects, opting instead for the souvenir stands searching for T-shirts and shot glasses.

"Sir," said Dad, with more reverence than you'd ever heard in his voice. "This is my son, Ernie. He is going to dedicate his life to you. Is that cool? Give us a sign."

The whole thing felt a little creepy. Suddenly, a wind blew and—from nowhere—a smell of sweet, musky cologne emerged.

"You smell that?" said Dad, sniffing the air like a dog around a T-bone steak. "Da King is giving us his blessing."

"Oh."

"This whole trip is kinda mystical kine, Ernie," said Dad, wiping a tear from his eye. "I was thinking about it. You and Elvis have da same initials. E.P. You both have five letters in your first name. You both have seven letters in your last names."

"So?"

"So? You think that's coincidence?"

"Yeah. Planny people have da initials E.P. Planny people have five letters in …"

"You got a lot to learn, boy, about da ways of da world."

For the Good Times

"My Dad is weird," you told Asa.

"He's not weird," said Asa. "He's kinda cool, actually."

You both sat at your favorite hangout, Makapu'u Beach, watching the waves break and the hang gliders soar above the lighthouse.

You remember Asa back in those good old days. How the sea wind blew through her hair. How her eyes were as green as *naupaka* leaves. How she body-surfed with one hand out, like she was reaching for treasures in the breaking wave. She had her entire life ahead of her, and you knew she was destined for good things.

Heck, Asa'd tackled unimaginable odds. She grew up in Kuhio Park Terrace. Her Dad was doing time for cracking safes. Her Mom worked two jobs and raised four kids. One brother was in a gang, running drugs. Another brother was dying of AIDS. Asa's sister worked as a prostitute, standing on street corners in front of the Nu'uanu mortuaries.

"You know what I'm gonna be, Ernie?" she said. "An astronaut. I want to fly in space. See stars and moons and planets. I wanna be the first astronaut from KPT."

That's when you noticed the creepy-looking old guy standing by the showers taking pictures. You figured it was some pervert after Asa. You were wrong. The guy was after you. He introduced himself as Flash Peterson, talent scout. Flash Peterson's cologne smelled like the musky winds swirling around the Meditation Garden at Graceland.

The rest, as they say, is history. You said goodbye to Asa and flew up to Vegas. Flash Peterson set you up. Your career paying tribute to Elvis was born. Soon you were playing gigs—church groups, fundraisers, conventions, wedding receptions, birthday parties, dinner shows.

"That's my boy," wrote Dad, on a postcard with Diamond Head and Waikīkī Beach.

It was your eighteenth birthday.

(You're The) Devil in Disguise

You have to ask three different people for directions before you find the place. In 'Ewa Beach, past the golf courses and the strip malls. Basically, in the middle of nowhere. A guard waves you onto the dusty property and you park the rental car. You walk past the kitchen, which smells of beef stew, and the gym where patients lift weights. You don't belong here, have no business here. But you've pulled strings with a social worker who'd caught your act while vacationing in Vegas.

You and Asa sit outside, at a table covered with a brown veneer. Birds sing in the trees. The years have not been kind to Asa. Her eyes—once green as Makapu'u *naupaka*—are tired and dim. Her teeth are stained yellow. She wears a white sweatshirt, denim shorts, and tennis shoes.

"So what brings you here?" Asa says, sipping Diet Coke out of a plastic cup.

"I came here to see you."

"You did? So what do you do nowadays? For a living?"

"I'm an entertainer."

"Actor? Singer? Porn star?"

"Elvis Tribute Artist."

"I guess your Dad must be happy. Mind if I smoke?"

"No. Not at all."

Asa takes out some rolling papers and a pouch of tobacco and expertly rolls a cigarette.

"I never thought about it," she says, inhaling the cigarette smoke and holding it in her lungs. "But you kinda do look like Elvis."

"Really?" Of course, you are flattered.

"Yeah. Your hair, forehead."

"Thank you. Thank you very much."

"So what brings you back home? The reunion?"

"My agent thought it'd be a good idea."

"You have an agent?"

"Yes. Well, sort of. Natalie Boucher is her name. She also works at Caesar's Palace."

"Wow. Promotions and stuff?"

"No, seafood buffet. She's a waitress."

Asa flicks her cigarette ashes into a coffee can.

"So how was it?" she says. "The reunion?"

"You didn't miss anything," you say. "How long have you been here?"

"I've been clean fourteen months now. They let me out three, four times a week. I'll be out for good soon."

"How did this happen, Asa? How'd you wind up here?"

"I'm weak."

"You're not weak."

"You want the truth? The truth is power, right?"

"Yes."

"When you left me, everything fell apart," she says, rolling up the sleeves of her sweatshirt. A horrible scar runs down the inside of her arm, from the bicep to the wrist. You want to ask how she got it, but don't. "I'd built my life around you. It sounds fucking corny to say, but you were my world. When I didn't have you anymore, I drank, smoked weed, sniffed coke, did ice. Anything to forget about you. Pretty soon, all I could think about was the next hit, the next drink, you know? It was the only time I felt good."

"I'm sorry."

"It's funny. Do you know where I used to buy my shit from? Your neighbor."

"What?"

"You lived next door to the biggest crack house in Kalihi."

"The house that always smelled like fingernail polish?"

"Acetone. An ingredient used to make drugs."

"Oh."

"I gotta go," she says, standing up and clutching her blue AA book to her chest. "It was nice seeing you again, Ernie. You watch. I'll beat this."

Don't Cry Daddy

You drive to Kalihi, budgeting fifteen minutes to catch up with the Old Man before heading off to the airport. You even bring him a gift, a plate with Elvis's portrait painted on it. The early Elvis, looking at the heavens like a man searching for the answers.

When you get to the old duplex, you're shocked to see the place on fire.

"No!" someone screams, on his knees. You recognize him as your neighbor. Ponytail, tattoos, skinny. "The place just went up, man," he says, gulping breaths like a drowning man. You realize in twenty-some-odd years, you never got his name.

Flames poke through windows, doors, and what used to be your roof. Firemen in thick yellow jackets shoot water from their hoses at the blaze. Black smoke is everywhere.

"S-someone ran into the house," the guy on his knees says, shaking his head.

"Who?" you say. "Where's my dad?"

"Maybe it was him, man. I don't know. Could be. Somebody ran in."

Paramedics carry your dad out on a stretcher. Dad's face is black, almost unrecognizable. Portions of his peeling skin are bloody and pink and burned. You're not sure if it's your imagination, but a tear seems to slip out of the corner of his eye.

"Dad?" you say, clutching the Elvis plate.

The paramedics look at you, shake their heads, and drive your Dad away. That's when you see her. Asa. Standing in a corner, blanket wrapped around her shoulders, crying.

In the Ghetto

Later that evening, as you wander through the charred house with the smell of smoke in your hair and clothes, you figure it all out. Asa, the poor sick bitch, had visited the drug lab to buy her shit. She'd told you she'd kicked the habit, but had been lying. While she was in there, the place caught fire. Dad ran in to save her. He managed to get her out. But could not save himself. You'd always thought of him as just some Elvis wannabe, a groupie. Now you realized he was a fucking hero. As you stare at horrible, desperate fingernail marks scratched on the black walls, you make two promises. From now on, you will dedicate every show you do to Dad's memory. And you'll dedicate the rest of your years to imitating his life.

I Want You, I Need You, I Love You

"Mama, I hope I look as good as you when I turn eighty," you say to the birthday girl, Willow, sitting in her wheelchair. "*If* I turn eighty."

The crowd eats it up. At least one set of false teeth hits the floor in an uncontrollable burst of laughter. You're playing to a feisty group of thirty senior citizens at Sisto Banditos, a small Mexican restaurant off the Strip. You wonder if the tacos, enchiladas, and burritos will play dirty tricks with the sensitive digestive tracks of your audience.

As you break into "I Want You, I Need You, I Love You," you start thinking about Asa. She's tried to call you several times, but you never called back. The bitch killed your Dad. If she hadn't gone back to the drug house, Dad would never have had to run into that burning hellhole and pull her sorry ass out. No, you left for Vegas without returning her calls. Just like that first time, all those years ago.

After the show, you pose for pictures with Willow and sign a few autographs. That's when Asa walks up to you.

"Nice jumpsuit, dude," she says.

“What are you doing here?” you say.

“I’ve been released from the treatment center. I’m clean.”

“I don’t know why I’m talking to you,” you say, as you both walk out of the Mexican restaurant. The lights from the Strip blink on and off in Asa’s green eyes. “I feel like you killed my dad. You lied to me, you went back to the drug house to buy drugs; Dad pulled you out of the flames.”

“Truth is power, right?” says Asa, stopping under a streetlight in the middle of the sidewalk. The night air feels very thin and cold. You place your hands in your pockets.

“Yes,” you say, stopping also.

“You got it all wrong, Ernie. I went to your dad’s place, hoping to see you again. The crack house next door was on fire. Someone said your dad was still in his house. I ran in. Sure enough, your dad’s arms were full of his Elvis scrapbooks, posters, records. He wouldn’t come out. I tried to pull him out. He wouldn’t move.”

“What?” The Strip begins to spin like a crazy roulette wheel. Las Vegas sinks beneath your feet. You do everything you can to not fall on your ass.

“I tried to get him out, Ernie. But I failed. That’s the truth.”

“I’m sorry,” you say, wrapping your arms around Asa. “I’m so sorry for doubting you. For everything.”

“That’s all right.”

“Have you been to Graceland before?” you say, after a long while, when you’ve saved up enough strength to start walking again.

“Graceland?” says Asa. “No.”

“You have any interest in going?”

“No. But with you, I might make an exception.”

“Good,” you say, placing your hand in Asa’s. “I have a buddy there I want you to meet.”

Lois-Ann Yamanaka

AUNTY CHONG SUM'S COMFESSION

Bless me, Father, for I have sin. It has been maybe three four day since my last comfession.

I think I sin a bad one. The girl, our Anah, make me see the ghost again. I try change since I accept the Lord Jesus Christ in my life as Lord and Savior, but I see all the ma-ke keiki again.

"I cold, Aunty Chong Sum," the keiki tell me. "I hungry, Aunty Chong Sum," they tell me. Always laughing by my knee. And scratching my face when I no listen them. Reverent Mother ask me how come my face and arm all cut up. I tell her I clumsy with knifes.

I so sorry I sin. I tell lie to the Reverent Mother, which is big number one commanment thou shall not give false testimary. What I going tell her? The ghost been bust me up 'cause I no listen them?

So I listen the ghost. I make big fire in the stove when they cold. I put plate hot bread and sweet cocoa outside when they hungry. I listen them and they no scratch.

But I comfess to you, Father, that I know it is sin in the holy word when I listen to ghost.

The girl, Father, you seen Anah? Her too all scratch up from the ghost. I seen the blood come from her eye like tear. No can stop the blood from the eye, you know. The towel, the bed, the clothes all blood. And the blood come off her finger all frip, frip, frip all over the place, I tell you.

She try no listen too. But she no can help. Just like me. I no can help. They like us listen.

I hear the Aki giggle, giggle, giggle. She the bad one throw stone at the kitchen window. She let go all the animal nighttime, Father, that one is a bad girl,

no listen nobody. All the time naked even when they put her in the grave.

Anah no let the holy sisters put the dress on her. “No,” she scream. “No, no, no,” like one cat she scream. “My sister no like wear your clothes. Only the flower and plant her body,” she scream. “Look, my sister running over there. You no can see her? Whassamatta you?” she scream. “You kill my sister,” she tell Sister Bernadine. “You cast your pearls before swine,” she yell at the sister. “You never catch my Aki no more,” she tell, and she climb the tree over the small grave.

And when they lower the dead one on the plank all cover with plants, she yelling, “Seth! Seth!” And she climb higher in the tree ’til no can see her.

You was there, hah, Father? You seen all this, hah? You seen the boy, Father?

That one is another sin of mine. The boy been coming see me again. You remember how Seth love his Aunty Chong Sum? Always bring me the special cream from his favorite cow. Or the cow tongue for me to cook Pa-ke style for my niece Pa-ke Doh Nee come better from the cough with the special Chinee food.

You remember, Father, he come all the time with his papa deliver the milk. Then he fall off the big tree and ma-ke, and I make vow to the Holy Mary ’til this day, I never seen the boy no more.

But the dead boy, now he all over the place with the girl. Everyplace I see the girl, I see Seth with her. Holding hands too, you know, Father, just like best friend, just like lover, she talk to him all the time, feed him, give blanket, sing all kine song, say all kine scripture reading. She no so sad when the boy with her. But when the boy no come, she all alonesome, only think about dead, dead, dead.

Poor thing. No more family. She bury two sister all by herself like a good, big sister. And the father ma-ke too and they no come get her for go home and say aloha-no to her daddy. What kine family is that? No wonder she make family with the dead boy. Forgive me, Father, for I know it is sin.

That girl lucky Sister Mary Deborah petition intercess for her to the Holy Mary and the Saint Joseph and all them other saints in the chapel.

Oi Virgin of virgin, my Mother, to thee I come, before thee I stand sinful and sorrow!

Oi Saint Joseph, patron of departing souls, do assist me by your powerful intercess!

Oi merciful Jesus!

I repeat all that from the holy sister. I make my own intercessor for me and Anah. And I make intercessor for the kanaka Queen. Our poor Queen Lili‘uokalani, no mo’ kingdom, no mo’ palace, her too ma-ke. So sad, so sad.

I better go back inside kitchen before the big sister accuse me of sloth again. Every day at least one two time I sloth. Sometime I have mouth of folly. Sometime I dumm. Sometime I sluggar. Sometime I shiftless fool. Most times I do works of the devil. Thass what the big sister say all the time ’pecially if she hot

and hungry.

Ai-ya, my God, I am so sorry I offend thee, and I detest all my sins because thy just punish me but most of all because I offend thee, my God, who is all good and deserve my love. I firm resolve with the help of you, I no sin no mo' and pass the near sin.

Father? You there? Father Maurice? You listening me, your humble servant Aunty Chong Sum? You hot in there? You hungry?

Linda Yara

KUKUMUSH: REFLECTIONS ON TRY 4 WRITE! BAMBOO RIDGE WRITERS INSTITUTE

One day when I was around ten years old, Mom bought for me an acrylic, diamond-shaped pendant into which was etched an orchid flower with the name "Kukumush."

"Why did you have to put that name on?"

"That's what we call you."

"But no one's called me that in years! How did I get that name anyway?"

"It started when you had just learned to talk. You just wouldn't stop. You had something to say all the time. Talk, talk, talk. All the time. And then you wouldn't stop asking 'Why?' to answer us each time we asked you to stop talking, each time we answered your questions, or each time we told you to do something. That's why they called you 'Chicken Why Why.' Your older cousins thought it was funny and began to call you 'Talk Too Much' to try to get you to stop talking. But you couldn't talk that good and when you tried to say it, it came out 'Kukumush.' That's how the name came to stick. They'd say, 'Talk Too Much,' and you'd say 'Kukumush,' and then everyone would laugh. You laughed too, like it was the funniest thing! You WERE 'Kukumush Chicken Why Why.'"

I still can hear Marie Hara, my fiction workshop leader, "You can do it! You can write. You already have the stories. Just get it down! Stop with the excuses already!"

So, after the Try 4 Write workshop, I set out to do more reading—homework for seeing how other writers hone their craft. I read stories of writers who have to get their desk just right and the pencils all sharpened and put in just the right place on the desk. I worked my way through Diana Gabaldon's Outlander Series of six volumes, each containing at least a thousand pages. I read for pleasure, at

the same time attempting to see what it was she was doing with the words that made me more awake with each page, reading well into the wee hours of the morning. But then, I didn't want to do any writing because I was afraid that whatever I wrote would be just a regurgitation of her style.

What was my style? What was my voice? After thirty years of honing my craft as a fiber artist, only recently had I stumbled onto something that filled me with passion as it allowed me to voice all that had been held captive within. Something that was mine alone, which spoke to me and for me. Could I do this with words?

About a couple of weeks ago, I received an e-mail with the title, "Just Pencils." I opened it and was taken aback by the sculptural images presented. They were gorgeous to look at. The title made me curious and so I wanted to understand why it was titled "Just Pencils." Upon closer examination, the sculpture was made up of hundreds of sharpened pencil points—uku-millions of them. The artist had apparently sharpened pencil points to needle-point sharpness and then cut them to a uniform length of about 1" or so from the sharpened point to cut end. He (generic-guessing as to who the artist might be then glued the pencils together to form the sculpture. The cut ends formed a smooth surface area on the inside as the pointed ends were also uniformly smooth as though finely manicured. The color choices made depended on the color of the lead as well as the color of the pencil itself. Way cool!

Wow, it takes an artist to take something that most people would toss away and turn it into something to amaze an audience. Then, I began to ponder what it took to make these sculptures. How many points could be made from one single pencil? How long did it take to make all the ukumillion points needed for one sculpture? How many pencils had to be purchased to make one project? Did the local office supplier have enough pencils or did a huge wholesaler have to be found before all the many pictured pencil sculptures were completed?

Even better—where did this artist get the idea to use the pencil points to begin with? Was this a frustrated writer who spent too many hours sharpening pencils to have enough sharpened for some exciting moment that was coming alive on the paper? Did this artist sharpen his pencils down to nubs which had accumulated over time and become the inspiration for doing a sculpture? Did this artist then switch gears and turn his passion to using the nubs themselves as the art form rather than the pencils being the vehicle for the art to emerge?

So, Try 4 Write. I try but no can. Or can I, as the character in the Road Runner commercial who changes from "No can!" to "Can!"? In my college days when I proved to be more radical in my attempts toward independence than my parents could tolerate, I learned something from Dad which still remains with me. After yet another session of tears and promising that "I'd be good" to Mom, Dad came in to get me to repeat my promises. Being obstinate, I didn't want to repeat those promises to him so I gave him the only honest answer I could say, "I'll try."

He surprised me when he said, “Try. Not good enough. When you say you try, you no going do. No say try.”

Wow! I think that was the most profound thing he’d ever said to me. Discipline had always been Mom’s *kuleana* and he rarely interfered. But this time, he left me thinking that maybe he saw through my answer with his bit of wisdom.

The Road Runner commercial had a follow-up and it has the same character spouting truisms about the service in pidgin, high style. He then looks directly at the camera as an aside and says, “What! No can help. I stay edumacated.” So, will I, too, be edumacated and spew words across the computer screen when I stop trying?

Everyone has stories. They are everywhere. If everyone wrote a book, there’d be no more trees and no money to buy all that there’d be to read. So, I tell myself that I’m being ecologically conscious when I refrain from polluting the environment with my words and allowing another tree to live and clean the air, not to mention the good feng shui from not having all those stacks of paper I can’t throw away or figure out how to store.

Another big reason that I put aside writing is that I prefer to identify with being a storyteller, not a writer. I love telling stories in person. Not so much to tell the story as to feel the responses to the story told. There’s something very magical about telling a story and feeling the story morph to fit the audience as they are guided to the desired response. It’s like a chemical reaction between storyteller and audience as energy moves back and forth between them.

When I sit down to write, the first thing I want to know is who will be reading it because I’ll feel more comfortable attempting an interaction with a particular person. That may be why my e-mails can become quite long-winded because, in the writing, I’m trying to work that chemical magic. Words change depending on who is anticipated to be the other party listening to the story or reading the words of the story.

I like the interaction because it is immediate validation that I’ve told the story well. I’ve touched the heart of another, if not their funny bone. Having been an impetuous and curious child, I’d learned to moderate the responses of adults to my behavior by trying to get them to laugh. As one comedian said, “They cannot laugh and hit you at the same time.” I guess aside from deflecting possible punishments or rejections, what I’m really looking for is acceptance through the behavior of the court jester.

What a cop-out! Yes, the kind of person I may be writing to may not be the kind of person who ends up reading the material. That’s why Marie always says, “Who cares! Just write!”

So, I wander about in the muck and mire, the kukumush, the unwritten but never-ending stream of words that revolves round and round in my head. Hmmm. This is the Year of the Boar. Boars live and thrive in the muck where they find their sustenance as well as their living environment. Makes me wonder what

kinds of words will be rooted out under the aegis of the Boar. I mean, even truffles are an acquired taste.

Beryl Allene Young

THE UNWORTHY DAUGHTER

No longer pretending to be affectionately filial,
I drag my tired body out of bed
and prepare a meager breakfast for two:
a fruit dish, two bowls of oatmeal,
and a bottle of Ensure for my mother
with a glass of water for me.
The hard, comfortless bed has left me stiff and sore,
and my night's fasting has left me weak and wobbly
on my feet. Feeling too tired to stand upright
for more than five minutes at a time,
I rest intermittently on the couch
beside the kitchen table. I go through my routines
feeding my mother breakfast, bathing her,
and shampooing her hair. I feel overwhelmed
when I lift half her weight out of bed, put her
on her wheelchair, wheel her to the toilet,
wash her hands, brush her hair,
and take her to the kitchen to eat.
Happily I think of the hot meals she will eat
for her lunch and dinner provided by
her widow's purse and the helping hands
of Meals on Wheels. I look apprehensively
toward the telephone to contact Care Resource
that gives me respite from care giving two days
out of every week, on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Yes, I am thinking, yes, I am doing my part of a dutiful daughter.
I push her wheelchair and put her in bed,
resigning myself to the solitary task of cleaning
the dusty house, now quiet with my whimpers
and her painfully labored breathing.

Beryl Allene Young

A NINETY-ONE-YEAR-OLD BABY

She rejects my proffered spoon of soft okai;
    she purses her lips stubbornly shut.
Annoyed, I discover a dribble of spittle,
    some black shoyu and rice gruel on her pink sweater.
I see food droppings on the rug beside her chair
    and when I scold her for letting food slide
between her teeth, she slobbers like a baby.
    I feel my head is growing long gray ass's ears
For quarreling with the old, the incontinent.

Almost sixty years old, I, who have no babies.

Beryl Allene Young

THE CAREGIVER AND HER MOTHER

She takes the spoon
of mashed potatoes from me
as gently as a rabbit takes a carrot
from the fingers of a child,
her eyes moist and glassy,
her hair tucked into a bun
at the nape of her neck.
She is my mother, but her eyes
follow me around the room.
She waits for me to finish eating dinner,
and together we watch television
until the sun goes down.
I climb into bed with her,
and we talk quietly together,
her hand held in mine. We will sit
watching television, warming the bed
with our bodies side by side
until the last newscast of the day.
What will I do when there are no
warm sheets, no warm body waiting
to offer me companionship in the early evening?

CONTRIBUTORS

Carlos Andrade is a descendant of islanders of both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. He lives on Kaua'i, is a father of three, grandfather of five. A composer of songs, as well as writer and teller of stories, he returned to university in his mid-forties to earn a Bachelor of Arts in Hawaiian Studies (1989), a Master of Education (1993), and a Doctorate in Geography completed in 2001. An associate professor at Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, he teaches Hawaiian perspectives in navigation, astronomy, and resource management.

Lisa Asagi is the author of the foldout chapbooks *Physics* and *Twelve Scenes at 12 a.m.*, published by Tinfish Press. She frequently collaborates on film, performance, and visual art projects. Recently completed projects include the feature films *Kieu* by vu t. thu ha and *[os]* by Ming-Yuen S. Ma. She is based in Honolulu and San Francisco.

Dave Manu Bird teaches writing as well as linguistics at Leeward Community College. His published books include the first volume of *Yap Regains Its Sovereignty: The Story of the First Yap State Constitutional Convention*. For a quarter of a century, Bird has edited numerous translations of Latin American literature for Dr. Charles Philip Thomas, Professor of Spanish at the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh, contributing to Thomas' many publications.

Elsha Bohnert writes and makes art in her Mililani studio. Born and raised in the Dutch East Indies, now known as Indonesia, with English as her third language, she is honored to have been published in *Bamboo Ridge*, *Hawai'i Review*, *Rain Bird*, and *Hawaii Pacific Review*. One of her poems is included in *Hawaii Pacific Review*'s "Best of the Decade: 1997-2007." In 1998, she was chosen one of 16 poets nationwide to work with Sharon Olds, then poet laureate of New York State. The experience left her so drained she stopped writing poetry. Only a recent visit to Italy got her going again. Coaching in autobiographical writing for solo performance with noted film director Mark Travis has encouraged her to begin creating her memoir in word and image. She secretly dreams of performing it on stage someday, if she can get fitted with a memory chip.

Kit Boise-Cossart was in high school in July 1967 when he waded out in tennis shoes on the shallow, jagged and porous reef at Pakala to take Ektachrome shots of Carlos Andrade riding Kit's 9'-7" Yater "Spoon." Kit currently lives on a coastal ranch near Gaviota, California, building houses, taking photos, and growing macadamia nuts.

Rachel Ana Brown was born and raised on the Big Island of Hawai'i and recently graduated from Hawaii Pacific University. Her work has appeared in the *Allegheny Review;* the *Susquehanna Review;* and *Wanderlust*, HPU's student literary magazine. She has been the recipient of the Castle and Cooke Award for Fiction and the Mark Bauer Award for Environmental Writing. When she isn't bumming around Chinatown or playing *taiko* drums, she can be found in Waikīkī, observing.

Amalia Bueno is a poet, writer and researcher. Born in Quezon City, Philippines and raised in Hawai'i, she has been published in *Bamboo Ridge*, University of Hawai'i's *Katipunan Literary Journal: Voices of Hawaii,* Our Own Voice, and by Meritage Press. Her poetry and fiction is forthcoming in *Bleeding on the Page* (Spinster's Ink Press) and *Honolulu Stories* (Mutual Publishing). She was recently selected to attend the Voices of Our Nation's Arts summer writing program at the University of San Francisco.

Lee Cataluna graduated magna cum laude from the University of the Pacific in Stockton California in 1988 and was awarded the honor of Distinguished Young Alumna of the University the following year. After working for ten years in television and radio, she became a columnist for *The Honolulu Advertiser* in 2000. The award-winning playwright was previously published in *Bamboo Ridge* and *Hybolics* and in *He Leo Hou: A New Voice – Hawaiian Playwrights.* In 2006, her collection *Folks You Meet in Longs* received the Ka Palapala Po'okela Award of Excellence in Literature and she received the Award of Excellence in Writing Literature from the Hawai'i Book Publishers Association.

Sue Cowing's poems have appeared in *Bamboo Ridge*, *Sister Stew*, and in other Hawai'i and mainland journals and anthologies. She is the editor of *Fire in The Sea: An Anthology of Poetry and Art* and the author of *My Dog Has Flies: Poetry for Hawai'i's Kids.*

Tim Denevi edited *vice-versa* from 2005 to 2007. He is currently an MFA student in creative writing at the University of Iowa.

Esther Figueroa, Ph.D., is a writer, filmmaker, linguist, and educator. She lived in Hawai'i for 25 years where she made media perpetuating indigenous knowledge and local content and promoting Native Hawaiian movements. Figueroa now lives back home in Jamaica and is currently making films on the environment and social justice. "The Reunion" is an excerpt from her unpublished novel *Holes in the Heart*.

Jesse S. Fourmy is a writer, surfer, father, and husband. He holds an MFA in Writing from Pacific University and earned his undergrad in Justice Studies

from Arizona State University. A resident of the Big Island, he works in law enforcement and directs a small creative writing workshop with select students of Ka‘u High School.

Clint Frakes has lived on O‘ahu since 2001 and is currently traveling through North America. His first book of poetry, *The Edible Myth*, is forthcoming in 2008.

Kimiko Hahn is the author of seven books of poetry, including: *The Narrow Road to the Interior* (W.W. Norton, 2006); *The Unbearable Heart* (Kaya, 1996), which received an American Book Award; and *Earshot* (Hanging Loose Press, 1992), which was awarded the Theodore Roethke Memorial Poetry Prize and an Association of Asian American Studies Literature Award. Her awards include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York Foundation for the Arts, as well as a Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Writers' Award and the Shelley Memorial Award. She is a distinguished professor in the MFA program at Queens College, The City University of New York.

Marie Hara:

Dear Reader,

You are on my mind. Did you find something here that will make you search out more to read? Please share it with those you care about. Keep local lit fresh and circulating.

Mahalo nui loa to you.

Gail N. Harada is a graduate of Stanford University and the University of Iowa Writers Workshop. She is a Pushcart Prize recipient and has published work in *Bamboo Ridge* and a few other literary magazines. She yearns for more time to write, pursue her other interests, enjoy her dog and cats, take an occasional nap, and maybe even go on a real vacation trip someday.

Mari Hatta was a lifelong creative collaborator of her sister, the late Kayo Hatta. Their first film, an ambitious "cooking show" that disintegrated into slapstick comedy, was created with their mother's Super-8 camera when Mari was 11 and Kayo was 12. Years later, they co-wrote the original screenplay for the feature-length film *Picture Bride* and together developed a number of film projects. Born in Hawai‘i and raised in New York, Mari attended Bowdoin College and received her BA from Oberlin College. After receiving her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Virginia, where she held the Henry Hoyns Fellowship in poetry, she received a Wisconsin Institute writing fellowship and served as artist-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is currently working on a novel based on her sister's life, as well as a book-length collection of Kayo's extensive journals, private writings, and artwork.

Ann Inoshita is a poet born and raised on O‘ahu. She has been published in *Bamboo Ridge*, *Hawai‘i Pacific Review*, *Tinfish*, and has other publications forthcoming. Her book of poems, *Mānoa Stream*, was published in spring 2007. She is in the M.A. program in English with a Creative Writing concentration at the Uni-

versity of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. She is a 2006 recipient of the Myrle Clark Award for Creative Writing and a 2007 recipient of The John Young Scholarship in the Arts.

Darlene M. Javar is a p-p-p-poet who needs to p-p-p-put p-p-p-poems to p-p-p-paper to p-p-p-pull p-p-p-pieces of her world together. Her oems have been ublished in *Bamboo Ridge*, *Chaminade Literary Review*, *Hawai‘i Pacific Review*, *Earth’s Daughters*, *Tinfish*, *Storyboard 8*, *Into the Teeth of the Wind*, *Kaimana*, *The Distillery*, and *The East Hawai‘i Observer*. Her oetry has also been included in “Rural Voices Radio II,” National Writing Project.

Kealoha is the founder of HawaiiSlam, Youth Speaks Hawai‘i, and First Thursdays, the largest registered slam poetry competition in the world (with an average attendance of 600+). He has served as Hawai‘i’s SlamMaster since 2003, and has conducted workshops and guest lectures at over 90 schools, libraries, prisons, and community centers throughout his career. Kealoha has represented Hawai‘i at five National Poetry Slams (placing 8th out of 350 of the world’s best poets in 2007), and in 2004 he was a San Francisco Grand Slam Finalist (top 12 slam poets in San Francisco). He has performed his poetry on Hapa’s album *Maui* (winner of 4 Na Hoku Hanohano awards including Album of the Year), Henry Kapono’s *Wild Hawaiian* project (whose album was nominated for a Grammy), and a full-length spoken word CD entitled *Kealoha*. He has toured throughout the United States and Europe, featuring at venues such as the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, New Jersey’s Performing Arts Center, and the NFL Pro Bowl halftime show. On a more random note, Kealoha graduated with honors from MIT with a degree in Nuclear Physics, served as a business consultant in San Francisco, and worked as a surf instructor prior to becoming a professional poet. Visit www.KealohaPoetry.com for more information.

Brenda Kwon is a poet, writer, and educator born and raised in Hawai‘i. The author of *Beyond Ke‘eaumoku: Koreans, Nationalism, and Local Culture in Hawai‘i* and co-editor of *YOBO: Korean American Writing in Hawai‘i*, her work has appeared in various journals and anthologies, and she has performed her poetry in Honolulu, Los Angeles, Boston, New York, and Seoul. A 2005–2006 Fulbright Fellow, she is the founder of the monthly poetry series *re:VERSES* and teaches at Honolulu Community College.

Michael Little is the author of the comic novel *Queen of the Rodeo*. His short story “Walter! Walter!” was a grand prize winner in the *HONOLULU Magazine* Fiction Contest. A native Texan, Michael moved from Seattle to Maui in 1980, taught English for five years at Maui High and Baldwin, then moved to Honolulu, the setting for many of his short stories, including “Mango Lessons,” “Speedy Delivery,” “Walter and the Dream Girls,” “The Man Who Loved Blondes,” and “Mutant Killer Shrimp of the Ala Wai.” He is President of the Aloha Chapter of the Romance Writers of America and edited a collection of local writers, *The Breakup Queen*, (2007). Michael is not married to a Cosmo

girl, but he does read the *Cosmopolitan* headlines in the checkout lines.

Mary Lombard is pleased to appear in another issue of *Bamboo Ridge* and honored at the company she's keeping.

Gerry Lopez has published widely in glossy surfing industry magazines, but this is his first effort for a small press literary journal. He is honored to appear in the *Bamboo Ridge* of his native Hawai'i. He now lives in Bend, Oregon. His story "Pakala," first published here, will be included in a collection of his creative non-fiction scheduled for publication in June 2008.

Wing Tek Lum's first collection of poetry, *Expounding the Doubtful Points*, was published by Bamboo Ridge Press in 1987.

Ian MacMillan's eighth novel *The Bone Hook* is due out from Mutual Publishing in 2008. He has made over a hundred appearances in literary and commercial journals, and has won the O. Henry Prize, Pushcart Prize, Best American Short Stories Award, and the 2000 P.E.N. USA-West Award for Fiction. He has taught fiction writing at the University of Hawai'i since 1966.

Chris McKinney is a winner of the Cades Award for Literature and the Ka Palapala Po'okela Award for Excellence in Literature for his groundbreaking first novel, *The Tattoo*. He followed up this success with *The Queen of Tears* and *Bolohead Row*. Having grown up in Kahalu'u, he currently resides in Mililani with his wife and daughter. He received both his BA and MA in English from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and is currently teaching at Honolulu Community College.

Michael McPherson is a longtime contributor to these pages. His books are *All Those Summers* (2005), *Rivers of the Sun* (2000), and *Singing with the Owls* (1982). Works in progress include *Life Estate: Selected Poems 1978–*, a journey with Albert Saijo, and *Manuela Boy*, excerpts from which also appear in our Issues 79, 81, and 84. He lives on the Big Island.

Alexei Melnick is completing a novel about the crystal methamphetamine epidemic in Hawai'i. His work has appeared in issues of *Hawaii Review* and *Bamboo Ridge*. He's received the Hemingway Award for Best Undergraduate Fiction Writer at the University of Hawai'i and was runner up in *HONOLULU Magazine*'s annual fiction writing contest. He was runner up for the Seiki Award for locally themed fiction.

Ursula Pflug is author of the novel, *Green Music* (Tesseract Books, 2002), available at the Hanalei Bookshop in Kaua'i. An award winning short fiction writer, she has stories forthcoming in *Mapping The Beast: The Best of Leviathan and Album Zutique*, *Strange Horizons*, and *Nemonymous Seven: Zencore*, edited by DF Lewis. She has had four and a half plays produced by professional companies, and writes about books regularly for *The Peterborough Examiner*, *The New York Review of Science Fiction*, and other publications. Recipient of an Ontario Arts Council Works In Progress Award in 2005 to complete a new novel, *Thin Wednesday*, Pflug was short-listed for the KM Hunter Award the following year.

She received a Canada Council grant in the current year for a novel-length flash fiction project. She teaches short fiction via the Continuing Education Program of Loyalist College and lives in Norwood, Ontario, with her family.

Kathy J. Phillips teaches English at the University of Hawai‘i. Of her five books, the most recent are *Manipulating Masculinity: War and Gender in Modern British and American Literature*, *This Isn't a Picture I'm Holding: Kuan Yin* (poetry), and *The Moon in the Water: Reflections on an Aging Parent* (forthcoming from Vanderbilt University Press, for their list on care-giving). This new book combines my dad's language ("ain't got no") and his wisdom with an indirect meditation on the meanings of Water-Moon Buddhist imagery over the centuries.

Elmer Omar Pizo has been publishing his poems in *Bamboo Ridge* since 1999, when publication of his poem "Black Dog" provided a validation of sorts for his writing aspirations. He had seven poems published in *Bamboo Ridge* #79, seven more in the last two issues, and a poem was runner up in the 25th Anniversary Issue.

Normie Salvador is editor at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa's Outreach College. He still freelances for Bamboo Ridge Press, Bishop Museum, and the occasional author. His work has appeared in *Bamboo Ridge*, *Hawaii Herald*, *Hawai‘i Review*, *Honolulu Weekly*, *Hybolics*, *Kaimana*, *A Literary Lei* (Watermark Press), and *Tinfish*. Work is forthcoming in *Hybolics* and *Honolulu Stories* (Mutual Publishing). Tinfish Press published his first poetry chapbook, *Philter*, a few years ago. One of his goals is to be published in every local publication. In November 2007, he took part, for the first time, in National Novel Writing Month (sponsored by the Office of Letters and Light). He was one of almost 300 representing the islands. In December 2007, he hopes to complete a playscript for submission to the Kumu Kahua Theatre Playwriting Contest.

Susan M. Schultz has taught at UHM since 1990. Her most recent book of poems is *And Then Something Happened* (Salt, 2004). *A Poetics of Impasse in Modern and Contemporary American Poetry* was published by the University of Alabama Press in 2005 and includes an essay on the poetry of Lois-Ann Yamanaka. She edits Tinfish Press out of her home in Kane‘ohe. *Dementia Blog* chronicles the months of January 2007 through August 2006 (moving backwards, as blogs do), periods of decline both for the author's mother and for the republic.

Eric Paul Shaffer is author of five books of poetry, including *Lāhaina Noon*, *Living at the Monastery, Working in the Kitchen*, and *Portable Planet*. His poetry appears in *Ploughshares*; *Slate*; *North American Review*; *Threepenny Review*; Australia's *Island* and *Quadrant*; Canada's *Event* and *Grain*; England's *Magma* and *Stand*; *Poetry Ireland Review*; and Salt Publishing's anthology, *100 Poets Against the War*. Shaffer received the 2002 Elliot Cades Award for Literature, an endowed literary prize given yearly to an established author, and a 2006 Ka Palapala Po‘okela Book Award for *Lāhaina Noon*. *Burn & Learn*, his first novel, will be published in 2008.

Moriso Teraoka: I will be 84 on June 18, 2008. After retiring from Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, I became a student at Kapiʻolani Community College and have been a continuing student ever since. At school I was a news reporter for *Kapiʻo* and a photographer for over ten years. I received an Associate Degree in Food Service in 1989. I started the cactus and succulent garden in 1988 and have been maintaining the garden ever since. Presently there are four of us that work in the garden. My love for writing started with Janice Cook and I've taken classes from Gail Harada, Lisa Kanae, Dennis Kawaharada, and Judith Kirkpatrick. I am also a student at Lois-Ann Yamanaka's school.

Christine Thomas writes the weekly *Honolulu Advertiser* column "What I'm Reading," and is a freelance book critic for many publications, including the *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Miami Herald*. Her travel writing and features also appear regularly in *Hemispheres* and *Spirit of Aloha*. She received her MA in creative writing from the University of East Anglia in England, and her short fiction has been published in the UK in *Pretext*, *Spiked*, and *Firsthand*. "'Ieʻie" features characters from her recently completed novel, and ties into to her multi-generational short fiction collection-in-progress. She grew up in Kailua, where she again resides.

"Da Pidgin Guerrilla" **Lee A. Tonouchi** is da co-editor of *Hybolics* magazine, writer of da Pidgin short story collection *Da Word* (Bamboo Ridge, 2001), author da Pidgin essay collection *Living Pidgin: Contemplations on Pidgin Culture* (Tinfish, 2002), and compiler of *Da Kine Dictionary: Da Hawaiʻi Community Pidgin Dictionary Projeck* (Bess, 2005). Literary anthologies he wen co-edit include *Hip-Hop Hawaiʻi*, *Bumbye Hawaiʻi*, and *Buss Laugh: Stand Up Poetry from Hawaiʻi*. Dis guy get two Kumu Kahua Playwrighting Prizes, two HONOLULU Magazine Fiction Contest Grand Prizes, two Kapalapala Poʻokela Awards, and one Eliot Cades Award for Literature.

Jean Yamasaki Toyama is a poet, scholar, translator, and writer of fiction. She lives in Hawai'i, where she was born and raised.

Joe Tsujimoto is the author of *Teaching Poetry Writing to Adolescents* (NCTE/ERIC, 1988) and *Lighting Fires: How the Passionate Teacher Engages Adolescent Writers* (Heinemann, 2001), and has published poems and short stories both here and on the mainland. His collection of short stories, *Morningside Heights: New York*, will be published by Bamboo Ridge Press in 2008. A graduate of CCNY and the University of Hawaiʻi, he currently teaches English at Punahou School.

Peter Van Dyke: I was working on the "The Hostile Elders" when I attended the Bamboo Ridge Writers Institute Try 4 Write and was inspired by the sessions. Ian MacMillan helped me flesh out the image of Mrs. Crandall (and there was an abundance of flesh to work with). Lee Cataluna led me to our Kailua-Kona Longs, where I caught a glimpse of Mrs. Crandall, browbeating the clerks about the narrow aisles and the over-cold AC. And Craig Howes made a great point—if

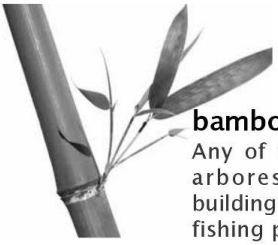
you can publish in *Bamboo Ridge*, all your friends will get to read you.

Cedric Yamanaka is the author of *In Good Company*, a collection of short stories.

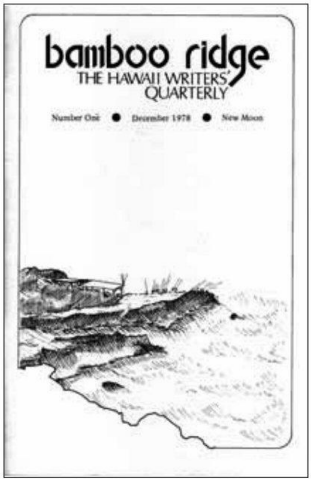
Lois-Ann Yamanaka is the author of *Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* (1993); the trilogy *Wild Meat and the Bully Burgers* (1996), *Blu's Hanging* (1997), and *Heads by Harry* (1999); *Father of the Four Passages* (2001); *Behold the Many* (2006); and two books for children, *Name Me Nobody* and *The Heart's Language*. She is the winner of the Lannan Literary Award, an Asian American Literary Award, and an American Book Award. She is codirector of Naʻau: A Place of Learning and Healing, in Honolulu, where she lives with her husband, son, four cats, three dogs, and eleven birds.

Linda Yara was born curious. She loves to make connections between disparities to create order out of chaos.

Beryl Allene Young is a graduate student studying English literature and composition at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa. She received her MA in English in 1970 and her MLS in 1973 and writes poems in her leisure time.



bamboo (bæm'bu)
Any of various tropical woody or arborescent grasses used for building material, utensils, furniture, fishing poles, etc.



bamboo ridge
(bæm'bu ridj)

A fishing spot on a ledge on the east O'ahu shoreline; due to the distinct line of bamboo fishing poles visible from the road, the area became known as bamboo ridge.

A Hawai'i publication that first appeared in 1978; the cover of the first issue depicted the fishing spot.

bamboo ridge press
(bæm'bu ridj pres)
A literary press celebrating its 30th birthday. A publisher that has featured over 850 authors, writers, and artists in 91 issues, to the delight of many.

CANE HAUL ROAD

1977-2007

CELEBRATING HAWAI`I FOR 30 YEARS

AND STILL LOLO