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HAWAII REVIEW FALL 2008 ISSUE 66. VOLUME 29. NUMBER 1

Hawaii
Review



Hawai'i Review

Hawai'i Review is produced through the Board of Publications of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. It reflects only the views of the editors and contributors, who are solely responsible for its content. Correspondence and submissions should be addressed to *Hawai'i Review*, Department of English, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1733 Donaghho Road, Honolulu, HI 96822.

Submission Guidelines:

We invite submissions of fiction, poetry, art, drama, and translations. Manuscripts (up to four poems, thirty pages of prose) should be double-spaced, crisp, dark copies. We accept emailed "rich text format" or MS Word submissions to this address: hireview@hawaii.edu. Art submissions should be on 8.5" x 11" white paper or 8" x 10" photographic prints. All postal submissions must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Allow three to five months for a response.

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Hawai'i Review is a member of the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines, is indexed by Humanities International Complete, the Index of American Periodical Verse, Writer's Market, and Poet's Market.

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ISSN: 0093-9625

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Hawai'i Review

From the Staff:

The Hawai'i Review has been inactive in recent years, and a group of undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Hawai'i's Creative Writing Program, along with faculty advisors, began the process of bringing it back. We intend to produce issues, beginning with this one, that would have come out during this hiatus, including both material originally accepted for issue #66 and new material from Hawai'i and elsewhere.

Each year the University of Hawai'i's English Department sponsors literary awards for students at the main campus and satellite campuses around the state. *The Hawai'i Review* will publish the work of former and current recipients of these awards, along with work from the mainland U.S., the Pacific and elsewhere. The undergraduate awards include the Ernest Hemingway Memorial Awards, from a bequest by Ursula Jepson Hemingway. For both undergraduate and graduate students there is a series of awards: The Myrle Clark Awards, from a bequest from the estate of Myrle Clark, Honolulu writer and newspaperman; The Stephen C. Stryker & William H. Stryker Prize, from the Stryker family; and the Patsy Sumie Saiki Awards, endowed by Ms. Saiki, a writer and former teacher who died in 2005 at the age of 90.

You may notice that the names on our staff list are the same as some of the names in the table of contents. The staff is made up of creative writing students, many of whom are former or current recipients of the abovementioned awards. They are also the volunteers who took up the challenge of bringing the journal back, which will involve putting out four issues within the next year.

In the future *The Hawai'i Review* will continue to publish works by recipients of our awards. We also invite submissions from writers everywhere and will maintain the journal as an eclectic, nationally distributed literary magazine.

Christopher Kelsey – Fiction Editor

Kai Gaspar – Poetry Editor

Paulo Kobayashi - Cover Art

Che S. Ng - Book Design

Kelsie Abing, M. Thomas Gammarino, J. Kyle, Alexei Melnick, Desi Poteet, Cortney Silva

Faculty Advisors: Ian MacMillan, Robert Sullivan

And many thanks to Jay Hartwell, Addy Mattos, Carl Polley, and the Board of Publications

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Gavin McCall

Winner of the 2007 Hawai'i Review Sudden Story Award
Fish Dreams

First there was bright, nearly blinding light, the light of summer. Hot noontime sun reflected off the surface of the lake, jagged swatches of glare piercing his eyes, nearly obscuring the silver fish running beneath the surface as it fought against the invisible line binding it to the man. But then the light faded, slowly at first but with increasing speed, darkening until all that was left of the scene was the barely visible rippling of the water, slower now, less steady. The water was left colorless in the shadow, and now he realized it, all of it, had tilted and was now flowing, flapping vertically, right up to his face. Visible now only from his left eye, the faint ripples ceased, only to pick up again barely a second later. The man exhaled roughly and sent larger waves streaming away from his view.

He blinked once, and as his eye began to focus on the details beyond the shimmering water he had apparently been immersed in, the man slowly came to the realization that it was no longer a lake, but sheets. Bed sheets. He blinked again and then sat up, crossing his legs under the dark bedspread and struggling to make out his surroundings in the gray moonlight. The room seemed peaceful enough, with a multitude of framed pictures, the subjects of which were impossible to discern.

He searched for something familiar, some hint of what he was doing in this room, but nothing stood out. The room's only door was open, creating a frame of the dim yellow light coming from somewhere down the hall. The man stood, wavering slightly, and walked into a hallway lit only by a thin bar of light escaping from below the nearest door. Quietly making his way towards the door, he was wondering what he was doing in this house, when he heard a toilet flush. Shuffling down the hall as quickly as he could with his legs so stiff from sleeping and his eyes still struggling to make out the dimensions of the dark hallway, the man made it to a narrow stairway and had just started down it when the hallway lit up. He froze, not even daring to turn his head for what seemed like an eternity, until he finally built up the nerve to shift his weight and look back down the hallway. The bathroom door was open, but there was no sign of its former occupant. He hesitated, thinking that perhaps it was for the best that the stranger hadn't seen him.

As the man turned to continue down the stairs and out of the stranger's house forever, he noticed that one photograph was now illuminated by the bathroom light. A thin, faux-wood border framed a portrait of a middle-

aged man with graying but full hair and a dimpled smile. He had one arm around a handsome boy of about fourteen, with a similar smile and the same dimples. My son, the man thought. He leaned forward to take a closer look at the next picture, and slowly made out the same boy, younger and posing with a bat, dressed in a little league uniform. Suddenly, a wave of insight hit the man, and he realized that this *was* his house. He turned where he stood on the stairs, trying to understand how the house could have been changed so much that he wouldn't even recognize it, and all while he'd been asleep. Even in the dark, he thought, he'd known, instinctively, that there was something wrong, something foreign, enough to make him assume he was in the wrong house.

Perhaps this was a new form of burglary, he thought. By sneaking into someone else's house, changing things to make them think they were in the wrong place, maybe then the thieves would have all the time in the world to rob a simple man of his every possession. He gritted his teeth, balled his fists. Not this man, he thought, glaring through the hallway wall in the direction of his bedroom and the intruder therein. The prowler would certainly have noticed his disappearance by now, the man thought. He would be thinking his plan was working, that he was now alone in the house. No time to call the police, and he'd be damned if he left the crook alone with his property. But he'd be stupid to face a dangerous burglar unarmed, the man thought.

Turning, he shuffled down the stairs as quickly as he dared, pausing at the foot of the staircase. There were two pool cues in the den to his right, he thought, but then made a left into the kitchen. The knife block was nearly empty. No cleaver, and even the large carving knife, just like the one Norman Bates used in *Psycho* – still his favorite scary movie – was gone. So the criminal *is* armed, he thought, and pulled out the thick, twelve-inch chopping knife and examined it, reflective in the yellow light coming from the streetlamp outside the kitchen window. With its rounded tip, the chopping knife would be no good for stabbing, but if used like the machete he'd wielded in 'Nam, it could really do some damage, he thought.

The knife gripped in his sweaty hand, the man steadily proceeded back up the stairs, barely allowing himself to breathe. He soundlessly crept, now thankful that he always wore his most comfortable (and therefore most padded) socks to bed, and he made it back to his bedroom door. Inhaling softly, he peeked, one-eyed, into the darkened room. At first he didn't see anyone – it took him a moment to notice the slow rising and falling of the bedspread. What kind of lunatic am I dealing with, he thought, wondering who would climb into a stranger's bed before ransacking his house. Ever so slowly, and as quiet as could be, the man made his way to the foot of the bed and stood for a

second, the knife extended aggressively, perpendicular to his lowered arm.

Then the figure rolled slowly to face him. In the dark, the man saw a thin, feminine face framed by a fluffy wreath of luminescently pale hair. An old woman's voice called out: "Francis, what are you doing? Come back to bed."

Francis, yes, that was his name. He stood with his mouth hanging open and nearly dropped the knife as a realization even more sudden and powerful than the earlier one on the stairway hit him. Last night, he'd fallen asleep here, in this bed, with this woman, his wife – what was her name, he thought.

Doreen.

"Ok, Doreen," Francis said, finally.

She grunted softly, and Francis shuffled back to his side of the bed and sat down, looking at the faint shadow his figure cast on the wall in the nearly horizontal moonlight. Suddenly remembering the knife, he looked around for a place to put it, and finally decided to stick in the top drawer of his nightstand. He'd put it back in the morning, he told himself. As he dropped the knife into the barely open drawer, he heard a soft but clear *clink*, as if of metal on metal. Puzzled, he pulled the drawer open, felt around in the dark. His fingertips brushed the knife handle, and then another, and then another. He didn't remember bringing more than one knife up with him, but after a while he decided that no matter where they came from, he'd bring them all down tomorrow morning.

Yawning, the old man laid down in bed and quickly found himself at the lakeshore, holding a prizewinning trout in one hand and a blunt-tipped chopping knife in the other. Wondering why he would bring a chopping knife on a fishing trip, the middle-aged man with graying hair and dimples merely shrugged and began scaling the fish on the pebbly shore.

Brad Modlin

Finalist for the 2007 Sudden Story Award
Oslo, Omaha

1.
She points to the Edward Munch painting of the twisted-face guy screaming; he is overwhelmed and illogical. The irony is too easy, in context with her and me.

"I wish Armistead could see this—he's such a fan of terror and post-impressionist inspired expressionism," she says. "But a girl Matilda's age would be frightened."

"Sure." I'm sarcastic.

"I miss them so much, but I guess it's best we left them with my mother."

"Probably," I say, by which I mean, *I'm exhausted*.

She's ceased to recognize my tone of voice and decides to tease. "You look ridiculous in your tourist Viking helmet, but your goofiness is a reason I fell in love with you. And now the kids bring it out even more."

I'm not wearing a Viking helmet, but I'm too worn out to argue. "I'm exhausted," I say, by which I mean, *We have to stop this*. I've said that too much the past couple weeks.

"You're just jet-lagged. We'll get coffee at the gift shop when we buy Matilda her coloring book."

"How old is Matilda tonight?" I ask.

I shouldn't have said that—that was really harsh. I'm being an ass to her lately. But it's been almost three months, and I can't keep this up any longer. I'm scared as hell for her and for us.

"Excuse me?" she demands, hurt. That's the problem. Every time I try to approach the subject, I feel like I'm smashing her. But she never quits, never says anything that isn't about them.

I kiss her arm in apology. "Never mind." I roll over, away from her, cover my face with my pillow. If I pretend to be asleep long enough, maybe she'll close the travel book, turn off the lamp, and at least breathe the way she used to.

2.
Marriage would *blandify* us, we decided in Year Four, when we considered ourselves spontaneity-caffeinated. When couples married, we reasoned, their lives became about bills and practical modes of transportation. Married people drained their energy complaining to couple's therapists about their spouses and lying to

their spouses about having no complaints. They forgot how to talk together.

"Things are great now." I said.

"Unmarried and unmarred" she sing-songed.

"Why trade them for stagnancy?"

"We will not morph into one of those couples who sit at the same restaurant every day and notice their soup more than each other," she declared.

"Agreed."

"Want to catch a plane to Taipei and have an us-absorbed conversation over noodles tomorrow?"

"No. A tuna boat."

"Out of Nebraska?"

"Absolutely."

That's how we were then. If the right boats or words didn't exist, we made them up.

Maybe our spouse theory was a little unfair, but we repeated it for two years, so even this past summer with the pregnancy and all our games and plans, we never even considered marriage.

Instead we considered names. We taped a giant chart to the kitchen wall and added to it every night before bed. Names from baby books, Shakespearean names, names of Nobel Prize winners. Names of trees, names of Buddhist social activists, names of office supply companies. When supermarket strangers asked, we listed Indonesian cities. According to Nebraska law, children cannot be named after food. "Kumquat," we told her mother over the phone.

We read books on psychology and breast feeding. I bought a sprinkler for the baby to run through someday. Her belly grew. I taped a construction paper mustache over her navel and spoke for it with a French accent. "I am *zeh* fat baby in *zeh* fat belly. My parents will go *le* broke feeding me when I am born."

"Add *Jean Pierre* to the chart," she said and laughed. I placed my hand on her stomach.

3.

Ended.

That was her word three decade-long months ago. *Ended*. Like a board meeting, a tennis match. Like white cursive over the last frame of a feel-good movie.

She entered the kitchen, said, "Ended."

I stood confused at the dishwasher for a minute—when I finally re-

alized what she meant, my gasp was a reverse sob. I reached for her arm, cupped my hand around her stomach out of habit. Her gasp was a little scream. She shook off my palms and drifted away from me, to the bedroom like an absent-minded hum. I called after her. She locked the door.

I ripped the name chart from the wall; wrapped it and myself with a blanket on the couch.

I felt like smashing something.

But things don't end. The white cursive closing credits eclipse the part when the generic boy and girl stop kissing and she has second thoughts about choosing him over the job promotion. They want to get to his place for sex but can't catch a taxi in the rain. She chews her lip, which irritates him. The next morning he goes to work; his sister mails him a card.

In the eleven days of monologue that followed, I paid the electric bill, hung up on telemarketers, e-mailed apologies to my boss, sat against the bedroom door, waiting for her to open it. The moments she did, she clutched the knob like she'd fall. Her eyes looked borrowed. I said: "Let me make you toast, some coffee," "Maybe we can visit your mother," "Let's go outside, sit by the Missouri," and "I think we should see someone." Sometimes she moved her lips in reply. Once we hugged.

4.

It started just as I was overcoming the shock of hearing her again. At first I thought it was a joke—albeit twisted—like back in Lincoln when we faked arguments in jewelry stores.

"I have a confession, my dear," she whispered. "Every morning, I repeat 'Mama' over Matilda's crib while you shower."

"Sorry," I fumbled. "Did you have a bad dream or something?"

"It's selfish, I know, but I really hope that's her first word." She sounded like she was admitting shortchanging a waitress. She wore this guilty smile, like she expected me to be teasing angry.

I tried to laugh and handed her some coffee to change the subject. I didn't know what to say, so I said nothing.

5.

I'm giving myself a pep talk on my drive home.

"This is the right thing. Get her to sit; say it how you've practiced. Don't get mad, she shuts down when you yell. It'll be fine. Don't mention that night or the name chart. No sarcasm. And watch how you pronounce *Armistead*—stop saying it like a foreign language. Know she might lose balance. Be deliberate, but don't speak slowly or she'll feel patronized. Catch

her.”

I'm already at the front door. “Let's be healthy. Or at least okay.” I say, opening it.

“Did you leave the house today?” I ask when I find her in the living room, even though I know the answer.

“With Matilda sick in bed? Of course not.”

“Can we sit?” I pull her toward the couch. “Listen. I think we should discuss Matilda. And Armistead.”

“Good, because we have so much to discuss—look what came in the mail today,” she bubbles and grabs off the coffee table a manila envelope addressed to Armistead. She hands it to me like a gift.

I shouldn't give in. I have a speech memorized. “Honey—.” But her mouth is squeezed tight, her eyes enormous as she waits for me. Damn it. Was there a time I knew how to give her what she needed?

I pull the brochures from the envelope. They're from Yale University.

“They want Armistead to apply! Isn't that marvelous?” she squeals. “Finally, all his nights cramming SAT words have paid off.”

“Stop it!”

I wasn't supposed to yell.

Three quiet seconds.

She whispers, “I'm so proud of him—it will be terrible to see him go, of course, I don't know what we'll do without him—but it's what he wants.” Her speech, too, seems memorized. Maybe they always have been.

Last night Armistead was dressing for his first elementary school dance. Tomorrow he'll probably begin chewing solid foods or want to borrow the car.

I'm stumbly over my syllables: “Listen—I—I'm sorry I've let this happen for so long. It's my fault.” I don't look at her.

In the beginning, when time was first counted by days after *Ended*, only Armistead and Matilda stories could pry her mouth open. Since then, no words have been true. But they were at one point—at one point I thought I could feel her through her voice. Like the music of it tickled our skin. That's what I told myself tonight in the car. If you miss something long enough, do you start to think it once existed?

According to Nebraska law, if a couple cohabitates for seven years, they are legally married.

I cradle her arm, look with eyes that feel borrowed. My sob is a little scream.

If the children leave home, we will have nothing to talk about.

Beth Tovar

Finalist for the 2007 Sudden Story Award

Plan B

A jar fell off the shelf and landed on the counter below with a loud crack that lifted her from her chair and rattled the paper she was reading. She thought for a minute it was an earthquake and then she remembered she wasn't in California anymore.

What would make a jar fall off a shelf? A snake? No, the shelf was too high, the wall too smooth. How would a snake get up there? Please, anything but a rat. A ghost. A ghost would be much preferable to a rat.

She went into the kitchen and picked up the jar. It was unlabelled, jelly in a Ball Jar. She had not opened it because she didn't know what kind of jelly it was or who had preserved it. The jar itself was unharmed, which was good because she understood Ball Jars were expensive.

She thought she heard the faint *flurr* of helicopter blades, but they were drowned out by the sound of the Jeep rolling in behind the house. She put the jar back on the shelf and headed back to her newspaper.

Robert came through the back door. "They're here. Feds at the Rangers Station, State Police at Milbee's, asking questions." He disappeared into the bedroom. "You remember the plan."

"I remember the plan." She automatically started sorting, gathering those things which would need to be burned in the barrel in the back, those things that should be taken with them and those things which gave no clue who it was that had occupied this cabin.

Robert appeared again with a hiker's backpack on his back and a pseudo military khaki knapsack in one hand. He felt the need to reiterate the plan, and she let him. "I'll go through the woods. You meet me at the Conoco station. It's okay to go the long way. I gassed the Jeep up yesterday and both cans are full. That should get us across the border before we have to stop again." He started for the door.

"Wait, Robert." She ran into the bedroom, came back with two pairs of her own boot socks. "Your heavy socks are in the wash, and it's going to be cold. Take mine. And here," she threw the bread she baked yesterday and that jar of unlabelled jelly into a bag. "Take this, too."

She kissed him, too passionately, and he was gone.

She stood in the living room and looked around. The cabin was perhaps as big as the living room of their house in Los Angeles. Their real home, not the one they rented during the trial. And it was actually better than some

of the motels, because it was quiet and the drains worked. But it was primitive, uninsulated. She had lived in three layers of clothes for the first two weeks after their arrival.

The newspaper she had been reading was three weeks old. She had resorted to the Sports section and was amusing herself by trying to pronounce the names of a Chilean soccer team. According to the plan, it must now be burned because it placed them in Tempe. She would have to hope to find another somewhere along the way.

The Jeep keys dangled from a hook by the door. Of course, the gas cans were full and the Jeep was newly filled. It was always newly filled. She hated driving that Jeep.

She stood on the porch, dressed and ready to go. She had found her stash of mini Snickers and put them in her pocket. One had been nibbled by mice, but one she could easily sacrifice.

The first four officers came out of the woods and walked toward the door. Two of them with guns drawn. She could hear the others waiting behind the trees, the rock wall. She held up her hands, not in surrender but to show she had nothing in them but the Jeep keys.

"He's gone south through the woods. You'll find him at a Conoco station on 237. If you park the Jeep by the dumpsters, he won't suspect a thing." She handed the first officer the keys. "Have you got anything I could read? Paperback? Fresh newspaper?"

Christopher Kelsey

Winner of the 2007 Pasty Sumie Saiki Award

Rapoza

The drying hoses' couplings clacked. Drips smacked on the cool concrete. "Jackwalin," Rapoza hissed, "put that sucka out." The orange tip glowed. He shook his head. Summer Session co-eds. He pulled off his denim work shirt and flailed at the unfurling smoke. His dingy undershirt barely contained a swelling midriff; a black tuft poked through the worn fabric over his bellybutton. He stared into the shifting morning shadows of the Waikiki Fire station tower where Jacqueline sat on stacks of coiled hoses. The overwhelming odor of Pine-O succumbed temporarily to the heavy perfume of fresh homegrown. "C'mon, Jackwalin. We no like get busted."

"Oh, Kah-mah," she squawked. "I told you—its pronounced, 'Zha-leeen.' It's French. On my Mother's side...I think..." Probably on her mother's *boyfriend's* side—one of them, anyway. She held another long hit, her head tipped back, and released a sweet-smelling cloud. After removing her petite denim shorts she began untying the front of her starched white blouse, brushing aside the blonde tresses that kept falling forward. Chin in her cleavage, she stared down at the bunny-eared fabric, picking at the knot with silver-sheened nails. She put her intense investigation on hold and offered the joint to Rapoza.

His head swiveled as if he were getting ready to cross a busy intersection, then he brought it to his lips. The urge to check behind him one more time was overwhelmed by his desire for a heavy toke. Good thing the drug-testing-dude, Moniz, was his boy. And Rapoza took care of him: bags of avocado, Puree mango, and lychee, from his mother-in-law's yard in Wahiawa Heights; fresh weke, palani, and menpachi—the papio he kept for himself—everytime he went diving off of Tong's; and a half-dozen cases of contraband Duck brand fireworks, mostly 20,000 count, every New Year's eve. But it was worth it, to be able to buzz along every now and then, tingling toes, a couple of head rushes.

The sweet woody taste poured across his hard palette while he unbuckled his belt. The navy blue staypresseds fell down over his local-style woven leather slippers, little puffs slipping out of his nose as he suppressed a cough. He wet his fingers and killed the joint, exhaling the balance of the hit in a thick stream. A warm tingle vibrated up his hamstrings.

Jacqueline seemed to have solved the riddle of the knotted blouse, pulling the unbuttoned front open triumphantly. "C'mere, darlin'," she mur-

mured.

He shuffled over in front of her, still not sure where to put the extinguished roach. She reached into the front of his Jockeys' waistband and pulled down with both hands. She wet her upper lip and giggled. "Ahh have always had thee utmost reespect for the civil servant."

Her sticky lids flew wide open as light flooded the room. The heavy metal door had swung inward and now slammed against the hollowtile wall. She let go of the elastic, snapping it up under his plumbing.

Rapoza yelped and twisted around, facing the blinding light. As his eyes began to absorb detail, he could make out the silhouette of Captain Hashimoto, standing with his fists on his hips. Jacqueline grabbed her shorts and scampered behind the stacked hoses.

"Gonfunnit, Rapoza!" The Captain's eyes bulged like a bufo caught under the tire of his Toyota. "How you goin respond to one fiyah!"

"Sorry, Cap...I...." He fumbled with his particulars, the roach still pinched between his thumb and forefinger. He yanked on his pants, stuffed the roach into his right front pocket, and hobbled after Jacqueline.

"Rapoza! What the hell you doin here on your day off! What the hell—"

"Sorry, Cap, can't stay and wala'au." He continued pulling up the pants while stumbling after his big blonde companion under a sky that looked like rain. She had managed to grab her 'ukana on the way out, heading in the general direction of his rusted Toyota pick-up—parked behind the station in the shade of some monkeypods next to the basketball courts—but seemed to be taking an indirect route, weaving as if she was heading a conga line. "Rapoza!" Captain Hashimoto had come to the threshold of the back door. "Why no take off da ress of da week"—his face had become as red as the sunburned tourists who flocked to the beach two blocks away—"cuz you suspended, you punk!"

Rapoza paused, one hand still gripping the front of his staypresseds. He deserved Captain Hashimoto's ire, even the suspension, but that "punk" remark had crossed over the line. He had half a mind to go back there and ask that prick, Arnold Hashimoto—who used to whimper like a puppy in the third grade when Rapoza "borrowed" his lunch money now and again, whose Grandpa Hashimoto had worked for Grandpa Rapoza at Waialua—if he wanted a chance to take it back before Rapoza made him.

But it wasn't worth his job. Not today, anyway. He needed to get Jacqueline back to her dorm and zoom home before Jeannie became suspicious. It wasn't that he didn't love Jeannie—she was still the cutest thing in heels. He'd never cheated on her before—except for that time with the dispatcher, Charlene Reyes, making out behind the far wall of the basketball

courts after last year's Fourth of July pa'ina—but that didn't really count...and *somebody* had had to finish up the baby Millers, all twenty-seven bottles. Her lips hadn't felt nearly as soft as he'd imagined they would.

But Jacqueline was different. He gunned it up Kapahulu Avenue, looking to cut back over to Dole from lower Wai'alae via St. Louis Drive. Especially from Jeannie, whose petite Japanese demeanor belied her child-of-the-sixties heritage. She was a good wife: quiet, dutiful, thorough, considerate, and—something that Jacqueline Honoria Winslow would never be—predictable. He couldn't even predict from day to day what color of lipstick Jacqueline would wear: blackberry, butterscotch, cobalt, crimson, fuschia, or Las Cruces purple. Jeannie wore chapstick. That first day, when Jacqueline asked for directions coming back from Kaimana Beach, she was so excited about meeting a "real" Hawaiian—he had introduced himself as "Kamapua'a, named afta da pig god an his sackshual prowesseses" instead of Wendell—that she squealed with delight when he also claimed to be a distant cousin of Princess Kawananakoa, "Chree-times removed...on my mudduhside side." "Kamapua'a" had been a difficult task for her lips and tongue—she was much more adept at some of their other uses—so they settled on "Kama" instead. She claimed to be from plantation aristocracy, but he half-suspected that her neighborhood contained more mobile homes than Corinthian columns. Standing in front of the fire station that afternoon, shifting her golden-sandaled feet, she batted her false eyelashes with an energy that may have affected the tradewind patterns.

It wasn't that his intimate life with Jeannie was less than satisfactory, predictability did have its upside, especially after the kids were asleep and they were halfway through a dube, but Jacqueline—her hair, her eyes, her hips, her blessed mouth...oh my. When she had asked him about his simple gold wedding band, he acknowledged his marriage but insisted that Jeannie had been stalling, delaying the divorce settlement, keeping him—a Hawaiian, a prisoner in his own land—away from her, the love of his life. The young coed lapped it up. But when she offered to help, when she prodded him about when they'd be able to get married, he would nod his head and solemnly intone, "Soon, Bebbh...soon."

He could pass for a Hawaiian. He was dark enough and although the more discriminating eye might detect the difference between a Roman nose and an 'upepe nose, Jacqueline never would. Just past the Hawaiian Studies facilities, he downshifted across the bridge, shot in front of a belligerent Budweiser truck, and bumped down the shadowed dorm drive.

"Hale Lehua, yeh?" Her eyelids didn't flicker—maybe they were stuck together. "Jackwalin?" He nudged her with his elbow, turning his eyes away from the approaching speed bump. His decrepit shocks bottomed-

out under the canopy of shower trees—whose boughs dropped coral petals onto the rusted Toyota's hood—popping the full-bodied Jacqueline up off the cracked vinyl seat. "Sorry, Bebbeh." He rubbed her hip. "I nevah see um, asswhy. Really, I..." Jacqueline's steady snoring—like an intermittent Poulan—halted his attempts to apologize. Was it Hale 'Ilima? or Hale Moki-hana? He glanced over at the blotto blonde. Maybe he should drop her off at Hale Mohala instead. Philodendron vines, leaves grown larger the higher they reached into the canopy, made it darker still. It smelled like jungle.

Around the next bend, a cluster of concrete benches huddled beneath the umbrella of a dense Poinciana. He pulled the truck over, tire yelping against the curb. Jacqueline's head bobbed on the armrest but not hard enough to keep her from snoring straight through.

"Jackwalin...Sweet-haht...chry wake up, yeh." He smoothed her hair. "I foget what dorm, Dahlin."

She turned onto her left side, barely missing the handbrake.

"Bebbeh doll...Precious..." He grazed the right side of her face with his fingertips. "C'mon, Sweetie...I gotta find out whea you stay...what dorm, yeh? Lehua? 'Ilima? Lokelani? Which flowah?" He had moved his hand over to her shoulder, resisting the urge to utter that crack about Hale Mohala. It felt soft and warm underneath the wrinkled cool cotton. "C'mon, Dahlin... juss chry tell me where fo go, yeh?" Before he told *her* where to go. The rubbing speed increased. Ten fifteen. He should've been home half an hour ago. "C'mon, Honey...whea you live? Sweeedee..." The shoulder rub had escalated into a major vibration, at least a four-point-seven on the Richter scale.

Her head bumped against the door's metal skeleton; her right eyelashes fluttered. "Kahmah?" Her left eye's lashes finally oozed open. "Don't leave me, Kah-mah."

"I not leavin you, Ku'uipo."

She moaned. "Oh Baby, I love it when yew talk dirty."

"Yeah...arright." He swallowed a chuckle. "Look Jackwalin, I gotta go. Tell me whea fo take you—what dorm, yeh?" A big white dove, having strayed north from the flocks at the zoo, landed on the hood.

"Kah-mah?" She put her arm over her eyes, ignoring the risk of it becoming stuck to her face. "When are we gonna get hitched like you promised?"

"Soon, Dahlin, soon." And he'd better get her dropped off soon and get home soon. She tried to sit up but, realizing somewhere in the process that the effort was futile, slumped back down on the bench seat, her face just missing the jagged pewter window crank. "How soon?" Her voice had taken on a more focused tone, as if her sluggish synapses had received a healthy jolt

of Mountain Dew.

"I tol you, Honey." He put on his best a-woe-is-me-look. "I tryin."

She folded her arms over her breasts. "Trying." Her rosy irises stared at him, pink-frosting lips tightening.

"I wen tell you, Sweetee, time-an-time-an-again." He inserted a melodramatic sigh. "She no like gimmee one deevoss."

"Mmm." The dove pecked at the window-washer spigot.

"We juss gotta be payshent, das all."

"Patient." She coughed. "Summer's gonna be over soon." She raised herself up on her right elbow. "Ahh got tard of beeyin' patient, Kah-mah."

"Wachu talkin?" The dove cocked its head to one side, as if listening. The overcast blocked more light.

"Ahh called yer waff an told her to let yew go so we could get hitched." She smiled with an air of accomplishment, as if she'd just made her own bed for the first time. "As my mama always said, 'Sometimes yew need to give yer life a little jump-start.'"

"Well...I..." He clamped his jaw shut until the urge to bellow and punch through the ratty headliner passed. "I reeeeee gotta go, Jackwalin." Her little "jump-start" threatened to release the energy of a hydrogen bomb. And he didn't know how he would deal with the fallout. He reached across her body and pushed open the passenger door. "I call you...bumbye." He pulled the towel more tightly across her substantial hips.

"What are yew doin, Kah-mah?" She slapped his hand away. "Yew tryin' to get ridda me?" Her tightening nasal twang had begun to grate on his auditory nerves like a corroded muffler dragging on blacktop.

"Nonononono. I not laddat." He shook his head, attempting to look solemn. "I love you, asswhy. Juss gotta be carefo." Jeannie had a temper. She once put a ten-pound sledge through the front of his TV in the garage when a football party had gotten a little out of hand.

"Kah-maaaaah!"

"I sorry, Bebbeh, but I reelly gotta go—now." He ran around the front of the truck and grabbed the door handle. The dove backpedaled.

"Ohhh, Kah-mah..." She edged towards the parking brake. "Why can't you just stay with me?" She reached back and grabbed the bare metal of the passenger door.

"I will, Honey...I will. Later." He pulled on the door handle but she held it fast. "But you gotta leggo da doah an lemme go—juss fo now." Maybe she thought that telling Jeannie would somehow tip the scales in her favor, but it was beginning to have the opposite effect. "C'mon, Bebbeh...I call you as soon as I pau wit my...business."

"You sure, Kah-mah?" The tension in her shoulders and arms re-

laxed. "Everything gonna be alright?" She smiled weakly.

"Garrenz."

"Pardon me?"

"Uh...yeah...no worries." He forced a smile in return and yanked open the door—her hand still attached—pulling her out of the car. She yelped, half-sprawled over the curb and sidewalk, a gooey seed pod caught in her hair.

"Kah-mah! My knee—I'm bleedin!" She looked down at the thin red line, only a scratch. "And my shoulder! It must be dis-low-cay-ted!" She made no attempt to get up. "And my hair, oh my Gawd!" She pulled at the long sticky pod caught in her white-blond strands. "What the hell is this crap, Kah-mah-pooh...whatever!"

He helped her to her feet, brushed off the seat of her towel-sarong, and pulled the gunky debris out of her tresses. "No worry." He blew on the scratch and flicked a couple of monkeypod blossoms of her shin. "Is only one shkratch." She clung to his arm. "You be arright."

She leaned up against him. "You'll call me?"

"Yeyeye. Bumbye." He slid out from under her cheekbone, ran back around the truck, jumped in and cranked the starter. The engine caught, blowing a cloud of blue-grey exhaust forward over the cab; the dove burst upward in an explosion of white feathers. He released the handbrake and jerked away from the curb, looking ahead for the next opportunity to turn around. Jacqueline—framed in the passenger-side mirror, denim shorts protruding from her bag, sandal straps hooked over her fingers, blouse ends clutched firmly in one hand, ragged towel hem pinched in the other—waved weakly. As her reflection shrunk in the mirror, her melting make-up that had pooled around her eyes gave her the look of a ghoulish raccoon.

He passed a service access, stomped the brakes and slammed the tranny in reverse. Whipping the wheel to the right, he squealed the truck back into the driveway, swung the wheel back over to the left, ground the gears, and laid down a black arc of rubber as he pounded back toward Dole. The speed bumps bounced him again but he plowed along under the canopy that had grown darker by the minute. He could no longer see where the shower trees ended and the mokeypods began. Zooming around the last curve, he jerked to a stop at the Dole street junction. Charcoal cumulus clouds were building in the back of the valley. He'd better get home before the storm broke.

He pulled out left, behind a black SUV, and kept it in second as he approached the light at East-West Road. With its windows up and its bass notes thumping, as if their sole purpose was to raise the rear window up out of its rubber gasket, using words that should have gotten somebody's mouth

washed out with Tutu Rapoza's laundry soap, the Escalade shot through the yellow. The Toyota's gasket had corroded through in three places, allowing Mano's frequent showers to generously water the colony of orange fungi that thrived in the soggy carpet behind the driver's seat.

The lights held as he sped along Dole, past the pordagee sausage statue—or the dull orange “finger,” depending on one's point-of-view—and then, across the street on the makai side, past the dorms, the law school, and finally the music department, where a wide variety of musical styles prevailed. He downshifted into second, yanked the struggling Toyota around the corner, and headed up University Avenue. A few more blocks and he'd be home.

But home to what? That stupid haole broad had blown the whistle, leaving him to come up with a fantastic explanation that, somehow, might seem credible. Passing Sinclair Library, a possibility popped into his head. The haole lady had become infatuated with him after he had revived her from a near drowning in front of Walls, a patient/doctor attachment. She had some kind of drug problem—ice, probably, just like Jeannie's cousin Jossalyn—and, as part of her addiction, had become so fixated upon him that she had developed some kind of wild fantasy about their nonexistent relationship that she so insanely desired. If she didn't quit this harassment he would be forced to take out a TRO against her. That was it. With just the right amount of groveling and kowtowing, it would fly.

He zipped past Metcalf, whistling an old Bobby McFerrin tune, and then, feeling so lifted, burst into song on the chorus. “No worries...babump-abumpa...be happy.” A beam of sunlight broke through the darkening sky. He smiled at himself in the rear view mirror, his molar's gold crown glinting in the reflection. Gazing a second too long, he nearly crunched the right rear quarter panel of a white Lincoln Towncar where the lanes merged past Maile Way. He nodded and waved, waiting for the ruffled driver to move on.

Groping in the doorless glove box for the Altoids, he remembered he needed to account for the time discrepancy. It was eleven twenty-eight; he should've been home by nine forty-five. He needed another reasonable explanation before he covered the three blocks to Armstrong. Captain Hashimoto had hauled him in after the meeting and given him grief about the haole woman, how she was disrupting routines at the station. He knew that Arnold had a bigger beef but he hoped to lay low and weather the little man's tirade. Finally forced to defend his integrity, he was vilified only when the squirt grudgingly accepted confirming accounts from Moniz and Chang. Good thing he hadn't asked Charlene.

Signaling for a left turn into Armstrong, he blew out a cleansing breath, as if he was preparing to free-dive. The impending rain—it was a hassle sometimes, but they needed it—smelled of earth and lau'a fern.

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He pulled in behind Jeannie's blue Honda and began to construct the proper look. He switched off the old truck, which continued to stumble like an unbalanced wash load on its spin cycle. Anxious? Maybe not. After slamming the driver's door, he shuffled up the Futura Stone walkway. Regretful? Not quite. He heard cooking sounds coming from the kitchen off to the right. Apologetic? Maybe. As he kicked off his slippers and pushed in through the doorway, constructing his furrowed-brow-look, the glorious aroma of corned beef and onions, heavy on the pordagee sausage, hit him in the face. As did the cast iron frying pan.

Che S. Ng

Winner of the 2007 Stephen C. Stryker and William H. Stryker Award
In the Summer We Would Sweat

On the south shore of Maui the streets are lined with rotting houses. My house was identical to a lot of the other houses around it, but it's the one I was raised in. In the summertime inside the house the heat was always unbearable. I never had a car so I had to walk anywhere if I wanted to get out from the heat of the house.

The air moves in shimmering waves rising up off the ground and the sun bleaches vision yellow or white. As you walk down the asphalt roads with no painted lines you can feel the heat moving through your clothes. The cars that drive by kick up dust and sand from the side of the road and crackle as they smash gravel into their tires. The feet of the people that live on the south shore are black from dirt mixing with the sweat that collects under their slippers.

Grass doesn't grow well there. The front yards on the south shore are crowded with broken machinery and scraps of wood and dirt and chicken coops. The houses weren't built well and they are wooden or cement-block. Most of them are falling slowly under the weight of the dust that has collected on them. These houses occupy a marginal space between the grassy kiawe wood forests and the roads.

Not too many years ago it was the beginning of the last summer I would spend on Maui. The sun had been up for a few hours and I wanted to go surfing. I stepped out through the screen door and as I walked down to the main road I took off my shirt. I didn't need it anymore and no one wore a shirt in the summer if they could help it. I stopped down at Jimmy's place because he'd borrowed my surfboard the day before. Jimmy loved to surf even when there wasn't a swell. He loved the water. His yard had nothing in it but dirt and a dog-house. He liked to say he was going to be a marine biologist, and I always laughed at him because he was so white and he burned in the sun. His mother opened the screen door and told me he was down at the Cove and already in the water. I said thanks and went around to the back and got my big rock-board and carried it onto the main road under my arm.

It's only a couple of miles down to the Cove. It's where all the kids in this part of town surf when there's a swell. When there's no swell some of the rats still go down and surf because of the heat. The main road that leads to the Cove has a yellow line in the middle and thick cracks grow from the edges of the blacktop. It runs for miles right next to the long beaches that stretch from the north end of town to the south end. At the south end the asphalt

recedes and the road returns to lava rock and sand. The best surfing is down at that end but it was a long walk and a long drive even if you have a car.

The walk to the Cove wasn't ever bad and I saw people I knew driving down the road and a few people in the beach-parks threw me shakas and said aloha quietly as I passed by. When I finally got to the Cove I was sweating all over and my surf shorts were already wet. I wished I hadn't brought my shirt because it got dusty and sweaty and it was no good to wear anymore.

The Cove is a small sheltered bay that funnels the swells into it because it used to be a boat-ramp in the olden-days. There is a deep impression in the corals from the bottoms of the boats scraping them. The sharks there are small and scared and there are plenty of fish now because the reef is starting to grow back where the drop-off is, and that's where you line up to catch the waves.

When I arrived the Cove was flat, and I could see Jimmy out on the swells with someone. I thought it was Garrett Murakami. I said hi to the old-man surfers that cruise the parking lot of the cove and one of them called me over so I put down my board on the worn pavement and shook hands with all of them one by one.

Uncle Buli was there. He was a legend around the south shore because he was the last waterman that anyone knew of. He was always somewhere down on the beach surfing or net fishing or diving the old Hawaiian ways. Buli asked me about my father.

"He's still sick but he's not going to die I don't think. He's going to get better."

Uncle Buli frowned.

"He's one good man. No mattah he stay haole," he said. All the uncles nodded and looked away or at their feet or took a drink of beer.

Buli always looked straight in my eyes and his curly black hair was brown in the middle and almost blonde at the ends from the sun bleaching it. At that moment his dark brown wrinkled face looked shrewd and childish, and somehow very old.

I asked Buli to surf with me.

He shook his head and frowned, "Nah we go dive sometime," he said.

I nodded but I knew he wouldn't bother to teach me unless I saw him when I had my spear at the beach. Elden Murakami was there too and I asked him if Garrett was out with Jimmy in the water and he said, "You know dat, brah. Going?" I nodded and said goodbye. I walked back to my board and down the boat ramp. I slid the board over the shallow water and paddled out.

On the way out I climbed onto my knees on the board and pad-

dled.

Paddling on your knees is faster and takes less energy than lying down. The wax on the board smells like bubble gum and the water is very salty and cold when you get out into the deep channel where the waves shoulder.

When I was halfway out Jimmy and Garrett rode in to me on the same wave. There was no competition between them because they were boys from long-time and the waves were small. They surfed in near me and both dropped down on their boards and Jimmy said, "Whassup haole," with a smile and Garrett said, "Ho," and we all paddled out together.

On a long-board the water makes a sound on your board like the clunking of an anchored boat. It's a calming thing to hear and feel, and you feel connected to the water. Sitting lined up with Jimmy and Garrett I didn't talk much because the ocean is loud and I had nothing to say. Garrett always talks and he was talking about sex but I knew he was a virgin and I told him to shut it. I was embarrassed to hear him talk like that.

The heat on the water is the same as the heat on the shore, but in greater contrast on your skin. I rolled off my board and sank into the water by exhaling. It was very cold and I could feel water pushing coolness and vitality into the pores of my skin. Every time I went down to the Cove I would leave my board on the surface and dive down to the bottom and grab a handful of sand and it was always black and a little oily from the olden days when the boats used to come through. I liked to think that every time I went down and came up the sand was a little bit lighter color and a little less oily but it never really was.

That time when I came to the surface Garrett pointed to the horizon and said, "Back set." I think he didn't shout it out loud like usual because he was a little hurt from when I told him to shut up. We all paddled out over the breakers to where the bigger waves break outside the drop-off. It was a decent size set and Garrett took the first wave because he saw them walling up out near the horizon.

There was hardly any wind and the waves were well formed. I took the second wave and got in a strong clean bottom turn, spraying the water down in front of the wave. I kicked the inside rail too hard and turned up the wave fast so I kicked the outside rail gently and began riding slowly and patiently on the big board.

The feeling on a long board is what I imagine flying to be like, but on a long-board you go slow and easy, and the water on the wave is sharp and fast. I rode the wave until it lost strength and crumbled. I dropped off the board back into the water.

I stayed out in the water for another hour with Jimmy and Garrett

but they had been out surfing since sunrise so I rode a small wave with them half way to the boat ramp and paddled the rest of the way in. I got out with both of them and when we went to the parking lot Eddie was there sitting with the uncles and I smiled and shook his hand because he's a braddah too. He was dark-skinned and local. His hair was wiry and I figured he was some kind of Polynesian mixed with Asian and white but I never asked him. Eddie looked at me and said there was going to be a party down at Sherwood's tonight and, "All da' boys from da' sout side is goin' be down," which meant that his crowd was going to be there. Jimmy and I said we'd go but Garrett didn't drink and besides his father was there and didn't want him going. Eddie was drinking Bud Light with the old men even though he was my age. He shook my hand and looked at Jimmy and turned away from us.

Garrett's father Elden offered Jimmy and me a ride home, so we staked our boards in his truck with his and Garrett's and got in the back with our knees curled up. There wasn't much room with four boards and Jimmy and me. Garrett was in the front with his father. Elden drove slowly back to our neighborhood and dropped Jimmy and me off at Jimmy's place. I carried our boards to the yard and rinsed them with the hose and rinsed myself with the hose while Jimmy went inside to shower and change. After I was done I went inside and wore some of Jimmy's clothes because I didn't want to walk home and get sweaty again. Jimmy had some girls coming over and I was excited and a little nervous. Then he told me it was Kat and Harley. I had known those girls as long as I've known anything but they both had become very pretty and it was hard to be friends with them because of the way they looked.

I ate dinner with Jimmy. His mother and sister weren't home and it was still early so we listened to music for a while and talked story to pass the time. Jimmy told me about wrestling and we both get excited and he showed me some complicated moves that hurt deep in my body when he did them to me. It took me a while to learn them and even then I still didn't understand exactly in what kind of a situation they would be good in. Jimmy knew but he couldn't tell me because he doesn't know how to say it right. He just knew because wrestling was in his blood and in his family. Jimmy came in second in the Hawaii State wrestling tournament for the one hundred thirty-five pound weight class when he was just a sophomore in High School. He was smaller than me by fifty pounds but he could out-wrestle me nine times out of ten. I thought that was very impressive. I made myself feel better by thinking that I could out-box Jimmy ten times out of ten. I thought that in a real fight I'd beat him silly and probably really hurt him. I grew up local and fighting and he grew up praying in Kansas like a haole. I tried to get those thoughts out of my head quickly though. Jimmy was my best friend and he always had my

back when I needed him. I thought of the times when I fought along his side and together we never really lost a fight. We had never lost, even when there were a lot of guys against just the two of us.

'He's a good guy,' I thought, and so I slapped him hard in the face and laughed. He grinned and tackled me to the ground and put me in an arm bar and twisted it hard until I screamed and laughed and finally when he let go I had tears in my eyes. The pain made my arm feel like it wouldn't work right for a month.

By then the sun was going down and Harley walked in the house alone without knocking first because she knew that Jimmy's mother wasn't around. She gave me and Jimmy kisses and sat down on the couch with her legs crossed. She's beautiful in that way that hapa girls are, and I'm sure they're the most beautiful girls in the world. She had a curving brown body, and her clothes weren't too tight like a lot of the girls around Maui, but they weren't so loose so you couldn't see her body moving under them.

"Where's Kat?" Jimmy asked her.

"I don't know," she said. "She said she'd be here, but I think she's with Wallzy somewhere."

"Wallace is a funny kid," I said.

"Kat is too good for him," Jimmy said. He looked at the floor and I saw his facial muscles tense up.

"Yeah, she is," Harley said, looking at me.

"Well whatever. She can do what she wants," I said.

"Yeah but," Jimmy said, "I just don't think she should be with Wallace, that's all."

"He's always been cool with me," I said.

Jimmy started to look pissed so I stopped and told Harley she looked nice. Whenever she was complimented she would laugh and squirm a little and it always quickened my blood to watch.

Harley had a very big smile. When she smiled you could see her teeth and some of her gums and her eyes wrinkled at the corners and I always wanted to make her laugh

so I could let that smile consume me.

"Harley, let's get married."

"I would, but then we'd have to sleep together,"

She smiled again.

I couldn't meet her eyes after she said that. Jimmy was still a little red from the sun or what he had said about Kat. He went to call Eddie to pick us up.

We had nothing to do for a few hours so we played cards. We played pipito and I lost most of the hands. When Eddie came his truck was full with

coolers and a stereo. Harley got up front. Jimmy and I climbed in the back, sitting on the coolers and holding on to the edges of the truck. The moon was almost full and the road was well lit with the light from the cloudless night-sky. The night air was warm and we were all still sweating.

Sherwood's is the name of a party spot that is just outside of the north end of town. It is inside a strip of kiawe forest that lives between the road and the beach. The inside of the forest is bare from four-wheelers and dirt-bikes tearing through it. Inside it is almost pitch black because of the canopy of kiawe. Having a party there is dark and everyone talks loudly to compensate for being almost blind. Even after an hour when you have full night vision you can only see a few yards, and when cars pull in full of kids everyone squints and is blind for another hour.

We were the first ones to arrive, and we sat in the back of Eddie's truck and talked. He was entertaining us and we had a good time because we were all friends. The other kids started pulling into Sherwood's a little while later. We knew everyone and the party got started.

Everyone had a beer. At parties like that the kids would group into circles. No one would leave lights on because the police would see them from the road and break it up. We all had separated but I eventually saw Harley and stood next to her for a while, talking with her friends and laughing. She leaned into me and she was soft and together we sweated more but I didn't want to let go of her. I leaned over to kiss her but she turned away.

There is a distinctive sound of knuckles colliding into a face. It is a thud and a wet crack, and when someone is hit very hard you can feel it through the ground in your feet. I heard it and felt it, and so did Harley and we were jolted from our comfort.

I left Harley and I was drunk as I walked towards the sound. I saw a local guy walking around someone on the ground. I knew right away it was Jimmy on the ground because it is easier to see white people in the dark. Jimmy shook his head and pushed himself up a little and Eddie hit him again. Eddie was calling Jimmy a pussy and telling him to get up. I stood still for a moment looking at Eddie. Something screwed up inside me and I hit him hard in the face twice with my right hand. Eddie fell down against the side of a car. I got Jimmy up off the ground. Jimmy was dazed and he shook me off and walked towards the road without saying anything. I asked if anyone wanted to fight for Eddie and no one wanted to fight me. Eddie tried to stand up and called me a faggot as I walked away. I turned around and hit him again without the coolness that I had before. I was angry and I could feel his flesh bursting, tearing between his bones and my knuckles. I hit him as hard as I could and he grabbed my shirt and tore it as he fell. I walked after Jimmy through the bushes and caught up to him on the side of the road. We

walked towards town and made jokes about the fight while we moved the night behind us. My shirt was splattered with dots of blood and torn. Jimmy's face looked like a balloon and my hand was stiff with swelling.

We got back to Jimmy's house deep into the night but neither of us wanted to sleep. I was still shaking in my knees from the fight even after the miles we walked. We went around behind Jimmy's house and got our boards and started walking down towards the Cove while the night sky bathed the world in pale hues.

The road and parks that followed the beaches were empty but for a few groups of kids and bums smoking and drinking in the shadows. They didn't throw us shakas as we walked and we kept our eyes forward on the road and talked to each other in hoarse whispered tones. There was no one who wanted to see us while we were walking down to the cove so early in the morning and there was no one we wanted to see. We walked down the broken road to the old boat ramp with our boards under our arms and even though we couldn't see any waves we paddled out over the flat water, glowing darkly in the moonlight.

Rai Chaze

The ocean was there on that day

The ocean was there on that day
In the lovers bedroom
When he came into
The grief of loving the woman.
He shuts his eyes and
Puts his body against hers
Very softly, he tells her
That he has begun to love her
He says that he does not want
To see it end
She does not hear him
She only hears the sound
Of the ocean in the bedroom
The sun is on the bed
Drawn by the coconut tree palms
He whispers words of love
And touches her skin
Soft and moist as the day
She cannot hear him
The ocean was there on that day
In the lovers bedroom

The souvenir of the sea

was pacing
Up and down the streets
in Paris
Breathing in the centuries
Panting her history
Considering the brim of the river
Faint spell and languor overcame me
Trance and swoon seized me
In my soul I searched for the sea
The souvenir of her soothing
The velvet of her breeze
The salted song of her evasion
I sought for my island
My mother's womb
Mère was sitting
Alone
In a forgotten corner of Paris
I went to her and
In the palm of her hand
I fell asleep

Michelle Shin

When Science Shorts

Natalie and Francis had managed to politely avoid each other, so far, for eleven days.

Francis would come home early from work and review notes and make revisions. He would be in bed by nine o'clock each night. Natalie would then come home at nine-thirty, after solely supporting the small coffee shop across the street, and watch late night TV and infomercials until she fell asleep in the den. Francis would wake up at five every morning, tip-toe past the den out to the garage, and head to the University of Hawai'i where he worked as a professor of entomology. Natalie would sleep until ten in the morning, then leisurely make cocoa and biscuits before also heading out to her job at the university, where she worked as a professor of plant and environmental protection sciences.

They worked in the same building. Natalie was one floor up.

Their avoidance routine, since each knew the other's habits intimately, was a simple matter. Francis knew Natalie liked to take a late lunch at three, so he made sure to stay in his lab at that time. He didn't want to risk running into her in the hallways. Natalie knew Francis always took one last trip to the business office at four-thirty before leaving work, so she sat in her lab and checked email during a buffer period. The tacit agreement was made especially easy by the fact that Francis was a man of strict routine. Greenwich, England should have been set to *his* schedule.

Francis was annoyed, however, with the knowledge that their problem had, as most problems do, stemmed from something rather small and insignificant. Something that they both might have looked back on and laughed at—if it had not been for the eleven days. Now it was a matter of the worst kind: pride.

Francis had been studying a moth; a new and unknown species of moth. As an entomologist it was what he was paid to do, but the difference this time was that he had kept this secret for six months. A secret from his lab, the department chair, and, worst of all, his wife. His wife was French and a nosy, moody woman who would not take the insult of being held in the dark lightly. Francis often wondered why the secrecy as he sat alone every night at six to eat his dinner of Marie Calendar microwavable dishes. But he was a scientist. He knew there was no easy answer. All answers involved variables and a combination of things that made singling out just one distinct and pure reason a task as impossible as convincing the Hawaii Tourism Board

that the damage done to the eco-system and the invasive species brought in by hoards of red-faced, camera holding, color blind demons would be irreversible. Francis sighed as he spooned another bite of radioactive mush into his mouth. Besides, doing a probing analysis into the heart of the problem would mean an irreparable change to his lifestyle if he wished to fix it. Thus Francis mulled over the possibilities and probabilities of this problem, every night, with each beep-beep-beep of the microwave, without ever determining an answer.

The moth in question was unique because it was a water moth that was born and lived its life, until pupating, in the middle of or at the edges of flowing streams. He had been studying it, scientific name *Hypsomocoma*, for quite some time, and this little moth had fascinated him by the evolutionary and adaptability possibilities it presented. Francis had spent months scouting the woods and streams in Hawai'i looking for the little critters. The opportunity to study this moth was one of the main reasons Francis had come to Hawai'i, many years ago, as a young professor. The moth was indigenous to Hawai'i and could be found on all of the islands. Already, he had documented several shifts in climate and water placement depending on the area and which streams they were in. Originally, he had found them only in center rocks completely surrounded by water and half submerged. They liked to lie on the shaded underbelly of boulders in the tiny groves and dents that occur in some rocks due to friction over time. But lately, in cooler climates, he had been finding them embedded on flatter, more accessible rocks at the edges of, or even several feet away from, rivers. Francis concluded that while *hypsomocoma* could live submerged in water, they seemed to need only mist and moist temperatures.

To see their adaptability to both climates, and the indications this made of their evolutionary progression, was thrilling news to him. The last time he was as excited was when he was ten and won his first science fair. His original error in habitat identification was due to his mis-identification of their natural food source. Initially, he had assumed they fed on moss, because the original rocks were heavily covered in moss that also filled the grooves on the rocks. But in his new field sites, with the moths away from the river, he found that they lived on rocks with absolutely no moss. He deduced that it was lichen that the *hypsomocoma* were living on and trial experiments proved this to be true.

Francis had gone to many sites on Oahu and had traveled many times to the neighbor islands to make sure he had a diverse spread of the species. He had waited so long to study this moth and did not want to risk inadequate data. Back when he was a new professor he had been too busy spending time on grants that would bring in the big bucks and which would

ensure tenure. *Hyposmocoma* were fascinating as an evolutionary study, but were not an environmental threat and, therefore, did not warrant funding in the eyes of the USDA, the College of Tropical Agriculture, NSF, and everyone else Francis had sent grants to. Now, as a tenured and respected professor, Francis had picked it up as his pet project, which he secretly funded on the side of other grants.

Francis had felt this was a systematic entomologist's dream in evolutionary adaptability and subsistence. Just the fact that the moths could live in water, a very rare trait, was something to take notice of. He wanted to learn more before properly presenting at either an acclaimed conference, like the International Congress of Entomology, or publishing in a highly respected journal, like the *Annual Review of Entomology*—with an impact rating of five! God knows, maybe he'd even get an article in *Nature* or *Science*—the holy Meccas of the science field. No, he knew secrecy was a must. The department chair was notorious for pressuring his way into co-authoring while doing little or no work, and getting half the recognition. And his lab, while brilliant and productive, was notorious for friendly gossip.

And then there was his wife. His beautiful, much younger, ambitious, Natalie—who worked in, basically, the same scientific field except that she was studying the effects of saturating soil with lime to deflect the ever-growing population of coqui frogs. Natalie, he suspected, was sleeping with the department chair behind his back. Francis didn't care about that; his feelings of detachment from Natalie had been crafted carefully since they had been just dating. He had always known it was more important to be clinical and detached about *anything* that could interfere with his research.

On the day the first domino fell, his schedule was cramped with a couple of grad committee meetings, his weekly seminar class, and a meeting with the Eppendorf sales rep over a faulty gel visualization system he had bought—and at twelve thousand dollars, it was no joke. He needed someone well acquainted with molecular sequencing to extract the DNA of his latest *hyposmocoma*, before the samples were contaminated amid the humid air, and sequence it. The lab had been in a heat wave due to a broken air conditioner and an over-crowded fridge filled with his other leaf-hopper and meely bug grants. He had only one working gel visualization now, thanks to this new development, and needed someone who could use the extracted samples to visualize the DNA and proteins under the UV light and take pictures to assess PCR success and concentration within the samples. Natalie was an expert at all of this since she had roots in molecular science and would have been the most natural choice to ask. Instead Francis decided to call in a favor from a professor in Natural Resources and Environmental Management whom he knew could do the job. But, of course, word got back to his wife,

as the jokes flew of how Dr. Dreyer had to “save” the infamous Dr. Francis Handler, who was well known for always working independently, as he liked things exactly in his systematic fashion. An innocent joke turned into eleven days of feeling the same non-existence he has always reserved for God. And the other thing was that these eleven days had become the best in a long time.

Francis was still unsure exactly why Natalie had married him, but he knew why he had proposed. He wanted a lady close to his intellectual ability who understood the seriousness of invasive systematics and his work. He wanted a beauty who would make the other older and long married professors twitch just a little with envy. And most of all, he wanted someone to just come home to. Or, at least, he thought he did. He had been feeling a bit sentimental at the time when Natalie arrived at the college. He had been sick of an empty house, of listening to creaking walls with no laughter to cover the noise, of always having to be the one to unlock the door. Every day he would reverse into his parking space, grab the newspaper, unlock the door, and then sit with a cold tea and read about international and environmental news. Francis had often thought of how nice it would be to come home, every now and then, to an already unlocked door, with just the screen door letting the breeze come in.

But Francis was riddled with various traits of OCD; he was a control nut. And, after six months of marriage with a self-proclaimed “free-spirit,” Francis was reaching a precipice. He needed his mail in the same spot, his cups drying on the rack and the dishes put away. He needed the door closed if it was a too-windy day, and he hated seeing nail clippings on the floor. It bothered him that Natalie would leave the screen door open along with the unlocked front door. Why would a reasonable person do that and let pests in? His married lifestyle was bringing back painful reminders of the life he had thought long gone. He had moved to Hawaii because he had been sick of his hippie parents back in Berkeley. Like Natalie, they had a careless disregard for everything except their work. His parents always had their laundry strewn about. They were the type who left half-finished drinks and opened bags of food lying around the kitchen and bedroom, and they never seemed to comb their hair. Francis had felt like a maid for most of his childhood as he followed them around, picking up and putting away whatever disaster they left in their wake. Their favorite words to him had been, “Darling, loosen up!”

Francis was also a bit paranoid. He had been ever since his older sisters had conspired to make his mother believe that he was the one who had broken the “good” dishes. His sisters, little tornado-like terrors, were fighting and making a mess per usual and had hit the dining room cabinet.

The china dishes had flown off their stands, hit the glass doors, and shattered all over the inside of the cabinet. The plates had seemed as delicate as butterfly wings. His devious sisters had concocted a story about how Francis had been doing yet another experiment and that this one had happened to involve how much velocity would be needed for an impact to shatter dishes while still inside a cabinet. Luckily, his parents didn't buy it. But Francis had never forgotten the conspiracy attempt.

Yes, Natalie uncomfortably resembled his family in her haphazard ways and in her still unproven, Francis had to admit, attempts to diminish his position and respectability by sleeping with the department chair. Plus, Natalie was so ambitious and was always too wrapped up in her own world of research to take much note of his. Unless, as he now knew, he for once didn't tell her what was going on so that she could ignore it. He remembered the first time, two days after their marriage, that he had noticed her selfish streak.

He had run to her lab upstairs with gleeful news on some research that he had been conducting.

"Natalie," he had breathed heavily from jaunting down the flight of stairs. "It's all been working out so well. I extracted the PCR from my final samples and sequenced for enough genes to align them across the different varieties of leafhoppers around California and I think I've managed to determine an evolutionary relationship, finally, between the new breeds in the north. This will definitely extend my grant monies for another two years!" His words had run out all in one long and excited breath.

Natalie, bent over her desk, papers surrounding every part of her, had only mumbled, "That's great, honey."

"Natalie, have you even listened to what I said? You know this is my largest grant."

"Honey," she had said, still not looking up. "Did you know that this damn frog is right up there with rats, cockroaches, and humans in the ways of its adaptability?"

Francis had been stumped. Was she playing around?

"And, honey," Natalie had said, finally turning around, her eyes filled with delight at discussing her own work. "Did you know that the coqui's screeching mating call can reach between seventy to ninety decibels? The federal government requires that workers wear ear protection if the noise in their surroundings reaches eighty-five decibels."

Oh yes, Francis remembered that day well. Natalie's insistent, relentless research on the coqui frog—research which she deemed far more urgent and important than his. How often had she repeated the same story over a late-night tea about the thousands of coquis that have infested the Hawaiian

islands...especially the Big Island. The frogs, scientific name *Eleutherodactylus coqui*, have very few natural predators in the islands due to the lack of snakes or tarantulas and thus their population abounds freely and fast. The coquis were not native to Hawai'i and extermination efforts were well-funded by many groups. He had listened to her through the caffeine spray trials, which produced heart attacks in coquis, but were then banned due to animal rights activists and federal pesticide regulations. He had been there for her after the citric acid trials, which worked wonderfully, but harmed flowers and other fauna that came into contact with the spray. And now he had supported her with open ears and a quiet mouth through the latest lime spray testing, which was proving to be most effective in an all around manner, but yet hydrated lime couldn't be used to kill frogs except for research purposes due to legal matters. For this past year of marriage he had listened to it all. Yet when he told her everything he did, it was always while she watched reruns of *The Golden Girls* and nodded, saying "uh-huh, sounds great." Everything except for that one little moth. And it had, to quote Frost, "made all the difference."

Now, on the eleventh day, Francis was home at five o'clock, eating dinner, and thinking about what to do regarding Natalie. The funny thing was that despite this silence, his growing annoyance and disgruntlement towards her, and his suspicions of her affair, he didn't want a divorce. Francis liked things to look nice and being married to an intellectual and beautiful woman looked very nice. Having her in appearance without the bother of conversing or interacting was turning out to be twice as nice. He had always kept a journal on Natalie—starting from when he first noticed her—but he had been writing in it more religiously since the silence in case any great thoughts or solutions presented themselves. Or, as a second purpose, if he needed evidence, to look back upon to win a fight. One couldn't win an argument without well thought-out logic, and good examples, and thus he kept track of everything he could use as proof of *his* decided righteousness in *her* very wrong situation.

Francis took the journal from its hiding place in the linen closet (Natalie never cleaned or did household chores) and sat down in the old, beige recliner in the living room. He began to thumb through it; he felt that in order to fully analyze where things went wrong he would have to start by looking at early entries.

Entry 1: I noticed the new professor in our department today. She walks very well, each foot in front of the other. She likes the color pink—as evident by her pink gemstone necklace, purse, and painted nails. Professional women always feel they have to wear black, brown, grey, or dark blue—you can only tell what color they really like by the accessories. (Note: Buy her

pink flowers as a welcome gift.)

Entry 5: Talked to the new professor today. Her name is Natalie Catherine Deneue. I invited her to lunch. She likes hamburgers with the tomatoes on the side and no mayonnaise. She seems to like Kahala Mall as perceived by her mention of it twice and no mention of any other. She likes to go after work and hit the coffee shop. She arrives at work late and leaves late. (Note: Stop by coffee shop some day after dinner and after the six o'clock news.)

Entry 10: Fourth date with Natalie. She looks up when she laughs. Likes the woods and mountains versus the beach. (Note: Offer up a good hike, maybe the one in Aiea, as next date.) Seems to like older, father figures. (Note: Give her advice and guidance on how to work with rules of department and with secretaries). Likes books by Nabokov. (Note: Read some books by Nabokov—he was an amateur entomologist. Find some of Nabokov's books with entomological origins.)

Francis put the journal down and scratched his chin. He had kept such specific notes, and made such accurate observations. So, how could he have been wrong as to how Natalie would turn out? So lively, energetic...it meant chaos and a mess for him to always clean up. It had seemed like such a plus at the time. His careful analysis of her had caused him to win her over easily—the seemingly psychic man who knew everything she wanted and liked. But Natalie couldn't be kept in a cage and observed for long. No, right after the marriage he soon discovered he had no idea how to keep her. Francis turned to the journal sections on the eleven-day silence. He had been tracking them day by day to see what he could learn of her fight strategy. Day 4: Natalie has, apparently, over the past three days decided to mumble to herself in French so that if I (and I do) overhear her in the night I will remain in the dark. She builds her defense and cleverly keeps it to herself while flaunting the words throughout the still hallways! It is no matter though as I have taped some of her mutterings and had one of the graduate students in French Studies translate. Below are the written translations in French and English for posterity.

“Quel salaud! Il croit qu'il a toujours raison. Mon père a toujours dit que cette philosophie amène à une vie misérable.” —*What a bastard. He always thinks he's right. My father always said that kind of thinking leads to a miserable life.*

“Peter me comprend tellement mieux et il ne range pas toutes mes affaires.” —*Peter understands me so much better and he doesn't keep putting everything I touch back to its original place.*

“Si tu caches une chose à ta femme, elle va t'en cacher deux fois de plus.” —*If you hide something from your wife then she will hide twice as much from you.*

“Je me demande où il cache les céréales. Sans doute qu’il se lève tôt pour le faire. Je vais cacher ses timbres et ça le rendra fou! Qu’est-ce qu’il est pointilleux!” --*I wonder where he hides the cereal? I bet he wakes up early just to do that. I will hide his postage stamps and it will drive him mad! He is so picky about little things.*

That is all I’ve got. She has uttered nothing today. I think she can hear the clicks of my tape recorder and has stopped due to this new information. It doesn’t matter since I have already found a new storage place for my postage stamps that she will not find. Everything else is redundant knowledge.

Day 7: Natalie has been leaving her shoes in the house—undoubtedly just to annoy me. The soles are especially filthy and look as if she has purposely walked through dirt to get them that way. I can see scuff marks in our front lawn that match the heels. I ran into Peter today and told him that I think he is not routing the email properly depending on hard and soft faculty and their designated obligations. As department chair I see this as his duty. I stressed the words emails and not routing properly in the hopes that he will wonder if I have accidentally received some that I shouldn’t have. A subtle hint about forbidden correspondence. I have not, incidentally, ever come across indecent emails between him and Natalie, but it is never a bad thing to shake the man up a little. I’m sure they exist. Proof will come in time after further research.

Day 9: Someone told me today that coquis were now real estate deal breakers. If someone knew they were in the area the contract could, and probably would, fall through. I bet Natalie started this bit of information and has been sending it around. She probably thinks her work is even more important now—saving the real estate business, the local economy, and uniting people with lovely, screech-free homes. She is not a true environmentalist. She has never once mentioned to me the distinct possibility of the coqui wiping out the specific insects that our rare birds rely on. Her soul has been sold for money, profit, and seeing her name in as many journals and newspapers as possible.

“What are you doing?” Surprised, Francis quickly shut the journal and looked up to meet the eyes of Natalie who stood in the doorway, the screen door wide open behind her. “It’s nine o’clock—shouldn’t you be in bed by now?” Francis quickly looked at his watch and then stared in disbelief. It *was* nine o’clock; the unspoken time that designated that he should be in bed with the door closed. Francis shook his head. Had he really been so caught up in those journals that all this time could have passed?

Natalie stepped inside, her platform heels still on, and peered at Francis’ lap.

“Is that your journal? The one you keep of me?”

"You know about this?" Francis had suspected, but never really believed it.

"Of course," Natalie scoffed. "You're not the only researcher here. I know how to collect data too."

Francis was stumped. He suddenly felt that maybe he didn't have the upper hand.

"In fact, I keep a journal on you. From the day you first asked me out. But lately it keeps saying the same thing over and over."

Francis knew she was taunting him—tempting him to ask to know more. He didn't want to fall for this trap, *but* he was extremely curious. He told himself a good scientist will do anything to get proper data—and this was needed evidence, but for whose case he wasn't sure.

Francis straightened in the recliner to try and look distinguished. "And what might that be, Natalie?"

"How un-adaptable you are." Natalie threw her purse on the couch and took three more steps. "How completely un-adaptable you are to change, to new environments, to new situations, and to new people. I have been thinking recently that if you had been the prototype for the human race, we would have been wiped out centuries ago. There would be Neanderthals running around instead of *Homo sapiens*."

She was studying her nails while she said this last bit—as if he weren't important enough to acknowledge. "Isn't it ironic?" she continued. "That little moth you love so much is exceptionally adaptable."

Francis stood up from the recliner in frustration. "Me?" His voice was thick with constraint. "Me! Un-adaptable. Well, how about you? I haven't seen you change a thing since we've been married. Have you tried to be a little neater? A little more conscientious of other people's feelings? A little less flirtatious with our Department Head? And for the record—the coqui frog is also highly adjustable. Maybe you should take a clue from your own research."

"Ha!" Natalie threw up her arms. "I knew you thought something was happening between Peter and me! Have you been spreading rumors? I have been getting glances in the hall lately and I just know you are whispering taints against my reputation."

"They glance at you because your flirtation is so obvious. It speaks for itself."

Natalie began pacing—still with her shoes on. Didn't she know this was Hawai'i? Not France or the mainland? She began talking as if Francis weren't even there, "Unbelievably stupid! Did he ever stop to think that maybe I talk to Peter because he is my only friend? Certainly I cannot talk

to my own husband. This husband that cannot accept the fact that life must change when you are married. That this house isn't his own bachelor pad anymore. That I have a right to be here and live as I wish. I can't believe I ended up marrying someone so similar to my parents. Why is the world filling up with control freaks? How could I have let myself pick such a husband?" She stopped, her body turned away from Francis, and enunciated very carefully, "A husband that does not understand that I am not one of his research projects."

Francis stepped into her path. "Quit it. I am not some child to be ignored. If you have something to say—say it to me."

Natalie crossed her arms and fixed an affronted stare on him. Suddenly, she cocked her head to one side and blurted out, "Do you know why I married you?"

Francis snickered—the poor girl was about to have her dreams crushed. "Of course," he said, suppressing his smile for later. "I analyzed you perfectly. You fell in love with me. But I put on a show for you because I wanted the beautiful, new, young professor for my wife. You're good for *my* status."

"Ahh, Francis," Natalie said, sighing. She looked almost whimsical, "We are really so much alike."

Francis shook his head. "We are nothing alike. You're a hurricane blustering up everyone's life. I'm the storm cellar that always survives."

"Dear, Francis." Natalie had pity in her voice. It disgusted him. "I married you for *my* status. You're a distinguished professor, already tenured, and well-received in the department and in the academic community. It's a sad fact that women are still more highly regarded if they have a husband such as you. Who knows? I might have married Peter if he weren't already taken. I thought, however, that we'd live a nice life in intellectual companionship."

Francis' mouth opened, but he had nothing to say. It was an unexpected blow. After all his careful observations? His detailed notes? His heart felt bitter; she had been a great actress.

"Yes." Natalie let a laugh escape and then stifled it because that was beneath her. But her lips still twitched. "I studied *you* so well. Older, all alone...basically dying for a companion. But so pretentious that you would only have one that would be admired. One who was smart *and* beautiful. I knew you would fall for me. Every day I did a little something to encourage you. I would talk about my passions, my favorite books in order to give you an opening to talk to me. I would hint about what kind of things I liked so that you could have the chance to buy them for me. I knew you would bite. It's like expecting a nezara bug to not bore through a macadamia nut—if the nut is right in front of it then the nezara bug always will."

Francis decided that analyzing her so incorrectly in no way diminished him

as a researcher. After all, it turned out his data was flawed. She had been feeding him false information and fraudulent facts. How could a scientist be blamed for a misleading hypothesis when he, himself, had been misled?

"Did you know your moths killed my frogs?" Natalie broke his reverie with her loud announcement.

"What?" Francis was confused by this topic change.

"Your moths. I had to feed my frogs one day and had run out of crickets. So I borrowed some of your *Hyposmocoma* moths—the ones who wouldn't fully pupate so they were worthless to you so don't blow your lid—and they *killed my frogs*. They're poisonous to them. Did you know that?"

"So what?" Francis raised his hand with a flippant 'who cares,' "You want to kill the frogs anyway."

"You're so narrow-minded. I'm talking about how I feel." Her face had such emotion; it radiated from her pores. "You are poison to me. You poison my life with your lies and your disapproving looks. I'm a free spirit, Francis—and you are trying to hold me down. Chain me to a test tube. Your methods are poison to me."

Natalie paused and was abruptly calm again. "It really is my fault I suppose. I studied you so carefully. I thought you would be the perfect fit for what I was looking for. How could my hypothesis be so wrong? I knew you were obsessively organized and isolated, but I didn't factor in the variable of you trying to control *my* life too. Make me like you. I can't believe my theory on you was so far off. What kind of scientist am I?"

Francis' rage, all his feelings of outrage and disbelief, began to calm. He realized she had been right...though he would never tell her. Despite their obvious differences, which first captured the eye, they really were too much alike. Stubborn to the core. Analytical in every way. It was just too bad that the hypotheses they were testing on one another had been so far off. He sat down on the couch and felt only resignation.

"What kind of scientists are we?" he muttered—no longer to her, but to the world in general. "Who can control everything, but our lives?"

Natalie seemed resigned too as she sat down at the far end of the couch.

"The kind that must move on to new projects. New research. We *can* control that and it *is* our lives."

And they sat, at each end of the couch, looking at the blank wall.

Brent Fujinaka

Broken

*

He looks up into her old face, her head nodding, telling him, *It's ok*. He twists through the break in the fence, the boards bending, bleeding a trail of soot on his white shirt, his new shoes with the velcro straps and the pocket that hides his quarter. *It's ok*, she motions with her eyes, her hands, *They don't need it*. And so he creeps across the lawn like a cat that smells the forbidden catch, creeps until the coconuts are green and round and within his reach. Before he can stop himself, he scoops one up, cradles it the way he wants to be held by her, and runs for the fence, her open, waiting arms.

*

He does not like the shouting. He does not like the anger, the words he knows he is forbidden to repeat. His grandfather sits in a chair, watching the television, his back straight and stiff as his own walking cane. There is no alarm in his black eyes, no color to his loose skin that used to resemble the packed earth he and his work crew uncovered when they split holes in the city streets. His grandfather turns to him, slowly, with those gazing eyes like a tin soldier's. *You watch. Jimmy going give him lickers. No tell yo maddah*. And the boy sits too, and listens to his uncle's heavy footsteps, the words he knows he is forbidden to repeat, the dull thump of flesh striking flesh, until it all bleeds away into the soundless blur of everything else, even the television the boy and his grandfather watch: the pretty faces, the mouths that open and close but say nothing.

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The car has just left him. Outside the house, other cars are squeezed onto the lawn, the street. His duffel bag with the sleepover clothes is tucked in the curve of his arm. He begins the climb up the stairs to the waiting arms of his mother, and on the way he is mindful of the cracked boards, the faded, curling paint, the nails that, over the years, have worked themselves free from the fast wood. And at the top he is greeted by the already-open door, the thick gathering of his aunts and uncles smiling at him through their pink, puffy faces. It is his mother who finds him, holds him tight against her rocking chest, and tells him that she is gone, gone: his grandmother is dead. At first he does not know what to do. But soon, the tears rise in his throat, stream down his face, and it is as if everything is as it should be, except that his grandmother is gone, and that, although he cannot know it yet, he will never again be as young as he was the day before.

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It is as tender a moment as they've ever had, he thinks, holding still his grandfather's head with the tips of his fingers. The hair clippers hum to life, pass over the head in a smooth arc. The boy remembers his grandfather's instructions: *Short. Short as can go without making um bolo-head.* He guides the clippers, fills their teeth with gray hair, and is amazed at the ease of cutting. He would do this forever if he could—clip and cut whatever is overgrown, fix whatever is broken. When it is finished, his grandfather's hands rub his scalp like some marvelous new thing, nods and rubs and rubs and says it's good, and the boy is sure he means it because his grandfather has never lied to him, has never shaded the hardest of truths. He will not lie, even later, on the drive to the hospital, when the boy asks why not have the barber cut his hair. The grandfather will tell him, with a slow wisdom he will have learned in these final weeks, that it's because he didn't want anyone to know. Because he didn't want anyone to care.

Alexei Melnick

The Comestible

The old books tell the same story.

In a bowl of salty, cold, blue soup, Unland drifted. It drifted because Wiseman saw its passing in the many eyes of Trueland. In dark time, the light of Unman's spoon shone upon the children of the Comestible. They ran in the many shades of blue, packed together balls of Unland, and hurled them several at a time; they soared and landed with white bursts and laughter. Their fathers poached from Unman's soup, heaving the great pinching, flopping nets aboard their rocking boats. High above, puffs from Unman's pipe loomed low, while V-shaped creatures made their slow, sad circles, bound to haunt Unland like the ghosts of slaves who even in death knew no other realm by which to fly.

The High Council of the Comestible assembled atop the stormy mount at great risk. It was no prophecy that one day the spoon would find the Comestible and Unman would eat Unland; it just was. Each with his hooded gown and torch journeyed up the spiraled trail worn into the rock by the feet of the ancients, to the summit where a fire burned. They came from the furthest corners of their floating, frosted crouton, to learn the mind of their master Unman.

The Comestible were guilty of many crimes. They ate of His soup, they breathed of His breath, they melted Unland to wet their throats and offended his sight, dotting Unland with their many domed dwellings. They intruded His slumber as unwatched young gazed toward His kingdom, Trueland. They rubbed tusks and rocks to make bright flickering heat which borrowed of his essence.

Upon his summit, Wiseman would chant that these crimes would make the Comestible more comestible, more flavorful. The Comestible knew the wisdom of Wiseman because of Unman's many lands, only Unland had so far escaped His eating. With mercy, Unland would be the final course of Unman's devouring. Wiseman's long, steamy breaths were lit white by the full spoon above him. His nose above his fixed half-grin was not unlike a stubby thumb. His coarse beard was the color of clay.

"Let us lie ourselves flat in offering," said Wiseman, and the Council drove their torches into the ground at once, lay face down in synchrony, and listened.

"Unman, we offer you our shanks, our breasts, and hope they are tender. We offer you every morsel of flesh and hope our bones crush in your jaw and do not stick between your teeth. O Master Unman, how we fatten

ourselves each day for you; spare us only long enough for us to fatten to our roundest, most succulent form as you desire. Rise, Comestible, so that you might learn his bidding.”

The Comestible rose and took their torches.

“Food, Comestible, my brethren, us many yet-Uneaten,” said Wiseman, “as we speak, Unland sinks.”

The Council murmured nervously.

“How does Unland sink, Oldman?” said Youngman.

“You must lower your voice, Youngman, lest we all be eaten Food. And yet again, I will be called Wiseman now, not Oldman. Unland sinks because we Food are too many and too much, in number and in size. With sadness, we must throw Youngman into soup.”

“If you say it, then it must be done, Wiseman,” said Youngman’s Father, gripping the boy by his long hair.

“Unland will still sink. You must join Youngman, Youngman’s Father,” said Wiseman. Youngman’s Father released his son and licked his lips.

“Could you have misjudged, Wiseman?” said Youngman’s Father.

“Sadly, not. I have judged Unland against the positions of the spoon. If Unland sinks further, we must throw more of the heaviest Food into Unman’s soup. Your sons will poach for you, and your daughters will be most well fed. They will dine from my table and rest at my bedside,” said Wiseman.

“What will become of us in the soup?” said Youngman.

Wiseman stroked his beard, and then put his hand gently on the boy. Wiseman’s gown raised and lowered from the air beneath him, as though he levitated like a phantom.

“Well, in light time Unman will see you, and you will be eaten Comestible.”

There were outcries from the Council, which was comprised of representatives from all the clans of Unland: “This is too much”; “Unman asks too much.”

“We must lower our voices, lest *all* our families are eaten Food,” said Wiseman, with his palms spread wide.

“What happens once we are eaten by Unman?” asked Youngman.

“Fear not, it will be only as it was before your birth,” said Wiseman.

The Comestible huddled around Youngman, patting the boy. Youngman’s family was from the same family of Last Wiseman and well respected.

“Oldman, how know you that Unland sinks? When Last Wiseman returns, he will decide if your judgments have merit.”

The Food stopped sobbing and leaned forward to hear Wiseman speak.

"Youngman, I saw Lost Wiseman as he left our line. No Comestible has returned once when he passes the line, no matter how honorable. We are all uneaten food; it is our very composition to be eaten. It is not the place of Youngman to challenge Wiseman," said Wiseman.

"Very well," said Youngman.

He removed his sandals and allowed his gown to slide down to his feet. Although the fire before him hissed and sparked, he stood serenely like a pillar as though the words of Wiseman had struck him and were now long past him and getting farther still. Compelled less by his own will and more by some strange outer magnetism, he felt his face pulled upward toward those dots who forbade reciprocation of their harsh, judging stare. Though his clan begged him to yield his provocation of Trueland, he did not hear their cries. Transfixed upon those "eyes" that punctured the black expanse of vacancy, Youngman knew only the vengeful, malevolent, and finite, while the benign, shapeless, and indifferent would have penetrated nowhere even in his young consciousness. He made fists and grimaced toward Unman, demanding action, demanding vengeance, demanding that much-spoken-of temper to reveal itself, and again demanding. Whether he shook so furiously from the fear in his chest or from the cold of his nakedness, no one knew. But he stood still, and the shaking ceased. Then came the mad and delirious laughter, like that of one who sees his own foolishness.

"Cowards," he said.

Youngman found the lightness of his legs, leaped from the mount, and tumbled naked and laughing toward Unman's soup. The loud crash echoed as he landed. The Comestible in their domes and villages heard the sound without knowing the place of its origin, like a sound in a house of mirrors. He swam with all the energy of Youngman, his father was following less willfully and more noisily.

Many light times had passed with no sign of Youngman. His sister slept in the shelter of Wiseman, who watched carefully as Youngman passed the line. During the dark time, Food poached and speculated about Youngman: if he had found first Wiseman, or if he had been eaten. More and more Comestible had to be thrown into soup to keep Unland from sinking, and their daughters were sent to live with Wiseman. Youngman's sister waded her feet blue-cold at Unland's jagged edge, searching for the slightest ripple of her favorite and eldest brother. She wanted herself cold, as she would be to Wiseman's touch. Of all the Comestible, she was said to be the most delicious, and it was this fault, she believed, that had caused her brother's sacrilege and scorned their Clan.

At the next meeting of the High Council, Wiseman read the names of the next Comestible to be eaten. All had daughters. None knew that down

at Unland's edge, a pair of hands broke through a crust of frozen soup, and Youngman emerged. He wore around his neck a pouch which appeared to hold nothing. His body, touching land, now required his sister to guide him. Even as his sister pled with him, he did not stop for shelter until he reached the summit of the mount. His eyes were red with salt and his body shook with cold. The High Council wrapped him in warm cloth and sat him by the fire.

"Oldman," said Youngman, when he had regained his voice. "I have seen Trueland and I know the mind of Unman."

Gasps and cheers came from the High Council.

"Youngman lies," said Wiseman. "I was Youngman once and I recognize witchery. How were you able to go unseen by the eyes of Trueland?"

"Wiseman," said Youngman. "Trueland is so grand in scale that we Comestible are far too small to be of any notice. He has no taste for us, we would be, all together, as a grain of salt to his stomach. We need not hide our faces to his kingdom, nor fear his endless hunger any longer."

"Oh great Unman! Of course you are too great for us to be of any concern. May we may live long and insignificant dark times, free of your harsh whimsical judgment," shouted the Comestible.

"Yes," cried Youngman, "long and unnoticed we shall live. We shall concern ourselves with the doings and needs of Comestible, for I am Wiseman now and proclaim that we are Comestible no more. We are forever more . . . Snow."

"What is Snow?" asked the Snow.

"This is Snow," said New Wiseman. He reached down and grabbed a handful of Unland showing it to all. He let it fall to the ground between his fingers.

"Oh . . ." said the Snow.

"Lies," said Oldman, "Youngman, have you nothing to show us from your journeys before we are all eaten by Unman?"

The Comestible looked backed at New Wiseman, with large eyes. Youngman smiled as he opened the pouch to reveal his object.

"I have," said New Wiseman, "it comes from Trueland."

The Snow passed it on to the next pair of eager hands, beholding its new form.

"I bring you the true shape of Unman," said New Wiseman.

"What call you this object?" asked the Snow.

"I call it a 'right angle,'" said New Wiseman. "With this shape we shall build a new Unland, and we shall throw Oldman and Oldman's Son to the soup."

With two loud splashes, Oldman and Oldman's Son were now Snow

drifting in soup. The long exchange of eyes with Oldman's Son had tired New Wiseman, who took his sister's arm.

"What do I do now?" asked a Clan Chieftain as he left the summit.

"Do what it is that *you* desire," said New Wiseman.

"What *I* desire?" said the Chieftain. His face, as he left, appeared troubled.

One by one the High Council of the Snow descended the summit with their torch, until it was only those two of that same womb.

"You look well-fed, Brother," said Youngman's Sister.

"You are free of your bondage, Sister," said Youngman.

"And of the rest of Unland's daughters? Shall you release them to the care of their Clansmen?"

"Quiet, before you are heard, Sister. Quiet, can't you see what I've done? I've begun the new day of Unland, where each Snow may write his own destiny."

"Brother, what is 'a day'?"

The next day Unland became a land of right angles, and the time was counted in "days" and "months" from the returning of Wiseman. Where all structures had been round, they were now made of right angles.

Rituals which honored Old Unman were outlawed and replaced by ceremonies that honored the autonomy of Snow. Attendance at these quickly shrank, as many Snow found them pointless. Wiseman's Sister found it hard to collect the tenth of Unland which was owed to her Brother as New Wiseman. A clansman of the southernmost village had thrown a fish, striking her in the nose.

"I don't understand," said Wiseman after his Sister had returned and washed her face. Wiseman put his hands on his brow and demanded the Daughters of Snow to leave him alone with his with his sister.

A council was called together at the House of Right Angles. During this heated meeting, a Snow floated ashore on Unland. He was bearded now, and few recognized him as Oldman's Son.

"Clearly this Youngman is an imposter," said Wiseman.

"Maybe," said Youngman, "but I too have been to Trueland, and I have come to tell you all the new mind of Unman."

The crowd circled around Youngman.

"Unman has grown lonely," said Youngman. "He now allows us the honor of his friendship."

"Great Unman!" cried the Snow.

"My friendship?" said a Snow.

"Yes, you alone and you all each," said Youngman. "He loves you, he will hold you close to his bosom. After you are eaten, you will live forever

within his glory. Unland and its insignificance, with each light time passing with nothing to distinguish it from another, leads to the great day when we will all be eaten by Unman."

"O sweet boy," said the Snow, "beautiful boy. You have saved Unland."

The Snow embraced him and stroked the hair of Youngman.

"Youngman," said Wiseman. "Surely you have proof of your journeys to Trueland."

"Why, yes," said Youngman. Youngman spread his followers out around the room. "I give you the true shape of Unman to behold and live by."

Youngman revealed his new shape.

"Sweet Unman," cried the Snow. "It is complete and perfect."

"Lies," said Wiseman. "He has merely taken the right angle and added a third line."

The Snow protested, as they found their new shape final, leaving nothing open and unanswered.

"Oldman," said Youngman, "how could you bring us a shape with so little regard for finality?"

"It is the true shape," said Oldman. "Infinite shapes can be made from right angles, Youngman."

"I am Youngman no more, Oldman," said Wiseman, "for I am Wiseman now. You are truly blessed, Oldman, for this day you shall dine with Unman, he shall hold you close to his bosom." A loud splash followed Oldman into soup. To be sure of his destination, all the right angles were bound to his ankles. Thus began the era of the complete, irreducible, shape of Unman.

New Wiseman watched as Oldman sank.

"What are we now?" asked the Snow.

"As is Unman, we are all man," said Wiseman.

"Man!" said Man.

"Will you still prefer our daughters at your bedside as other Wiseman have?"

"I suppose," said Wiseman.

In a bowl of salty, cold, blue, soup, Unland drifted. It drifted because Wiseman saw its passing in the many eyes of Trueland. In dark time, the light of Unman's spoon shone upon the children of the Comestible. They ran in the many shades of blue, packed together balls of Unland, and hurled them several at a time as they soared and landed with white bursts and laughter. Their fathers poached from Unman's soup, heaving the great pinching, flopping nets aboard their rocking boats. High above, puffs from Unman's pipe loomed low, while V-shaped creatures made their slow, sad, circles, bound to haunt Unland like the ghosts of slaves who even in death chose no other realm by which to fly.

Tim Denevi

The Tabloids Have Bloomed

You'll be walking in a supermarket. Your skin will feel dry, scaly, a cough dangling in your throat. There will be small children in the aisles, thin-boned and quiet. There will also be the elderly, the carts they push always, strangely, empty. And teenagers—how could we forget the teenagers?—the curators of this realm, these half-adults in blue vests, all of them bagging, calculating, and watching, smirks that say: *Do you think I'll let you pass? Is that what you think?*

And you: you with your list and its highlights—green onions, red wine, feta, things forgotten, things (like the wine) you should put back on the shelf—you won't realize what's going on until you've stopped walking, until you're staring toward the checkout counter while so many others continue past.

The tabloids have bloomed. A famous actor is dead.

Surprisingly, you liked this actor (you're a tough one on celebrities, you)—something about his pale eyes, his glance of self-conscious confidence, as if in the end he found fame and all its trappings to be slightly amusing. People enjoyed this look, and you, though you're loath to admit it, like many of the same things as the others in this supermarket.

He died naked, somewhat shamefully, though without the added ignominy of a sprouting needle, or crusted ejacula, or another corpse to accompany on the journey to whatever's next. He died in his sleep (you know this already, you, internet-savvy), his blood chilling, his heart softening with its newfound lack of purpose—dead and young, and by the time the corpse was wheeled out into the city night, the paparazzi had already gathered, so that the picture you see repeated now on every cover is this: a stretcher, its red legs spindly beneath; a police officer, his glance cast off-camera as if he's about to wink; and two figures in black. The first is pulling the stretcher, walking mid-step like a Beatle across the road—he's wearing black boots, the tongues lolling out, and a pointy black ski-cap—but this is the thing: where his face should be, where his eyes and jaw should appear in profile, there's a white flashbulb, as if a hole has been punched in each and every tabloid, multiple holes (flashes) that lead to another side, another light. The second figure is lashed flat, his body bag a dark robe that crowns like the shadow of a hood, and on each cover it looks to you as if Death himself is trying, unsuccessfully, to sneak past the crowd.

But before we get to what you're really thinking, staring at this leafy image, let's first touch on a few things you're not:

You don't realize you've forgotten the olives. You don't consider the breath mints, a clean, peppermint purchase. You don't hope that you're at least partially clothed, if and when you're found dead.

This is what you do wonder, profoundly as ever, you—it's more of a moment actually, something you might even describe as religious after the bottle of wine:

You suddenly feel as if you've been granted a brief and puzzling look toward a place that, as you stand and stare, resembles the largest supermarket of all, trains of elderly and the young in the aisles—these non-celebrities undone in the middle of their ordinary lives—and you understand somehow that the only vibrant residents here are the blooming tabloids, fresh with the scent of cardboard and dust, their petals revealing a miraculous past, one which seems as glamorous and far off as myth (or at least someone else's life).

But it's time to stop staring. Really. You need keep moving. You need to leave this vision behind. Don't ask what it means. Don't pull out your cell-phone and call your mother. And please don't put back the wine.

At the most, buy yourself a tabloid, the brightest one, and offer it to the smirking teenager at register: a token that can be exchanged, this one time, for passage back to a world you recognize.



Ann Inoshita

First Poem

A girl listened to the window

that spoke of rain

and wrote on the paper provided.

She could not hear

boys anymore.

the girls and

Raindrops became

falling apple cores.

She drew clouds

and lightning.

her hand

She held the weather in

was up.

and threw it on paper until time

Then the teacher read her poem to the class

of falling apple cores and light.

Bird-of-paradise

An unusual breed with blue blades
growing from the head instead of orange.
I walked closer and looked to the left.

Two heads of flowers were dead.
The blades on both were brown
with sap dripping under the shadows.

Hester Young

The Boyfriend Manual

Your First Boyfriend will be the best. He is the standard by which you judge all successors, an eager scrap of boy that has not yet learned the disappointing ways of men. He is a simple soul. He holds your hand. He rubs the bellies of dogs. He is delighted by senseless displays of male violence. When you present him with a problem, he'll try desperately to fix it. He'll repair your bike and show you how to work the VCR. If you fight with your best friend, he'll loyally agree that It Was All Her Fault. One girlish pout, and he is putty in your hands.

He will be suspiciously popular with all members of your family. He laughs politely at your parents' jokes. He plays checkers with your little sister. When you bring him to Thanksgiving dinner, he impresses everyone with his good manners. Years after the relationship has ended, your great aunt will ask about him. She will remember his name long after she has forgotten yours. After Thanksgiving, he will turn to you, smiling, and say something innocent like, "That was nice." You will tell him to stop being such a kiss-ass. This is the beginning of the end.

You test his limits. Jump, you say, and he will jump every time. You will grow bored. You will think you need someone more passionate, someone who understands that Deep Inner You. You bait him. You talk about other boys. That boy in your math class is *so* nice, you tell him. So good at geometry—perhaps he could tutor you. And isn't it funny? Your friend Sara thinks he has a crush on you! You are indignant when your boyfriend responds jealously. How, you exclaim, can he be so possessive? Doesn't he *trust* you? He says he does. You know he shouldn't.

You begin to spend a lot of time at your best friend's house. Your boyfriend misses you. You're hardly ever around, he says. You explain that you need more time with your girlfriends. You have been neglecting your best friend, you say, and she's important to you. So is her brother, but you won't mention that. Her brother is taller, older than your boyfriend and thinks you are "cute." You will spend agonizing nights analyzing just what he means by "cute." When you see him, you will flirt shamelessly while your best friend rolls her eyes and says things like, "So how is your *boyfriend* doing?" Her brother will want to know who your *boyfriend* is. When you tell him, he will proclaim your boyfriend a pussy. Gazing at your friend's brother, you may be inclined to agree.

Hawai'i Review

You will break up with him over the phone. When he asks why, you will say something ambiguous like, "I need space." He will ask if there is someone else. Be offended. Suggest that his own jealousy has driven you apart, then cry. He will apologize for any wrong you name. He will want to know how he can fix things. Cry harder. Hang up before he starts crying, too.

You may or may not score your friend's brother. If you do, your success will be temporary. You will be sleeping over your friend's house, hopeful, wearing your nicest pajamas, the ones with the teddy bears. You wait until the rest of her family is asleep, and casually find him in the kitchen eating cookies. He will probably not be wearing a shirt. Try not to drool. Tell him you just wanted a glass of milk. He will kiss you against the refrigerator and cop a quick feel, an experience you'll describe to friends as "wild" or "erotic." Actually, he kisses funny and you can taste his Oreos. He won't speak to you after that, except for the occasional grunt of recognition.

When your ex hears about all this, he will not gloat. He is horribly, punishingly sympathetic. He will catch you in the hall at school one day and tell you how sorry he is, and he will mean it. He'll say your friend's brother is a jerk and a player, everyone knows that (except, apparently, you). He'll say he misses you. He'll say he wants you to be friends. This is a code. He is asking you to be his girlfriend again. He's saying he forgives you.

You will stare at him, long and hard, wondering what you ever saw in him. There is a great void between you now. You are part of a world he cannot understand. You have known the kiss of an older man, and you have no time for boys.

I have to go, you will say, I'll see you around. You take off down the hall. His eyes will follow you until you're gone from sight, swallowed up in the passing time crowd. For months after, his face will light up each time you walk by. He will look as if he wants to speak, as if he's waiting for a sign from you, a smile or a wave. Ignore him.

Years later when you are home visiting your parents, you will read about his wedding in the local paper. You will squint critically at the fuzzy black and white photo of his wife and decide she looks wholesome, perky, much nicer than you. More domestic, you tell yourself. More his type. You will smile, remembering how smart, sweet, and funny he was. You will be relieved.

Your One True Love appears in college, typically your freshman year. He is "deep." He will sit next to you in lecture and never take a single note. He is often stoned and could probably stand to wash more. You will excuse this as the vice of the creative. In later years, you will be mystified by your

passion for this sloppy, slothful boy. You will shake your head, asking yourself *why*, over and over. Be forgiving of your old mistakes. Understand that when a One True Love hits, he is devastating.

Your first encounter will foretell none of the future drama in your relationship. He will seem unthreatening, disarmingly low-key. "Hey," he might say, "can I borrow a pen?" (The pen is for doodling; he still won't take a single note) When he returns your pen, he'll remember to say thank you. He'll smile slightly; he has a dimple. Slowly, systematically, he will win you over. First, he will compliment you. "Mmm," he'll say, leaning close, "You smell nice." He'll finger your earlobe lightly, pretending to admire an earring. He watches as you studiously record your professor's every remark in perfect penmanship and says teasingly, "You write like a teacher." Naively, you will consider this a harmless flirtation. You'll pretend not to notice him sketching you in the margins of his notebook. Soon, you will have accepted the fact that he rarely showers. In fact, you'll find it charming. From this point on, you are lost.

He will make his move when you are alone and vulnerable, reading in the library or drinking bad coffee at a crap café. He'll slide into a chair beside you as though you're old friends. When you ask how he did on that last exam, he'll explain to you the failings of the American educational system. He'll tell you he doesn't believe in institutions. He is an artist, he says. He paints or writes poems, sings, acts, plays soulfully on his guitar. Whatever his hobby, you will be convinced of his undeveloped raw talent. "I'd love to see/hear/read your work," you say, and he'll invite you over then and there. You will probably end up naked in his bed. Expect this. Try not to wonder how long it's been since he washed those sheets.

Afterwards, he will gaze adoringly at your body and tell you it is perfect. He will kiss a freckle on your left hip, the scar beneath your breast, the tiny hairs on your bare shoulder. He is passion personified. He will sketch you as you fall asleep and make love to you the moment that you wake. He will say he wants to possess you completely, every part of you. Incredibly, this will not sound cheesy. You will melt into his arms. You will forgive what is really a rather disappointing sexual performance.

Though a regular inhabitant of his bed in the months that come, you will know better than to question the state of your relationship. Once, perhaps, you will openly refer to him as your boyfriend. He will perceive this as a verbal leash. He'll gaze at you reproachfully and tell you that relationships are like poetry. You can't dissect them. You can't define them. Why use labels? You meet his friends. They have greasy hair and reek of pot. The boys are tormented and feminine. They have oddly all-American names like Jeff, Steve, and Mike. They sleep with girls who wear an excess of black eyeliner and

have pierced tongues. These girls have names subversive in sound or spelling: Alix, Myriah, Kat. Alix, Myriah, and Kat will view you with suspicion. You do not smoke the requisite amount of pot; you dress too colorfully. You view them with suspicions of your own. Your One True Love has probably slept with all of them.

The gravity and depth of your relationship will at first consume you. You'll speak to each other in metaphors, impressing one another with your penetrating insight and nihilistic trains of thought. He'll show you his charcoals, and you'll analyze the thickness of each line, their subtle curves. Maybe he'll play a song he wrote for you, with lyrics you pronounce "haunting" or "bittersweet." He'll say, "I really feel you understand me," and you will really feel you do. You won't.

The fights begin. He does too many drugs, you say. He's failing out of school. He tells you the drugs inspire him. He'll say his grades don't matter, he won't be measured by letters. In bed, his once passionate fumbling is reduced to the occasional tepid grope. Paranoid, you'll sniff his clothes for traces of Girl, but any telltale odors are masked by the scent of marijuana and Unwashed Boy. You see him less and less. He vanishes from lecture altogether. He sleeps well into the afternoon and stays out all night doing things he knows you'd disapprove of with a shady character named Goat. "Goat?" you will exclaim. "Goat? Who calls himself Goat?" Your One True Love says you are obsessed with surface details. Details are the dividing lines, he tells you. He says you must learn to see the unity around you. You'll ask what he's been smoking. He'll say, "You just don't understand me," and you don't.

He will break up with you over the phone. When you ask why, he will say something ambiguous like, "I need space." Know that there is someone else, and that her tongue is pierced. Don't cry. Take this opportunity to tell him what you really think of him. Tell him he has the artistic talent of a four-year-old and is completely tone-deaf. Tell him how bad he was in bed, that you've been faking it to spare his feelings. Advise him to shower more. Hang up when he begins to cry.

In the month following your breakup, you will be a weepy wreck. You will sob uncontrollably at the slightest provocation. Friends will do their best to comfort you. Females will squeeze your hand in an act of sisterly solidarity and tell you that all men suck. Males will check out your replacement—is it Alix, Myriah, or Kat?—and assure you she's a dog. This will probably not console you. You will possess an endless reservoir of pain. You will eat chocolate until you feel nauseous and watch romantic black-and-white movies with happy endings that make you bawl. You may feel inspired to write an epic poem about your heartache and the cheating ways of men. Do not inflict this work on other people. Eventually, your misery will trans-

form into venom. You will become an Embittered Woman, making regular announcements of your hatred for the entire male species until the day a cute rugby player smiles your way.

In just a few short months, you will have a new boyfriend. He is tall and broad, entirely lacking an imagination. He can kick the ass of your One True Love; he may offer. When your One True Love sees the two of you together, he will shake his head in disgust. You have become a traitor to his ideals. You have Conformed. Observe your new boyfriend through his eyes: the pretty face, athletic build, the friendly, vapid gaze. Hug the young man who can't construct a metaphor and thinks irony is a metal. Smile at your One True Love.

Know that you've gone mainstream. Be proud.

The Security Blanket comes in those first aimless, post-college years. Floundering professionally, you'll be looking for something solid, someone to ground you, and there he is: responsible, reliable, with all the rich emotional depth of an eggplant. He probably works for the government in some mysterious capacity he's not allowed to discuss. He knows state secrets. Your logic is simple: if he can protect a nation from the world's evil, he can protect you, too.

He'll approach you at a bar, someplace smoky and chic. He dresses well; he has a solemn smile. In a room filled with raucous drunks, he'll be an oasis of sobriety and self-control. He'll buy you a drink and introduce himself. His attempts at conversation are less than original, but he's attractive and you'll be drunk enough to overlook a few clichés. A couple beers, and he looks good enough to eat. You may be disappointed when he doesn't take you home. Know that he is a gentleman; he doesn't take advantage. Instead, he'll say he'd like to see you again. He'll take down your number, promising to call. He will flag you down a cab.

Don't worry. He'll call exactly when he says he will.

Your dates are a comforting blend of predictability and decorum. He is a man of class, a man of culture, and he'll impress that fact upon you at every opportunity. He'll take you to an art museum, a jazz club, an expensive tapas bar, where he'll order with a flawless accent. He is an intellectual type, and will enjoy sharing his knowledge. Do your best to appear interested, even when he discusses German expressionist art or the finer points of new American cuisine. Cultivate an intrigued look and knowing nod for those occasions when your mind happens to wander.

Physically, he may seem disappointingly well-behaved. He will proceed at a disconcertingly slow pace, kissing you solemnly on the forehead, ear, or cheek when you say your goodbyes. Do not mistake his sense of propriety

for a lack of interest. Given the proper time and attention, a happy sexual relationship can indeed flourish. Though passive, he is ready and willing to follow your lead. Take initiative. Be bold. He will respond well to your commands: *kiss me, take me, fuck me*—he is happy to oblige. You will learn to work with his need for instruction, explaining to him in precise detail what you'd like him to perform.

Before long, you'll have learned everything that can be learned about this man. He is loyal, committed, utterly unexcitable. His radio is permanently tuned to NPR. He has a passion for firearms and gets misty-eyed at war films. Movies like *Braveheart* or *Das Boot* affect him as you never will. You will never quite grasp his sense of humor. His jokes unnerve you. His sincerity is comical. On your birthday, he'll present you with an expensive bracelet and a pair of bunny slippers. Do *not* laugh at the slippers. This is his idea of an earnest, heartfelt gift.

You'll fall quickly into a routine of carefully scheduled activities and carefully choreographed sex. Your wild nights are followed by absurdly domestic mornings. You will squeeze into the bathroom with him, sleepy-eyed and ruffled, mumbling incoherently. You'll sit down for your morning pee while he brushes his teeth. You will take unromantic showers with him and feel content to know you've found a man who can watch you shave your armpits. The realism of your relationship is soothing, if unglamorous.

You'll move in as a matter of convenience. Though he is the one to suggest it, there is no hint of deeper meaning in his offer. Cohabitation is, to him, a practical issue which implies nothing about the future of your relationship. Only when you unpack your belongings will the true gravity of the move hit him. He may panic when he realizes he has acquired not just you, but your kitchen appliances. Reassure him. Remind him that he, too, will feel the benefits of your George Foreman grill.

Almost as an afterthought, you take him home to meet your family. The results are unimpressive. Your mother tells you he isn't very talkative. Your father would like to know more about his mysterious profession. Your sister says, "Jesus Christ, he's boring!" When your sister hints that you could do better, you are wildly defensive. You tell her she is too young to appreciate a man like him. In this uncertain world, you say, he's a rare find. "Sometimes," you explain with the experience of your more advanced years, "stability is more important than passion." Your sister will shake her head in disgust and ask when you turned into such a grandma.

Months later, as you toddle around the apartment in your bunny slippers, her words will return to haunt you. You'll stare at yourself in the mirror, horrified to see the beautiful girl you thought you were decked out like a tired suburban housewife. You'll realize how long it's been since some-

one told you that you're sexy. You'll discover that you hate your life: your job, your home, those goddamn bunnies on your feet. You'll decide to make a change.

Within a few months, you'll have accepted a new job in a distant city. Don't expect tears when you break the news. He will congratulate you. "Good for you," he'll say, entirely unruffled. "When are you leaving?" He doesn't mean to be insulting, to dismiss his time with you as meaningless. He genuinely believes he is being supportive.

You will wonder if he ever cared. You will wonder if he's capable of caring. Do not give voice to your hurt; he is oblivious to the complexity of human feeling. Know that he will never, ever understand you, and leave it at that. Realize that however long the relationship has lasted—a year or two or three—you will emerge with no greater understanding of his elusive personality, if, in fact, he possesses one at all.

The day you leave is a quiet one. He'll help you pack your car, quickly and efficiently, without an inch of wasted space. He'll study the map with you and advise you of the fastest route. He'll tell you to drive safely. When you go to say goodbye, you'll kiss one another on the cheek like an awkward elderly couple. You'll catch a whiff of his aftershave. That smell will always make you just a little sad.

You'll pick up one final cardboard box and stumble bravely to the car. He will chase after you with a map, roads highlighted for your edification. He'll say, "Call me if you get lost." He looks as though he hopes you might. You smile. You thank him. "Take care of yourself," you say, and you know that he will.

As a newly single woman with something to prove, you're a danger to heterosexual males everywhere. Unleashed on a city of strangers, you are ruthless. You conduct your love life like an indecisive diner, sampling bits of this and that, rarely returning for seconds, spitting out the bones. You are nobody's bitch, and if your heart's a little empty, your bed never is. You'll go through a string of flings as if moving down a checklist of male stereotypes: jock (check), nerd (check), all around nice guy (check, check, check). You may encounter The Bad Boy, The Boss, The Macho Man, The Stalker, The Sex Master, The Older Man, The Much Much Older Man, and/or The Tempting Ex. Your bedroom will host a varied group. Savor them all.

The Foreigner will coax his way into your apartment with courtly gestures: carrying your groceries or escorting you safely home. He is a pretty man, slim, with golden skin and a few delicately placed freckles. He has a low, mellifluous voice that molests the English language. He will make you laugh. He will call you *bay-bee* in an exaggerated accent and profess to adore

the most trivial parts of your body. "This leetal toe," he'll say, taking it gently between his teeth, "is a rare delicacy." Though passionate, attentive, and absurdly romantic, he's no model of safe sex. This is the kind of man you've been warned about, the one who balks at the word "condom," the one who stares at you, injured, and says, "But don't you trust me, bay-bee?" Lay down the law, sweetly but firmly. Tell him he's welcome to suckle your toes all night long, but the more exclusive areas of your body have a dress code. Ignore his whining. Throw him out at first light.

At a New Year's Eve party or Valentine's Day bash—some occasion threatening loneliness—you'll encounter the Republican. He's a friend of a friend, an accidental acquaintance with no immediately apparent physical defects. You'll argue about politics, a little tipsy, and discover that his repugnant opinions are somehow quite a turn-on. Back at his apartment, he'll tell you his Ten Year Plan, his dreams of starting a multi-national corporation, his theories on the future trends of electronics. He'll say, "But family is what really matters." He'll ask if you like children. He'll hold you too close and whisper to you in the dark. He'll kiss your belly as if envisioning the barefoot and pregnant mother of his child. You'll cut out while he's still sleeping. You'll pity the woman who falls victim to his Ten Year Plan.

In a shallow, weaker moment, you will succumb to the Pretty Face. He is stunningly beautiful and knows it. He believes himself utterly irresistible to women, and maddeningly, he is. His irritating swagger, unappealing laugh, and general lack of a developed personality are but trivial details when faced with his overwhelming physical perfection. He's not exactly thunder between the sheets, but the splendid visuals more than compensate. He is shameless eye candy. Watching him sleep beside you, you'll excuse the unattractive snore. You'll gaze at him, titillated, and find the simple act of observation more arousing than the sex itself. You'll want to take his photograph and distribute it to all your friends as an official announcement of your prowess: This. In *my* bed. You will feel a sense of profound accomplishment when you watch him go. You've been there, done that, and would gladly buy the T-shirt.

In time, the novelty of your one-night stands will subside. Behavior you'd once thought daringly liberated will seem increasingly adolescent. You'll make some female friends at work, and feel renewed hope for your gender. Caught up in your career, men will become little more to you than a joke among friends, the shared and occasionally amusing burden of women. You'll date when you think of it, accumulating a variety of disastrous, embarrassing stories that appeal to your new and improved sense of humor.

You will be happy.

Eventually, inevitably, you will fall desperately, hopelessly, painfully in love. This unpleasant experience requires little elaboration, as it has been exhaustively documented in many depressing works of literature and magazines for teenage girls. Expect to accrue lifelong scars. This is *The One That Time Won't Heal*. There is absolutely no chance for long-term success in this relationship, and he will tell you so from the beginning. You won't believe him. Whatever insurmountable obstacle may exist to forever divide you—race, religion, geographic distance, a wife—it will fail to register in your militantly optimistic consciousness. You'll feel certain that love conquers all until at last, it conquers you.

He'll say, "Things are getting too serious." He'll say he doesn't want to lead you on. He cares about you, he says, loves you even. Really. But it's time to move on. It will take approximately three months for you to realize that he means it. You may choose to respond in a variety of ways. Remember the Three Ps: poise, pride, perspective. Do not stalk, spy, threaten, beg, weep, or feign a pregnancy. Avoid drunken 3 AM phone calls if at all possible. If you possess duplicate keys to his apartment, dispose of them before you succumb to temptation. Dropping in when he's out is a felony, and restraining orders are a hassle for everyone.

Listen to the advice of friends. Eat more. Sleep less. Get out a little. Patiently await the day when the gaping wound in your heart is reduced to a manageable dull ache. It will come.

Cautiously content, you won't be looking for someone. This, of course, is precisely when he surfaces. Your Someone may be a familiar figure or altogether new. He may be the Someone you envisioned as a child, strikingly handsome with smoldering eyes; more likely, he has a receding hairline, unfortunate nose, or slight beer belly. His smile will, for unexplained reasons, attack you in the stomach. For weeks, you will dismiss this as indigestion.

He is all that you want, just as you're discovering you want it, one smarter, sweeter, funnier than those that came before him. You are older. You are wiser. You will overlook his extensive collection of Internet porn. You'll convince yourself that his ability to recite Adam Sandler movies in their entirety points to an ingenious memory and not a wasted life. Years of living as a bachelor may have left him a little rough around the edges. Don't ask why he has chosen to mount a golf club on the living room wall, why there are Lord of the Rings action figures wedged between the cushions of his couch.

He is a simple soul. He holds your hand. He rubs the bellies of dogs. He is delighted by senseless displays of male violence. When you present him with a problem, he'll good-naturedly attempt to fix it. He'll repair your

car and show you how to work the DVD player. If you fight with your best friend, he'll helpfully point out that It Was Kind Of Your Fault, Too. One sexy, girlish pout, and he is willing to negotiate.

He will be adorably popular with all members of your family. He laughs politely at your parents' jokes. He compliments your little sister. She will grin and give you a big thumbs up each time his back is turned, enthusiastically mouthing the words "I like him!" You will smile, blush, and glow. You like him, too.

When you bring him to Thanksgiving dinner, he impresses everyone with his good manners. Your great aunt will take a special liking to him and announce her approval to the table at large as you sit cringing. Oblivious to subtlety in her advanced age, she will pat his arm and say something embarrassing like, "Now wouldn't you like to be part of such a nice family?" He will look at you solemnly and say, "Yes, I would." Ignore the significant glances your relatives will exchange. Maintain your composure, and keep your elbow out of the cranberry sauce.

After Thanksgiving, he will turn to you, smiling, and say something meaningful like, "That was nice." You will search his eyes for traces of sarcasm and find none. His expression will say: it *is* nice, it's *all* nice. Your parents are nice, your sister is nice, your great aunt is nice. *You* are nice, his face will say, and everything I do with and for you is nice. You will be amazed by the descriptive powers of this one adjective. You will begin to cry. Tell him thank you. Tell him you love him. Throw your arms around him and hug him till he can't breathe. Kiss him and don't let go.

This is the beginning of the end. Hang on to this one.

Candice Novak

Portrait

While I cut out family portraits

I cut all the self-portraits and sullen sitting girls out of my over-sized, slick hard cover

Frida Kahlo book.

I taped them, all those people in their rectangles, onto my scuffed wall.

A bit of tape on all four corners.

And the wall looked a lot better.

It looked like a utopia of women. Except for Diego Rivera. But he's fat and funny. So I

like him. He's so malleable and feminine. And Frida's got her mustache.

A family hallway. Everyone hanging there to stare. Sitting in the crooked grid of faces.

And then, at the bottom corner there's Frida, sitting in a photo, in her wheelchair.

He reminds me of my father because he has a beard, and my father doesn't.

His mouth is there, he can eat, and speak, but I've never seen his front teeth.

Even when he laughs it's with his head thrown back, just a gaping hole flashing red and

black shadows.

Hawai'i Review

Because he never really looks me in the eye. He never really looks at anyone, but then he

writes about them like he was their guilt and their lover.

When he gets old he peppers and that makes him look tanner, and better than before.

He reminds me of my father because wrinkles look good when you've watched them grow.

His papery hands would sound like festival crepe hanging over the streets of

somewhere foreign.

He could say "burn your suit" while wearing one.

He reminds me of my father because I don't know him, only in passing.

He's one of the group of faces you see every day—on your way to wherever—that get familiar.

Jonathan Lewis

Night Bird

One night
 I pay a visit to see
 my night bird,
 perched
on the calm sea rocks.

The bird and I,
 though sundered by
 edged rock
 and broken wave,
 find each other.

Because we hear the
 susurrant sweep

of the tide

&

feel its pull

creeping

catspaw

through the sultry dark.

Under night tide,
 we singly gaze
at the immense trickle
of constellated light.

Then conspire to end
 our loneliness there,
 and spend
 the rest of the night
 with
each other.

The Sea Turtle

I went looking for the night bird
but instead found you:
bleached shell,
glazed eyes,
you climbed up on the beach to die.

Your carapace –
motionless with a severed fin
dug into the soft earth:
land myths once were made
from sights like these.

Your beaked face crawled
with undertakers:
ants struggling late into the night
to build your grave.
(you were worth it to them)

Breached shore reserved
for rest, and laying life.
Two long gashes pushed
through the sand, like scutes,
the trail of your last land voyage.

No crease made
by your severed fin.

Philip Damon

The Death Prayer

Steven awoke in a fright. It was still dark and he'd been dreaming—more of a nightmare, as he reluctantly recalled it. He'd been suffocating beneath a huge mass of sticky, web-like fibers which came at him and reached for him malignly from every possible direction, in time as well as space. Worse still, as he struggled to get away he immediately discovered himself to be paralyzed, first in the lower extremities of his legs and then the more he strained to escape the more he felt the icy numbness in his thighs and then his hips and finally in his upper body as well. Increasingly helpless, he had slowly succumbed beneath the tangled mass, and the first of the hairy, probing fibers had begun to burrow their way inside his body when he'd abruptly awakened, in a cold sweat and gasping for breath.

But where was he? Not in his own bed—in fact not in a bed at all. This was a thin futon a couple of inches above what felt to his exploring fingers like a hardwood floor. No sign of a clock, or any of the bulbs, dials or digital displays that glowed in the darkness of his own condo bedroom. Slowly his breathing returned to normal. Wherever he was, at least it was not in his dream.

Nor was it quite completely dark. There was a hint of the approaching dawn outside the open floor-to-ceiling windows, beyond which he heard the reassuring sounds of the surf and the wind in the palm leaves outside, and suddenly he recalled where he was. With a groan and a laugh he collapsed back into the dampness of his uncased pillow.

This was the Diamond Head property he was currently brokering. He'd spent the night here.

Relieved to be once again re-oriented in space and time, he arose from the futon and walked naked to the full-length windows, which were French doors, actually, opening onto one of the many small balconies which added to the property's elegant, hacienda-style effect. It gave him a feeling of well-being to be here: to be the sole broker of this marvelous two-acre ocean-front estate, to be the one to whom all prospective owners had to come and make their bids, to be in possession of all the keys to all the locks, to be free to come and go, even to spending the night, as he pleased.... He'd have thought he'd died and gone to heaven—if only it wasn't for this damned aching in his legs.

He felt it now, like blades cutting into the muscles of his calves, and he leaned forward and rested his weight on the wrought iron railing of the

balcony. He thought again of his disturbing dream, wondering momentarily if he would trade the pain for the chilled numbness which had seemed so real to him only a few minutes ago. Then he remembered with a shudder those probing, penetrating fibers.

The aching had begun only in the last couple of days. At first he'd attributed it to the long runs he took several times around Diamond Head every other morning. He hadn't run since the pain began, though, and still it had gotten progressively worse. He was becoming more than a little bit worried about it.

The morning light was spreading into the sky above the Molokai Channel to the east and by degree the various features of the estate began to emerge from the darkness, as distinct details in the growing light. The pool. The hot tub. The tennis courts. The guest cottages. The plumerias. The bouganvillias. The stately palms. The lush, closely-cropped lawn which sloped gracefully down to the sea wall and the huge volcanic boulder, at least three-quarters of which remained buried beneath the grass just beyond the rich green garden of ti plants. But hold on a minute.

He blinked twice and then his eyes narrowed as he stared downward into the shadows. There was somebody down there. Somebody was sitting in the shadows beside the great stone. Somebody was trespassing on this property.

Suddenly Steven remembered that he was wearing no clothes. He dashed to the bedroom's capacious walk-in closet and snatched the light cotton trousers and aloha shirt from off the only hanger there. In a matter of seconds he had them on and was hurriedly bare-footing it down the regal circular stairs and then back through the empty dining room and out the kitchen door onto the soft, cool lawn. Fortunately his legs weren't quite so painful when he was moving.

With a rising sense of indignation he strode in the direction of the mysterious intruder. It had been impossible for him to see anything more from the balcony than someone's shadowy silhouette and he had no idea what he'd find once he got there. The estate was surrounded by a high wall. Moreover he had made certain that the tall gate to the driveway was securely locked before he went to sleep for the night. Whoever the trespasser was, he'd gone to some trouble to get inside the property. Steven was warming up to giving him a good piece of his mind. Meanwhile the flimsy aloha shirt hung un-tucked and unbuttoned from his shoulders and his heart beat more and more anxiously beneath his exposed chest as the thought slowly occurred to him: what if he was forced to defend the property—not to mention himself?

Just beyond where the gorgeous garden of ti leaves swayed in the morning breeze loomed the shadowy outline of the buried boulder and then the human profile seated on the grass beside it. Steven stood still for a mo-

ment and stared. From this vantage point there didn't appear to be any menace in the intruder's posture, and his feelings of apprehension were immediately displaced by a renewed rush of territorial annoyance. What the devil was this individual doing on this piece of obviously private property?

But then in the next instant he recognized who it was, and all traces of apprehension and anger fell away from him in a sudden cathartic release of breath.

And at that precise moment the sun began to rise up out of the ocean. In a matter of seconds it was shining directly on the serene face of his visitor, illuminating her long white hair in a magical glow. "Auntie Momi!" he called out to her in surprise, stepping forward until he was standing beside the great ancient stone. "How did you get in here?"

Unhurriedly, the old Hawaiian woman turned her smiling face upward toward Steven. "Aloha, Leiali'i," she greeted him. "It is good to see you."

Auntie Momi Kapumana was acknowledged to be one of the few remaining traditional kahunas, and she was regarded with reverence throughout the islands. Steven had first met her at the blessing ceremony of a commercial property in Waikiki which had been brokered by his boss, Duane Bartholomew. Steven had been strangely moved by Auntie Momi's lyrical Hawaiian incantations, and he had sought her out during the reception which followed to pay his respects. Much to his confusion, however, she had acted as though she already knew him, and since then they had met on numerous occasions under the most perplexing and coincidental of circumstances.

Invariably she insisted on calling him Leiali'i, which she'd explained was the Hawaiian word for "crown" and was the root meaning of the name Steven. To be perfectly honest all of this Hawaiian mystical mumbo-jumbo made him more than a little nervous, yet whenever she addressed him by that other name he felt a wonderful thrill rush like a memory throughout his body.

"Well, it's good to see you too," he told her now. "But what are you doing here? And how did you get through the gate?"

"I have my ways, Leiali'i. You know that." She patted the soft grass beside her. "Come," she invited. "Sit down here beside me."

He grasped and then immediately released the cool boulder before doing as she'd requested. Without a word she took both of his hands in hers and looked him deeply in the eyes. Together they regarded one another in the angular rays of the rising sun. As always, he had the feeling that she was reading his mind, and he waited for her to speak first. In the meantime he allowed himself to relax in the comforting aura of her peaceful presence. Finally she nodded and parted her lips to speak. "I am here," she told him, "because I

heard you calling me.”

He caught himself before denying he had done so. Most of the time the old kahuna was speaking metaphorically—or perhaps more accurately, metaphysically. “I see,” he answered instead in a subdued tone. But in truth he really didn’t see at all.

They sat facing each other cross-legged on the grass between the huge stone and the sea wall, and Steven suddenly noticed her studying his pale, partially exposed calves. Self-consciously he released his hands from hers and rearranged his trousers down over his ankles. “How are your legs?” she asked as soon as he looked back up, and immediately the pain was there again. It was all he could do not to wince and whimper. “There seems to be something the matter with them,” he acknowledged. “I can’t understand it.”

Once again she held him in her compassionate gaze. Breathlessly he waited for her to break the ensuing silence, his calves aching all the more as his mind cried out for relief. “Leiali’i,” she finally said to him, “I am going to be very direct with you. Someone is trying to pray you to death.”

“Someone is what?” He felt his face suddenly flush with blood. “But how could...?” He was unable to put words to his feelings, however, and he simply shook his head and stared at her in speechless confusion.

“I know it is very difficult for a haole such as you to understand,” she told him gently, “or for anyone in these modern times. Not even many Hawaiians know of the death prayer anymore. It was called *ana’ana* in ancient times, and certain sorcerers and renegade kahunuas—*aihamu*, they were called, eaters of filth—used this means to dispose of their enemies and their rivals.”

“But these aren’t ancient times anymore!” Steven protested. “I’m not anyone’s enemy or rival!” Despite the cool morning breeze from off the ocean he felt himself breaking into a clammy sweat. His emotions were overcome with alternating waves of outrage, disbelief, self-pity, and denial. “This can’t be happening to me!”

“I’m afraid it is, Leiali’i,” she replied, with more than a hint of sternness in her gentle voice. “Insisting that it is not so will do us no good whatsoever.”

She became once again silent, allowing his mind to run riot with its own conflicting thoughts and emotions. He gazed up beyond Auntie Momi and the looming volcanic stone beside them toward the palatial mansion he was presently negotiating for purchase by the highest bidder. Here he was, after all, sitting on one of the largest non-commercial real estate deals in the history of the Islands—and according to trade gossip on the verge of being awarded a “very senior position” at Bartholomew and Associates—only to be suddenly asked to believe that some “enemy” was in the process of praying

him to death. This was too bizarre for him even to imagine.

Yet there was nothing imaginary about what was happening to his legs. He'd been considering consulting a doctor since early yesterday, as a matter of fact. Of course if there was any truth to what Auntie Momi was telling him a fat lot of good a doctor would do him anyway. Only how could there be any truth to it? It was all just a bunch of south sea island superstition, wasn't it?

He looked back into the kahuna's patiently smiling face. It was true that he had never taken her spiritual pronouncements entirely seriously. Nonetheless, he had been not only flattered by her special interest in him but often intrigued and temporarily impressed by the unusual ways she had of entering his life at the uncanniest synchronous moments: often just when he needed someone to talk to. On those memorable occasions she had known exactly what was on his troubled mind and exactly what to tell him to relieve him of his troubles. It never ceased to amaze him.

Tenderly she took his sweating hands back into hers. "It is going to take some time for you to accept what is happening, Leiali'i."

He nodded, then shook his head. It was going to take something. "Well, how much time do I have?" he replied. "How long is it supposed to take for this death prayer to work?"

"Three days."

His mouth dropped open and he stared at her in total shock. "You mean in just three days I'm supposed to be...?"

"If we don't do something to stop it," she told him. "I'm afraid so."

That afternoon he drove aimlessly about the island in his Mercedes sedan, almost beside himself over what to do next. Auntie Momi had advised him to remain on the property, actually, in close proximity to the great stone—which according to her was a "healing stone" on the site of what had once been a very important heiau. "Many sacred ceremonies were held on this spot in ancient times, Leiali'i," she'd told him, "and there is much mana here still." But he couldn't feel any mana—he scarcely even knew what it was. He felt nothing but confusion and fear, and this infernal pain burning in his legs. It was becoming agony for him now to have to use the pedals.

He had called his answering service on the cell phone between the seats and there were a number of messages. First were the ever-insistent bidders, down now to three maniacally obsessed multi-millionaires. Their messages were remarkably similar, with each one trying to sound coolly detached while at the same time all but inviting Steven to name his price. But the frenzied bidding had already exceeded any amount he might have imagined possible before the process began.

Duane Bartholomew's message also betrayed more than a hint of anxiety: "Steve, this is Bart. Not to be rushing you, old buddy, but just wondering how close we are to closing this one. Haven't seen you lately around the store—been with the bidders or what? Call me, okay?"

There was a terse message from Barbara, his ex-wife, now living with their son Timothy in Portland. "We need to talk, Steven," was all it said, and he wasn't sure they did. Certainly *he* didn't need to. He and Tim called each other at least once a week. What did he need to talk to her for?

Finally there was a message from Carla, his current significant other: "Hi, Steven, it's me. It's morning and I missed you last night. Are we still on for tonight? Thai, Greek or Mexican? Around seven? Let me know where. Love you."

Carla didn't know yet about this business with his legs, but if he met her tonight there was no way he could keep it from her any longer. Carla had been born in the Philippines, where her grandfather—now in his eighties—was one of the notorious "psychic surgeons." Herself a Jungian therapist, she was into a lot of New Age hocus-pocus like visualizations and crystals, and there was no telling what kind of theory she'd have about all of this. She'd probably call it "karma." Or an imbalance in his "chakras." But would that be any more off-the-wall than what Auntie Momi was asking him to believe?

The kahuna had talked to him this morning until the sun was directly above them, and most of what she'd told him had gone straight over his head. All that stuff about the force of mana and the substance of aka, for example, and how aka was produced from mana and how mana traveled from location to location through cords of aka. Of course none of this mana or aka could be seen, at least not by the naked eye of the average person. And what was more, aka cords carried mana not only between individuals across limitless expanses of space and time, but between everyone's own various levels of self as well—from the very lowest, the unihipili, to the very highest, the aumakua.

"Our more common island folk tales," Auntie Momie had explained to him, "talk of the aumakua as a benign animal spirit which manifests for our assistance in times of extreme trouble, but while this is a lovely poetic image, I'm afraid it is also naive and inaccurate. In reality, the aumakua is everyone's own highest omnipotent and omniscient self.

These distinctions had been lost on Steven, however, who had never even heard of the aumakua until this very morning.

This afternoon's drive had taken him desperately through nearby Kahala, then to the top of Maunalani Heights and back into Manoa Valley, then upward once again and around the periphery of Mount Tantalus, and finally back along the deepest recesses of Nuuanu Valley before crossing over the

Koolau Range at the Pali and out along the coastline toward the north shore of the island. At some point he had realized that he'd been revisiting the sites of his greatest triumphs in realty. It was a kind of spontaneous pilgrimage, he reflected now, to those personal milestone properties in Oahu's most prestigious and expensive neighborhoods—perhaps motivated by the unconscious hope that once it was completed, all things would once again be well and back to “normal.”

But such was hardly the case. If anything, he felt worse than ever, and not just physically.

Auntie Momi had explained to him that it was along the invisible cords of *aka* that he was being attacked right now, and he had recalled with a sudden surge of fright the probing fibers of his dream. He had not wanted to acknowledge any connection between the two, and as a result had mentioned nothing to her about the nightmare. Yet he had uncomfortably suspected that she was well aware of it without the least bit needing to be informed by him. He didn't know whether to be reassured or frightened even further by this growing suspicion that everything which was happening to him was already known by her.

Did she also know that he had left the property and was now purposelessly motoring around the outermost periphery of the island? Had she known beforehand that he would make this desperate effort to escape his unimaginable fate? There was nowhere to escape to anyway.

She had instructed him that it was along distinctly different cords of *aka* that he must appeal for the aid of his *aumakua*: if he wished, that was, to remain in the world of the living after the next three days. “Without the intervention of the *aumakua*, *Leiali'i*,” she had told him, “we are able to do nothing.” She had given him specific steps to follow toward this result, yet after she left the property he was too distracted by confusion and pain to do anything but get in his car and drive.

The rustic little surfers' and artists' town of Haleiwa—geographically as well as temperamentally isolated from commercially developed Oahu—had always been his favorite spot to get away from it all, but this afternoon he passed on through without even stopping. And then suddenly he had no choice but to get onto the highway that cut through the cane and pineapple fields and return south in the direction of Honolulu. As he worked the pedals to slow and accelerate he noticed with increasing chagrin that the pain was being replaced by a systematically rising numbness, from the soles of his feet to his ankles to his calves and shins. Auntie Momi had warned him of this: a sign that the prayer was beginning to take its deadly effect.

He was also noticing that his mind was becoming more and more occupied not so much with thoughts of denial and disbelief, but with a list of

possible perpetrators of the alleged deed. If it was actually happening, went his reasoning, then who might be the diabolical force behind it? It reminded him of a movie he'd seen once in which the main character had been fatally poisoned yet still had time to discover his murderer's identity. Steven could only hope that in his case there was time to do more than merely that.

But did this mean, he suddenly asked himself, that he had accepted the incredible fact of the prayer itself? The bitter tears burned his eyes as he drove numb-footed into the late afternoon sun.

Yet who could be motivated to do such a thing as pray him to death? Other than Auntie Momi he didn't know any kahunas—renegade or otherwise—much less have one for an enemy. When he asked her who it could be she had simply shaken her head. "That is something you must find out for yourself," she told him. And when he asked her if she knew, she shrugged. "That knowledge is available to me, but it is not my place to find it out for you." When she returned to the property in two days, she assured him, he would be able to tell her.

Now he anxiously reviewed his meager list of suspects. There were any number of business competitors who resented his success—within as well as outside his own agency—but they were mostly haoles or decidedly secular Asians, and besides, could any of them resent Steven to that extreme? He didn't think so. There was the trio of competing bidders for the Diamond Head property: a Black baseball legend recently inducted into the Hall of Fame, a Japanese electronics magnate with numerous commercial holdings in the islands, and a fabulously successful Honolulu personal injury lawyer named C.K.Y. Chang. But even if one of them was willing to kill for this property what good would it do to kill the broker? No, it wasn't one of those guys either. Then there was his unforgiving ex-wife Barbara, acerbic author of the little notes and phone messages he'd come to think of as Barb's barbs. But he was worth more to her alive than dead, and she believed in this kind of stuff even less than Steven. Let's face it, he didn't have a clue.

This could turn out to be the perfect crime.

According to Auntie Momi it wasn't necessary to determine the author of the prayer right away anyway. It was important now only to enlist the aid of the aumakua. And as he headed eastward past Pearl Harbor with Diamond Head once again in his sights beyond the tall office buildings of downtown Honolulu and the hotels of Waikiki, he recalled the last thing she'd told him before he let her out the gate in the conventional manner. "Just remember," she said, "that the aumakua can do anything—provided we are free of the psychic encumbrances of guilt and fear. Our present beliefs matter far more than our past experiences, Leiali'i, and our fate will inevitably be determined by these present beliefs. You must search the unihipili."

Then she was through the gate and gone, and he was left alone to work out for himself the mystery of his own survival.

He spent that night outside the mansion on the soft grass between the healing stone and the sea wall, only a few short feet from the rustling ti leaves. Auntie Momi had pointed them out to him this morning by their Hawaiian name: "The ki plant has magical qualities," she'd told him, "and was traditionally used to drive away unclean spirits. Stay as close to these as you can in the next few days, Leiali'i, especially when you sleep." "But what if it rains?" he'd wondered, and she'd shaken her head and smiled. "It won't," she'd assured him.

She had instructed him to consume only papaya, guava and water and not to have the cellular phone anywhere near him, so in the early evening he hobbled on his nearly useless legs to the car, where he called Carla. She was her usual tolerant and accommodating self when he told her he couldn't meet her for dinner. Yet he almost wished she had hung up on him in a huff. It would have made things a lot easier. "Something's wrong, isn't it?" she asked with obvious empathy. "You're not just busy, are you? I've had a feeling all day long that something's the matter."

He noticed that he was gripping the phone so tightly his knuckles were white. "I've just got some things I need to work on," he told her. "Right now that's all I can tell you."

He heard her sigh across the static. It wasn't her nature to take things personally, but he could sense the depth of her frustration. "It's got to do with that damned mansion you're auctioning off, hasn't it?" It was no secret between them that Carla was unhappy with his "high-rolling" real estate activities, though usually she kept her opinions to herself. But when he told her yesterday at lunch how high the bidding had risen on the property she became visibly disturbed. "This definitely can't be good karma for you, Steven," she told him, before immediately dropping the subject.

"I don't really know if it has to do with the property or not," he answered her now. "Either way, though, if something is the matter I've got to work it out for myself." He promised he'd call her soon and then said goodbye, limping back lamely to his secluded and serene spot overlooking the slowly receding tide. It would be dark soon. All there was for him to do now was sit here and try to follow the instructions Auntie Momi had given him toward enlisting the aid of his aumakua.

At regular intervals during the next three days he was supposed to practice a visualization process she'd called the kala healing ritual, which was triggered into action by a careful four-step preliminary sequence she called the ha prayer. This involved the accumulation of available mana through a

certain breathing exercise, followed by the mental reaching up along the aka cord where contact was visualized to take place with the aumakua, then the release up the cord of the mana, and finally the communication to the aumakua of a clear mental image of the result that Steven—or Leial'i—desired. All of this was to be accomplished not precisely by him, however, but by his unihipili, which provided his sole source of access to the aumakua. The unihipili, Auntie Momi had explained, was essentially his subconscious mind, which could turn out either to be his best friend or his worst enemy. He was almost afraid to discover which would turn out to be the case.

Strangely enough, while this ritual was an entirely new and alien experience for him, there was now something eerily familiar about it as well—as though he was actually remembering it when he tentatively performed the steps in the mental process. Auntie Momi had called it an exercise in imagination, and bizarre as it was to be imagining this mana energy moving “up” an aka cord between two entirely non-physical faculties of his own being, he felt as if he was experiencing some eerie sort of *deja vu*. It all seemed to make a weird kind of sense to him. And what kind of sense did that make?

Yet before he had any indication whether he'd successfully contacted the aumakua, he felt himself losing consciousness and drifting reluctantly off to sleep. It occurred to him for a troubled moment that his last sleep had brought him the dream of the dreadful probing fibers, yet there seemed to be nothing he could do about it now: the next thing he knew he was suddenly dreaming once more. Only there were no fibers this time. Nor was he paralyzed. He was running...away...and his pursuers were Hawaiian men in the antiquated hats, uniforms and boots of nineteenth century colonial policemen! They were racing to catch him along a faint trail marked by low hao trees up the sides of a densely shrubbed valley. They were no match for him, however, in their leather boots against his strong bare brown legs and his bare calloused feet and his huna magic....

He awoke with a sudden start and sat back up on the grass. What the hell was happening to him? He focused his attention on the familiar murmur of the surf on the distant reef and the rustling of the trade winds in the palms. He gazed up into the black, new moon night and fixed on the constellations of stars, yet immediately discovered himself recognizing not only those few he had always known from his boyhood visits to planetariums but all of them—as well as their Hawaiian names and the multitude of Hawaiian legends behind their mythical origins—then his eyes were closing and uncontrollably he was falling back on the grass and again he was asleep and dreaming.

Throughout that night and the next day he slipped back and forth

between disquieting states of sleeping, dreaming and waking, most of the while scarcely able to discern the difference. Occasionally he could determine that he was awake because of the paralysis which had now risen well above his knees into his upper thighs, and when he was hungry he had to drag himself with his arms across the grass lawn to the umbrella-shaded lanai, where his papayas and guavas rested on the round glass-top patio table. He was light-headed from a lack of solid food, and he seemed to have lost total track of time. Yet most disturbing of all was this hallucinatory sensation that his very identity was slowly but surely slipping away from him.

It was as though he was being systematically transformed into somebody else. When he was this other person he was no longer paralyzed, therefore he assumed he had to be dreaming, yet the distinctions had become almost impossible to recognize by the time the next day was dissolving into dusk. He continued at lucid moments to practice the ha prayer and to visualize the kala healing process, but even then he could no longer be certain he was actually awake while doing so. This shadowy other self knew the ritual far better than he, it seemed, and he was no longer able to say whether it was he or the other who was mentally performing it. And then he would be suddenly plunged back into the dream-state all over again.

It was as though in his escalating delirium he was watching a play or a movie, only he was simultaneously its audience and its main character as well. It was about the death prayer, this much he had grasped almost from the beginning, but in his ongoing dream-story there was no thought at all about that—at least not yet. Instead his thoughts were entirely focused on the stiff-necked haole missionaries, and on their recently instituted law which he was accused to have broken *Section 1034. Sorcery—Penalty. Any person who shall attempt the cure of another by practice of sorcery, witchcraft, anaana, hoopiopio, hoounauna, or hoomanamana, or other superstitious or deceitful methods, shall upon conviction thereof be fined in a sum not less than one hundred dollars or be imprisoned not to exceed six months at hard labor...*

It was common knowledge that nobody lived through one of these six-month sentences. This was the haoles' way of exterminating the kahunas.

He had successfully eluded capture by the "civilized" police for several weeks, but in order to do so he had been forced to remain constantly on the move from ridge to ridge high above the island's valleys. There was no doubt he could thus remain at large in this manner for an indefinite period of time, only this would mean that in effect the missionaries—and certain of his rivals and enemies who had allied themselves with the interests of the colonizing white men—would have achieved their spiteful purpose: to keep him away from his huna practice at the sacred Leahi healing stone heiau. It

was galling to his pride and he brimmed with bitterness and rage each time he was forced by the police patrols to descend from the ridges and blaze his own trails through the almost impenetrable tropical denseness at the backs of the hot and humid valleys.

He was, after all, a man who could heal by touch, who could counsel the future through the gift of foresight, who could walk with impunity over smoldering lava, who could even if he chose cause the death of someone on the remotest neighboring island. For him to be thus humiliated in the eyes of his own people was certainly an intolerable situation to bear.

It was particularly galling to him because in no way was he a sorcerer—nor had he ever resorted to “deceitful methods.” He was a proud priest of the order of Lono, and as such had always been devoted to the highest principles of intellect and reason. Over the generations Lono had provided the people with their surgeons, herbalists, agronomists, shipwrights, navigators and astronomers. But the kahunas of Lono had for centuries suffered at the hands of the priests of Ku, who dominated the arenas of politics, commerce and war. It was the priests of Ku who were the sorcerers—sequestering their impressionable young apprentices in their moku hales where they could be trained in the black arts of e'epa. And now the deceitful priests of Ku had managed to manipulate the haole missionaries and governors into believing it was the order of Lono instead which practiced the dreadful death prayer.

Wasn't it enough of a blow to his pride and dignity to be a fugitive from authority in his own land, without being falsely accused of this most heinous of acts in the bargain? His thoughts were bitter as he beat his way through the fragrant ulei and the black-berried kawau and the lovely, enduring ohia lehua along the steep ridge to the lofty peak known as puu anipo. Beneath him at the farthest reach of Palolo Valley was Kaau Crater, and as he recalled the legend of its formation by the demigod Maui he yearned to be serenely back in his rightful place, expounding his knowledge and wisdom beside the sacred healing stone on the breezy makai slope of Leahii crater.

Of course the haoles were already calling it Diamond Head, as they rushed in their arrogant way about the islands changing the laws, changing the names of things, even changing the very meaning of the land—the 'aina—upon which all of them walked.

Suddenly Steven realized he was awake—and once again his present-day familiar self—as his burning face painfully brushed the great stone against which he sat propped in the afternoon sun. But which afternoon was it? And was his face burning from the sun or from the indignities he was experiencing in his dream? It was all so terribly real that he had to gasp for breath and shake his head to gain control of his turbulent emotions. The frightful numbness had risen even further, he now discovered, to his hips and his loins.

Auntie Momi had said that when it reached his heart he would be dead.

But what was death? Death was Po. We were born out of Po, we visited Po regularly in our dreams and when we journeyed blissfully out of our bodies, and to Po we sooner or later returned, perhaps to be born again into Ao—this ordinary waking life. Yet how did he know all of this? To his conscious knowledge he had never heard the word Po in his life. Well, obviously his other self knew, just as it knew that each of us exists in both Po and Ao at one and the same time, either state of being a mere blink of the eye in distance from the other. Then what was the danger in death?

That afternoon he struggled with all his feeble strength to remain conscious as the day was silently consumed by lengthening shadows. Exhausted as he was, he was afraid to fall asleep. He was afraid to discover what unknown fortune awaited him in that earlier world of his dream-real fugitive self. He was also afraid he might never again return to the reassuring solidity of his familiar, here and now identity. But he was even more afraid that if he were to return it would be only to witness the inevitable rising of this tide of numbness—up the final few degrees of its ascent to where it would finally smother his already beleaguered heart. He brushed his face against the stone and rubbed his sweating palms against its texture in his feverish efforts to stay fitfully awake.

But he could feel himself slipping away, into Po, and he was soon experiencing a dizzying vertigo as he spun psychically about between his two simultaneous states of suffering: at moments in paralysis from above his waist to the tips of his toes and then at others in full furious flight over the vines and the stones of the ancient valley terrain. He wasn't sure which felt more real or which felt more like a state of hallucinatory horror. But he was suddenly saved from further struggles as well as speculations when from out of the shadows of the nearby ti leaves Auntie Momi was materializing beatifically before him. She approached him as if she was afloat in the island air.

"Aloha, Leiali'i. And what have you learned about yourself in these last few days?"

She stood there smiling above him in a white, full-length muumuu which blended into her long white hair in the fading light of the dying day, and he leaned back into the stone breathless and speechless with sudden relief. The impression she created was of some ghostlike angel-figure, manifested from the ethers to guide him from the perils of his own private purgatory. He closed his eyes, immediately to feel himself running recklessly downward along the precipitous Lanipo ridge only a few yards in advance of his relentless pursuers. How had they gotten so close, he wondered. He opened his eyes and looked up at Auntie Momi and groaned.

"It appears that I have arrived just in the nick of time," she remarked. He was struck by the glow of wry humor in her eyes, which seemed to be of the same white depthless substance as her ghostly hair and dress.

He was incapable of mustering more than a sheepish nod in reply. Self-consciously he touched his hand to his navel, but all physical sensation there was gone. Nor could he feel the base of his sternum, several inches above. He watched her in a rising panic as she quickly and gracefully sat down on the grass before him. "So tell me," she repeated. "What have you learned?"

He felt the renewed imperative to fall immediately asleep, this time stronger than ever, and he looked at her from beneath his heavy eyelids. "I don't know what I've learned," he confessed in a sleepy mumble. "It's all so crazy. I keep dreaming, but I don't see what any of it has to do with me."

"Who is it you are dreaming of?" she asked him. "Is it yourself, or is it someone else?"

"No, of course, it's me," he stammered. "But yes, it's someone else. It's someone else, but it's also me!"

"So then you are two different people." Her Hawaiian eyes opened wide and she smiled at the apparent contradiction. "How do you suppose that could be possible?" she asked him.

He groaned again and leaned back into the reassuring solidity of the stone. He didn't know the answer to the question. He didn't suppose anything. He could feel the stone only part of the way down his back now—somewhere in the middle of his ribcage he lost all physical sensation. In the meantime his eyelids had closed almost completely, and Auntie Momi was a flickering shadow in the narrowing aperture of his vision. His head nodded suddenly forward and he heard the gentle assurance of her voice calling after him as he plummeted away uncontrollably into the past. "You can remain awake even as you dream," the voice was saying. "Just continue to ask yourself the question. Do not let go of the question!"

But he was immediately caught back in the life or death reality of fear and flight, and his awareness was again awash with thoughts of injustice and the burning emotions of self-pity and wounded pride. He and his pursuers were down from the ridge now, and running steadily along one of the level tree-lined trails toward the shoreline of Kahala. Oddly enough he never seemed to tire, and though the absurdly uniformed Hawaiian policemen remained in steady pursuit he felt no threat that he would ever be overtaken. What was it then he was so deeply afraid of? It would soon be dark, after all, and he would most certainly escape them with ease.

In the distance ahead of him he could hear someone singing, and he recognized right away the voice of Auntie Momi. She was at the heiau, and

she was chanting the *Kumulipo*, the sacred creation chant of his people. But she was much too far away in space and time for him to hear her, wasn't she? Then he recalled her instructions—"Do not let go of the question!"—and he was suddenly awake in his mind and sitting with her beside the stone, even as he ran over the sandy ground ahead of his pursuers. Yet what had been the question?

"But certainly you can remember that, can't you?" came her words, as if in conversation with his unvoiced thoughts, and he realized she had discontinued her chanting.

Spontaneously he nodded. His eyes were still closed, and in his anxious awareness he was in two different dimensions at the same time. He was in Po and he was in Ao. Was this the answer to the question? Suddenly without opening his eyes he turned to Auntie Momi and furrowed his brow. "Did I use to be this other...?" His voice faltered. "In some other...?"

In his mind's eye he saw her smile. "Who says it has to be a question of 'used to'?" she asked in reply. "Who says it can't all be taking place at the same time—right here in the right now?"

In response to this suggestion he felt his two disparate identities merging somehow into one—even as he sat there beside the kahuna while also running along the trail inevitably toward them. He himself had run in several Honolulu Marathons, and the ancient trail seemed now to coincide uncannily with the paved course of the race's last several miles through Kahala and past the crater which had come to be known as Diamond Head. But why on earth was he returning to the heiau? Even if he could easily elude his present pursuers, this place was hardly a sanctuary for him against the haole authorities and their co-opted Hawaiian henchmen.

Yet as apprehensive as this thought increasingly made him, he felt at the same time the growing need to be reunited with his other self here beside this sacred stone.

"Are you thinking of the question?" It was Auntie Momi's voice—calling to him, it seemed, from deep within the center of his own being. "Are you remaining awake?"

Yes, I'm awake, he thought, and she echoed: "Yes, you are."

His mind was aflame now with a combustion of violent emotions which were suddenly somehow also physical: his pounding feet on the darkening trail carried his vengeful rage in their relentless rhythm while his paralyzed body in this totally alien modern setting was now the dumpsite of centuries of smoldering guilt. But guilt for what? And when? Then? Or now?

"Search the unihipili for your answers, Leialii," came Auntie Momi's immediate reply.

Yes, of course, the unihipili. The subconscious mind. All of it was there. Or was it here?

And what about the aumakua, he suddenly wondered. Where was that?

This time the answer did not come from Auntie Momi but from his own deepest awareness, in the manner of a forgotten knowledge gradually recollected. The aumakua was, and forever had been, already there, poised and ready to assert its presence. It remained unable to do so, however, until this unfinished business with the unihipili was resolved—until these flames of vengeance and guilt were once and for all extinguished—yet for that to happen his paralyzed self and his running self would have to be reunited in this very place. Whatever the cost may be.

Rapidly now the runner was approaching. As he drew closer and closer to the sacred site his pursuers faded farther and farther into the obscurity of the dark night behind him, while at the same time his vengeful intentions became with each step horrifyingly clearer. A murderous plan was forming in his outraged mind, and the sudden recognition of it made the paralyzed Leiali'i want to leap to his feet and intercept his other self on the trail. "No!" he cried. "Not that!"

But of course he wasn't about to leap up and do anything. He had his own life and death problems to contend with, right here and now. Yet at the same time he was beginning to feel a growing nausea astir in his lower extremities—almost like the sensations of returning circulation—and as it rose through his system it seemed to oscillate, first between something physical and something emotional and then between something emotional and something mental. It was as if he himself was running and as if he himself was raging bitter vengeance and as if in a final defiant gesture he himself was planning...yet could it be so?...the unthinkable death prayer!

Well, why not? Weren't they going to arrest him for it anyway?

Then he heard the gentle inner guidance of Auntie Momi, who had been once again softly chanting the *Kumulipo*. "Do not lose your distance from things, Leiali'i," she reminded him. "The key to your survival is the lesson this holds for you."

Involuntarily he opened his eyes and gazed in a rush of gratitude at the kindly old kahuna seated before him, an apparition of white in the darkness of the night around them. Beyond her he could faintly see the lush broad leaves of the ti plants, and when he turned his head he peripherally glimpsed the weathered patterns of the great volcanic stone which continued to hold his paralyzed body upright on the grass. Above and behind him in the starry sky was a thin sliver of new moon, slipping downward into the western sky beyond the crater. And here he was, trembling on the brink of the unknown.

For the first time he could almost feel the force of the mana in this marvelous sacred place. But did he have to die to truly feel it?

Then suddenly he recalled the death prayer, and immediately he closed his eyes against the horror of it. Waves of guilt rushed over him, followed by waves of fear followed by further waves of guilt. Yet he was still unable to distinguish the meaning among his contradictory feelings. What was the lesson on all of this?

"Search the unihipili, Leaiali'i," came Auntie Momi's gentle reminder, and in that very moment he understood that these faint stirrings he was feeling in his lower body were merely the memories stored in that mysterious ancient part of himself—which could remember unimaginably more than these few painful events once he was finally ready to tap into it. "But for now these events are sufficient," Auntie Momi firmly assured him.

And the following moment the runner was no longer running, nor was he any longer waiting paralyzed for the runner to arrive. They were both here now together—the dying realtor and the fugitive kahuna—reunited finally in one complete timeless integrity. "Keep your distance," Auntie Momi cautioned him. "Remain the witness of these events. Watch closely what is happening."

He was alone at last at the Leahi heiau, his "Christianized" Hawaiian pursuers totally confused and lost in his wake. This was his rightful place and he was determined never again to flee, inevitable as it was that he would be found now that he was no longer on the move. In the meantime, if he was going to be condemned by history as the kahuna who practiced the death prayer, then he just might as well be rightly accused.

He knelt down before the low coral altar beside the healing stone and immediately began to activate the mana in the ethers around him. There was a host of discarnate spirits which inhabited the area, assembled over the centuries by his ancestor kahunas for various malign as well as benign purposes, and with the force of his chants he systematically marshaled them together in a swirling cloud of psychic commotion. Many of them had been tortured while still alive and then executed for the purpose of guarding the outermost boundaries of the heiau—or even worse, toward the very purpose for which he was gathering them now—and they were especially responsive as he instructed them to absorb the mana for the bowls of taro and kaava which he had arranged among the small stones and pieces of wood located ceremonially about the site. Then, having placed on the altar a lock of the hair of the priest of Ku who was his intended victim, he sent the restless spirits on their murderous way, with the command to wait however long it may take for the perfect moment to enter his nemesis' body and drain him of his life-sustaining mana.

"Oh, Lono!" he called into the windless night. "Listen to the voice of your devoted servant. Answer my call to guide these spirits in their attack

upon my enemy. Guide them as they enter, as they enter and curl, as they curl up and straighten out.”

And in an instant they were gone, magnetically drawn like so many malicious flying animals toward the object of his fiercely vengeful enmity, and he was now once again alone in this place of his former service and influence.

But of course he was not alone at all. He had been joined by the incredulously watching witness within, who was doing everything in his rapidly fading powers to keep his distance and not be caught up himself in the emotional extremity of these dramatic events. He was feeling fear now like he had never felt fear before, as he imagined the squadron of spiteful spirits on their way to carry out the purpose of his own homicidal prayer. But against whom, he was rapidly beginning to wonder. Who would finally become the victim of this inhuman gesture of hate?

Suddenly into his awareness came the calmly reassuring tones of Auntie Momi's voice. “You are finally beginning to grasp the lesson, Leialii,” came the message, and he visualized himself doing precisely that. He was actually beginning to understand what was happening.

In his mind's eye he saw the ensuing events as a rapid sequence of terrifying yet enlightening memories: The magical power of his sorcerer-nemesis to resist the prayer and then to turn the easily tricked and manipulated spirits back towards their original source...the increasing intensity of his own deepest emotions of guilt and fear, which served only to make their malevolent trip back that much quicker and easier...the sudden and unexpected arrival of the armed authorities who immediately surrounded the sacred site, thus cutting off all avenues of escape...his own clairvoyant recognition of the spirits' return and his final desperate act of frustrated defiance as he seized a ceremonial spear and charged his would-be captors—only to be shot down a few feet from his kahuna's altar barely moments before being invaded by the probing tentacles of his own rebounding spirits, which swarmed in confusion about his suddenly lifeless form, deprived at least for the time being of a victim for their slavishly murderous purpose.

And with the impact of the bullets he was abruptly aroused from his somnolent trance, awakening now to Auntie Momi's loving gaze with an uncertain one of his own as he ambivalently recalled all that he had just experienced. Or re-experienced. She was sitting so close to him on the grass that their legs were almost touching. Not that he would have been able to feel it if they were. The partial relief he was feeling now seemed terribly out of place in light of the distressing facts at hand: he was still paralyzed, and he was now the victim of his own previous murderous intentions. “I'm afraid,” he told the kindly old kahuna.

She nodded and compassionately smiled. "You always have been," she told him, "in the unihipili. You just didn't remember it. Forgotten fear is living death in huna."

Immediately he felt a cold chill rushing through his chest and shoulders. His newly-earned understanding was now very much awake within him. Nor was it only fear that plagued him. "I am guilty too!" he confessed.

"Fear and guilt go hand in hand," she replied, taking up both of his in her own. "Tell me. What have you learned about your guilt?"

He groaned. "It's not only that earlier...that other guilt...about the prayer." He shook his head and then looked about himself in the now totally moonless darkness. "It's this property!" he exclaimed. "I had the intention of selling it. This sacred ground. This living 'aina! Oh, my God, what did I think I was doing?"

"What could you have known?" Auntie Momi squeezed his hands and suddenly his arms were alive with the flow of energy pouring into them. This was mana, and he felt it flooding into his shoulders and chest and then downward, like a blessing, like a healing, through his trunk and towards his lower body. "What else could have brought you here in the first place?"

He shook his head and then looked around them. He had loved this "property" from the very moment he'd laid eyes on it, and now he understood why. Yet how could he have consented to be its broker? No one could own this place. No one could own any of this island—or any of the rest of the world, for that matter. It was all sacred ground. It was all living ground. It was the mother.

He felt the numbness receding rapidly before the force of the mana flooding his physical body. It was like so much polluted water being drained from a stagnant pool, and in his mind's eye he watched it go with gratitude and relief. His emotions and his thoughts were clearer now as well, and as he regarded Auntie Momi's smiling face he saw that the darkness over the channel to the east was beginning to lighten with the promise of a new dawn. He smiled at the kahuna in return. He had a lot of things to re-learn, he realized with a quick shiver of excitement—from his torso to his rapidly awakening legs. But before he could do anything else, he had a few phone calls to make.

Michael Malan

Titan's Blue Aura

I can't remember anything--the morning after
or "Radar Love." There is no now here, only music
and lyrics: the laugh track was canceled. The sky
goes pink, then green like a ham sandwich. Is this
a preview of the afterlife? I wonder, gazing out
the window at Titan's blue aura. Song after song
about tinhorn lovers, the sort of people I know
nothing about. On one side of the highway there
is forest a slow-moving ballet of pine and fir trees,
on the other side an empty building painted black.
And I think how, years ago, I saw an exhibit
of Sioux ghost shirts in a museum in Rapid City
and my dad was standing in the corner smoking
a cigarette and wearing his Napa Auto Parts jacket
and I felt the ghosts right there in the room with me.

Anna Jackson

Ready (drunk) (not chicken)

I threw myself in, ready (**drunk**)
to be rushed off in a current

over whatever there was to fall
down, and here I am – still

drunk, finding the water warm,
slightly saline, after all this time

beginning to *congeal*, feeling
in some places almost solid,

forming a *skin* within the pool.
A membrane to hatch through?

Or a *contact lens*, for a vision
a whole lot bigger than my life?

Additional galleries: click on an image.

I was not around in those Gay Edwardian days
when young aristocrats and men of fashion
came to London to indulge their pleasures.
I did not attend, as a guest or ghost,
any of the legendary dinners
cooked by the fabulous Mrs Rosa Lewis,
I did not wear an evening gown
and have my hair done London style.
I did not, raising my champagne glass
to smash it dangerously hard
against the glass of the man across
from me, suddenly feel
the world double and split
with a sensation of déjà vu,
as if I saw myself or had already been seen
by some future ghost of myself whom
I could never come to have been,
I did not look across and see reflected
in the glass windows
of the glittering St James hotel
the pinched
and haunted face,
the frown between the brows,
of anyone watching me.

Luis Benitez

Kustendje, By The Black Sea

In your letter you told me how beautiful Kustendje looks
when the Chinese and the wind arrive at the Black Sea
and that not far from the bus station
there is a stone where you were told Ovid sat
when it was called Tomis and was his banishment.

Let no one, even the divinity, save us from the favours of the mighty
as from changes no one is saved.

That yesterday they demolished Lenin's last statue
and that at Tomis he cried for nocturnal Rome,
so smiling, the frivolous reading of love poems,
the repentant hangover of the following noon,
when he commented licenses, conquests or rejections,
to other lazy ones in the baths or on the streets
of a world that laughed forever.

In your letter you told me they still whisper little English
and while he spoke alone and drove hens away
with the voice of his hexametre Ovid was still
that ragged old man, the same introduced to Augustus
with other clothes and hair and perfumes.

That you already knew why stones and verses
change, when the glance changes, just as when
Ovid knew before the metamorphosis
why poetry is of no interest to anyone.

The Hand

This hand I stretch out
awaiting you
is another vain prodigy,
another useless miracle
of the infinite series
that surrounds us in silence.
In the morning it has abandoned
the two vigils,
that of insomnia and that of sleep,
which is also possible,
I contemplate it at times with the only amazement
we keep for what is strange.
It has travelled all night with me.
Perhaps, I don't remember, it has touched
shapeless things.

At its touch, doors have been opened
and walls opposed
which may not exist.
It has shaken with cold and has sweated
in unchanging climates. Possibly
it has been cut off, just like in a night
in 1676, and remains intact.
It will travel with me all day long.
It is my very self, it will make locks turn round,
it will touch what has been touched and others will.
Everything is an infinite handrail.
It will accept the treacherous friendship and try
to dissuade the threats, which are no other
than love misunderstandings among men.
And I don't disdain that hours of light
make it play minor roles,
light a cigarette or leave
the humiliation of alms,
they are a part of the mystery
where hands act.
Like me, my hand is something existing
in the world to accept it all.
Now, in the evening,
when I contemplate what is writing
these voices without the honour of some precisions,
I darkly understand
the rags of its metaphor. Like a sacred book,
kept in zeal by the puzzle of its language,
another day has fallen off
by the passing of the hand.





Brian Potiki

Earthquake

the ground shakes
causing the house to rattle
all those important objects on shelves,
in cupboards -
but, like basho said
we'd need no roof at all
were it not for the rains that fall

i was re-reading a letter of
tony fomison's - not to me -
from 25 years ago
when the shaking began
sorry to hear you've been
pushing your bodies around too much.
look after them, they're the only ones
you're going to get

the scariest part is
the rumble that comes first -
the one that makes you want to run to mum
&
hide
under
her
blankets

In Their 40's

how beautiful miles davis
& bob dylan looked
in their 40's -
confident &
edgy, still

but Time
is a river
of silk
& sandpaper
& clouds

in time
all is
abraded:
the lustreless hair,
the lines forming round
the eyes

My Adulterous Heart

meet me by the arawa st roundabout
let's have lunch in the government gardens
i'll see you in city focus at 2.00
dad'll meet you at kuirau park - by the foot pool
she said she'd be here - she's late!
wait for me outside the fat dog, please!
there's a cafe at the bath-house - we could meet
there
is it raining where you are? it's pouring here
how about half an hour in a private pool?

Wendy Graetz Hoglen

IM

BUTTERFLY

By the time Neala gets to the pool, the other swimmers on her team are well beyond the warm-up and part way through their workout.

"You're late," Coach Daniels tells her as she stretches pool side. "Practice starts at three on Mondays."

"Don't worry. I'll make up for it." She dives into lane three, surfaces halfway across the pool and starts her fly.

Neala's butterfly is like lighting a fuse. The flame starts at the top of her head and explodes out her toes. Arms marshal the charge; legs are the ammunition. The well-timed stroke, bold and beautiful, evokes the Muhammad Ali sense of the term: *Float like a butterfly; sting like a bee.*

Neala floats and stings up and down the length of the pool. Her fuse is beyond lit.

Coach, stop watch in hand, keeps her eye on the thirty-five churning, turning bodies: salmon swimming upstream and down. The whiplash of her whistle punctuates the syncopated slaps and splashes of flip turns.

Coach Daniels uses her whistle to coordinate the movements of her swimmers like an orchestra conductor uses a baton. And she can use it to stop the one swimmer she wants as if she had announced that swimmer's name over the PA system. She pages Neala Bradley.

"Step into my office." Coach motions to the corner where only pull buoys, hand paddles, and tossed aside tee shirts can hear. The shirts are personal bill boards of motivational messages. "Start slow...Finish slow...Finish last," one cautions.

Coach crooks her elbow around Neala's neck and whispers near her ear. "Your times are so beautiful when you're angry."

"Yeah Coach. When I'm good, I'm very good, but when I'm mad, I'm better," Neala says, all breathy a la Mae West.

Neala's specialty is the 200 meter individual medley. Coach compares it to a four course meal consisting of butterfly, backstroke, breast stroke and free style. Neala goes out so strong and so fast, her butterfly is an appetizer – of raw meat.

"Just leave room for dessert," Coach reminds her.

Neala laughs, the first time all day. She is having a bad day.

It started when her advisor called her into his office to chew her out.

He was unhappy about her approach to journalism. Too much style. Not formulaic enough. He accused her of being sophomore.

Neala didn't bother to state the obvious. She *is* a sophomore, albeit a bit older than most, having taken a couple of years between high school and college to collect her thoughts and to gather some steam, much like a gymnast pauses in the corner before starting the last tumbling run of her floor routine.

She did tell him she tries to listen to her sources so she can tell their stories properly.

"Your job isn't to listen," he said without looking up from the papers he was shuffling. "Your job is to report. Reporters don't tell stories. They tell facts."

When she got home, there were messages on her answering machine. Four of them were from Luke. Neala and Luke haven't been in touch since the Sunday before last at 5:30 A.M. "I need a swim," she had announced then like most people say they need a drink, leaving the hug of his arms and the warmth of their bed.

"Let's work out here," Luke had suggested sleepily. But off she went, taking her luminous, crisscrossed tan marks with her. The last thing Luke saw was the back of her tee shirt: "I am what I am – Popeye; IM what IM – Neala Bradley."

Neala listened to Luke's first message, *Beep* "I want to see you," and then fast forwarded over the rest.

Beep "Miss Bradley, this is the clinic calling. You missed your appointment. Please call us to reschedule and don't forget to use your ID number when you call. If you want to speak to a counselor, our hot-line is twenty-four/seven."

Now, at the pool, what Neala wants to do is pretend nothing has changed. She finishes her set of hundreds, fifteen of them. She puts on her fins and paddles to do another fifteen hundred of resistance training. She has the pool to herself.

The red-and-white lane markers stretch across the pool like strings of peppermint candy. The surface of the water, between intervals, is smooth and clear as a squegeed pane of glass. The only sound is the rhythm of her muscled momentum.

Neala stops, hoists herself out of the pool, and grabs a kick-board. She swings the rectangle of green Styrofoam against the legs of the lifeguard's chair with the constancy of a metronome. Again and again she pounds the board, until it breaks into fragments and dust.

BACKSTROKE

Neala likes to look at the big picture and have her goals in sight. Swimming backstroke, all she sees are the rafters and rainbow-haloed mercury lamps. Catch. Bend. Roll. The sequence sounds like commands in a dog obedience class. The secret to the backstroke is in the catch, the part of the stroke where hands grab water. "With backstroke," Coach Daniels says, "the catch is the catch."

When Neala started age-group swimming at age five, her coach was Daniels. She told the kids to think of their hands as paddles, their arms as oars. At the end of practice, the children with good hand position got gummy worms, their reward for having the "Catch of the Day."

Neala likes the way Coach handles herself around other coaches, most of whom are male, and the way she handles her swimmers, all of whom are female. A few weeks after they began dry-land conditioning with free weights and pulleys Neala's freshman year, one of the girls came to practice with a note from her mother. "Please excuse my daughter, Austin, from lifting barbells."

"My mother looks at my shoulders," Austin told Coach, "and starts to cry."

"Don't wear sleeveless shirts," Coach advised her. "Now give me three sets of overhead pulls, ten reps at fifteen pounds. Isolate your shoulders."

Today, Neala's shoulders are part of her semaphore system. Her arms are flagpoles and her hands are flags, signaling her S O S. She tries to focus on her backstroke. She tries to regain her equilibrium. If she's lucky, backstroke is the sorbet that clears her palate after butterfly. She doesn't feel lucky.

She searches for her equilibrium. She searches for the backstroke flags. She finds neither. She smashes into the wall. Life should come with backstroke flags.

Neala leaves the pool. It's time to meet her mother for their weekly Tuesday lunch.

She arrives at the diner early. She watches her mother navigate the crowded restaurant. Her mother, Dr. Annabel Rogers Bradley, is model-beautiful. She doesn't look good for her age. She just looks good. She's often told she and her daughters look like sisters. Sometimes when that happens, she advises people to get their eyes checked. Or she explains "That would mean my mother was past sixty when she gave birth to these two younger ones."

Beauty and brains is what people say when they hear Annabel is a mathematician.

I didn't know I was only allowed to pick one is what Annabel says in response.

Neala stands up when her mother arrives at the table. They are the same height, 5'11", and have great posture. It would be hard to say which woman is more beautiful. Each has blond hair and Caucasian features, and yet still manages to be exotic looking. Given her appearance, Neala's name confuses people. Once they understand it's properly pronounced Nay-allah, they want to know its origin and what it means. The family joke is that it's Hawaiian for absolutely nothing.

They hug, and Neala buries her face in her mother's neck, a habit left over from childhood. Snuffling, they call it.

The two of them hit a rough patch when Neala was in high school. Whenever Neala offered details of her life, her mother offered advice, saying "Here's what I would do if I were you."

One day, Neala came home with her nipple pierced.

"Why did you do that?" her mother asked.

"So you could tell us apart."

Neala and her mother sit down and order lunch and Neala cuts to the chase.

"I need to borrow five hundred dollars."

"Okay. What for?"

Neala wishes she could sit on her mother's lap. "An abortion."

Annabel weaves the fingers of her hands together, a stress-management technique she learned in a nail-biting cessation seminar. "Do you love him?"

Neala is relieved her mother doesn't ask her to name names. "Possibly, but that's irrelevant."

"Love is never irrelevant."

"I'm not trying to decide what I should do about him. I'm trying to decide what to do about the pregnancy."

"Isn't he part of that? His sperm certainly are."

"It's hard enough for me to figure out what I want to do without factoring him in."

"You've already 'factored' him. Now you need to tell him."

"No. You need me to tell him." Neala touches her nipple ring to remind her mother how their relationship works.

Her mother fidgets with her wedding band. "If I only tell you what you want to hear, I'm not doing a good job as your mother or as your friend. You need to consider all your options."

"I thought you were pro-choice."

Annabel scootches her chair closer to her daughter. She takes Neala's

hand in both of hers. Her hands shake slightly. "I had an abortion. My pregnancy got..." Her mother pauses to search for a word. "...derailed."

Neala kisses the back of one of her mother's hands. She brings it up to her cheek. "Are you glad you made that choice?"

Annabel studies her daughter's profile. Strands of Neala's hair have escaped from the loose chignon held in place with spring-loaded clothes pins. There is the faint aroma of chlorine, Neala's signature scent.

"'Glad' is not a word I could ever use in this context."

"Are you saying I should have this baby?"

"I'm saying you could have this baby. I'm saying it's a choice – a difficult choice – not a foregone conclusion."

"How do I make the right choice?"

Annabel disengages her hand from her daughter's. She takes the napkin from the table and uses it to blow her nose. "You don't think about making the 'right' choice. You think about making *your* choice."

Neala takes a sip of water and gives the glass to her mother.

"Have you told Cally?" Annabel asks her daughter.

Cally is Neala's older, married sister. She and her husband are trying to have a baby. The one time she did get pregnant, she had a miscarriage. "If at first you don't conceive..." has been their motto.

"I don't think I can discuss this with her."

"I don't think you can't."

Neala reaches for her mother's hand again.

"You know," Annabel tells her daughter, squeezing her daughter's fingers "not all of life can be taken like a standardized test."

BREASTSTROKE

"Ladies. Let me remind you. This is not your grandmother's breast-stroke."

"What do you know about stroking my grandmother's breast?" Neala asks.

It is Wednesday, five-fifteen in the morning. In their baggy sweats, the swimmers look ready for a sleep-over. Austin's bunny slippers and teddy bear enhance the impression.

"Drop and give me ten."

Groaning, the girls spread out their towels. They hate the serpentine push-ups designed to prolong the pain. With each brush against the cold tile floor, the girls, one at a time, call out the name of fantasy lovers.

"Johnny Depp," one swimmer yells.

"Jonathan Rhys Meyers," says another.

It's Neala's turn. "Steve Buscemi."

Normally, Neala loves the burn of lactic acid build-up. But this morning her arms feel tired. Fortunately, breaststroke is all in the legs. Coach D. explains. "They used to call it 'frog kick.' Now it's 'whip kick' as in 'I can whip your butt with both hands tied behind my back.'"

Coach dives in. Hands clasped as promised, she zooms the fifty meter length to prove her point. With her second length she incorporates arms. She crosses the pool like a heat-seeking missile bred with a mole, her head popping up and down out of the crystalline, perfectly ph-balanced water. The trick to breaststroke is to stay out of your own way.

The team gets in. Neala's times are off by a little and then by a lot. Coach D. stops watching the watch. She focuses on Neala's technique and form. "You're stroking like you've just come from the hair dresser," Coach calls out. "Get your face wet!"

More than two hours later they head to the showers. In the locker room, the swimmers wrap themselves in their towels like a Moo Shu dish.

Neala's locker is next to Austin's. Neala slams the door, caging her wet suits, cap, and goggles. "How's your mom dealing these days?" she asks.

Austin takes a minute to finish rubbing cream into her face and then answers. "She's still not thrilled with the shoulders. But she sees the advantages. She keeps telling me how much she loves my perky breasts."

"Who doesn't?"

Neala's breasts, hips and periods came when she cut back on her training towards the end of high school. That's when her parents discussed sex with her. They did not counsel abstinence. They counseled prudence.

"We're not concerned about sex without marriage. We're concerned about sex without condoms. We're concerned about sex without love. Being in love can make you feel like having sex. Having sex can make you feel like you're in love."

Neala took their advice about condoms, ignored the stuff about love, and managed to have her heart broken once or twice.

Each time it happened she called her sister, Cally, for debriefing and debridement. Neala calls her sister one evening a couple of days after her lunch with Annabel.

"How's school?" Neala asks.

"I love my kids this year. They're so bright-eyed and bubbly."

"You say that every year."

"It's true every year. How's school with you?"

"I love my professors this year. They're so big-mouthed and bubbly."

"How's the team?"

"Good. They recruited some real pistols. They're fast and they're fun." Neala pauses. "I'm a little off."

Neala hears muffled conversation. Then Cally is back on the line.

"Sorry. Okay. No, wait. Hold on."

Neala inhales and exhales deeply while she waits.

"Hey, I'm back. You're a little off?"

Phone crooked under her neck, Neala shakes out her arms like she does before a race.

"I'm pregnant."

The silence stretches out so long, Neala wonders if Cally has quietly put the phone down and walked away.

"Congratulations." Cally's voice is flat.

Neala takes another deep breath and plunges into the empty, gaping pool.

"I'm thinking about having an abortion."

Another long silence. Then, an exhalation, almost a moan. "I can't talk about this now. I'm going to hang up. I'll call you back later." This time Cally does put the phone down quietly.

Neala huddles in the chair which is slip covered in beach towels, mementos of team training trips. Garlands of red, blue and yellow prize ribbons are strung above the windows; the wooden plank of her coffee table is supported by the metal tubing from an old starting block; swim trophies work as book ends on the shelves.

She reaches for her cup of tea. She wishes she could read tea leaves. She wishes the phone would ring. She wishes she knew what to do.

The phone rings.

"Okay," Cally says. "We can talk about this now. I'm jealous as hell. My life is one long exercise in fertility. I want what you don't want."

"I didn't choose to be pregnant."

"Just because you didn't choose it, doesn't mean it's undesirable. Maybe it's not a choice. Maybe it's a chance."

"It is desirable. But not now. Not this way." Neala hugs her knees closer.

"You think you can live your whole life by design."

"Well yeah, as long as it's intelligent design." Neala digs her heels into the seat cushion and clenches and unclenches her toes in the air. "I just don't want to live my life by default."

"Don't look at it as a fault. Look at it as serendipity."

"Aren't you going to ask me whose baby it is?"

"I know whose it is. It's yours."

"I love you, Cally."

"I love you too."

"I wish I could give my pregnancy to you."

"I wish I could give my desire to have a baby to you."

"That would be some weird reproductive 'Gift of the Magi,'" Neala says.

FREESTYLE

Early Friday night, the pool is empty except for Neala. Stroke, stroke, stroke, breathe. Reach, pull, recover. Her legs flutter like hummingbird wings with graphite scaffolding. The cadence lulls her. She does five hundred meters of stroke drills. Each movement is in slow and exaggerated motion, soothing in a wax-on/wax-off kind of way.

"Like you're slipping your hands into gloves," Coach D. tells her swimmers, describing the hand entry.

During her high school years, Neala's friends teased her about her sport of choice. "It's so boring. Everybody knows some horses run faster than others," one short-lived boyfriend complained. He wanted her to ditch her two daily practices.

"Yes," she politely agreed. "But did you know some horses swim faster than others?" Neala ditched him the next day.

Her fingers brush the wall, her head tucks under, and her knees and feet rotate 180 degrees on the vertical axis. Then she pivots. Part cork-screw, part ballet dancer, she plants her feet for the push off the wall. Her body is parallel with the pool bottom. The black line on the concrete below points the way.

When she first learned to do flip-turns, more than fifteen years earlier, it felt like she was trapped inside a washing machine. Over and over, she practiced the awkward sequence of motions. Over and over she came up sputtering. Water up her nose; water down her throat; water in her goggles. She would get out of the pool every so often to go throw-up.

Now she imagines the cluster of cells growing inside the fluid of the amniotic sac. With each turn, she sees the blastosphere spinning around, like those liquid compasses people put on the dashboards of their cars.

She thinks about the sperm her mother mentioned at lunch. She thinks of the joke about sprinters. "Why shouldn't you have sex with sprinters? Because they always go as fast as they can."

She thinks about Luke and how he takes his time. How he traces the dorsal muscles on her upper back, and kneads her shoulder blades. How he admires her muscle definition.

So well defined, he told her kissing her up and down her spine, she

should be in the dictionary.

On her next flip turn, Neala over-shoots and catches her heels on the tiled edge of the pool. She gasps from the pain. She snakes over the lane markers on her way to the ladder closest to the locker room and climbs out. Blood drips from a gash in her heel. After a few steps, she turns to assess the damage. She sees her wet foot prints and the piggy-backed drops of blood – an organic Rorschach test.

She pushes against one of the double doors to the locker room. Austin is just coming out. “Hey. What’s up?” Austin adjusts the backpack on her shoulder.

“You have a Band-Aid and a tampon?”

“Got your period?”

“Maybe”

“The tampon will work better.” Austin reaches into her back pack and pulls out a small zippered pouch. “Here you go.”

Inside the toilet stall, Neala peels down the three layers of suits she wears for practice. There’s a little bit of blood. She puts in the tampon, flushes the toilet, and goes to the sink to wash her heel and her hands. The cut isn’t as deep as she thought. She puts on the bandage.

She goes back out on deck, and looks up into the bleachers as she limps to the head of her lane. Luke is sitting in the front row of bleachers, elbows resting on the rail. He stretches forward, his arms dangling down. Neala changes course. She stops just beneath the balcony. If she reached up with the full span of her long arms, her finger tips would brush his.

“You can swim but you can’t hide,” Luke says.

“I need to swim.” Neala’s mantra floats up.

“Well, I need to...” But Neala walks away and plunges in head first before Luke can finish.

She swims down to the far end of the pool. Stroke, stroke, stroke, breathe. She turns and heads back toward Luke. She stops at his end and pushes her goggles to the top of her latex-capped head. She looks primordial and futuristic at the same time. She hoists herself up and out and approaches Luke, arms cradled for warmth.

“I’ll call you later tonight. I promise,” Neala tells him, her words wet and wobbly. He leans forward again, and reaches out his arm. This time, she stretches upwards. Her fingertips do brush his.

She pulls back her hands and uses them to adjust her goggles over her eyes and turns then takes the few steps to the pool edge. She jumps in feet first, tucks up into the fetal position, and pushes off the wall. Streamlined and sleek, she undulates along the bottom.

Luke is still in the bleachers, arms resting on the rail again. Neala reaches the far wall, swims back toward him, turns off the wall closest to him and swims away once more, plumes of red streaming out behind her.

Lyn Lifshin

He Said He Tasted the Music, Colors

the wind whipped
nylon over
shoulder blades
he leaned into
waves there was
color coming out
of the rock,
notes and codas
each time waves
split on grass,
lavenders, corals,
allegros, chartreuse
leaping it wasn't
this way he
begged just
tell him he
was almost weeping
the water filling
rooms the words
an adagio he'd
hoarded dripping
out on to eels
and sharks
stained pale stones
a white
feathery blur

Dorati's Mother

pulled from Odessa
pulled from a dream
of gypsies and balalaikas
under the dark green
pines, herded into a
cattle car crowded
with women all
bourgeois and not
used to urinating in
a corner, shitting in
full view on the floor.
Not used to being
stepped on, kicked.
Many screamed, tore
their own flesh,
wouldn't eat dog soup.
But she knew all
Beethoven's violin
pieces, knew the
viola parts, the violin,
went over each part
and didn't go mad

Greg Evason

The Large Woman Smiles

just a kid
and there she is
she's just a kid too
she's huge
my father is trying
to get me
to ask her to dance
it's a wedding in Owen Sound
I can't do it
I don't want to do it
he says
I'll live to regret
not taking advantage
of the experience
of dancing
with a fat chick
which so far
is not true

Judson Simmons

Dissection of an Instant

A boy stands dangerously close
to the edge of railroad tracks.

I can see this boy
for perhaps a moment--
the weight of his body
pushed back by the force
of our oncoming train.

Outside it's the new birth
of all green. Trees regain
their brilliance, the perennials
are beginning to gather
in suited lengths.

The squirrels have restarted
their games of chase, deer
tiptoe out into the open
then dash back towards
the wilderness, and skunks leave
their essence at the first sight
of worry...

But what about this boy?--
left alone to play among the tracks,
those steel backbones
protruding from the earth.

(. . . continued on the next page . . .)

Perhaps he wasn't pushed back
by the train, maybe he stood
already aware of the danger, carelessly pushed back
by my sole perception...

(perception sometimes feels
like 9/10ths deception
and 1/10th innocence.)
And what if I told you
I could never swear
that this young boy ever stood there.

What if what I really saw
was a tree stump, amputated
of its foliage. A boy,

or a tree-we're one and both
in my mind
as we sped into the distance.

Flowers at the Supermarket

What cruel arrangement
they've set you in--the farthest corner
of the store. Tucked away
like a nuisance or blemish,
forgotten and possibly forlorn.

How do we appreciate
these dying buds? Their petals dwindle
to the ground, swept up
at a stock boy's whim or at closing
each night...

Little piles
of lily leaf and rose buds,
tiny flecks of carnation
scattered across the floor.
The long necks of sunflowers
hanging towards the ground in last prayer; orchids huddled
in fading bunches. Their colors,

once so intense they seemed
copulated in the fury of lightning--
now draw breaths of dust
and dirt--nothing left, left alone.

Kenneth Quilantang

Hands

May 1984. I've been watching him go at this for hours. There are tweezers available to handle the miniscule parts of the 1943 Harley-Davidson Servicar three-wheeler model that lie strewn across the top of the yellow flowered vinyl tabletop but he doesn't use them. For the smallest parts he uses a magnifying glass the size of a small saucer to probe what part fits with what.

He's stubborn. I can tell and I'm only in third grade.

Insert Part "A" into slot "B."

His eyes are like dynamite about to blow up. He pinches a small piece, (he whispers to himself, calling it the "distributor") between thickly callused, wiry-haired fingers.

It escapes being picked up.

He lets out a soft, almost silent, groan while giving the slippery piece a stink eye.

With his patience switch set to go off, he tries again for the small plastic piece, which once more teases him by escaping. The glossy black piece appears to be moved by some mischievously irritating force dead set against my father completing this seemingly simple task.

Insert Part "A" into slot "B."

It escapes being picked up.

Hands swell into fists.

"Goddamn it!" He bellows and the house seems to tremble.

"Why the fuck do they have to make these things so damn small!"

We've been through this before.

Mom washes the rice; I see blue veins in her arm pulse and bulge through her thin, wet skin. I turn away, back to my practice of writing in cursive.

Bam! The two swollen fists smash against the table temporarily suspending the little pieces of the model, my homework, and whatever isn't secure in the air.

"Fuck I don't know why these people gotta make the parts so damn small," my father reiterates in a pleading, infinitely hopeless rage.

"Ah shit forget it already," he crumples the instructions between his knurled fists.

I glance at my mother; she quietly slices away at a large onion.

She doesn't say a word.

I wince at the smell of the onion fumes.

She doesn't cry. She's used to it.

Through watery eyes I erase the mistake caused by the jarring of the table.

* * * *

Another day, late in the summer of that same year.

This year has been especially hot. It's the kind of hot that makes people yell at each other when the beer runs out, the kind that makes any large body of watery relief worth more than all the rice cake in a manapua man's truck.

Rice cake is fifty cents.

The straws filled with colored sugar are 10 cents apiece.

The line for the manapua man at the beach is long.

We don't wear slippers; our little wet footprints evaporate almost instantaneously when they are formed by our flat feet.

Heat, sand, blisters and the potential for diabetes are all free.

Under the prickly canopy of yellowed, dry, kiawe trees we wait for our turn at the manapua man's high counter. Kids dangle off the open side of the dirty white van like the prickly kukus that stick to your pants when you walk through the bushes.

I hear someone close behind us whisper, "Fucking haole boy. Fricka wen cut."

I know of whom they're talking and turn to him. His eyes water; I ask him if he's okay, he says its only sand.

Liar.

I know.

I can't take it.

"WHAT YOU PRICKS!!" I snap back at the source of the insult doing my best to muster all of my father's rage into my voice, "LIKE TROW?!"

"Why you helping out dis haole?" the skinnier boy retorts while spitting at the ground. "Maybe we should kick yo ass too?"

"Nah, nah, nah da haole boy going call his haole faddah, dey bot fags," the chubbier one with the patches of white skin on his elbows says confidently, "let 'em go." The skin on his elbows reminds me of one of the cows in the dairies that dot the inner valleys of Wai'anae.

He's da bull.

"FUCK YOU, YOU ASSOES," I hear from my taunted compatriot; his eyes are filling with tears. He screams, "MY FADDAH NOT EVEN HAOLE!"

His movement becomes a blur when he punches the chubbier boy on the side of his face.

Chubby boy seems to land gently on the baking, blackened pave-

ment.

His elbows that were once pale whitish pink are now covered with pebble-encrusted specks of bloodied, bright, rosy-colored cuts and scrapes caused by the fall.

Skinny boy is paralyzed by shock. I cock back a closed fist to drop him.

Skinny is faster and lands a stinging blow on my right cheek.

My buddy who was the subject of the taunting sprints toward a rusty, beige Ford Fairmont parked under a half dead kiawe tree situated in the far corner of the beach's sandy parking lot. I dart after him still dizzy from the punch, holding my throbbing mouth together.

He is my brother.

His skin is white, my skin is brown.

Color is free.

Rice cake is fifty cents.

We make it to the Fairmont wheezing.

"I saw you guys," a voice booms in a seemingly disappointed tone from the driver's side of the rust bucket. Thickly callused, wiry haired fingers clench the steering wheel of the car tightly. "Why'd you punch and run? Why didn't you do something for your brother?" My father burns a disgusted gaze into my sweaty forehead.

"I dunno, I... I mean.... I, we neva do notting to dose guys," I say while kicking small rocks around with my feet.

"What did you say?" My father's higher pitched voice signals his heightened state of anger.

"Oh, I meant that we didn't do anything to the other kids," I correct myself and continue with my father's impromptu parking lot interrogation, "Abe and I were just waiting in the line, and we wanted rice cake. It's the other guys who wanted to fight. They said Abe cut, but we didn't I swear."

From across the parking lot Skinny and Chubby look in our direction. Chubby is picking out the rocks from his bleeding elbows.

"Get in the car!" My father snaps and starts the rumbling engine of the Fairmont. He's driving towards the manapua truck.

My brother and I look at each other not knowing what to make of this. Rice cake doesn't seem too palatable at this moment.

"Go get your rice cake," demands my father, "both of you. GO!"

There's no use resisting our father so we get out, woefully, like convicted death row inmates on our way to the electric chair. Our last meals as far as we are concerned, will be translucent, sticky slabs of rice cake.

It takes forever to get to the van.

"OHH!! YOU FUCKAS CAME BACK!" Chubby grins, "You no

can false crack me now fuckin haole!" They have more friends now; vengeance hangs thick in the hot summer air of Pokai Bay Beach Park.

It's soft at first. A mechanical sound. Deliberate.

Ka-chunk. Crunch. Ka-chunk. Crunch.

We can hear it from around the corner of the van.

Ka-chunk. Crunch. Ka-chunk. Crunch.

"You frickin kids," a familiar voice bellows from behind us, "what did I tell you? Go buy your rice cake before I leave you here!"

He stands there, his weight bearing down upon his cane; the brace on his right leg makes creaking sounds from the strain of him standing. Helmet-like long curly black hair glistens in the sun. Dark shades hide his eyes.

"If you odda kids get problem wit my kids cutting, go tell yo fad-dahs," he explains to the other kids. My brother and I stay silent as we chew and forcibly swallow our sticky sweet treats. My jaw goes slack in bewilderment; I'm wondering to myself how my dad, who never spoke like that to my brother or I, suddenly became fluent.

"Tell dem to meet me at da park by da elementary school at six," he instructs. The children are slackjawed, not believing what has transpired. They scatter to tell their families of the crazy man with the cane and his mixed up sons.

"*Choi duc*," the manapua man says smiling while soft music in some sort of Asian tongue plays from a radio in his van.

"*Choi duc*," my dad answers laughing as the three of us walk back to the Fairmont.

"What was dat?" I inquire.

"What's what?" His answers come in the form of irritated barks, "and speak in straight English boy."

"Sorry," I sheepishly regain my composure and prod my father correctly, "what did you say to the manapua man?"

"It's Vietnamese," he replies chuckling softly to himself, "let's go home."

Rice cake is fifty cents.

The straws filled with colored sugar are 10 cents apiece.

We don't have to pay for the food.

* * * *

It's still unbearably hot at 5:30 pm when we get home. My brother and I pass the time away by peeling off the stuck wax paper left on the pieces of jiggly rice cake.

"Boy, go tell your mom that I'm going to Tamura's to get the hamburger for tonight," my dad says through clenched teeth.

"Okay dad, c'mon Abe, let's go," I use a sticky, drying rice cake en-

crusted hand to yank at his arm. He lets out a yelp when the skin on his legs rips from the vinyl seats.

"Boy, go get me the bat, I'm going to see if they have any baseballs for us to hit tomorrow after school."

Delighted at the thought of whacking baseballs, Abe rushes past me to where my dad keeps most of the sporting goods in the laundry room.

He's back to the car with the Louisville Slugger before I even have to time to get mad at him.

My father zips out of the street fast in a rusty beige blur.

At 5:55pm I inform my mom of my father's excursion.

"They sell baseballs at Tamura's?" she asks both of us, and I have the feeling she's asking the question to herself more than either my brother or myself. She winces thinking and tells us to go shower.

I'm making my shampoo soaked hair into a unicorn's horn when I hear the kitchen door open and shut so violently that it shakes the whole house.

Mom's screaming.

I run out of the bathroom scared of what I might see.

Dad places the hamburger on the counter with a dull thud.

"Get back in the shower!" they shriek in unison.

"GO!" They yap. They are just staring at each other for some strange reason.

There is no fighting this, I realize. I solemnly slide into the bathroom to finish off, as I do I peek at thick, callused skin on his knuckles. His hands are bleeding intensely, dripping onto the kitchen floor into tiny crimson explosions.

Gotta show these assholes we're not gonna be pushed around," my dad explains between my mom's snuffles. "The boys gotta learn to stand up for themselves."

By the time I shut the door to the bathroom, mom is wrapping dad's hands with wet paper towels, sniffing as she does, saying nothing.

"I can't feel my left han..." dad solemnly tells my mom. I lock the knob.

Rice cake is fifty cents.

Blood is free.

* * * *

Fast-forward twenty- five years. December 2005. We're at the Spark M. Matsunaga Veteran's Administration Medical Center. The place smells like him. The pungent aroma of old leather and faded military fatigues coalesce in my mind to form a photograph of him I remember that was taken

during R&R in the Philippines. I close my eyes and visualize him, a giant at five feet five inches, standing amongst tiny unnamed uncles who appear no more than shoulder height to him. Several men hold what appear to be rifles, I can't tell because there are clouds of fading tones of gray due to age that frame the colorless black and white photo. Dad stands there, unarmed, dressed in tiger stripe fatigues, smiling broadly, his gleaming teeth enhanced by an unfamiliar shaven face. I've never seen him with hair so short in my life and it's unnerving. I begin to delve deeper into this picture that has been burned into my mind with the subtlety of a phosphorous grenade.

A cold shudder travels down my back, and shakes me out of my daydream.

My wife sits there skimming her slender fingers through the ads in the Honolulu Advertiser, humming softly to herself.

She doesn't notice but I do.

Sullen ancient soldiers limp or roll by our seats at the snack bar. The chairs are so high my legs dangle off the floor and instantly I feel like a child again.

Squeaking tennis shoes signal the presence of the medical staff trailing the veterans. Deep lines in the faces of the stoic patients form cracks that only amplify their rocklike profiles. Their stoicism falters however when a group of the seasoned combatants excitedly gather to trade tales.

The routine isn't unfamiliar to my family or me; we've been coming to the Veteran's Hospital for as long as I can remember. Over the years, I've been witness to the dynamics of how these men go through their formalities and unsaid rituals that are observed.

Most men, upon entering the facility, inhale, and then exhale deep with a barely audible gasp, sounding as if taking their first breath.

The guys confined to wheelchairs skim the interior of the high domed glass ceiling and my eyes trace the length of the spiral staircase longingly. One particular old vet, Hawaiian by the looks of it, whizzes by where my wife and I are waiting. He quickly darts towards the elevator in a blur only to meet me with his stern, steely gaze.

My wife sits there, still slapping a sandal with her crossed leg, oblivious.

It lasts only for a fraction of a second, but I understand the reason for the stink-eye.

I sorry Uncle, I neva mean fo stare, my faddah stay hea too.

Within that eternal moment that our eyes meet, I quickly divert my eyes towards the gleaming, white linoleum, shamed in silence by my actions.

With a swish the elevator door closes. I feel his gaze even as they do.

The swishing seems to echo throughout the lobby of the center. Another vet enters shuffling through the double glass doors. The guy's stubborn. I can tell.

Like my dad, this battle-scarred soldier wears his hair in long silver locks; I hear a familiar "ka-chunk" emanating from his steel leg brace as he makes his way towards the spiral staircase. I knew he was stubborn. A woman attends to him; she looks to be about twenty (could be his daughter), she rolls her eyes sarcastically behind his back as he puts up a stiff left leg up the first step. She stands behind him should he misstep and fall. I want to help.

I can't. Invisible chains of hesitation strap me down to the barstool.

It takes around three minutes for him to clear four steps. After each one, the old man precariously teeters along the edge of each step for a few seconds, trying to regain his balance. His attendant skittishly prepares herself in the event that he should fall.

She smiles at me nervously, expectant. Her father swears every time she touches the back of his sweat soaked shirt.

Sorry sista, I no can help, everytime I try, my faddah he get mad.

I watch the pair hobble painfully up the staircase and out of sight, the old man's cursing becoming fainter when they make their way through the maze of hallways in the building.

Someone's staring at me.

I get that primal feeling that travels down my spinal column and into every cell of my body. It's recognition; I make out the form of my father leaning on the rigid koa wood railing fronting the doctor's office.

Dad calls for me with his eyes.

I look around for a wife that I suddenly can't find.

I'm starting to panic, the palms of my hands forming beads of perspiration.

I direct my line of sight down the hall where my dad is resting and I'm met with her glowing visage looking back at me.

She's already there tending to him.

I sprint skittishly down the slippery corridor and overhear their conversation.

Diabetes. I knew that.

Type two, I knew that too.

I keep quiet, too frightened of asking anything.

Complete numbness in his hands, I suspected that for a long time.

Then it comes, the word I dread hearing.

Surgery is needed again, this time in his neck to remove shrapnel and calcified bone to bring back the feeling in his hands.

I hear the words risk and quadriplegic.

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I can't talk.

My wife rubs his sweaty back as I hold his jacket. Dad smiles his familiar gap toothed smile and draws in an unfathomable breath that seems like it's his first. We slowly make our way to the car.

I exhale in a short, sharp, release; feeling like it will be my last. I take his free hand, feeling the callused, scarred, knuckles hoping he feels it through dead nerve endings and shrapnel.

This is the last time I see him walk.

Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán

Post-Warming

i.

I lean into the place of song. Hair twisting like seaweed,
tangling in the shared salts of our flesh, singer, be sung to.

Currents call, pull you across the Pacific, edge
of the Atlantic. You are always returning home.

Chests rise against palm faces, slide off with sweat, glide between us.
Lungs fill with air. Sun bursts blue the day of your diagnosis.

I would bath you in the waters of your birth, tincture of tuberose
and trailer parks. Give you back all the u's in your name.

Magma cooling beneath layered layers of blue, the purpling areas of your
body.

Web weaving songline, heartline, connecting.

Strong muscles protect: the birthplace of song. Magic and memory,
medicine, gather in your follicles. Drum rhythms, hip sways, chant.

Deep beneath brown skin is a secret of milagros. Hidden beneath layers
of Spanish and Greek surnames: the truename of your homeland, diacritically
marked.

You are hungry for the vowels, if you knew them, they would balm
your wounds, each essential to the doctoring.

Remember the scents of warm flesh.
You welcome me, welcome me in.

I am listening to the words of your journeys: viral, geographic.
Inside waves crack. Land and skin are sung into being.

I am listening. It's been years, but I am still leaning against
a strong furrow of brown.

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Rice terraces of memory, superimposed over your own,
foot deep with seedling.

Within each wave is a song of flesh and memory, beneath them a memory of
birth.

In your ear are the words to your own language.

Tattooed in your memory is the seven shades of sea, seven sounds of desire.
Vermilion and jasper ceruleans dance.

The waters you have crossed: they are more your home than any
small bit of land. You are from the sea.

ii.

Been a while since you've been inside another man. You are concerned
about infections, my young years, risks I'd take unacceptable to you.

Your arms, how could they endanger me? Making love

to making out, kissing—soul-tonguing, to lips/cheek, holding hands, to...
friends.

Not your body that is wasting, but this relationship.

The ocean, your first lover, pulls you from me. You drift.

On the day you get your full AIDS diagnosis, the candleholder you gave me
explodes.

it had been a long time, you said. familiar, that was.

(...continued on the next page...)

iii.

why this intersection speak your name, don't know. another time you drove
me home.

rememories of.

street cleanings. repark at 5am. 6.

fibers get stuck in your teeth. like lemongrass
not removed from the cooking, you explode
in my mouth

iv.

I am still leaning against a strong furrow of brown...

We solidify in sun.

I palm your chest; stigmata scab over.

Hair tips dancing shoulders,
long sways above skin.

Your chest, the place I rest, come evening.
I drink in the slow expand of lungs.

Ice caps will freeze again, our lands resurfacing from the waves.
Sal y sol evaporate up, become land.

This small isthmus
between us.

Trent Busch

Portrait

Her hair is straight back, though we can't
tell from the photograph whether
or not it's in a bun. It is
a close up and she is alone,

which is unusual for pictures
of that time. We'll keep her relationship
to our family distant though
her resemblance to Sissy Spacek

must be more than coincidence
even if we must blot out later
the name of the actress lest our own
in future years seem too modern.

Not often comic or ironic,
if we are to trust ancestry
and her writings, she nevertheless
stood strong against her father's house

and never married, yet provided gossip galore for townspeople
busy to bury their secret
diseases and homely children.

Anyway, there she is and you
can see how proud we are of her,
the way the eyes reveal neither mischief nor malice, mouth pursed

and waiting for the inattentive kinsmen's embrace, inviting
us to stand singularly faced
and immortal beside her.

Tamara Moan

Pull Up Gently

Without end I am tugging
myself toward perfection,
disappointed that I can't
answer all the mail,
take down the dead tree
in the back yard,
mop all the floors,
knit a sweater
and write the novel
I started in 1992
all in one day.
It's a hard lesson,
learning to coax
my garden along
without being a bully.

On Saturday we learned
to listen to our breath,
to walk with our
weight shifting slowly
heel to toe.
Quietly in, quietly out,
below my breathing I could hear
the chatter of deadlines, goals, and chores
fade like noisy teenagers
passing me on the sidewalk,
turning the corner,
then fading out of sight.

I am trying to remember
To wait for time to unwind,
to pull up my crops gently,
all their green,
unfurling leaves
intact.

Tiare Picard

A Severed Gift Keeps Him From Iraq

The weekend the herd gathered at gates for branding,
instinct failed him in slow motion.

Off near the gully, his eyes pried through
thistle and cat’s claw, fixed on a māmā ‘ole.

Thighs clasped around horse ribs,
his lariat poised to reel in the stray.
Small details unleash twisted consequences—

even twigs have agendas of their own.

Thorns snatched at the rope,
tangled his wrist and severed his right
hand—the one that wills work.

Freak accident bled under the kiawe tree.

Months of morphine kept the ghost thumb
alive, groping at spoons.

He wore a sock tucked at the elbow
hoping to keep his skin quiet.

Now, every Sunday, he slips
through barbed wire, crawls on bare belly;
khaki covered legs inch forward
like a gecko in fern shadows, while his

dogs bark out orders.

He beads down on his target: great boar
in hāpu‘u, all tusk and teeth.

Its hair stands on spine
like needles of lehua blossoms
warding off the fog.

Iron sight magnifies breath that blows out worm dirt.
Smoked meat on rice waits for dinner.

His left finger pulls the trigger.

Ancestors

Hooks catch more than fish:
swiftness of air, salt in a wave,
lucid dreams of old women.
One stands on a southern atoll,
a second straddles the Southeast.
One more knows snow.

Tricksters in shadows, they find
comfort in the trenched curves
of fingerprints on jade,
among folds of muscle, the *O* in a stone.

They speak in monotones
wrapped in envelopes of Hanafuda
colors, or chimed in key chains
made of balsam; in trickled nut milk
through cheesecloth
or purple yarn at the loom,

smooth and soft like a head of hair.

Appeared in the *Honolulu Weekly*, Volume 17, Number 29, July 18-24



Contributors' Notes:

Eugene Kristofher was born and raised in Northern California, began his escapade with art at the age of 4 with the help of villains and superheroes at the local comic books stores. Graduating from pencil to paint, he began going to train yards and under bridges to feed the need for greater "expression". Later, a restless Eugene Kristofher made a big change shortly after high school. He and a couple close buddies bought one-way tickets to Hawaii. Immersing himself in the local urban art and tattoo scene, Eugene looked for the ultimate artistic outlet. Ironically, true inspiration was found amongst the poorest of the poor in India, Jordan and South Africa where he lived intermittently for several years as a missionary. After returning to Hawaii he married his sweet love and hooked up with a close knit local forum for the arts, Ground Up. Touting the message of compassion, faith and introspection, he continues showing at various venues throughout Honolulu and its emerging Chinatown art district under the name "Eukarezt".

Gavin McCall is from the district of Ka'u on the Big Island, though he's spent the bulk of his writing career in Honolulu, where he is currently finishing his Master's degree at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Honolulu and Ka'u, with their vast cultural diversity and constantly changing populations, each figure heavily in his short fiction, as he is obsessed with forming dialogues between place and identity. His fiction and flash-fiction often rely on setting as primary characters; as things that not only challenge his protagonists, but just as often nurture and educate them, as well. As such, Gavin loves to travel, and does so whenever possible, in part to help expand his understanding of the two places he has called home. He also loves soccer and skateboarding, though they appear far less often in his fiction.

Brad Modlin is at Bowling Green State University, where he is the Assistant Poetry Editor of *Mid-American Review*. His poetry currently appears in *The Pinch*. He likes to walk barefoot in the woods.

Beth Tovar: My first thought, when my brother told me about Sudden Fiction, was that it should start with a "sudden" event. And that led to this. I live in Texas. I have four grown children and four grandchildren. I have a day job, but I'm working on a novel. (Isn't everyone's bio going to say that). I'm married to a retired jockey, now an assistant trainer, and I spend as much time as possible with the horses.

Christopher Kelsey has been fortunate enough to have been living in Hawai'i

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most of his fifty-three years. The bearded, bare-footed, long-hair is scheduled to graduate in the Fall with a PhD in English, Creative Writing. He teaches in the English Department at UH Mānoa.

Che S. Ng was born in Grass Valley, CA. He was raised on the island of Maui, and now attends UH Mānoa as an undergraduate. Living in Honolulu, he misses the beach and hates work.

Rai Chaze was born in Tahiti from Polynesian parents. She studied in Tahiti and lived in the United States for eleven years. A journalist and an artist in several media—including photography and dance—she is also one of the founding members of the literary revue *Littérama'ohi*.

Michelle Shin is the recipient of the 2004 Myrle Clark Award and winner of the 2005 Patsy Sumie Saiki Award for Fiction. She is a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Brent Fujinaka is a recent graduate of the English department M.A. program at the University of Hawai'i.

Alexei Melnick was born and raised in Windward O'ahu. He won an editors choice award for his contribution to *Bamboo Ridge*. He won the Hemmingway award for undergraduate fiction from the University of Hawai'i, and runner-up in the Honolulu Magazine's Fiction writing contest. He is currently writing a novel about the crystal meth epidemic in Hawai'i.

Tim Denevi is an MFA student in creative nonfiction at the University of Iowa. His work recently appeared in issue #91 of *Bamboo Ridge*. He graduated from the University of Hawaii's MA program in 2007.

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 2007 by Kahuaomānoa Press. She has an M.A. in English from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She is a 2007 recipient of The John Young Scholarship in the Arts and a 2006 recipient of the Myrle Clark Award for Creative Writing. She is finishing her second collection of poems.

Hester Young earned her MA in English/Creative Writing from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2006. Her stories have appeared in *Flyway*, *First Class*, *Shades of December*, and *Antithesis Common*. She currently teaches

English in New Hampshire.

Candice Novak was born and raised in Waiialua, HI. She pursues many forms of writing. Currently, she works as a correspondent for The Boston Globe and US News and World Report and continues to write poetry and short stories.

Jonathan Lewis is the recipient of the 2007 *California Poetry Prize*, sponsored by the *Berkeley Poetry Review*, and judged by Robert Hass. His work has appeared in the *Berkeley Poetry Review*, *{M}aganda*, *Vagabond*, and *Dream Catcher* (UK). Jonathan has visited Hawai'i many times; the poems appearing in this review were written while he was in Kona.

Philip Damon retired in 2002 from the UH English Department, where for thirty-four years he taught various forms of narrative writing and literature of a spiritual nature. He now writes and runs in the mystical woods of the Pacific Northwest. Several of his stories have appeared in *Hawaii Review*, of which he was a co-founder. "The Death Prayer" is the final story of a new collection called THE KARMA SUTRAS.

Anna Jackson lives in Island Bay, Wellington, and lectures in American literature at Victoria University of Wellington. Her most recent collection of poetry is THE GAS LEAK (Auckland University Press, 2006).

Luis Benitez was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina (1956). Member of the Latin-American Academy of Poetry (USA), the International Society of Writers (USA), World Poets (Greece), the Advisory Board of Poetry Press (India) and the Argentinean Society of Writers. He has received the title of Compagnon de la Poésie, from La Porte des Poètes Association, France. His 9 books of poetry, 2 essays and 2 novels were published in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, USA and Venezuela. He has received the following: La Porte des Poètes International Award (Paris, 1991); Biennial Award of the Argentinean Poetry (Buenos Aires, 1991); Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat Foundation Award of Poetry (Buenos Aires, 1996); International Award of Fiction (Uruguay, 1996); Primo Premio Tusculorum di Poesia (Italy, 1996) and 10me. Concours International de Poésie, accessit (Paris, 2003).

Michael Malan is an editor at Cloudbank Books in Corvallis, Oregon. His poems have appeared in Epoch, Midwest Quarterly, Wisconsin Review, and elsewhere. He was co-editor of Millennial Spring: Eight New Oregon Poets (Blue Heron).

Brian Potiki's TE WAI POUNAMU: YOUR MUSIC REMEMBERS ME: FOUR SOUTH ISLAND HISTORY PLAYS were published (by Steele/Roberts) in June 2007. Last year, in Delhi, India he just missed out on seeing an indigenous Bob-Dylan-devotee, a musician who performs only Dylan's songs.

Wendy Graetz Hoglen received a B.A. in sociology from Yale University. She is a journalist and award-winning poet on Kauai where she lives with her husband and two daughters. IM is her first short story, published or otherwise.

Lyn Lifshin has over 120 books and has edited 4 anthologies. Recent books include THE LICORICE DAUGHTER: MY YEAR WITH RUFFIAN (Texas Review Press) and ANOTHER WOMAN WHO LOOKS LIKE ME (Black Sparrow at Godine. BARBARO: BEYOND BROKENNESS (Texas Review Press) and DESIRE (World Parade Books) will be published in 2008. 92 RAPPLE DRIVE was just published by Coatilism. For other new books and news please visit her web site, www.lynlifshin.com.

Greg Evason lives alone in suburban Toronto where he spends his time writing, drawing, collaging, painting, and playing the guitar and piano. He is presently working on a novel.

Judson Simmons is a graduate of the Sarah Lawrence College Writing Program and holds a BA in Writing from the University of Houston. He currently resides in Pearland, Texas and works for the University of Houston. His work has appeared/forthcoming in *Awakenings Review*, *Evergreen Review*, *Folio*, *Pebble Lake Review*—plus other journals.

Kenneth Quilantang I graduated from Wai'anae High School in 1991. I think it was in June but I'm not sure. I did a short military stint and lived on the mainland for a while, mostly in Seattle. My wife and I have two big dogs that eat too much. I'm hopefully graduating in May and headed to graduate school at Mānoa in the fall of this year. Surfing is fun. I don't want to imagine what life would be like if I couldn't write anymore. Writing is fun too.

Ahimsa Timoteo Bodhrán was conceived in Niagara Falls, was raised in Lenapehoking, and has lived in Deutschland, Aztlán, and Tongva, Muwekma Ohlone, and Anishinaabe territories. His work has appeared in over ninety periodicals and anthologies in Europe, the Pacific, and the Américas. He received his B.A. in Women Studies from San Francisco State University,

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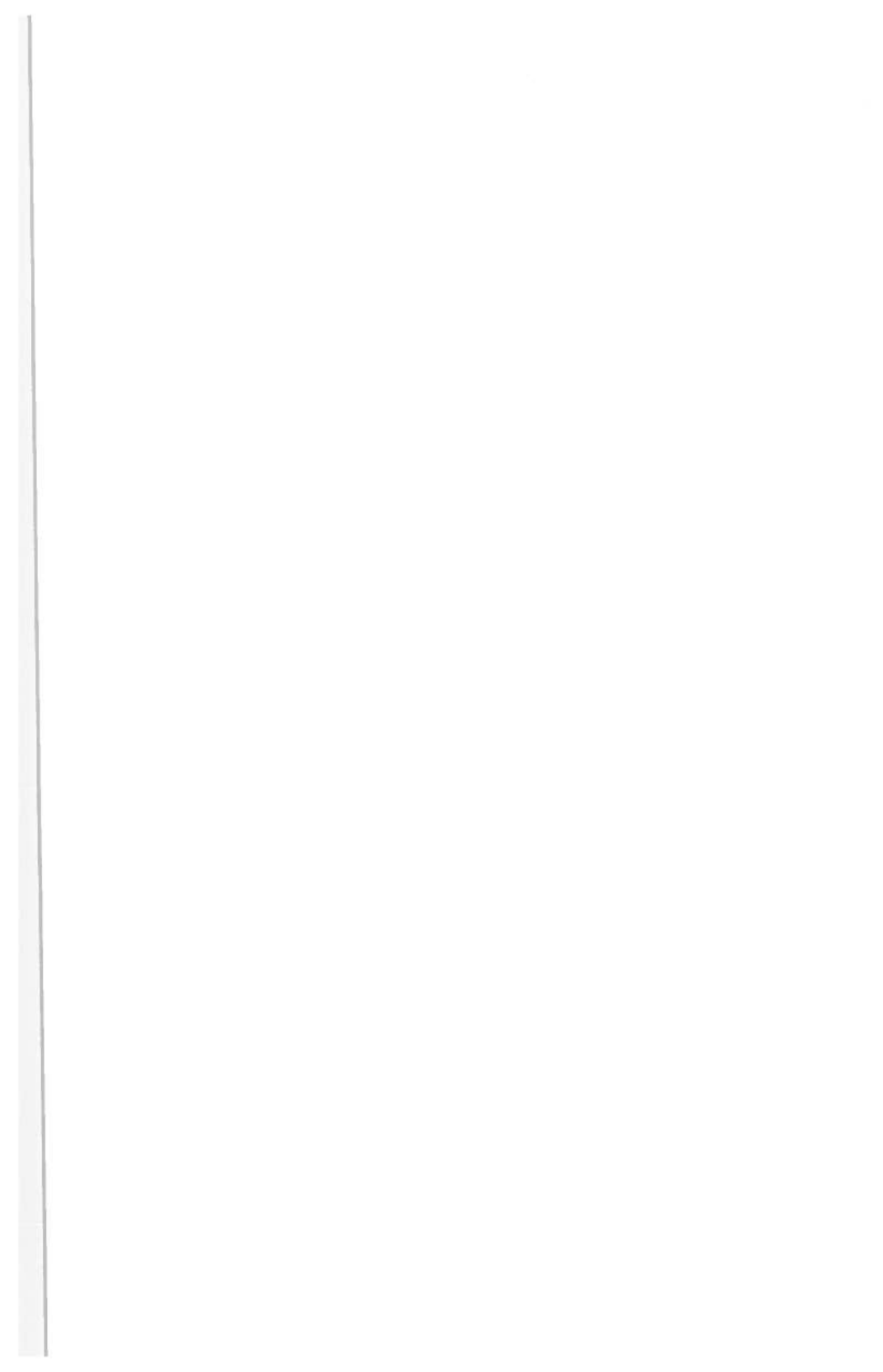
M.F.A. in Poetry from Brooklyn College, and is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at Michigan State University. His first book, YERBABUE-NA/MALA YERBA, ALL MY ROOTS NEED RAIN: MIXED BLOOD POETRY AND PROSE, is forthcoming. <http://www.msu.edu/~bodhran>

Trent Busch is a native of rural West Virginia who now lives in Georgia where he makes furniture. His poems have appeared in *Best American Poetry 2001*, *Poetry*, *Hudson Review*, *Manoa*, *Southern Review*, *Georgia Review*, *Threepenny Review*, *Shenandoah*, *The Nation*, *American Scholar*, and elsewhere.

Tamara Moan is an artist and writer who lives and works in Kailua, Hawai'i. Her poetry and non-fiction has appeared in local and national publications.

Tiare Picard was born in Honolulu and spent her childhood between Tahiti and Hawai'i. She received her BA in Political Science and Women Studies from the University of Denver and an MA in English from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Her work has appeared in *Ka Lamakua* (2006), *Ka Leo O Hawai'i* (2006), and *The Honolulu Weekly* (2007) and *Tinfish 17* (2007). Several poems are forthcoming in the 2008 *Tinfish Special Edition*.





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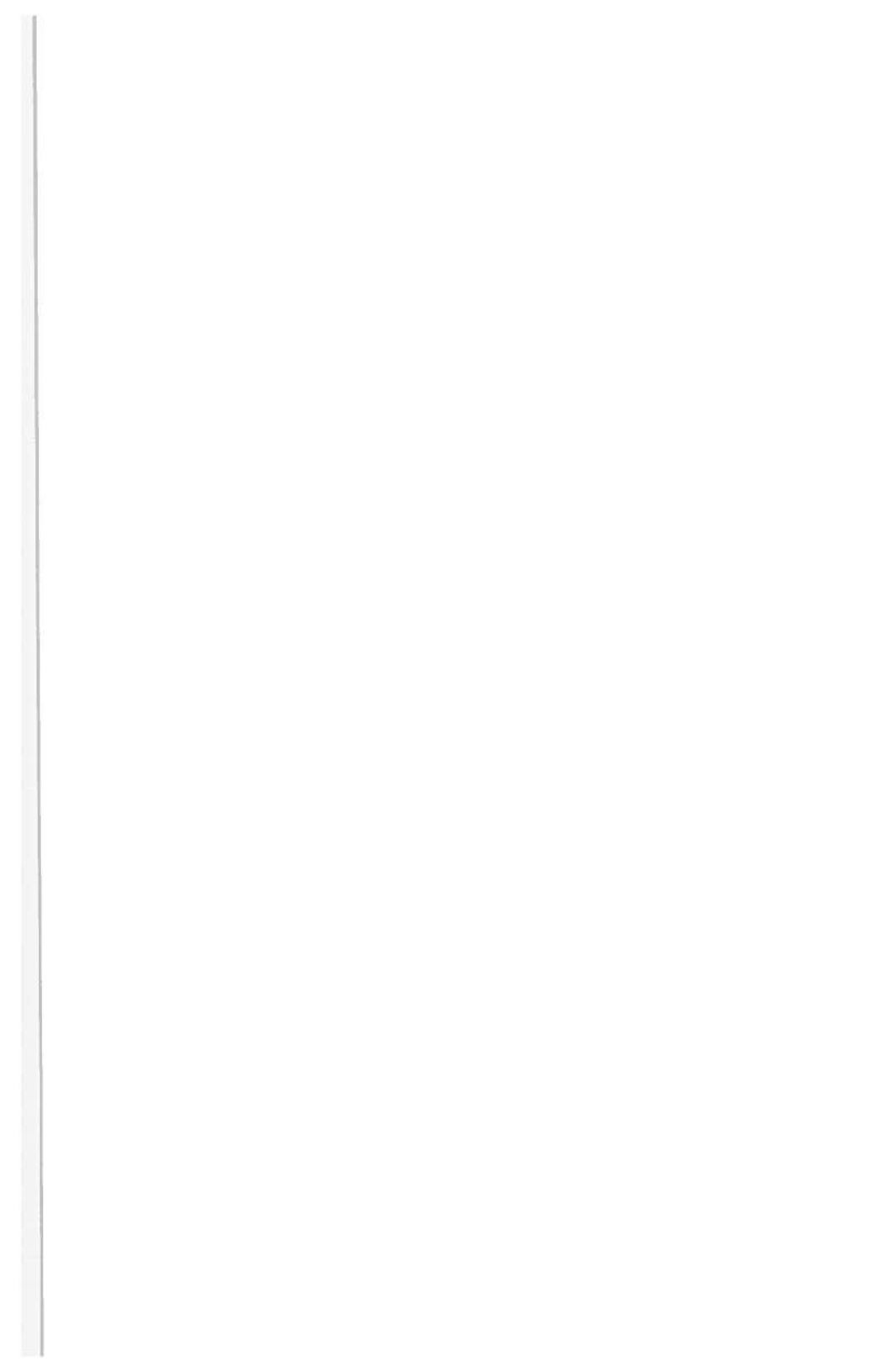
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