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Madam Pele: Novel and essay

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MADAM PELE

NOVEL

&

ESSAY

By

Jud Laraine House

Master of Arts (Writing)

Faculty of

Education and Arts

© 13th November 2006

Abstract.

Novel

My novel deals with the themes of obsession, jealousy, volatility, and revenge, while simultaneously dealing with the more benign theme of love within relationships, and holiday-mode pleasures. Divided into different narrative voices, it traces the interweaving stories of Madam Pele, Goddess of volcanoes and lava, a small lava rock, and Di and Paul, both during their past holiday in Hawaii, and in the present in Perth. Inadvertantly transporting Pele within the rock on their return from Hawaii, they unwittingly release her rage upon their city.

Essay

In this essay I cover contemporary theoretical considerations, such as Modernism, Postmodernism and Fantasy, and an analysis of various influential authors' writing techniques, descriptive language and narrative-plot genres, that led me to want to write my novel *Madam Pele* as a contemporary mythical fantasy. I then detail the devices, (such as voices, patterns, free verse, active verbs and so on) that I used to achieve this result - the implausible becoming reality with the Pele myth incorporated into the contemporary world.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

.....

Jud L House

Acknowledgments

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I wish to acknowledge the encouragement of T A G (Tom) Hungerford whose beliefs in my abilities has sustained me through many times of doubt.

I wish to acknowledge the support and tolerance of my family and friends who have become unofficial critics in times of need.

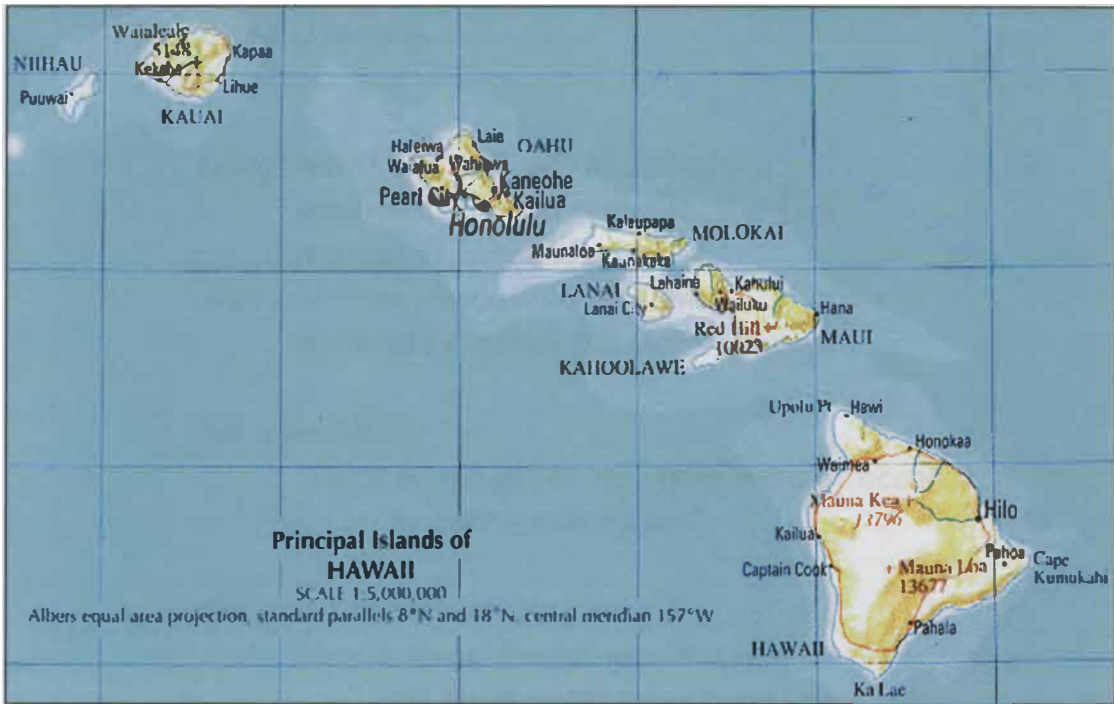
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MADAM PELE



By

Jud House



Islands of Hawaii.

Pele's Journey.

Daughter of Kahinalii and Kane-hoalani
insubordinate and disrespectful Pele
enticer of husbands
cast out from Honua-mea, in Kahiki
pursued by sister, Na Maka o Kaha'i.

Kai a Kahinalii
"Here my daughter, you have need of ocean
to carry your canoe."

Surround the mountains -
Hale-a-ka-la, Mauna-kea, Mauna-loa
till their peaks peek from ocean gift.

Kaula, tiny isle,
a home for Pele?
Tunnelling deep to fire
quenched by flooding ocean -
sister sent.

Lehua, tiny isle,
a home for Pele?
Tunnelling deep to fire
quenched by flooding ocean -
sister sent.

Niihau, tiny isle,
a home for Pele?
Tunnelling deep to fire
quenched by flooding ocean -
sister sent.

Kauai, large isle,
a home for Pele?
Tunnelling deep to fire
quenched by flooding ocean -
sister sent.

Oahu, double mountained
Kaala, the fragrant
Kona-hua-nui;
useless, unsatisfactory chain.

Molokai
Lanai
failures as before.

Maui, western mount,
Hale-a-ka-la immense and sulphurous,
Pele settled in delving and stirring
the lava and fumes.

South-east to Hawaii
across Ale-nui-haha channel
Firepit bubbling beneath the crust
awaiting release
awaiting Pele
home at last in Kilauea
Navel of the Earth -
Ka piko o ka honua.

He knew what it cost her to be polite. Diane loathed situations like this, where a man in power held her future in his hands. Paul watched her as she stood rigid, fingers held firmly on her folio, emotions held in check.

She wanted to scream, he could see that. He knew her so well.

She wanted to throw her bloody folio at Bert's arrogant sweaty head, but she refused to allow these thoughts to show.

"Of course, you realise that your work may not be to our standards." Bert sat squelched into his deep chair behind his barren expanse of desk.

He was just a figurehead. She'd wager he'd never had an original idea in his life. She turned to look at Paul, her partner, supporter, backer, to see what his reaction was.

"You'll find her work is excellent. Well above our requirements. That's why I'm recommending her." It was time he put in a good word for her. There was no love lost between the two men. Before they went in he'd told her that his recommendation might not help her.

"I'm sure I can meet your requirements and deadlines with no problems. I *have* done this sort of thing before." She closed her lips tightly, shutting in the rebellion. She *had* done this sort of thing before. And for a much bigger company than this one. He was just a white slug.

As Bert sank deeper in his chair, oozing perspiration wetting his face, the corners of her mouth twitched with the suggestion of a smile.

Bert sat squelched into his deep chair behind the barren expanse of his desk.

It was bare - like his mind. He couldn't think of anything to write himself. He hadn't had an original thought in years. He just criticized others who did.

Bert's job was mechanical, automatic, a set of actions and reactions. He was not called upon to think, only there to respond to any given set of circumstances.

"I'm just like a computer. I don't know why they need me," he muttered. A computer would do the job just as well.

It was the human touch, of course. The company wanted to create the illusion that they cared about writers, and customers - like the banks. But more and more the automatic tellers replaced people, and the banks charged customers for using the real tellers.

"That's what I'm like," he continued, grimly. "Push the right buttons and I'll give you the right answer. Not necessarily the one you want to hear though."

He gazed out the window at the smog of the city.

"At least I've got a window to look out of. With this mind-numbing job I need it!" With his last word he slapped the cold desk with his palm. The window was an escape, his safety valve.

The company knew that. Where a job was, by necessity, thin in content but vital to the overall picture, then it was psychologically important that there were compensations for the employee. The Time Management consultant had told them that.

He gazed out the window at the smog of the city. They both did, side by side, leaning on the cold metal sill.

The smog crawled through the streets, clung to the buildings, crept along the ledges and around the corners to peer in the windows at the occupants - workers and idlers, doers and dreamers.

“What a filthy day.” She turned away from the window of Paul’s office. An ominous day for a job interview really. If she believed in omens she’d have given it a miss today. But she didn’t, and she needed the job. They couldn’t save for another holiday on just Paul’s wage. Besides, she liked working. She wanted to work. She hated sticking out her hand to Paul every time she needed money for something.

She looked across at Paul who still gazed gloomily out the window. “How do you think I went? He didn’t seem too impressed.”

“It’s hard to tell with Bert. He behaves the same whether you’ve done well or not.” He moved towards the door. “I’ll go and see him now. He might’ve made up his mind.”

Bert looked up sluggishly as Paul entered. His caterpillar eyebrows lifted towards his beaded forehead. Wandering over to the window, Paul stared at the smog before turning his back on its cloying, infectious emptiness. He needed a clear head when dealing with enigmatic Bert.

“What do you think of her?”

“She seems overqualified for the job. What if she gets bored and leaves?”

“She wants the job, and I know she’ll do it well. She may even raise our standards a little.”

Bert stuck out his fat grub lower lip, shrugged, then with an effort made a decision. “Okay. She can start Monday.” He slumped, overflowing his chair, then dragged a damp handkerchief out of his pocket to mop at his glistening face and neck.

“I’ll go and tell her. Thanks, Bert.”

With a wave of his white hand, Bert turned to the miasma clutching the pane of his window, blocking what should have been his view of the life of the city - in the streets below the buildings beyond. His only contact with reality.

Hawaiian anthem.

*"Night and you, and Blue Hawaii,
The night is heavenly
and you are heaven to me . . ."*

*Elvis crooning an
Hawaiian anthem
Heart twanging to
steel guitar riffs
Tears shimmying on
smooth faded cheeks
Breath rippling as
visions surface
daydreams break
memories beach themselves
on the black sand
of her sorrow.
They never went for that
'moonlight swim'.*

*Behind thick curtains
cold driving rain
beat at the iron roof;
competed with the song.*

*Behind closed eyes
warm misty rain
clung to her face
in beads
coral pink
from emerging sun.*

She smiled.

She smiled. Opening her eyes Di looked down at the photo album as it lay on the smoked grey glass coffee table between the blue suede couch and the two matching armchairs. The glossy photographic cover displayed palm trees against a lurid sunset. Di loved it. She ran her hand caressingly over the smooth surface, then flipped it open to gaze at the photographs within. Each was slotted into its own little plastic pocket – or was it cellophane? Who cared. They were protected and she could see them easily. Beside each were a few lines of poetry, of which she was rather proud. They described the subject of the photo, but gave a feeling for the location as well. Not bad for an amateur.

The first showed their hotel room in the Holiday Inn hotel in the main street of Honolulu. Well that wasn't quite true, it was a cross street actually, but had been so close that she could see the main street from her balcony, and the unusual architecture of the Hawaiian Bank on the corner. How wonderful it had been that first night after they landed. She had stepped outside into the warm humid fragrant air and her heart had opened. Sounded stupid didn't it. But she didn't know how else to describe it. She'd waited all her life to travel to Hawaii, ever since reading a Primary Social Studies school book, about a man's travel amongst tropical islands.

And then there was that Sesame Street program about Hawaii that she'd first seen by chance. It had covered a week's episodes as their main storyline – they had one every day – and instead of showing the commercial side of Hawaii, which was undoubtedly there, they showed the natural beauty of the islands, the waterfalls, beaches, lagoons, and the wonderful unbelievable fluted cliffs. How she longed to see them.

But, when they did get to Hawaii, they discovered that a helicopter ride was needed to see the cliffs, and that had proved too expensive for their budget. On each of the four islands, they had made do with the Circle Island Tours, which were informative, interesting, and covered most of the natural beauty each island had to offer.

In fact they had been her means of gaining info about Madam Pele. Gazing thoughtfully at the photo of the hotel bedroom, she pictured herself there, as she slowly turned the pages.

"You loved that room, didn't you?" she murmured.



Oahu – main island.

Arrival.

Landed

after interminable flight;

Ushered

along corridors and up stairs;

Shuttled

by trolleybus to Customs Hall;

Herded

through cattle-run-maze to counter;

Endorsed

entries on passports, visas;

Shuffled

in endless line to baggage claim;

Collected

by lei-laden, transfer driver;

Driven

through well-lit, sleeping streets;

Deposited

with luggage on hotel steps;

Signed

for keys and future charges;

Elevated

to the appropriate floor;

Searched

for the appropriate room;

Dumped

luggage with sigh of relief;

Explored

facilities of temporary abode;

Opened

slatted screens and sliding window;

Stepped

onto balcony and stood together;

Breathed

the fragrant moist warm air;

Arrived

at the island of dreams,

at last.

Hawaii!



You stood together on the balcony of your motel and breathed the fragrant moist warm air. Below you, at three in the morning, the throb of disco music strobed from the doorway of a club. People roamed the lit streets, window-shopping.

“Can you believe it? We’re actually here.” You leaned back against Paul’s chest, aware of his heart-beat. “Smell that? I think it’s Frangipani blossom.”

“Look at those people below us. Don’t they go to sleep here?” Releasing you, Paul peered over the balcony rail in an effort to see the front of the club. “I hope that noise doesn’t go on all night, every night. We’re going to need our sleep when the jet-lag hits us.”

You hugged him from behind, your fingers undoing his shirt buttons as he leant against the rail. “Perhaps we should try to sleep now. There’s a lot to see in the morning.”

You moved together into the room, rolled the slatted timber screen across the window-wall, and gazed at the king-size bed that filled half the space. Beside it on the bedside tables stood two lamps - their bases large shell-filled glass vases. "I wonder if all the other rooms have these lamps?"

"I guess so."

"Think of all the shells they'd've had to use. Pretty aren't they. They're not crummy broken old shells either." There were various sizes, colours and shapes - a variety of smooth and shiny, and rough and spiky. Fascinating. Maybe you could make some like that when you got home, to Perth. Hard to believe you were so far from there, but it *had* taken eons to get to Hawaii. And with only one meal at the beginning and one at the end. No wonder all those people were loaded down with bags of chips and nuts and lollies! Hours without food or drink. Madness. Well things would be different on the way back, that was for sure.

Paul was in bed already and you were still looking at the lamps. You struggled out of your clothes, found your toothbrush and moved to the bathroom to clean your teeth. Make that to the powder room. Double hand-basins below a softly lit mirror that reflected the walk-in-robe behind you. To your left was the toilet and shower room. It was all rather worn, but clean.

By the time you returned to the bed, Paul was asleep. Typical. Couldn't stay awake once his head hit the pillow. And once asleep there was no point in trying to wake him. He'd sleep through a cyclone - and in fact had. You used to say that someone could rape you beside him and he wouldn't wake up. But you knew that wasn't really true.

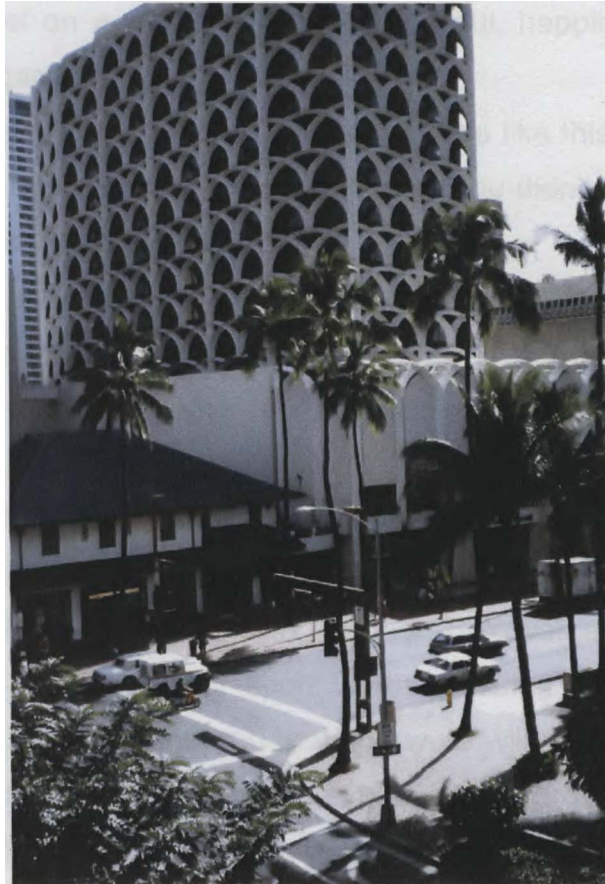
It was strange how he didn't feel the same as you about being in Hawaii. As soon as the warm fragrant air accosted you on your arrival, you began to breathe freely and relax. It was a really strange reaction, yet seemed so natural. For years you'd fantasized about going to Hawaii, and you were determined that it would live up to your expectations. Despite arriving in the dark and going through all the unfamiliar customs procedures before even finding your hotel, you'd not been disappointed.

You guessed it had something to do with attaining a goal in life, one that seemed to be way beyond the realm of possibility for you - and you so nearly hadn't come. You went ahead and bought the tickets and said "I'm going,

whether you come with me or not. I'd really like you to come with me, but if you don't, I'm going anyway." My God, how brave were you? But it had paid off. And you were really going to enjoy this holiday, and so was Paul.

You wandered across to peer through the slats of the screen. You could only just see out - mostly the sky. No-one could see in.

You lay in bed wishing morning would come quickly.



*Waikiki
man-made beach
hotel strip
shopping malls
restaurants
flea markets
banks*

There was a lot to see in the morning.

After showering and dressing in your cotton skirt and shirt with the aqua palm leaf pattern, you gazed from your balcony at Honolulu in the sunlight. Flanked by a hotchpotch of architecture, colourfully clothed people filled the streets, and clustered under the pockets of palm trees that adorned them. The place looked, sounded and smelt flamboyant, exotic.

Downstairs, with tourist brochures in hand, you emerged in search of breakfast and coffee. Not understanding the American sizes and style of coffee, you ordered a large white. Horrified by the huge paper cup full of black scalding liquid, accompanied by those disgusting little impossible-to-open milk containers

that you always get on a plane, you glared at Paul, happily drinking his black coffee with two sugars.

“This is disgusting! I hope it’s not going to be like this for our whole stay. I won’t survive!” Coffee was your only vice, too. You didn’t drink or smoke; and sex - well that wasn’t a vice.

Well you guess to some people it was a vice – not everyone was as broadminded as you were. Not everyone had such a thorough teacher as your uncle was for you. Not everyone learnt to equate the sexual act with love. No wonder you were such a disaster in relationships. Some people called you a nymphomaniac, others promiscuous, and some definitely didn’t want to spend *all* their time having sex with you instead of sharing that time with other pursuits, such as going to the movies, or playing sports. Sex was a sport as far as you were concerned – well the only sport worth pursuing. You invested all of yourself into it, as a form of showing that you were willing to give them your all. You learnt the hard way, that was for sure.

But you had it well in hand with your relationship with Paul. You had sex when he wanted it, and you never ever said ‘No’. You knew some women who used it like it was a reward or a punishment. They’d say, “he’s not getting any sex for a fortnight for that”, for whatever the offence was. You never believed in that and you never would. One you missed out on was one you’d never ever have. And while that might seem trite, it was the way you lived your life.

Across the street, in another cafe you ordered a plate of pancakes and half a cup of coffee with a jug of milk. When the pancakes came you couldn’t believe it - the plate was heaped in a pyramid of pancakes surmounted by a large dollop of butter-cream, enough for two people, or perhaps even three. With it was a small metal jug of maple syrup, and your half a cup of coffee with the small china jug of milk.

Handing the jug of milk to the waitress you asked, “Could you please put this in that microwave for fifty seconds.” You pointed to the microwave that you could see on the shelf behind the counter. Although she looked at you as if you’d lost the plot, she did as requested.

While waiting, you looked around the cafe which was well patronised. At the next table an overweight American couple were almost finished their plates of pancakes, mopping up the syrup with the last pancake held in their hands.

Their voices were strident. Their sharp Eastern-seaboard accents cut the din of the cafe as if it were silence. Their matching clothes were brightly floral, and their fat fingers and arms were loaded with gold, rings, bracelets, and watches.

“Look at the fat Yanks,” Paul said, grinning. “If you eat too many of those pancakes you’ll end up just like them.”

“Then you’d better help me eat them.” What a thing to say on the first day of your holiday. Typical of Paul though - he always looked at the negative, but had no idea that he did so.

It was always the same thing. You were a fat slob! It didn’t matter whether you were as thin as a rake, or plump and voluptuous, as far as he was concerned you were fat. And then when you did try to diet he filled you up with ‘treats’. Maybe deep down he thought if he kept you fat enough you wouldn’t be attractive to other men and so he wouldn’t lose you. So why couldn’t he let you be then? Why did he keep on your case about your weight?

When the waitress returned with the hot milk, she watched in fascination as you poured it into the cup, raised it to your lips, drank and sighed.

“If I want my coffee like that, how should I order it?” you asked her.

“I don’t know. ... Ask for hot milk on the side, I guess.” She hesitated. “Is it really nice like that?”

“The only way to have it. Try it some time. It’s how I make it at home and people come for miles for my coffee.” It was true. You always said there wasn’t much you could do, but you could make coffee.

Funny that you saw yourself like that. You’d say “there’s not much I can do, but I can sure make coffee.” Why did you underrate yourself like that? There were heaps of things you were good at. You could sing, and you could paint and write and play the piano, and you were kind to your friends and to strangers even, and you had a great sense of humour. Better than that, you had a great sense of the ridiculous, which of course Paul had no appreciation of or patience with at all. “Stop being silly” he’d say to you, as you larked about and annoyed him. But he could act like a galoot in the shopping centre and that was okay. Talk about double standards. Mind you, he must have believed in some of your abilities, as he’d promised to try to help you get a job where he worked, upon your return from Hawaii. You never really knew where you stood with Paul.

After breakfast you walked hand in hand along the shadowed streets between the hotel towers towards the beach. You couldn't see it but you knew it was there on the other side of the hotel strip. As you passed one hotel, lined on the ground floor with shops as they all seemed to be, you spotted a tour shop. Posters advertising tours and various forms of entertainment filled the windows, including one of a small bus with long low windows and the phrase *Circle Island Tours*.

"Let's book a trip in there," Paul said, leading the way into the cool interior. After consulting the loudly dressed tanned smiling paunchy man behind the desk on the best possible tour, Paul booked and paid for a Circle-Island trip for the third day, and a Luau for their fourth evening.

You continued your stroll until you emerged on a narrow path from between the ground-floor car-parks of two towers, to find yourselves on the beach. It was an anticlimax. Waikiki beach was short and narrow by Australian standards, filled with bodies tanning on their towels and deck-chairs, with sail-board riders either flanking the shore or scudding across the blue-green water.

Behind you along the beach was a pink Art-Deco hotel, beautiful in line and size, expensive beyond the means of the average tourist. You gazed at it and wished you had a room there. It was the Hawaii of the movies, as was the cone of Diamond Head crater across the curve of the bay. The magic touched you and you let your disillusion wash away as you breathed the warm moist tropical air, allowing the sounds of the sea and the crowds to envelop you.

"Come on, slow coach." Paul was striding impatiently along the narrow path towards the wider part of the beach. You passed hotels crowding the beach, their faux-lawn forecourts adorned with swimming pools where guests swam and sunbathed on lounges an arms-throw from the sea. How bizarre!

When you stopped for a drink at a small bar, the weather-beaten barman told you that the beach was man-made. Every year more sand was brought in from Australia to replace the sand that washed away with the tides and the storms. In fact the whole of Waikiki was reclaimed land - it was once a swamp. Somehow the knowledge of its man-made element, rather than destroying it as you'd have expected, only enhanced the magic. What was the matter with you - you weren't usually this romantic.

Well that was a lie. You were brought up on romance, in the music on the radio, and the movies in the theatres. The novels you were encouraged to read were romantic always ending happily. And further back, as a child, there were the fairy stories with their 'Once upon a time' and their 'Happily ever after' to fill your head with dreams. You were so affected by the heroines in the movies and the comic books that you had an unusually early interest in boys as a means of achieving that happy ending. Forbidden at the age of 8 years to go anywhere near the flooded Scout Hall after major flooding in the town, you rode your bike there and played Hide and Seek in the ruins of the hall, partnering the coolest boy in town, and kissing him amorously in the derelict toilet block while you waited to be found. Very romantic!

Further along, the beach met the main street beside a huge Banyan tree - the first you'd seen. What an amazing thing. Multiple trunks appeared to support the tree, with roots growing down from the branches and swaying in the breeze like a horror-movie set. And despite the glare of the sun beyond, its shade was dense and cool. People sat and strolled beneath it; tourists snapped photos of each other amongst the tangles; and lovers leaned against its smooth trunk entwined like the vine-like roots. In contrast to the noise of the traffic flickering past on the street, an atmosphere of peace existed within the shadow-line.



*Flamboyance everywhere
in flora, fauna, food
clothes.*

*Lifestyle
lavishly adopted
by tourists
trendily attired
in matching pairs.*

Colourfully clothed people filled the sunlit streets, and clustered under the pockets of palm trees that adorned them. The warm humid air was filled with the sounds of happiness. Tourists attired in bright floral shirts, dresses, and sarongs strolled together window-shopping.

Paul chuckled. "More fat Yanks."

"Paul, stop that," you hissed. "Anyway I like their clothes. They're bright and colourful. We should get some. I wonder where they are?"

"You won't catch me wearing anything like that!" He meant it. You knew by the tone of voice. He could be so stubborn sometimes. Typical Taurus. Oh well, you could still get some for yourself.

You loved the clothes and the colour everywhere. Why couldn't you wear clothes like that in Perth. What was the matter with Aussies that they laughed at any show of flamboyance. Or they called people who wore clothes like that

Poofters and Lezzos. It said a lot about your culture, though people now were becoming a little more wary of showing their real attitudes in case they were accused of discrimination. And a good thing too. How else was prejudice to be stamped out. Mind you there were those who just took it 'underground' and still exhibited the same attitudes without the accompanying dialogue. What they all needed was a trip to Hawaii to open their eyes and hearts and souls to colour.

In a forecourt of a large shopping centre you joined a crowd watching a group of bare-footed hula dancers - the muscular men bare-chested, the women wearing grass skirts, colourful bra-tops, Hibiscus flowers in their long thick black hair, and layers of leis. The music ululated and twanged as the dancers swayed and stamped and the crowd exclaimed and applauded.

Soaking in the Hawaiian experience, you walked through the arcades and malls towards the International Flea Markets. You'd heard about them from friends in Perth who had been to Hawaii a few years before. These markets sold cheap garments, trinkets, jewellery and memorabilia - in fact they were full of the usual tourist crap that market stalls sell throughout the world, but with a Hawaiian flavour.

You'd had no intention of shopping while in Hawaii. You meant to spend your money on seeing the islands, not buying clothes. But of course you'd have to buy presents for your friends and family - it was expected. And having seen the Hawaiian clothes, you wanted some. So you roamed around the cluttered markets looking at the crowded stalls. There were enormous quantities of coral jewellery, from cheap ear-rings, bracelets and necklaces to more elaborate rings and brooches, on at least a dozen stalls, some adjacent to each other. Their attendants vied for your attention holding up strings of coral beads in an attempt to outdo their neighbours.

"I'll buy this for your Mum," you said picking up a brooch of gold swirls around several chunks of pink coral. "It's not too dear and it's the nicest one here. What do you think?"

Paul glanced at it and said loudly, "I guess so. You're not going to buy all the presents straight away, are you? You might see something better somewhere else." The large brightly-dressed woman serving you looked annoyed, but smiled at you as you handed over the money, forgetting to haggle over the price.

How embarrassing. It was okay when he did it of course, but woe betide if you embarrassed him. It was maddening the way an incident like that could undermine your ability to deal with people.

At another stall there were beautiful towels with whales and dolphins on them, cheaply priced. You needed beach towels. There was no point in bringing those with you all the way from Perth. A Japanese woman in her forties pulled two of the chosen design packaged in plastic from the middle of a large stack of towels. Their pile was flat and felt much thinner than the pile of the towels hanging on display.

"They're not the same," you said fingering their pile. "These are thinner. I want the ones hanging there."

"No. The same," she replied, grasping the package and pressing it to show you that they were just squashed.

You didn't believe her. They felt thinner. The pile was definitely not as thick. Just then Paul took the towels from the woman, thrust the money into her hand, and told you to come on. He walked away with the towels.

"Why did you do that?!" You were angry. Fancy embarrassing you like that in front of that smug woman.

"It wasn't worth the argument."

"I was going to get her to lower her price!"

"Oh. I didn't realise. Sorry." He did look sorry, ashamed of having spoiled the plan. You reached out and took his hand.

What a peacemaker you were. You couldn't let any unpleasantness remain. You always had to apologise. But then that was pounded into your psyche by your father whose motto was "Always consider the other person, and try not to be a nuisance to people". This was compounded by telling you to "Be quiet" every time you opened your mouth to speak. You didn't actually have to say anything, just look like you were going to speak. So you spent your formative years, and adult years for that matter, apologising for your existence. "You don't mind if I visit you for a while, do you? I won't stay too long." "Is it okay if I sit here. You're sure you don't mind." Sorry. Sorry. Sorry.

"Come on. There's the Macaw parrots we were told about."

They perched on a lady's hands as her photo was taken - the blue and yellow on her right and the red and green on her left. She laughed with delight

as they screeched and the yellow and blue bird nibbled at her rings with its large striped beak. The bird-owner smacked it lightly across the head and it sat up with a squawk. Both birds were transferred to their perches where they nibbled seeds from a metal bowl attached at one end, and fluffed their feathers indignantly.

The owner turned his tanned lined face to you and asked if you'd like a photo taken with the birds.

"Go ahead," said Paul.

"I don't think so." You turned away to walk through the next arcade.

Catching up with you, Paul asked, "What's the matter. I thought you wanted to have your photo taken with the Macaws."

"I did. Until I saw how they were being used. I wonder how many hours they spend being passed from person to person like that!? And the way he smacked the blue one - that really put me off." Paul shrugged. It didn't bother him - he had no empathy for the place yet, unlike you. The bird incident tarnished the magic, but you refused to let it spoil your day.

Having strolled up a ramp to the next level of the markets, you investigated an art gallery gift shop full of ceramic pieces – vases; sculptures of bright blue plaster conch shells, dolphins, seals, and fish, striped coral, and red starfish; and the usual mug sets in bright reds, pinks, blues, greens and yellows. Soothing music, filled with ocean sounds, emanated from hidden speakers, and the bright lighting picked out the objets d'art and the underwater paintings on the white walls clearly, favourably.

Paul snorted.

"What?" you asked surprised.

"It's a bit false isn't it?"

"I love it." You wandered around your senses bombarded by the profusion of colour within the gallery. The paintings showed a multitude of underwater sea-life with the islands in the ocean above simultaneously. You wondered if you could paint something like that when you returned to Perth. They showed tremendous detail, especially of coral and fish species, and you didn't know if you could manage work that fine. You knew people liked your paintings, and some had bought your work, but you still doubted your abilities. You could make coffee though.

Nearby was a dimly lit cafe with fans turning overhead and a view of the markets below. Positioned amongst the laminated wrought-iron-legged tables with matching, surprisingly comfortable, rattan chairs, were varieties of potted palms in large wicker baskets.

"I could do with a coffee. Do you want a drink?" Paul nodded. "I'll have a go at ordering the coffee with hot milk on the side and see if it works."

Paul followed you willingly into the gloom.

Honolulu

*historical buildings, monuments
Hilo Hattie's emporium
entertainment day and night.*

Pearl Harbour

*USS Arizona Memorial
suspended over deathship
bleeding oil from rusty tanks.*

Having seen the Hawaiian clothes you wanted some. And today was the day.

Last night you'd dined in a very posh restaurant, with an immaculately dressed Maitre D' who told you both not to go back to the hotel to change, but to come on in - you in your cotton outfit and sandals, and Paul in his open neck shirt, shorts and thongs! Within the restaurant there were diners wearing evening dress and diamonds, and tourists in all manner of dress. You felt relaxed and enjoyed an amazingly cheap Surf 'n' Turf meal, before strolling through the well-lit arcades back to your hotel. Tired by your long first day the jet-lag hit suddenly and you clambered into bed with a hurried goodnight kiss to sleep till mid-morning.

After ascertaining from the hotel staff which bus to catch, you both boarded one that took you direct to Hilo Hattie's emporium for which you had vouchers as part of your package holiday. Upon entering you were greeted with "Aloha", shell leis and friendly smiles by sarong-clad attendants. For a while Paul roamed with you around the huge warehouse looking at the acres of clothes, shoes, videos, music tapes and CD's, costume jewellery, perfumes, cosmetics, ceramics, trinkets, novelties, paintings, posters, cards, postcards and in fact every possible miscellaneous item that a department store could contain if it combined with every other type of shop in existence. It was a superstore! And down the back, separated from the store by a rail, was the workshop where the Hilo Hattie's clothes were made. They were Hawaiian originals, of which Hawaii was proud. For a while you leaned together watching the vibrantly clad women cutting, sewing and pressing the piles of kaleidoscopic fabrics into garments for sale. The atmosphere was one of sunshine - in the women's white smiles, in

their happy voices against the Hawaiian background music, and in the sunbeam shafts streaming from the high windows across the rear of the warehouse.

Becoming bored with the store, Paul decided to catch the next bus on to the Arizona War Memorial to try to join a tour there. Not interested in memorials, you decided to stay in Hilo Hattie's purchasing the remaining gifts for those at home. Besides the memorial was out in the middle of Pearl Harbour, which would mean a boat trip out to it and your motion-sickness was legendary. Agreeing to meet back at the hotel later that afternoon, you separated. Besides, it would be much easier shopping without Paul censoring everything you bought.

Ain't that the truth. Whenever you went shopping with Paul in tow you bought nothing. You'd look in great detail at the item that you wanted, find the exact one that would suit you, price it, and then go home without it. And let's face it, he would have a much better time on the boat without you turning green to spoil his fun, not to mention embarrass him. Besides you didn't handle war things very well.

You couldn't watch war movies or war TV programs, except for comedies like 'Hogan's Heroes' that were completely divorced from the reality of war. You couldn't bring yourself to watch something that might have really happened, something that was based on a real occurrence, especially when it entailed the oppression of people, and the inhumanity of people. And the same applied to anything that showed persecution of any sort. Naturally the Inquisition was definitely out, as were Civil War movies and anything showing the wiping out of American Indians or Australian Aborigines. Yet you could watch *Star Wars* and love every minute of it. Maybe because it wasn't real, although you supposed it could be some time in your distant future.

Having availed yourself of several elastic belts with enamelled clasps, several hair slides decorated with artificial colourful Hibiscus flowers, and five pairs of shell earrings tinted blue and teal and swirled with gold, you ventured into the realm of clothes. If only you'd known they would be so cheap you wouldn't have brought that huge case-full of clothes from home! You bought shorts, T-shirt, bolero and a wrap-around sarong, all in a brilliant pattern of Strelitzia or Bird-of-Paradise flowers - aqua, yellow, apricot, burnt orange and red on a black background - ultra flamboyance. Holding the shirt up against you

as you gazed in a mirrored pillar, you realised that with your cascade of curly black waist-length hair you looked as if you belonged in Hawaii. If only!

Your vouchers entitled you to a free mug each as you left the shop, and to a small percentage off the clothes, which were so cheap. Of course everything appeared cheaper than it really was, because when you got to the checkout they added on the VAT (Value Added Tax) for which you never seemed to calculate. It was a rude shock the first time. You'd added up how much it would cost and had your money ready, and they quoted a different price. They were quite polite when you stated that it wasn't that much - they obviously dealt with ignorant tourists all the time. They smiled, explained it was the tax, and waited calmly until you sorted through the unfamiliar money. Packing your purchases they included your free mug, and one for Paul that he'd left at the checkout for you to collect.

You loved your mugs. One had a yellow sunset background with an island and palm tree silhouetted in the foreground, and the other had a gorgeous Bird of Paradise flower against a deep teal blue background. Packing them so they wouldn't break was a minor problem, which you solved by stuffing them with the stupid stockings you'd brought with you that you definitely didn't need.

"Mahalo. Come again. Have a nice day," said the attendant as he directed you to the bus that would take you back to Waikiki.

As you sat in the bus gazing out at Honolulu, the bus driver gave a commentary to his passengers pointing out spots of interest. These included the wharfs where segments of *Jake and the Fatman* and *Paradise, Hawaiian Style* were filmed. He indicated other sites that could be visited where other parts of the TV show were shot. Honolulu was dotted with parks, rambling shopping centres, canals, high-rise apartment blocks, and closely crowded run-down fibro and timber houses half-hidden by rampant tropical foliage. The proverbial swaying palms were everywhere, mingling with fragrant Frangipani, and multi-coloured Hibiscus and Bougainvilleas. Colour everywhere. Enchanting.

Deposited a few blocks away, you strolled through the streets to your hotel, where you changed into your new Hawaiian clothes. Tired of waiting for Paul, you returned to saunter along the main streets happily accepting the myriads of advertising pamphlets thrust at you from passing spruikers. They seemed to be a hazard for tourists who dawdled, who strolled with no apparent

purpose. The pamphlets offered free coffees with breakfast deals, and ten percent off clothing or goods from certain shops, off meals at various restaurants, off Luaus and shows, and off sight-seeing trips.

Finally joining Paul at the hotel, you showed him your purchases then listened as he told you about the memorial.

"It's amazing, Di," he enthused. "It's a floating building above the *Arizona* - one of the ships sunk in the Pearl Harbour bombing. It's a grave - the dead were left on board. It was spooky standing there, looking down at the ship. There's an oil slick still seeping out of the engine room - you can see it on the water."

"Could you see the boat below you? Or did you just know it was there?"

"Yeah. You could actually see it. I bought this small booklet. There's a photo in here, somewhere." He thumbed through the coloured pages then pointed to a photo that clearly showed the white arched memorial hovering above the dim outline of the sunken ship - murky green against the aqua sea, with a pearl-grey slick smeared across the surface. "And in the memorial there's lists of all those who died at Pearl Harbour. Not just those in the *Arizona*, but all the other ships that were sunk. It's pretty impressive."

Boy were you glad you didn't go with him. You'd have been crying all over the place. The thought of all those lives lost. You'd just rather not face it. This was supposed to be your trip of a lifetime, and you didn't want to spend it crying. You guessed that made you seem a bit shallow, but it wasn't that you didn't understand the pathos of the memorial. It was that you empathised too much with it. Besides it angered you too much to think what a waste all wars created. Much better that you hadn't gone. But you were glad Paul went, because he looked at those things differently from you. You didn't mean that he wasn't moved by them. But he looked at them differently, more technically and less emotionally.

"I'm glad you enjoyed it. Did you come back by bus?" He nodded. "Did your bus driver give you a commentary all the way to the hotel?"

"No."

"Mine did. He showed us where *Jake and the Fatto* was shot - you know the wharves and things. There's the Fatto statue by the government buildings

too that we can see if we get time. I know where it is on the map, but it might be a bit of a walk to get there. Unless we can find the right bus.”

“Okay. We might have time, but we’ve already got a lot to see.” Paul wandered out onto the balcony, leant on the railing and gazed at the Waikiki buildings. “Where will we have tea?”

“There was a little place I saw on my way from the bus-stop. It’s just around the corner, and has that Surf ’n’ Turf meal for six-ninety-five between six and seven p.m. We could try there, or at one of these places,” you said indicating the pile of pamphlets on the bed.

“Let’s just go and find somewhere - I don’t know, in the markets or somewhere.” Paul had obviously had enough of organised things for one day.

You didn’t know why he asked you, when he didn’t really want an answer. You wished you’d learn. You never got it right. You should have known it was a rhetorical question. You made him come to Hawaii, so you had to let him run the show. It was really important that he felt that you couldn’t have managed the trip without him. At least you hadn’t said ‘sorry’ this time.

Frangipani kisses.

*Frangipani wafts in through screen slats
shells glow in the lamp-light
colourful clothes drape on chairs.*

*Reclined together on pillow-banks
sarong-clad you discuss tomorrow.*

*His matching hand lies softly in yours,
neat fingers relaxed
accepting your gentle caress.*

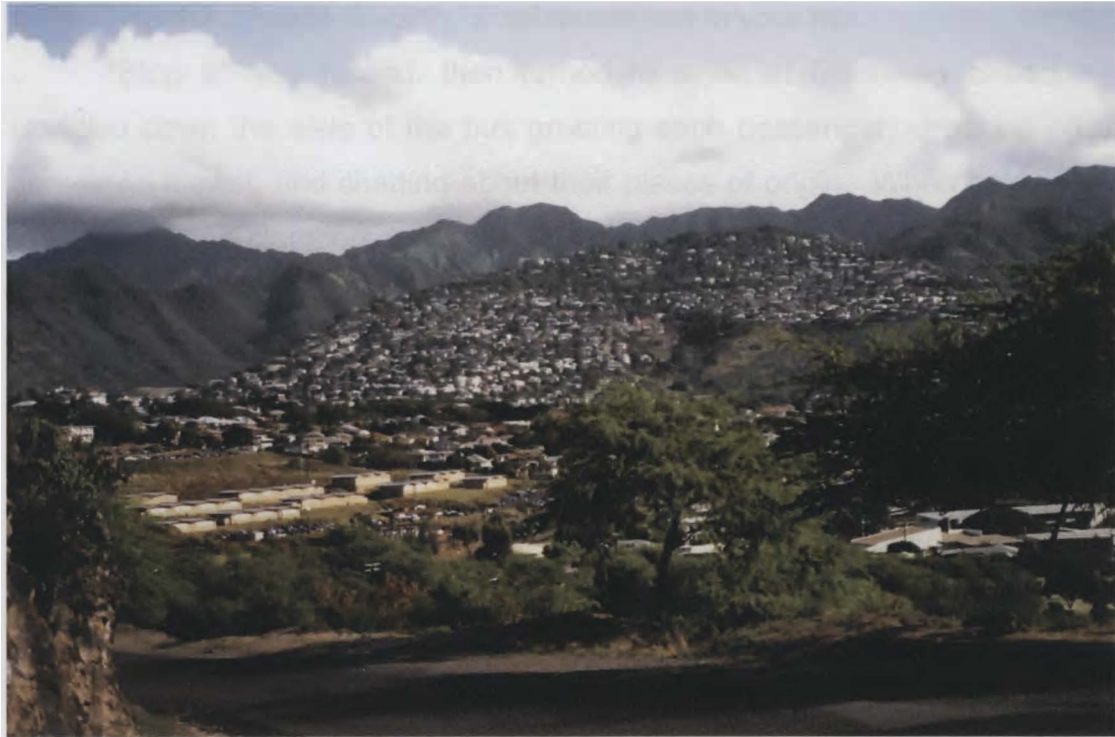
*His eyes of light and laughter
glance at you from time to time.*

*His arm enfolds you warmly
cradling you to his chest
while your hand explores.*

*His nipple leaps to attention
as your fingers tweak through shirt.*

*Your lips seek each other's
touching
nibbling
opening
merging
as passion flames in unison.*

*You draw apart shaking,
to rid yourselves of clothes
to clamber onto each other
upon the huge bed.*



*Diamond Head crater
secret war tunnels
within its walls
dominating skyline
postcards
tourist memories.*

They obviously dealt with ignorant tourists all the time. And as you waited to board your bus for the circle island tour you saw a representative of this group arguing with the tour guide. The latter was a huge Hawaiian man, clad in the brightly coloured floral shirt that was the uniform of the tour company, and beaming, unruffled, as he listened to the bossy outburst from the large American woman.

As Paul opened his mouth to comment you quelled him with a look and a shake of your head. What you didn't need were any 'fat yank' remarks drifting her way. Turning your back on her, you muttered in his face, "Don't you embarrass me before we even get on the bus!"

Paul grinned.

Once you were all seated in the small white bus, with its long low windows designed for maximum viewing, the driver introduced himself as Garth.

“Garth? Should be girth,” Paul murmured in your ear.

“Stop it!” you hissed, then turned to smile at Garth, as cheerfully he waddled down the aisle of the bus greeting each passenger, checking off their names on his list, and chatting about their places of origin. When he’d returned to the front and clambered into the driver’s seat, on the left side of the bus, he put on a headphone set.

“Can you all hear me okay?”

After we all responded positively, we set off. Garth told us to ask any questions of him at any time, and said that first we would do a tour across Honolulu on the way to Diamond Head Crater.

“Do you all know how to find your way here in Hawaii?” Garth asked.

“You go *makai* or *mauka*,” you said, after a strained silence showed that no-one wanted to answer.

You loved their language. It was so musical. Once you had the vowel sounds which were really straight forward, and you realised that every single letter was pronounced, it was really easy. You had to find a language vocab book. You wanted to learn their language. At least you already knew a few words. Paul thought you were ridiculous using the word *Mahalo* instead of thankyou, but you didn’t care. You were not a know-all; you were just interested in things. Curious. Inquisitive. That wasn’t a bad thing.

“Right. Do you know what it means?”

“It means towards the sea, and towards the mountains – because it’s an island.”

“You’re right. Our mountains are always in the centre. So we’re either going towards them or towards the sea that surrounds them. We also use local landmarks for directions around the islands.”

“What do you mean?” A British voice called out from behind you.

“Well, you might go ‘Waikiki’ or ‘Diamond Head.’ You might hear someone say, ‘Go two blocks Diamond Head on Kalakaua, then *mauka* on Kaiulani.’ Once you pass Diamond Head, you use the next landmark. That’s ‘Koko Head.’ If you’re in Waikiki and going in the opposite direction from Diamond Head, you’re going ‘Ewa’, beyond Pearl Harbour.” He paused. “You all understand that?”

There was a general cry of agreement. You glanced down at your map of Oahu given to you by the tour company, marked with the places you were to visit on your tour that day.

“Garth?”

“Uh huh.”

“There are two mountain ranges on this map of Oahu? How do you tell direction when you are in the valley between them?”

“Great question. You use *mauka* and name the range you want to travel towards. And if you are heading towards Honolulu along the valley - we’ll be doing that later today – you are heading *makai* Honolulu.” He chuckled, a deep rumbling sound over the PA, that was infectious, causing the passengers to smile.

What a personality! He might have filled the whole of the driver’s seat plus some, but what a nice respectful sunny guy. And no doubt a lot of fun.

As the trip continued through the streets and suburbs of Honolulu, Garth provided information about them, and when available bits of gossip too. Having grabbed the front seats on the right side, you had a clear view of the streets, shopping centres, houses, traffic, and people. You were also close enough to be able to ask questions easily of Garth without having to shout.

“We’re heading for Millionaire Row, where Elvis had a house. We’re real proud of our connection with Elvis here in Hawaii. You’ll be hearing a lot about him as we go along.”

Eagerly you all sat forward to look at what you thought would be sparkling trendy mansions. What a disappointment. Although they were set in large blocks of land that looked to be about half an acre to an acre in size, the houses were not particularly big or flashy. They looked like the sort of houses that an average Australian could buy.

Well that was before the current explosion in house prices! And it was much better for those in Perth than for the poor people in the eastern states. Poor in both senses of the word. If you had to pay the sort of prices they did for a house, you’d be struggling to manage. But they wouldn’t think of themselves as poor people, or appreciate being called that by a Sandgroper either. So, you figured how rich the houses on Millionaire Row looked, depended upon where the viewer lived.

"They're not very big," you ventured to say. "I thought they would all be huge."

"The problem is the cost of building materials here," replied Garth, as he drove slowly along so everyone could get a good look. The gardens were quite attractive, but unexpectedly not elaborately landscaped. Maybe you were spoilt in Perth, in Australia. "All the building materials have to be brought in to Hawaii. Bricks, timber, roofing materials – the lot. That makes it expensive to build here."

"Is that why the other suburbs we drove through were mainly fibro houses?"

"That's right. But most of them are cladding, like timber-style." He drove the bus into a large lookout carpark and drew to a halt. "If you would like to stretch your legs for a few minutes, we are going into Diamond Head Crater next. It's over there through that tunnel. You can also get great photos of the coast and also back to Honolulu from here."

We all tumbled out of the bus and dutifully crossed to the railing to admire the scenery, and take photographs.

"I'll bet we'll be doing a fair bit of this before the end of the day," Paul suggested wryly. You chuckled. In the background you could hear the grating strident tones of the American woman informing the British couple that this was her third trip to Hawaii and that she always took a tour when she came.

Paul pulled a face. "And I'll bet we'll be sick of the sound of her voice by the time we get home too."

Choking with laughter, you growled at him. "Behave."

The drive into Diamond Head proved interesting. It seemed that during World War II the government of Hawaii was housed inside the walls of the crater. Not inside the crater bowl, but inside the surrounding walls. These were tunnelled out around the crater ring, and rooms created, bunkers to protect the personnel, important documents, and trappings of government. The only sign of this was a low white building in the green caldera, and flag poles flying an American flag and a Hawaiian flag.

That'd be right. Protect the damn government people and their red tape, and to hell with the general population without whom there'd be no Hawaii. You knew that the infrastructure was important to the running of a city. Paul had told

you how cities in India that he'd visited had beautiful buildings erected that, as the city lacked the infrastructure to maintain them, and the surrounding streets, were then left to fall apart slowly. But surely tunnels that big could've easily housed the residents of Honolulu – of the whole of Oahu for that matter – thus saving the people as well as the paperwork.

“Garth,” asked Paul, “Why is there a Union Jack in the corner of the Hawaiian flag? I noticed it when I was at Pearl Harbour.”

“That was because our King, Kamehameha, liked the Union Jack. He wanted it as part of his flag, and made it part of his terms to the Americans when he sold Hawaii to them.”

“You’re kidding!” You couldn’t believe what you were hearing. “He sold these islands to America? Just sold them!”

“Yeh.”

“What did the people say? Did they mind?”

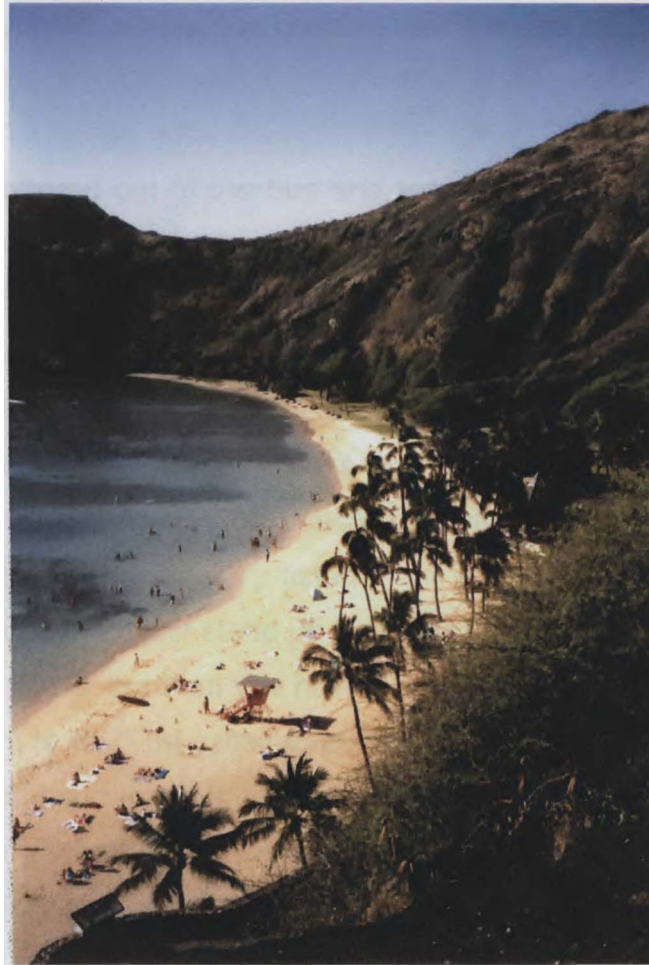
“Well they had no say. King Kamehameha was King, and could do what he wanted to do. But he did it so that Hawaii would be part of a stronger nation. And because he thought it would help make Hawaii wealthy.”

Garth turned the bus and drove back across the caldera, towards the access tunnel through the crater wall. He chuckled good-naturedly, “And it did. It brought in all you lovely tourists.”

As the bus emerged onto the coast road again, it resounded with laughter.

You looked at Paul. “This is going to be fun, after all.” He nodded.

What a relief. You’d been worrying that he would get fed up really quickly with being driven round and shown miscellanea indiscriminately. You could relax and enjoy the trip yourself now. At least you got some really great shots of Honolulu suburbs that stretched up the ridges, with the jungle gullies between them. And you loved the smell in the air. Bliss!



*'Blue Hawaii' beach
at Hanauma Bay
palms swaying
fish teeming
families snorkelling, sunbaking
sailboarding, surfing.*

*Polynesian Cultural Centre
displaying cultural differences
craft, cuisine, legends,
songs, dance.*

“We’re real proud of our connection with Elvis here in Hawaii.” Garth repeated as he pulled the bus into the car park for Hanauma Bay. “Did you all see the movie *Blue Hawaii*?”

You all responded loudly in the affirmative.

“Well, do you remember the beach scenes where he stayed in his beach shack?”

“Yes, yes.”

Garth clambered out of the bus and led the way to the railing. Pointing down towards a clump of palm trees, he declared, “Well that’s where the beach hut was. And this is the lagoon where all the surfboard scenes were filmed. And the long-boat scene.” He stepped back spreading his arms magnanimously, as some of the tourists oohed and aahed and pointed details out to their partners. Satisfied, Garth told them they could have ten minutes to take photos.

“Can’t we go down onto the beach, Garfield,” you asked hopefully. The *Blue Hawaii* beach. The itinerary listed it as a stop, and you’d thought that meant you’d walk on it not just stand up there, gazing at it.

“Well you could, but then you have to cut back on another part of the trip. What do you want to do?” he called to everyone. “Would you like to go down to the beach here, and shorten your time further on?”

Not knowing what was further on made the decision hard. There was a general and slow shaking of heads. “Okay. Ten minutes till we leave then.”

The British couple sidled over to join you at the railings. “We wouldn’t have minded going down onto the beach here. But I guess we need to stick to his schedule.”

“Maybe we could come back later to check out the beach,” Paul suggested. “We’ll be here for another day yet.”

“We still have that Luau to go to,” you pointed out. “We catch the bus in the arvo, but I s’pose we might have time in the morning.” Paul shrugged.

Blast! You flew all that way to see the romantic places shown in the Elvis movies, and when you got there you weren’t even allowed to go down and walk in the sand under the palms or wade in the water. Piss on it! And it looked so perfect.

Below you the water sparkled invitingly as it lay over the reef. People swam and snorkelled in its green shallows, and sail-boards scudded across the darker deeper water further out. The bay was horseshoe shaped and completely protected. Cobalt sky, azure and aqua sea, white sand, and green palms. Warming sunshine, cooling breeze, an apparently litter-free beach, and no flies.

No wonder it was so popular. No wonder they had used it in the Elvis movie. How Hawaiian could you get.

Back on board and before leaving the beach, Garth stood in the front of the bus, pointed to and named each couple, adding their respective cities and countries as he moved down the bus. Considering that there were twenty-four people in the bus, it was a lot of names to remember. You all admired him loudly. He chuckled and told you that it was just a little trick, reliant upon you keeping the same seating, they liked to play to make each group feel special.

“So you’ll do the same thing tomorrow with the next group?” Paul asked.

“Yeh. Sure will.” Garth was in a great mood.

Leaning forward, you asked, “Garth, Elvis held a huge concert here didn’t he?”

“Yeh.”

“Where was it held? I have a tape of the concert at home, but I am not sure where it was held.”

“It was at Punchbowl Crater. They hold flea-markets there too on weekends. You should check it out if you have time.”

“The concert was for charity wasn’t it?”

“Yeh. Elvis was very special to Hawaiians, and he loved the islands a lot. He spent a lot of time here. It was his way of saying thanks to the Hawaiian people.”

You stopped several more times on your journey along the coast of Oahu – at the Blow Hole which wasn’t blowing; at the tiny Sandy Beach; at Kaneohe to admire the amazing mountains and get refreshments at a souvenir shop; at vantage points to look at Rabbit island and the Chinaman’s Hat islet; and a final stop at the Swanzy Beach Park at Kaaawa for a picnic.

Mountains! Mountains! You couldn’t believe the mountains. They were like nothing you’d ever seen before. You’d spent a holiday in the Grampians as a child and they’d left an indelible imprint on your mind, and a longing to return to them again before you died. But they were craggy if your memory served you correctly. And you had to climb way down into them to see the main waterfall – down endless wet slippery steps with metal railings that were difficult for a child to hold. But how wonderful the waterfall was when you reached the bottom of the chasm. You’d been in love with waterfalls ever since.

The Oahuan mountains thrust up in a seemingly endless ridge, not as yet fluted by the wind like the ones you wanted to see in Kauai. They were blue/grey/green with a knife-like edge along the top. And so high. And so powerful. If the damn power-lines weren't in the way you could have taken a decent shot of them, but you needed to be much closer to them to eliminate the crisscross of lines. But then you wouldn't have shown the enormity of the range, as their crest wouldn't fit into the shot. Damn. You were in love with them. You were overwhelmed by them. And Paul just said, when you enthused about them, that they weren't bad. Not bad? They were magnificent. You didn't know why no-one else seemed to be interested in them. When they got out of the bus they'd glanced at the sea and headed straight into the rest-stop for a drink and the toilet. Peasants! Though to be fair it's possible that they'd seen mountains before, and so to them these were just more mountains. There you went again, peacemaking. What to laugh.

The picnic had been enjoyable. As you climbed down from the bus you were met by tour company caterers who had set up a lavish cold picnic on tables under the palms by the grass, sand and ocean. Not being a fan of pineapple, unless cooked with a steak or in Sweet and Sour dishes, you were amazed at how mild and delicious it tasted. You couldn't get enough of it, and for the rest of your holiday in Hawaii you searched for it on the salad bars.

As you had an hour to spend there, Paul and some of your fellow travellers changed into bathing costumes and went for a swim, while you sat under a palm and talked with Garth. He was such an interesting person, knowledgeable about many subjects. And he expressed an interest in you too, drawing from you what you were doing with your life, even though he didn't know you, and would probably not remember you beyond the end of the week. No wonder he was a tour guide.

Once more underway, you headed along the coast past many beautiful little beaches; past the famous Crouching Lion formation; past the Polynesian Cultural Centre that wasn't on your itinerary but which Garth said was well worth the visit – it was used in Elvis's *Blue Hawaii* and the *Paradise Hawaiian Style* movies – and past the Turtle Bay Hilton to Sunset Beach.

Larger than the other Leeward side beaches, this beach faced the Pacific Ocean, bearing the full brunt of its power. Waves had travelled halfway across

the world unimpeded to reach its sandy shore, pounding over the hidden reefs in huge pipelines of surf. You were looking forward to seeing them. But first you were going to spend a couple of hours at Waimea National Park where Garth had prepared you for gushing waterfalls and lush endangered vegetation.



*Waimea Falls Park
delicious foliage
endangered plants
healing waters.*

No wonder he was a tour guide. Garth had kept up a commentary most of the way from Honolulu – informative, witty, and well-mannered. He was a personable man. After the picnic he had remained silent for a spell in case the group was feeling sleepy. When asked a question he responded willingly. You were impressed. You had to admit you were also feeling fatigued and a bit over-beached.

So when the small white bus pulled through the gates and down the long lush drive of the Waimea Falls Park to the gravel car park, you sighed.

“Tired?” Paul inquired.

Nodding, you rose, disembarked with the other passengers, to straggle through the entry turnstiles beneath the dank timber roof behind Garth, who

handed in the paperwork for your prepaid passes. You grabbed a bite to eat, nothing memorable, sitting on the ornate cast-iron seats beside the stretch of lawn in front of the kiosk.

After your snack you boarded an open trolley bus that took you through the park. As you passed through the flowering tropical plants, breathing in their revitalizing perfumes, you felt the fatigue lift away from you, and your mind cleared to focus on the commentary. The driver informed you that most plants in the park were on the endangered list, and that the aims of the park were to propagate and preserve as many endangered species of plants as possible. He narrated the lengths to which the park rangers would go in order to secure certain plants, including dangerous cliff climbing and abseiling.

Eventually you reached the falls and its pool of legendary therapeutic water. Several people sat in the cool water and under the trickling falls. Garth had warned you that there had been a drought and that the pool would be shallow and the falls a quarter of its normally gushing self. He was right. The pool lay diminished in its surrounding bowl of exposed rocks, and the high falls were a thin glistening line most of the way down. It was only visible where the bathers sat in the hollowed scooped wall at its base.

What a bummer. You'd been dying to see waterfalls. They were high on the priority list, being one of your fave things. And there you were, all set to see your first Hawaiian waterfall and it was a trickle.

"That's a bit disappointing," you muttered. "But doesn't the garden smell divine."

Paul sniffed dramatically. "Can't smell anything. Besides you weren't going in the pool anyway." He reached for your hand. "Come on, let's walk." You strolled along the path till you reached a clearing with a stage placed on one side and a couple rows of wooden benches set back under the shade of huge spreading trees opposite, with a clearing between them. A sign beside the stage listed performance times for the Hula.

"Let's watch this." As Paul scowled at the suggestion you added. "Girls in grass skirts. It could be fun." With a shrug he gave in and you sat in the centre front row of the benches. Just in time too, as tourists appeared from several directions and the seats were soon full, so that many had to stand.

On the stage well built men, muscles gleaming, wearing very little made from large glossy leaves, lined up.

"Where's the girls?" Paul craned his neck to check down the path. "I don't want to watch men."

"Well I do." You knew you were beaming, but so were most of the other women whose partners all looked a bit grumpy. "The girls will be here soon. Guaranteed. They wouldn't do a hula show without hula girls. There'd be a riot." You giggled.

"I should think so too." Paul slumped with his arms folded across his chest and gazed unamused at the Hawaiian emcee as he stepped forward with a mike in his hand.

"Originally, the hula was only performed by men, to tell stories of legendary gods, and goddesses, the people, their exploits and deeds, and important events. It is only in more recent times that women have danced the hula, and that it has become an art form."

The drums began to beat and the men began to pound the ground with their bare feet.

"It looks like the Kiwi Haka, doesn't it?" you muttered to Paul, who nodded.

When the men finished their dance to a scattered applause, the Hawaiian girls shimmied in. That was the only word for it. Colourful leis and flowers adorned their necks, hair, and hips, grass skirts hung almost to the ground just revealing their bare brown feet. Their smooth brown skin gleamed on their exposed bellies and their abundant glistening black hair hung below their waists. Beautiful.

If only you could look like that. You'd got the hair, but the figure eluded you. Woe, woe and thrice woe. How appropriate. Didn't the witches in Macbeth say that? Well 'bubble, bubble, toil and trouble' and make you a potion that'd make you look like those gorgeous girls.

You turn to Paul. "Okay now, darling?"

"That's more like it." As Paul sat up grinning, all attention now, you laughed at him.

The emcee continued. "This hula tells the tale of how Madame Pele, the goddess of the volcanoes, came to the Hawaiian islands, over the sea from New Zealand."

You nudge Paul in the ribs and he nudges you back. Just a pair of kids, both of you.

"Disciplined for her insubordination and disrespect, Pele was expelled from her native land of *Honua-mea*, in *Kahiki*. She voyaged north to the Hawaiian islands. On each island she tunneled into the earth but the ocean poured in and stopped her. Some say it was her still angry sister, *Na Maka o Kaha'I*, goddess of the sea, who caused the flooding as punishment. Pele tried again and again on successive islands to create a home for herself, but failed until she came to Kilauea – the navel of the earth – *ka piko o ka honua*.

"This seeking of a habitation is related in a long song in a *hula pa-ipu*, a *hula* of dignified character, dealing with an historical period of migration."

As the drums beat, the girls danced using their facial expressions and hand, arm, and body gestures to describe the action of the song that the men began to chant in Hawaiian. The emcee translated it into English for the benefit of the tourists. The whole formed a kaleidoscopic multidimensional flurry that carried the audience along with it.

*A pit lies far to the east,
Pit pierced by the fire-queen Pele.
Heaven's dawn is lifted awry,
One edge tilts up, one down, in the sky;
The thud of the pick is heard in the ground.*

*The question is asked by Wakea,
"What god's this a-digging?"
"It is I, it is Pele,
Who dug Niihau deep down till it burned,
Dug fire-pit red-heated by Pele."*

Night's curtains are drawn to one side,

*One lifts, one hangs in the tide.
Crunch of spade resounds in the earth.
Wakea reurges the query,
"What god plies the spade in the ground?"
Quoth Pele, "'Tis I;
I mined to the fire 'neath Kauai,
On Kauai I dug deep a pit,
A fire-well flame-fed by Pele."*

*The heavens are lifted aslant,
One border moves up and one down;
There's a stroke of o-o 'neath the ground.
Wakea in earnest would know
"What demon is grubbing below?"
"I am the worker," says Pele;
"Oahu I pierced to the quick,
A crater white-heated by Pele."*

*Now morn lights one edge of the sky;
Streams the light up, and shadows fall down;
Deep below there's a clatter of tools.
Wakea in passion demands,
"What god's this who digs 'neath the ground?"
It is Pele, whose answers resound;
Hers the toil to dig down to the fire,
To dig Molokai to the fire.*

The morning looks landward aslant;

Heaven's curtains roll up and roll down;

There's a ring of o-o 'neath the sod.

"Who," asks Wakea the god,

"Who is this demon a-digging?"

"It is I, it is Pele; I who

Dug on Maui the pit to the fire:

Aha, the crater of Maui,

Red-glowing with Pele-won fire."

Now day climbs up in the east,

Morn folds the dark curtains of night;

The spade of the sapper resounds 'neath the plain;

The goddess is at it again!

For a moment after the hula ended there was a stunned silence. Then the crowd erupted in applause. It had been spellbinding. Even Paul, the cynic, was clapping.

Captivating stuff. You felt like you'd been sitting through a dream. You could see it happening. A fiery young glowing voluptuous woman, persevering despite the obstacles thrown in her path. What strength. What courage. What independence.

"Wow," you breathed. "I like the sound of this Pele. She's my kind of person."

Well she was the kind of person you wished you could be. The kind of person you tried to be but knew you didn't achieve, despite your refusal to give in and be a door-mat for others like Paul, or a boss, or any other man for that matter. And a few women too you might add.

Your life was filled with arguments as you refused to be walked on. But then your peacemaking characteristic got in the way, not to mention your need to apologise for your existence. How could you have such a dichotomous personality? If you could just rid yourself of the latter elements you might succeed in life, but then maybe the kindness would go too, and the romance,

and the empathy. Then you'd just be a nasty person. On second thoughts you'd struggle on - as is.



Waimea Bay

pipelines plunging

curling

crashing

over hidden reefs

surfers skimming

sliding

shooting through strong sea.

Just a pair of kids, both of you. Pushing and shoving each other, as you climbed back into your bus for the homeward stretch of the tour, you each tried to get the window seat. In the end you gave in and allowed Paul to sit there. You knew he wouldn't give in and he was too strong for you. Besides other people were trying to board the bus and had to pass you to get to their seats. And they looked too tired to tolerate your fun and games.

"I'm taking you to Waimea Bay next," informed Garth over the PA. "It's the famous surfing beach where all the huge competitions are held. It has some of the largest pipeline waves in the world. Did you know that surfing originated here in Hawaii?"

A desultory "Yeah" answered him. Everyone was getting tired by now. It was a long day, this full circle island tour. Many of the group were wondering if maybe a half-day tour would have been better.

Garth tried again. "Do any of you know who the first Hawaiian surfer was?"

"Isn't that someone to do with the Duke's at Waikiki bar?" a voice called from the back.

"Yeh, that's right. His name was Duke Kahanamoku, the original beach boy. He and a group of his friends began the surfing sport and craze. There are still some of his friends at Duke's nowadays."

"They sure got some int'resting memorabilia on the walls there."

You dug Paul in the ribs. "Maybe we should have a look at that," you murmured. He nodded.

When you arrived at Waimea Bay the ocean was flat as a resort swimming pool, calm, glassy in places, with barely a ripple.

"Is this it?" you ask Garth. When he nodded you continued. "I thought you said this was the surfing beach"

"I did. It's the wrong time of year for surfing though."

"Oh. Well. It's a nice beach, even if there isn't any surf." And it was, long by Hawaiian standards, and sandy.

Paul pulled a long face, obviously disappointed. "Well that's going to be hard to explain when we get home." You laughed.

The next part of the journey entailed a long drive back along the valley floor, between the two mountain ranges that dominated Oahu. As you passed plantations of sugar cane and pineapples, reminiscent of footage from the *Blue Hawaii* movie, Garth explained that they were once the main industry in Hawaii. But they had been overtaken by macadamia and coffee plantations, and ousted from top spot. Tourism was the major industry of Hawaii now.

He turned the bus into a long gravel driveway that swept down between rows of trees to a long low metal shed.

"This is a macadamia and coffee plantation. We will stop here while you refresh yourselves. There are macadamia products for sale and also a variety of coffee blends that you can try and buy, including the famous Kona coffee."

As you tumbled out of the bus - you were getting disembarking down to a fine art now - the aroma of freshly brewed coffee wafted out to you. It evoked a low hum of expectation from the group, that left a memory floating in the mind of

warm sounds, dappled light and multiple green foliage whenever you were to smell coffee brewing.

“Can you smell it?” you asked Paul who had a very poor sense of smell. Sad really – he missed out on a lot of lovely aromas, and the fragrance of perfume was wasted on him. However, it meant he didn’t have to put up with bad odours, like the smell of unwashed bodies in crowds, or the overpowering off-putting mixture of street market and food court cooking. Bonus there.

“Course I can. Even blind Freddy could smell it.”

“You idiot! Especially blind Freddy could smell it.”

“Well, anyway, it is very strong. So, yeah, I can smell it.”

“Let’s go get some.” You hurried into the shed with Paul dragging behind you. “Macadamia nut brittle. Yummo! I’m getting some of that.” You tried a sample piece and handed a piece to Paul who had to admit it wasn’t bad.

Then you tried the coffee that was ready on tables in large glass coffee pots beside a stack of little paper cups for tourists to use for sampling. Best of all it was free. There was a jug of milk, another of cream, and sachets of sugar. After you had tried a few you settled for the Kona coffee, which was mild and slightly sweet, lacking the bitterness of most ground coffee blends.

“I want some of this one,” you told Paul, as you reached into your purse.

“Hang on a minute. What for?”

“What? What do you mean what for? It’s coffee, it’s nice, and you drink it.” Sometimes you wondered what planet Paul came from.

“But you can buy cups of the stuff wherever we go,” he insisted.

“I know, but I want to take some home to Australia with me.”

“You can’t. They won’t let you take food in through Customs.”

“Oh. Yeah. Bugger.” He was right. Boy you hated it when he was right. What a party pooper. And so were Customs. What harm could a sealed packet of coffee do? As it turned out later, when it was too late to do anything about it, he was wrong. As long as the coffee was in a sealed, as in unopened, container or packet it could go through Customs. It was processed and therefore the bugs that Customs were trying to keep out of Australia, had already been eliminated from the product.

Meanwhile you sulked. It seemed so unfair. You were sure that you wouldn’t be able to find Kona coffee back home. You might be able to in some

of the gourmet specialty shops though they would probably charge the earth for it, and then Paul wouldn't let you buy it anyway. Poodoo. You had to thank 'Star Wars' and George Lucas for that – what a great word. Poodoo! Poodoo! Poodoo!

“Oh well, I'll just have to make sure I ask for Kona coffee every time I have a cup from now on. While we are here in Hawaii I mean.”

“You'll add it to all the rest of your instructions about how you want to have it,” Paul scoffed. “They'll love you.”

You poked your tongue out at him and headed back to the bus, where you rustled your macadamia brittle packet as you sneaked little pieces to eat. Why was it so important to him to point out that he thought you made too much fuss when ordering food? The one thing you were learning, by your stay there in Hawaii, was that the customer, and tourist in particular, was the most important person and should be served and facilitated well. Nowhere did you experience the indifference and often rudeness shown to the public, and tourists in particular, in Australia. Mind you it was beginning to improve.

Anyway, no-one in Hawaii gave a fat rats how you wanted your coffee. They just did what you asked politely and took your money with a smile. That's how it should be. So, when you returned to Perth, you were going to order your coffee the way you wanted it. And if they didn't like it, or pulled faces at you, you'd tell them that you'd take your business elsewhere and it would be their loss.

Settling back into your seat and gazing out the window, you let your mind drift as the journey resumed. What an amazing place this was. A place of intense geographical beauty and contrasts. How wonderful to paint it, the colours and the textures. Being an artist gave you a different way of looking at the landscapes and people. You saw things in terms of lights and shades, brush strokes, nuances of hues and values, and composition. Whenever you took a photo you made sure you framed it, or got the negative and positive balance right. You had tried to explain this to Paul but he looked at you as if you had lost the plot again. As far as he was concerned you pointed the camera, made sure the lens-cap was off, and pressed the button.

Occasionally Garth's voice over the PA would penetrate into your flurrying thoughts. . .

“ . . . and the planes flew down this valley strafing the people and bombing the buildings. An air force base was located in this valley and they were heading for that. But the people they were killing were actually Japanese. The valley was full of plantation workers from Okinawa.”

“Did they know that?” Paul asked.

“I don’t know. After the bombing of Pearl Harbour all the Okinawans were rounded up and put into camps till the end of the war . . . “

And what an amazing person Pele must have been. Well Goddess really. You realized she wasn’t real, but the Hawaiians seemed to believe she was. Strange the respect you heard in Garth’s voice when he spoke of her. The dancers were amazing too. Pity you couldn’t have had a sit in the pool. You could do with a bit of healing. You chuckled to yourself.

“What?” Paul glanced at you. You shook your head.

“ . . . yeah there are lots of homeless here, especially in Oahu. Mostly native Hawaiians. They’re put into temporary housing accommodation in camps – men in one and women and children in another. It causes lots of problems.”

“Why?” someone asked.

“Well the men climb into the compound to see the women at night – there is a risk of getting caught.”

“But can’t they live anywhere they like?”

“The only alternative is the streets. You will see them sometimes . . . “

That’s like that guy the other night after you came out of the posh restaurant. He was sitting on the sidewalk against a palm and the police were trying to move him on. That’s the only bit of unpleasantness you’d seen since you’d arrived. Except for the nasty lady with the towels. You hadn’t seen any beggars. You hadn’t seen any working Hawaiians or their children for that matter, other than those involved in the tourist and service industries. Mind you, you had seen a few bratty kids who belonged to other tourists. Thank God there weren’t any on this trip. Imagine a long day like this with tired kids screaming and whinging. It didn’t bear thinking about.

Darkness appeared to creep in over Hawaii as you’d travelled towards Honolulu. The sun setting behind you flung its shimmering veil of gold, through pinks, to deepest maroon, as it reluctantly departed to be replaced by the darkest velvet studded with zircons. Gradually you became aware of the silence

within the bus, as the other tired passengers settled with their thoughts. Garth had stopped commenting and turned off his mike, but continued in a quiet voice to answer the occasional query from those sitting near him.

“I went to the Arizona Memorial a couple of days ago, Garth,” Paul said. “It was very moving.”

“Did you see the leaking oil slick?”

“Yes.”

“They say the slick is the tears of the ship. Some say it’s the ship bleeding.”

“That’s a good description of it.”

“It’s been leaking two pints of oil a day since it sank.”

“Really?”

“Yeh. They are very worried about it now. The ship’s rusting away and they think it might break up, causing a major oil spill.”

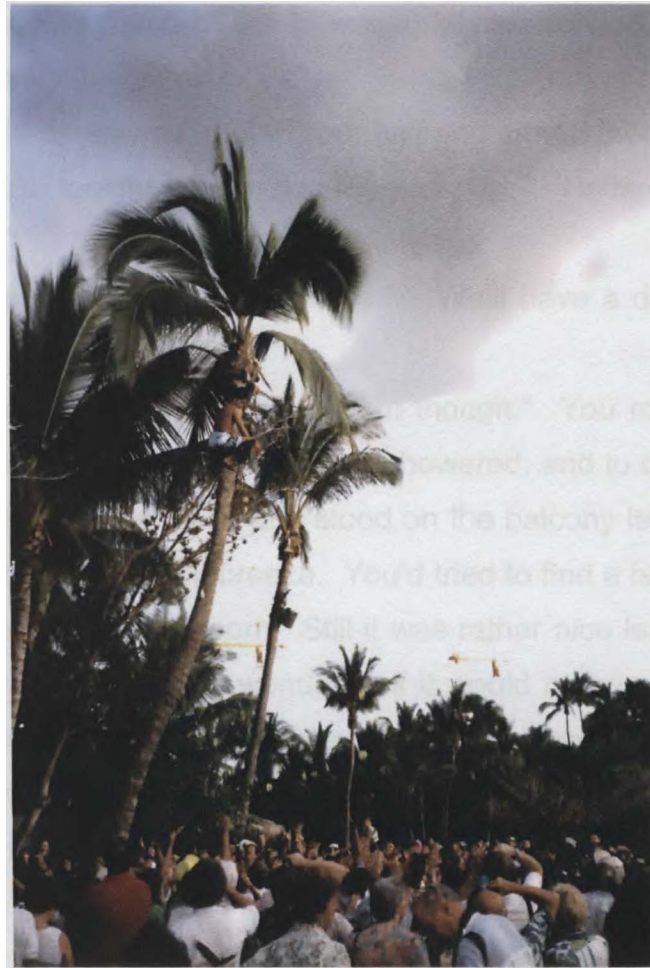
“That’d make a real mess of Pearl Harbour. What are they trying to do about it? Do you know?”

“No. But it’s difficult for them, because it’s a tomb.”

“That’s a real worry,” Paul murmured before lapsing into silence.

The silence was tangible; like an extra passenger it rode with you in the bus until the lights of Honolulu sparkled on the horizon. Gradually, they became more distinct as you drew nearer.

You sighed. It had been a long day. “We must do this on the other islands,” you murmured to Paul, who nodded.



*Hotel Oceanarium
restaurant wrapped
on three floors;
fish feeding divers
entertaining diners.*

You could do with a bit of healing. Turning your head on the pillow to gaze between the slats of the window screen at the blue inviting sky, you sighed. Your leg muscles felt tight and there was a dull ache in your lower back. Probably from all that sitting in the bus yesterday. At least you'd had a good sleep in after your long day's tour circling the island. Garth had been great, informative, a real personality, and you'd learnt a lot. You wouldn't forget him in a hurry.

It was nice to be alone again together. You liked people. You were a people person. But a twelve hour trip cooped up in a small bus with strangers was a bit wearing. And you intended to do it again on the other islands. A glutton for punishment. But it sure was a good way to see what each island was

about – and to see as much of the Hawaiian Islands as you possibly could for your time and money.

You stretched, yawned, ruffled your hair and turned towards Paul.

“The Luau’s tonight.” He nodded sleepily. “Nothing to do till then. Nothing planned.”

“Let’s keep it that way.” He yawned. “We’ll have a day off – just roam about.”

“If you like. The Luau should be fun though.” You rose and wandered into the bathroom to wash your hair as you showered, and to dress. When done you slid the timber screens aside and stood on the balcony leaning over the rail to dry your wet hair in the sunlit breeze. You’d tried to find a hair-dryer, but there didn’t seem to be one in your room. Still it was rather nice leaning out over the rail in the fragrant breeze. You wondered if it would make your hair smell like Frangipani. Below you, on the artificial turf of the roof garden, guests lay on sun lounges beside the pool, hidden from the Hawaiian magic beyond the screening roof walls. What idiots! What a waste of a holiday in Hawaii. They might as well be by a pool on a roof anywhere.

By the time your hair was dry Paul was dressed and ready to explore some more. You spent the rest of the morning strolling down streets, through arcades marvelling at the expensive goods juxtaposed with cheap tourist crap, and into the up-market hotel lobbies for a sticky beak at the plush décor. Paul went to the ATM at the Bank of Hawaii, an ornate white box of a building on the corner of the main Waikiki street, Kalakaua Drive. Then you ambled along it, past the International Markets where you glared in the direction of the Japanese towel-selling woman, the one bad egg in the otherwise superlative service industry.

When you walked into a shop in Hawaii you were not left to wander around unattended while the staff carried on their conversation about their respective love-lives and their weekend entertainment. But if you expressed a wish to do so, they allowed you to, unless they thought you needed assistance about prices. You were not spoken to rudely, sharply, nastily, or in any way other than politely. And if your requests were a little difficult, they still attempted to do as you required. That is what the service industry was supposed to be like.

That is why it was called a 'service industry'. But Paul just worried about causing too much trouble, and making a fuss, and drawing attention to you both.

Besides, he reckoned that it didn't work back home, because the Aussie workers were given good wages so they didn't need to grovel to get the rest of their money. But that was the whole point. These people in Hawaii didn't grovel. They treated their customers with respect, as vital for their economy, which they were. There was a distinct difference. He said that if you made too much fuss about how you wanted your food, you'd just make yourself unpopular, wouldn't get what you wanted anyway, and would make yourself and everyone around you miserable. A true cynic.

As you passed one of the sidewalk spruikers, he thrust into your hand a pamphlet advertising a 20,000 gallon 3 storey high Oceanarium in one of the posh hotels. So after consultation you decided to check it out. You were heading in the right direction along the right street – it was diagonally opposite the huge Banyan tree, under which you had stood on your first day, and the beach.

On the ground floor the foyer doors opened into a vast chamber lit mainly from an enormous central circular glass oceanarium – there was no way you could call it an aquarium. Around the perimeter were café tables and chairs, screened from an adjacent restaurant, screened in turn from a bar area. At this level patrons gazed into the reef rocks and coral, sandy bottom, and the base of the various seaweeds and plants, and at the small multicoloured multitudinous reef fish, star fish, anemones and crustaceans – in other words the bottom dwellers.

"Let's check out the other levels, before we decide where to eat," Paul suggested.

"Good idea. We have to check the view as well as the menus."

On the next level the reef could still be seen below, with larger reef fish swimming in shoals. At the top level the deep water fish swam – rather boring really, except perhaps to a fishing fanatic. While the ambient glow from the tank shimmered through all levels, you decided that you liked the flashy colour of the busy bottom level best. Besides, the café was there, so the meal was cheaper and more suitable for lunch – pleasing Paul.

You chose a table right against the glass wall of the tank, ordered, then broke, spread, and ate your bread roll while you waited for the meal to arrive. It was a novel experience eating in the company of so many fish – a small tank with plastic plants and a few Neons and a Guppy or two across the room was the usual deal. When your meals arrived you became engrossed till surprised by a tapping on the glass wall beside you. You both jumped, looked up and grinned.

“Wow, that’s great.”

Inside the tank, through his mask a diver was smiling at you. He waved, then moved a little into the reef area to feed the fish that swarmed around him, jockeying for the best position. Some hung back then rushed in to snatch a morsel from in front of bigger fish. It was a feeding frenzy minus the sharks.

“It sure beats a TV playing silent sports at you for lunchtime entertainment.” You grinned at Paul, who choked a laugh.

After your late lunch, you wandered back to the beach until you found what looked like a huge beach shack, stuffed full of surfing memorabilia.

“Hey, this is Duke’s at Waikiki!” Paul grabbed your arm. “Let’s go in there.”

“Okay, but not for too long.”

“Why not?”

“Cause we have the Luau to go to tonight, and I don’t want to be too tired.” You paused, questioning the wisdom of continuing. “Er. And you don’t want to have too many beers before we go there.”

As soon as you said it you knew it was a mistake. Paul’s face took on its most stubborn look. “And why shouldn’t I. If you ask me, I’ll need to have lots of beer to help me survive being cooped up in a bus with loads of Yanks.”

You shook your head. You knew you shouldn’t have said it. Now he was going to be belligerent all afternoon and probably drunk before you even got on the bus. If you’d just said nothing he probably would have had one or two beers and you could have just left. You watched him as he walked, beer in hand, around the Bar looking at the many old surfing photos and boards that lined the walls. With a bit of luck he might forget what you said.

“Is this a Malibu?” you asked him as you joined him beside a very long board. You knew it was, but wanted him to feel as though he knew more than you did, so he could have the pleasure of telling you all about it.

“Yeah. Course. You know it is.” Not fooled – damn.

“Huge aren’t they? How did they ever ride them, or control them?” You hadn’t actually realized how long they were. You’d seen footage of them over the years, but never seen one up close like this before.

“I don’t know. I never tried it. As you know,” he added pointedly, “I only body surfed with my mates.”

“Yeah. They were fun days, hey?” You thought of the long beach at the bottom of the cliff, where you and all the girls had lain on the sand sun-bathing, while Paul and his mates had body surfed and swum in the ocean. All that gross sand in your clothes, and burnt hot skin. What on earth did you all think you were doing! You chuckled.

“What?”

“Nothing.”

“No. What?”

“I was just picturing us all at the beach when we were younger. Lined up cooking on the sand, turning a fashionable bright red.”

Paul laughed. “Yeah. You were all a sight, that’s for sure.”

“Gee. Thanks. Now you tell me.” You grinned back at him. As Rove would say: ‘Crisis over.’

You found a shaded table and sat looking at the beach, the surfers and wind surfers, and the bikini clad women everywhere of multiple shades of tan, as you sipped a guava juice on ice and Paul drank beer. The breeze blew gently, cooling your face and lifting your hair away from your face a little. Very pleasant. Pity about the Luau tonight. You could just sit here relaxing for the rest of the day and evening. You sighed.

“What?” asked Paul.

“Oh I was just wishing we hadn’t booked for the Luau now.”

“Why? I’m not too drunk.”

“No. Not that. It’s just very nice sitting here, and I’m tired because yesterday was such a long day, and it would be cool to just stay put. I need a rest.”

“Yeah, well, you can have a rest tomorrow. We have to fly to the Big Island tomorrow and I’ll bet that’ll take up all our day.”

“Well, I booked the flights in the middle of the day so we’d have some time here before we left, and have time there when we arrived, to settle in and get our bearings.”

“I know. I know. It wasn’t a criticism.”

Sure sounded like it. “Oh okay.” You took a sip of the guava. It really was extremely yummy. “Oh well, I hope it works out that way. I guess we can take our time and not rush. We won’t have to go look at things as soon as we get there, will we?”

“Course!” Paul grinned. “Got to go do things!”

“Oh no,” you groaned. Why did you bring him? He was going to wear you out.



*Luau in abundance
visual spectacle
regimentally planned
give regulated doses
of the Hawaiian experience
to every tourist.*

You were a people person. Paul wasn't. And now you were both shuffling your feet as you waited in the underground car-park of the hotel with a rapidly growing crowd of them. Camera laden, Hawaiian outfitted tourists, were all waiting to board the coach to the Luau at Paradise Cove. Well coaches actually. There were two of them, and they were monsters. You weren't sure how many people they held – your reason told you about two dozen, but when you climbed up and into the one you had been allocated, the seats stretched back into dimness, the aisle rising as they do in touring coaches.

The driver clambered in and settled, starting the engine and the air conditioning system. The guide introduced himself as Leon. When you were all seated and attentive, the doors closed and the coach pulling out from beneath the hotel onto the street, he explained that as your trip to Paradise Cove would take an hour he had entertainment lined up.

Then he did Garth's trick but on a grander scale. He walked slowly up the aisle asking each couple their names and where they were from. You and Paul realized what he was up to immediately, but others had no idea. When they asked, he said, "Wait and see," with a grin, and would tell them no more.

He told you that the other coach-load was your competitor for the duration of the Luau, and that there were several ways points would be totted up for each coach.

“For example,” he said. “All the people who taste poi with their feast tonight will gain a point each. All of you who help pull in the *huki lau* – that’s the net full of fish from the ocean – will get points too. And so on.”

“That’s a good idea. It’ll make people join in.” You turned to Paul, chuckling.

“Well I’m not going to.” He crossed his arms on his chest.

“Oh no. You’re not going along prepared not to enjoy yourself are you?” You laughed. This was often how he set out for a party, and when you arrived there, late, he became the life and soul of the party and was always the last to leave. It was rather a private joke of yours.

“It depends.” He grinned.

“On what?”

“On whether there’s lots of beer there.”

“You’re hopeless.” You shook your head at him, but laughed anyway.

In the parking lot at the beach, as you disembarked from your coach, you were handed blue stickers to display on your shirts. These designated you as blue bus people, and indicated to the Luau organizers and caterers exactly what your ticket entitled you to do and eat.

“So now we all follow like sheep, hey?”

“Shhh.”

Your group moved forward to file through the waiting group of souvenir stalls set up flanking the entrance. They contained the same things as all the stalls you had seen so far had held, except that where possible these were emblazoned with the Paradise Cove Luau emblem – key rings, fridge magnets, T-shirts, mugs, postcards, sarongs, sandals, board shorts, bikinis, dancing hula dolls, coral jewellery, and turquoise American Indian jewellery.

“Keep going.” Paul pushed you past them. “No need to stop to look at that crap.”

“Shhh.” You giggled, then glanced warily at those around you.

"You're the Aussies aren't you?" a soft American accent asked from behind you.

"Yeah," Paul replied turning to face a young, blond, tanned couple. The guy's hair was long and bleached by surf and sun, and his board shorts, printed with Malibu surf boards against pipeline waves, hung loosely on his hips. She wore a sarong of sky blue with yellow hibiscus tied at her waist, a bikini top also sky blue, and a gauzy yellow cotton shirt blowing open and flapping against her tanned midriff.

"I love the way you talk, man." The young man grinned openly at Paul. "Say something else."

With his eyes on the girl, Paul responded. "Like what?"

"You kill me, man." You all laughed. He stuck out his hand.

"I'm Tom, and this is Becky."

Paul shook his hand. "I'm Paul and this is Di." He glanced around, then added. "Where's your mate?"

Tom looked around also. "We're not with anyone else. What do you mean?"

"Injun Joe." Paul laughed, and they joined in uncertainly.

"Paul, don't tease!"

"Just my little joke." He looked at their faces. "Your names are from 'Tom Sawyer' – the book – Mark Twain?" When enlightenment showed on Becky's face, but Tom still looked blank, he continued. "Sorry. I thought all Yanks knew about Mark Twain."

"Yanks." Tom laughed openly, unaware of the slur behind Paul's comment. "Geez you guys talk funny. I just love the way you talk."

You thought it was time for a change of subject. "Where are you from?"

"L.A., California." Tom swaggered a little as he said it.

"Where are you from?" Becky asked.

"Perth, Western Australia."

"All the good surfing beaches are in California," Tom volunteered.

"You want to see good surfing beaches, you come to Margaret River south of Perth." Paul fired up.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. They hold international surfing competitions there every year."

"I've never heard of it," Tom replied. "If it's that good, I'd have heard of it."

"It's that good." Paul looked straight at Tom, implying that Tom maybe wasn't that good himself.

You broke the uncomfortable silence. "Let's go look over there." You pointed towards the beach where cultural and craft activity booths were set up, groups of tourists milling around them while selecting which one to join.

"Oh my God," Paul muttered. Followed by Tom and Becky, you strolled across the grass and onto a paved walkway to check out the activities.

There was palm frond weaving, and Ti Tree leaf plaiting, bead threading, poi making, hula dancing, and a type of ball game that you couldn't quite grasp. All of these activities were on the point-scoring list for the competition with the other bus. As you'd suspected, this was a ploy to encourage the tourists to participate and mingle instead of hanging back just watching.

"Let's do hula dancing!" You grabbed Paul's hand and tried to drag him into the hula tent.

"Nah. You do it. I'm not doing it."

"It's okay. Men do it too." As Becky drew Tom into the hula tent, you persisted. "Look Tom doesn't mind doing it."

"Yeah, yeah. Big girl's blouse," Paul muttered. Perhaps you shouldn't have pointed that out to him. Now he would be rude about Tom all night. You sighed.

"And I suppose the Kiwi's who do the Haka are big girl's blouses too."

"Surely are."

"I'd like to see you say that to their faces!" Then he laughed at you. He'd been winding you up. And you fell for it. "Honestly Paul! You're so juvenile sometimes."

"Where's the beer tent?"

"There isn't a beer tent. And I'm glad."

"We might as well go home then."

You were both interrupted by the deep throaty sound of the conch shell being blown, and cries of "Huki lau" from the water's edge.

Joining the throng, you moved to the beach ringed by palms, and watched as the Hawaiian men stood in the water pulling in a big net. They waved to the tourists to join them, but you were too far back to do so.

"We'll lose points for our bus if we don't help," you said to Paul anxiously.

"Tell someone who cares," Paul laughed.

While he took a few photos of the sunset behind the palms, a couple of Hawaiian men climbed adjoining nearby palms for the crowd to photograph. As they crowded beneath them, exclaiming and pointing, the climbers showered them with Frangipani flowers. You caught a few and tried unsuccessfully to make them stay where you'd put them in your hair, but their stems weren't long enough.

"Posers," Paul muttered. So you grabbed the camera from him and took a couple of shots of them as they began to descend the palms.

The group then proceeded to the Luau pit, which was exactly like the New Zealand Hungi pit used by the Maoris. Well Pele came from New Zealand originally, so there were bound to be other traditions from there also. After all, the Polynesian umbrella was extensive, covering most of the Pacific.

You patiently sat through their talk about the traditions of the Luau, and the cooking of the pork in a pit, wrapped in Ti tree leaves and lying on the hot stones. Meanwhile the stone wall you were perched on dug into your buttocks.

"I'm getting a numb bum," you whispered to Paul, who snorted, stifling his laughter as the speaker reached the climax of his oration.

When you were all ushered to the long tables, you realised just how many people were there at the Luau. There were a lot more than your two coach-loads. Far too many to count, of course, but the tables were long and there were at least twenty of them. And there seemed to be one coach per table, each designated by a different colour. Yours had a blue flag fluttering in the evening breeze behind the head chair. It matched Becky's sarong, you noticed, as you waved your fingers at her and Tom sitting a distance away from you down the table.

"Look you scared them away, Paul."

"Too bad." He grinned smugly. You backhanded his shoulder. "Ow!"

"Serves you right. You are not a nice person sometimes. They were only being friendly, and you were very rude."

"Fat rats." He didn't care. You shook your head at him.

Suddenly the people at your table began to rise to form a line to go and fill their plates with food, from the buffet feast. This was spread along a well lit

series of tables, protected from the breeze by awnings, and served by costumed Hawaiian locals. When it was your turn, you were served with fish, and pork so well done that it fell apart as it was carved and placed on your plate. On seeing the poi, which was a pale mauve glue, you wrinkled your nose, and began to shake your head so they wouldn't serve you any.

"Go on. Have some," said Paul.

"You will like it ma'am," encouraged your server. "It's excellent with the pork."

"Go on," said Paul. "Don't be a wuss."

"Oh okay." You watched anxiously as a glob of mauve was added onto your plate.

Back at the table you tentatively tried it. Actually, it wasn't too bad. In fact it wasn't bad at all. And it did make the pork taste better somehow – not that the pork tasted bad either. By this time the beer was flowing, and Paul was much happier. It did not take him long to become the focus of your table, and everyone's mate.

When the floor show began, diverting attention to the stage, you were rather relieved. It was, of course, spectacular. There were flame twirlers, male and female dancers from Samoa, New Zealand and other Polynesian islands, with the Hawaiian hula performed last by all performers. You tried to take as many photos of the show as you could but you weren't too sure if they would turn out.

True to form, when it was time to leave, Paul didn't want to. He proclaimed this to everyone and you were the last to leave the table, and straggle across to your waiting coach. This meant that for the return journey, instead of being up the front, you had to sit in the third to back row, over the wheels.

When Leon did his party trick of naming everyone in the bus, he got a bit confused because you'd changed seats. But he only got two names wrong out of the whole crowd. Still pretty impressive. The rest of the crowd certainly thought so and cheered loudly, and exclaimed about how clever he was, and wondered in loud voices how he did that.

To add to the entertainment, the highlight as Paul later referred to it, the entire bus sang 'Old MacDonald Had a Farm', with one of each couple

designated to supply the choice of animal and the sound of that animal. Paul, all fired up, did a really bad rendition of a Kookaburra.

As the coach pulled back into the underground car park of the hotel, Leon announced that the Blue bus had indeed beaten the red bus in the point scoring competition. The crowd cheered, echoed by a faint cheer from the other coach.

Paul leaned towards you to speak confidentially to you. “They prob’ly jus’ told that other lot the same thing.” Unfortunately, his alcohol intake had made him rather loud, and quite a few people heard him. Some laughed, but Leon wasn’t too amused though he feigned a chuckle.

Luau afterglow.

*Tired and happy you lie
legs linked
fingers linked
lips linked
drawn inevitably together.*

*Strong hands lift and draw
body onto body
urgency builds
hands exploring*

*His magic hands caressing
supporting
massaging
holding flesh firmly
feeling silky skin
with feather-touching
finger-tips.*

*Strokes building surging
quickenning easing
flickering pausing
passionate
seductive.*

*An experience beyond all others
Eight out of ten.*

Humped on her desk the little black lava rock menaced the office. Di couldn't understand why every time the department secretary, Jan, entered the room she seemed uneasy. She hurried through her errands, then rushed out of the room as if pursued.

By Friday Di could no longer contain her curiosity about Jan's odd behaviour.

"Jan, do you have a problem with me working here?"

Jan edged towards the open door. "No. Not at all. Really."

Why did she need to reassure her three times. "Come on, what's wrong? I know something's wrong."

"I don't know what it is," she muttered.

"Do I smell? Have I bad breath? Is it personal?"

"No, no. It's nothing like that."

"Well, what then? Is it office politics? I didn't take anyone's job. Bert made this job just for me. So what is it!"

"It's this room. It gives me the creeps!"

"But this was your own office before I came - you and Sally and Meg."

"I know. I don't know what it is. It's changed somehow. It's creepy." Jan shuddered.

Di looked around the office. The sun slanted through the new wooden blinds she'd had installed to block out the view of the neighbouring building, casting shadow-stripes across the photographs of Diamond Head crater, and Kilauea Volcano that hung on the side wall. The old filing cabinet stood against the opposite wall, but now sported a small potted tropical garden, with a large potted tropical garden on the floor beside it.

"You don't like Hawaii? Is it too tropical or something?"

"No, it's not that. I love the Hawaiian look. In fact I'm so jealous of you. We all are. Going to Hawaii I mean. I've always wanted to go there. But Bali's all I can manage."

"Well, what is it then?"

"I don't know. Really I don't. I just get sort of scared when I come in here. Don't you?"

"No." Di thought about it. What was there to be scared of. It was *her* room. Her Hawaii away from Hawaii. God, she missed it. She wished she could go back. She wanted to live there. Rotten luck being Australian really. If it wasn't for Paul, she'd have gone over there and married a Yank sailor so she could stay there. Gently Di

picked up her lava rock and stroked its porous surface with her thumb. What was there to be scared of in her room?

Jan backed away into the open doorway. “Well, I’d better get on with those letters. Was there anything else?” Di shook her head. The door snapped shut behind Jan, leaving Di facing the poster of the Macaw parrot on the back of it.

MSN Hotmail
di-n-paul@hotmail.com

Page 1 of 1

From: bec&tom@yahoo.com
To: di-n-paul@hotmail.com
Subject: Move to Hawaii

Dear Di,

I'll have to keep this email short and sweet, but I wanted you to know now that it's a reality. We're moving to Hawaii to live!!!! Can you believe our luck? Next week! ☺ We fly out next weekend! I keep pinching myself to make sure it's real. And Tom and I can't stop grinning.

We have to pack like little beavers to get it all done in time for the movers to pick it up so they can ship it out. We'll probably have to live out of our luggage until our stuff arrives, but who cares! We sure don't.

I applied for a transfer to the University of Hawaii as soon as we'd gotten home from our holiday there. They sent me an acceptance letter last week, and have enrolled me into their language and culture classes. I can't wait! ☺ I only wish you could do the same because I know how much you want to. ☺

Anyways, this means that Tom can surf there all day everyday if he wants to – well when the surf's up at least. So he'll get more experience for the competitions at Waimea Beach, and might even start winning some.

I'll email you with our new address and phone number as soon as I know them. I think we'll be living in Honolulu, but we might get a place in one of the smaller towns on the edge of the metropolis.

Miss you heaps,

Becky xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

PS: Do you still have that lava rock? Or have you sent it back?

Her Hawaii away from Hawaii. That's all Di could have now. This room. And the memories. And now Becky and Tom were moving there to work. Lucky buggers. She was so envious. It was so easy for them. Being Yanks they just changed States, moving from the mainland to Hawaii effortlessly. She shrugged the thoughts away.

The rock she held was neither cold nor hot - rather it was the temperature of her hand. She lifted it to her cheek to feel its sensuous surface. Odd though it was, she'd always been keen on the way things felt - like the smoothness of a cigarette between the fingers, or run along the lips. She was sure she hadn't smoked them in her teens for the taste. Yuk! That bottom of a birdcage taste first thing in the morning. Oh how she didn't miss that. But that smooth tube? She still rolled napkins into tubes to fiddle with in cafes. It was pretty obvious that she was just addicted to sensation.

"Can I come in?" Paul poked his head around the door. "Hey, what's the matter. You look miles away."

"Do I? Maybe I was." Shaking her head Di carefully replaced her rock and sat on the edge of the desk.

Concerned, Paul put his huge hand on her shoulder and bent to look into her face. "What's wrong? Why so glum? Job not working out, or something?"

A diversion. Just what Di needed to pull her out of this weird state she seemed to be in. "If you must know, I'm sick of the rubbish I'm expected to endorse in this job. Some of the stuff I handle is such crap!"

Paul chuckled. "Your Pilbara edges are showing."

"So?"

"So you can't call what they want you to do 'crap'!"

"Why not? If it is."

"Regardless of whether you think it's crap or not, if they ask you to do it, you just do it."

"Bullshit!"

"No. It's not. It's the Corporate way."

"That's easy for you. You don't have to believe in what you do. You just crunch numbers. I have to try to sell this shit. To do that I have to believe in it, or convince others that I do."

"Well, do it Di, or you'll lose your job. Bert'll give it to someone who can pretend better than you."

Di sighed. There seemed no way out. Brought up in the North West of the State, in the rugged Pilbara, she'd been taught to call a spade a 'spade'. Now she'd have to try and call it a 'bloody shovel'. She needed her job so she could go back to Hawaii. Mind you with Tom and Becky now residing there, although it gave them someone they could probably stay with and save them heaps of hotel bills, it had tainted her desire a little. If they went back again there was no question that they would have to see them again, and Di wasn't sure whether she was ready for that yet. Still it was not going to happen this year the way their savings were going.

With another sigh, Di dragged her mind back to her current problem with Paul.

"You're right, Paul. Okay, I'll toe the Corporate line."

"Good girl. You'll get used to it." She half expected him to pat her on the head.

"Just keep thinking of the holiday you're earning."

"Yeah. I so want to go home to Hawaii."

"Home? Home to Hawaii. What makes you say that?"

"Did I say that? Why would I say that? I meant back - back to Hawaii, of course."

"Jeez Di. That's just what I've been talking about. We'll go as soon as we've saved enough money."

"I want to go there before we have kids."

"Kids!" Paul was obviously not expecting that one. For a moment he looked startled, then grinned. "That's a good idea. It's time we had a family."

"Don't start that again. I said 'before we have kids'. Read my lips, Paul."

The grin disappeared, to be replaced by a pained look. It was Paul's turn to sigh.

"And, I want to go there to live. Like Tom and Becky. Lucky buggers! It's so not fair. They can just move there any old time they like, and we're only allowed to visit." Now, even to herself, Di sounded like a petulant kid chucking a tantrum. He looked even less impressed.

"You know, Di, you're beginning to sound a bit obsessive about Hawaii. I know you loved it, but you have to keep it in perspective. It *was* only a holiday." He frowned down at her.

"I thought you at least would've understood." After all he'd shared her Hawaiian experience, her love affair with the islands. Di turned away and crossed haughtily to the filing cabinet to rummage in the top drawer. "You'll be wanting that report I wrote last

week. Here it is.” At arms length she handed him the file, then circled her desk, touching the lava rock with her fingertips as she passed.

“I wish you’d get rid of that thing!” Paul glared at the rock, huddling on the edge of the desk-blotter. “You should’ve never brought it home with you. You know what they told us over there.”

“Well, they shouldn’t have had them for sale then. It’s mine. And I love it.” Di knew she was all red in the face. Not a good look. She lifted her head and looked straight at him. “Was there anything else? Some of us have work to do.”

He looked a little shocked at her tone. Oh well, too bad. He should know not to rubbish her about Hawaii. He shrugged. “Okay. I’ll see you at home, tonight. That’s our home, by the way. Not your imaginary one in Hawaii.” The door clipped shut smartly.

Smart-arse. Di had to admit though - it was a good one. The sort of parting remark she wished she could have thought of in time, when in situations like that. Her trouble was, she always thought of a good retort after the opponent had left the building, or she was halfway home. Home. Why *had* she said home to Hawaii? She must be losing it. No wonder he thought she was becoming obsessed. Di hated it when he was right.

“You know what they told us over there.” With his mug of steaming coffee in his hand, Paul leaned back on the couch and watched Di as she moved restlessly around the living room. “Come and sit down. Come on.” He patted the cushions beside him.

Di stalked over to the furthest armchair and plumped into it. Curling up in the chair made her feel better, safer from the urges that had prompted her pacing. She didn’t look at Paul. Instead she gazed at her painting of Madame Pele in the lava flow that she had done upon her return from Hawaii. Paul had been rather reluctant to hang it, but she had insisted, and it looked stunning, a focal point of the living room. She glanced down to the mantle beneath it, where her lava rock hovered anxiously at the brink, peering over at the tiled hearth below.

Paul tried again. “They told us not to take any lava rock away when we left Hawaii.”

“I know. But not everyone believed that story. It was just a myth.”

“But the rangers at Kilauea were serious. They said they got a stream of returned lava rocks through the mail all the time - some every day. From people who took it with them, then had bad luck.”

“It’s just superstition. Nothing has happened to us. I scored a great job in your office since we’ve been back. I wouldn’t call that bad luck.”

“I thought you’d changed your mind about that after this arvo.” He laughed quietly, then sobered. “No, but Di, I’m serious about this bit of rock. I don’t like it. It unnerves me somehow. I can’t relax when it’s around.”

Di said nothing - just stared at the rock perched on the mantle. She should pick it up from there. It might fall. She uncoiled from her chair to do so.

“Where are you going? Oh, I see.” The exasperation in Paul’s voice was unmistakable. “Well, if you won’t send the damn thing back, could you at least leave it at the office. I’d rather you didn’t bring it home here.”

“You can’t be serious!” Di swung around to face him.

He leapt out of his comfort-zone, then appeared to regret it. “I’m bloody serious. I don’t want to see it again!” While she stared in dismay, he stalked from the room.

What was happening. They never quarrelled. Well rarely. Okay, so they argued as much as most people did. But this was the first since their return from Hawaii. She thought he’d mellowed out. He was being unreasonable, of course. Di looked at the rock nestled in her palm. How could a little thing like this make him behave like that. It didn’t, of course. It was just the idea of having a bad luck rock in the house. If that was

how he felt then she'd have to hide it from him - pretend to leave it at work, but hide it in her handbag instead. It didn't like staying in the office all alone. Really, she didn't like leaving it in the office - someone might take it.

Di put the rock down on the coffee table, next to the photo albums of their trip, picked up their empty mugs and headed for the kitchen. Elros, her ginger cat, from deep in the large cushion on the couch, opened his amber eyes and stared at the rock. With a yowl he sprang into the air sideways onto the arm of the couch, then off onto the floor skidding on the shiny vinyl surface. She had to laugh. Happening in seconds, it had looked like the antics of a cartoon cat - probably Sylvester. Her laughter, even to her, echoed with hysteria.

It didn't like staying in the office all alone. It squatted grumpily in the In-tray watching the door. Waiting.

Jan poked her head around the door, saw Di was not there and entered the room cautiously. Crossing to the desk with a handful of papers she hesitated when she saw the rock guarding the In-tray. With a malicious whack she brought the papers down hard on the rock, smothering it. Triumphant, she turned to find Di watching from the doorway. She had left the Ladies' bathroom down the corridor as Jan entered her office.

"What was that in aid of?" Di spoke quietly, with rigid control.

Jan edged along the wall towards the door and Di, then stopped, unsure. "Nothing. I don't know what you mean?" She hesitated while Di looked steadily at her. "Can I go please? I have a lot of work to do." She moved closer to her means of escape, which Di still blocked.

"Jan, if you have a problem with me please don't take it out on my office." Di knew it wasn't the office. She knew it was her rock, but she wasn't going to admit it to Jan, who was as bad as Paul. Di stepped aside and Jan pushed past her through the door which was closed firmly behind her.

Crossing quickly to the In-tray, Di rescued her rock from beneath the heavy pile of papers. She could feel its relief. Was it for its rescue or for her return? It didn't seem to mind being in her handbag and that was certainly claustrophobic, and crowded. Perhaps if she put it in her pocket it would be okay. Then she could carry it everywhere she went, and people could get on with their work without all this ridiculous melodrama. Problem was that she had no pockets in that skirt. She could use the pocket of her blouse but it would be seen bulging against her chest, which was already big enough thanks very much!

Di put the rock up into the small tropical garden on the filing cabinet where it could feel at home, and got on with her work. She had to go through the papers that Jan had brought in. When that was done she moved to the cabinet to file some of them.

"You all right in there?" Di asked her rock. It seemed to have burrowed into the potting mix a little, and looked quite comfortable. As she returned to her desk Jan put her head around the door.

"Can I come in for a minute?" Receiving a frosty nod from Di, she entered and crossed briskly to the desk. "I want to apologise for my behaviour. I don't know what came over me. I don't know what comes over me when I enter this office."

“That’s okay. As long as it’s not because of me.” Di gazed up at her. Slowly, she shook her head.

“It’s that rock, I think.” She glanced at the In-tray but it was not there. “But that is so ridiculous and illogical that I can’t believe I’m saying it.”

She was obviously puzzled, at a loss for words to express what Paul didn’t hesitate to express. What a pair of wimps! Scared of a piece of rock! From its nest in the potted garden it watched smugly as Di placated Jan and sent her back to work.

“But that is so ridiculous and illogical that I can’t believe I’m saying it.” Rubbing at a red lump on her forehead, Jan looked anxiously at Bert whom she’d met in the corridor on one of his rare excursions outside his office.

“A rock, you say.” Bert was skeptical. He’d heard some strange things in his life but he had to admit that this was one of the weirdest. “It’s a piece of lava rock? Solid rock?” His look of disbelief made Jan retreat.

“I know it sounds stupid. I thought you ought to know, that’s all.”

“How did that happen?” He nodded at her forehead. Self-consciously she dropped her hand to her side.

“I hit my head on a filing cabinet.” Avoiding his look of compo-claim horror, she hurried away around the nearest corner. Breathing hard, she leaned against the wall. If this rock thing went on much longer she’d have to resign, before they fired her.

Profusely sweating from the effort, Bert waddled towards Di’s office, pausing outside the door to listen to the strains of Hawaiian music that emanated. He thrust the door wide to get his bulk into the room. As the force of the room’s personality seized him, he shuddered, then subsided into the armchair opposite the desk.

Di raised her eyes from their perusal of a complex piece of work, to gaze at his blanched face. “Bert! I’m surprised to see you here. Is there a problem?”

“No, no. I just came to see how you’re getting on. You’ve settled in all right? Work not too boring, I hope?” He squirmed.

“No, it’s fine.” In the silence, they gazed at each other.

Uneasily, Bert glanced around the office, from the posters to the wooden blinds, to the plants. “Nice effect, this.” He waved his white hand, wagging the fat maggot fingers to indicate the decor. “My office could do with a touch of colour, like this.” It would never happen - he liked his cocoon room too much. Colour might disturb his security. It would make him edgy, and then he’d sweat more. “I take it you got the posters when you were in Hawaii?”

Di nodded. She thought she knew where this was leading. But she wasn’t going to prompt him. She watched as he scrutinised her desk, then the window ledge half-hidden by the blinds, and finally her pot-plants. She saw him flinch as he caught a glimpse of her rock guarding the pot from deep in the potting mix beneath the foliage. His mouth gaped as he gulped the air. Floundering, he heaved himself out of the chair to step closer to the pot. As dizziness struck he teetered, then staggered to the still wide open door.

“Well, I must get back to work. I must go. Yes. That’s it. I’ll see you again. In a while.”

“At the meeting on Friday.” Di didn’t want to help him, but thought she’d better. She didn’t want to antagonise him and lose her job.

He shook his head spattering the door-frame and wall with drops of sweat. “Yes, of course. Of course.” He hurried away slowly. Like Jabba the Hutt from *Star Wars*.

Di looked at the damp upholstery of her armchair. How disgusting! With a sigh she rose to shut the gaping door.

He liked his cocoon room too much. Bert sank into his soft leather chair with its familiar musty smell. Breathing hard he expanded and relaxed, then reached for some papers in his in-tray. Something felt wrong. He couldn't quite reach the tray. Yet it hadn't been moved.

Attempting to ease himself forward in his chair he found he couldn't. He was stuck. No matter how he wriggled and squirmed he couldn't get free of the chair. How ridiculous.

Fortunately, his phone was closer, and by stretching he could just reach the intercom button.

"Help me, Susan. Help me!"

After a moment or two, his startled secretary, Susan, looked cautiously around the door.

"Did you call me?" She looked around the room. Everything seemed okay. "Are you all right?"

"No, I'm not." Bert was embarrassed and unusually brusque.

"Not his normal oily self," Susan later reported to Jan and the other office girls. Needless to say Jan then spread the news to those whose offices were on Di's floor.

"Call maintenance, at once."

Susan disappeared to return in a while. "Clem can come in half an hour. He's with the air-conditioning consultant at the moment."

"Tell him to come now! Don't take any arguments from him. I want him here, now." Bert's white face glowed pink.

Susan scuttled out. Five minutes later she returned with an officious balding overall-clad man who was breathing hoarsely.

"What's wrong! I got here as quick as I could. I had to leave the AC consultant cooling his heels."

Scowling at Susan and wagging his fat fingers towards the door, Bert rumbled, "That'll be all for now. I'll call if I need you." He waited till she left the room. "It's a bit tricky," he continued, his cheeks now maroon. "In fact, it's downright embarrassing. You see, I'm stuck. I can't get out of my chair." Glaring at choking, snorting Clem, he added in a baffled whine, "I don't understand it. My chair's custom made - not tight at all. It was fine when I left the room half an hour ago, and now I'm stuck. I just sat down, and I'm stuck!" He appealed to Clem, who struggled to look serious. "Do something! Get me out of this!"

Clem inspected the chair, but nothing seemed to be wrong with it. Taking hold of the back of the chair, he towed it and Bert away from the desk. The chair slid out heavily, swung around clumsily. Clem pulled on Bert's hand to help him stand, but he could not budge.

"I'll need back-up." He reached for the phone and pressed the buttons. "Jim? Find Dave and Geoff, and get up here. . . . Bert's office. We need some help."

Bert sighed, then mumbled. "Bloody rock nonsense. Why'd I bother to see Diane? I should never have left my office."

In the end the fire-brigade was called in to cut Bert out of his chair. Gleefully, Clem compiled the details to tell to his mates in the pub after work.

Di sat with Elros purring on her lap, gazing at the photos. Turning from the Oahu photos of the Luau show she revealed the first page of the Big Island photos. The Big Island. Hawaii. How eager, yet apprehensive, she had been to get to it and see the volcano. Her appetite whetted by the story she had heard about Pele, she wanted to learn more about her, and her fiery home. But there was no doubt about it, Di had been afraid.

She'd always been fascinated by 'volcano' television programs, and had read about them in her father's National Geographic magazines. She'd loved those old magazines and had spent hours looking through them. Her favourite topics that she'd never tired of had been volcanoes, and anything about the underwater world - like sealions, seahorses and seadragons, jellyfish, and squids, cuttlefish and octopuses. Or should that be octopi? Whatever.

And there she had been in Hawaii, about to visit the Kilauea volcano.

Muttering to herself, she leaned over the photo album and studied the photos of the Big Island one at a time.

"It was fascinating from the minute you'd touched down"



*Runway of silver ribbon
strung across black
lava landscape.
Black lava airport
award-winner.
Bougainvillea - lined road
linking with Kona.*



*White coral graffiti
ever temporary
scrawled across black
lava landscape.*

It was fascinating from the minute you touched down. Landing in the Big Island, Hawaii, was an amazing experience. It looked as though you were about to land on a lava field. In fact, you did, as the runway lay across an ancient flow. The airport was also an eye-opener. Built using the black lava rock, it merged with its surroundings, and as a result had won an award for most environmentally compatible airport in America.

Flanked all the way by hedges of Bougainvillea, the road to Kona stretched across the lava flow for miles. Coral graffiti lined the route, with personal messages, and those stating, for example, that Joan and Bill were here in 1998. Tourists and locals used the coral because it could be moved around to create new messages, it stood out clearly against the black background, and it was environmentally friendly as it did no damage to the lava.

Upon arrival at the King Kamehameha Hotel complex, you were shown to your room, from the window of which you could see, through an orange flowered African Tulip tree, the quaint town below. It lay stretching sleepily beside a crescent sea wall, with a boardwalk of shops and cafes in the distance.

As was his habit upon entering a hotel room, Paul turned on the television to the Tourist channel. Erupting volcanic footage flared at you from the screen, stopping your unpacking instantly. Holding a pile of clothes in your lap, you sat riveted on the end of one of the twin double beds nearest the window. Paul would have the one by the bathroom, for actually sleeping in, if a double bed proved to be too uncomfortable after the luxury of the King-size bed in your Oahu hotel.

When the program finished, Paul suggested, "Let's go out. We can't sit here all afternoon watching the TV."

"Yeah, I know. But isn't that stuff amazing. And scary. I love volcanoes."

"I know. Come on, let's go." He turned off the set and you left the room.

Downstairs, from the foyer windows opposite the entrance, you could see native huts and statues of some kind on what looked like reclaimed land beside the harbour wall. What looked like a cross between a huge outrigger and Chinese Junk was moored beside the wall. A vast banner, declaring that dinner and dancing under the stars on the ocean began at 7.30 pm, was draped across its spars. To the right of the reception desk, a corridor led to a mall, with a department store, and smaller gift and jewellery shops, through which you wandered. The mall exited through ornate glass doors to the pool area with palm-leaf thatched drink and snack bars, barbeque area, and rows of deckchairs, all surrounded by lush colourful garden.

"Isn't it gorgeous! It's so romantic."

"It's just a pool."

"I want to swim in it."

"Do we have to? I want to go exploring." He turned and headed for the mall entrance.

Reluctantly you followed him. "Can we come back and have a swim later?"

"We'll see."

"We haven't had a swim yet. Not since we arrived in Hawaii."

Paul pulled a face, then seeing you were determined, gave in. "If we have time, I suppose we can."

"Great!" Happy, you set out after him to explore the town of Kona.



*Cloud-shrouded mountain
crowding the town.
Coral Courthouse
old muralled church
Boardwalk markets
and restaurants
by sea wall cunningly placed.*

It lay stretching sleepily beside a crescent sea wall, with a boardwalk of shops and cafes in the distance. You strolled along taking in the sounds and smells as the breeze wafted in off the sea. Kona was obviously older and less commercial than Honolulu; the buildings were predominantly timber framed, with fibro walls and metal roofs, or timber walls and thatched roofs. There were some brick buildings, such as hotels, food chain restaurants, and petrol stations. But the quaint part of town, especially along the boardwalk, seemed less substantial yet had obviously weathered many storms and much time.

As you strolled towards the boardwalk you passed a two-storey building made from white coral. From the ornate sign board out the front you learned that blocks of coral had been sawn from ancient long-dead reefs, and used to construct a Court House. It shone amongst the palm fronds, majestic in comparison with the fibro buildings opposite.

Passing between tourist booths lining one of the alleyways of the boardwalk, you entered a large café, with long open adjacent rooms, one a few

steps lower than the other. Huge ceiling fans circled from the open rafters, palms squatted on pots amongst the tables, and the ambience was definitely colonial. While Paul had a beer, you, influenced by the romantic notion of the cooling drink sipped on balmy tropical days in an era long gone, decided to try the iced tea.

Eagerly you picked up the huge icy glass of amber gold and sipped. You shuddered. “Yuk!”

Paul laughed. “Yuk?”

You tried again, in case it was an acquired taste. “Yukko! That is disgusting. How can people drink that stuff!” The thing was that you knew they did. In droves. But it was really awful. You piled sugar into it in an effort to improve it, but that just made it sweet and gross. Calling the waitress, you apologised, and asked for a lemonade.

When it arrived in the same size icy glass, sparkling pale pink, ice cubes clinking, you were astonished. “This is lemonade?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

Gingerly you tried a tiny sip. Then beaming, you took a long drink, followed by a long sigh.

“Better?”

“Much.” You inspected the drink again. “It’s hard to believe it’s lemonade. I was expecting it to be yellow, or white. But pink!”

Paul reached over and stuck his finger into your drink, then put it into his mouth and sucked.

“Get off!”

“Mmmm. Not bad.” He reached over again, but you were too quick for him. Your laughter echoed through the nearly empty café and out to the boardwalk in front.

Back at the hotel, after some nagging, you convinced Paul to go for a swim with you. Down at the pool you slid into the water, then began to swim lazily along the length of the pool. As you turned to call to Paul to join you, you were horrified to see him leap into the air and bomb down beside you. As you floundered trying to clear the water from your eyes and protect your hair, which

you had wound up onto the top of your head, he burst to the surface and shook the water vigorously from his eyes.

“You bastard!” He threw his head back and roared with laughter. “Can’t you ever just be nice to me?” He continued to laugh, as were other people who were now watching you both.

Angrily turning away from him, you moved to the other side of the pool to swim on your own. Undeterred he swam the length of the pool, pulled himself out, and headed for the bar. As there seemed to be no more point in having a romantic swim, you swam to the steps and climbed out, quickly wrapping yourself in your towel.

When you had collected your possessions, you crossed to him to ask him for the room card which was with his gear. You held out your hand to him for it, and laughing he put a glass of iced water in it. Looking steadily at him, you drank the iced water and held out your hand again.

“Please give me the card to our room. I want to go up and change.” With a grin he passed the card to you, and you walked away. You were sick of the way he always had to ruin things for you. And with all those people watching you weren’t about to have a fight with him.

Up in your room you made yourself a coffee, with the horrible powdered milk substitute, and sat on the bed trying not to cry. It was amazing how quickly he could crush your enjoyment of things. You loved him so much, but he could be so unfeeling sometimes. You knew that in a while he would bounce into the room and act as if nothing had happened,. And of course, nothing much had happened. He had just jumped into the water, because you wanted him to have a swim in the pool when you knew he didn’t like swimming in pools. He liked swimming in the ocean, which you definitely did not. You liked to know what was on the bottom beneath your feet, when you went for a swim.

In no time at all the whole thing could be turned around as being your own fault.

When he did return, exactly as you expected, you were dressed and ready to go out for tea. You said nothing about his behaviour, and he wisely didn’t either.

Not far from the hotel was a two-story fibro building that boasted the best seafood restaurant in Kona. The transfer driver had recommended it and

pointed it out to you as you all disembarked upon arrival at the hotel. Up a rather grubby flight of stairs, and filling the entire second floor, was a lino-floored café with trestle tables beneath sluggish ceiling fans. It was packed with people and you had difficulty finding seats. Feeling a bit embarrassed and conspicuous, you finally sat at the end of a trestle that was already taken by a family of locals.

After the initial overtures of “Do you mind if we sit here?” followed by permission, your attempts at friendly conversation were met with one-syllable answers and silence. The locals not in the tourist industry were obviously not used to tourists crossing the ‘us and them’ barrier in their local restaurant. Most of the tourists usually went to the chain restaurants or down on the boardwalk where they were catered for with all things Hawaiian. You appeared to be the only tourists there.

The décor was out of something you might have read in Somerset Maugham, the tableware was primitive, the heat was uncomfortable, the noise was deafening, and the fish was delicious. No wonder it was packed!

As you were finishing your meal, Paul glanced speculatively at you, then said, “Guess who I saw at the pool bar after you left?”

With a moment’s hesitation in which you felt unnerved, you gave the expected response. “Who?”

“Tom and Becky.” Paul grinned. “She was wearing her blue and yellow number again. Nice.”

“When did they arrive? They weren’t on the plane with us? I take it they’re staying in our hotel?”

“Don’t know. Didn’t ask.” Paul grinned. “I just let them rabbit on for a bit. They’re going to see the volcano tomorrow though.”

“With us?” Your anxiety levels had definitely risen. Not that there was anything wrong with Tom and Becky. In fact Tom was a bit of a spunk. But Becky was a real chicky-babe, a fact that Paul had not failed to notice when you met them at the Luau.

“Don’t know. Don’t think so. I think they’ve hired a car, like we should.” This had already caused friction during your holiday. Paul wanted to hire a car and drive instead of being driven by others, while you were worried about driving on the ‘wrong’ side of the road. Besides if you went with others you learned

more about the places you went. You'd learned so much from Garfield on the Oahu Circle Island Tour and Paul couldn't disagree with that.

Not wishing to rise to his bait you just replied, "Yeah, yeah. Have you finished your drink? Can we go?"

Paul chuckled and led the way down the dingy stairs, out to the beauty of the balmy night.

Back at the hotel room you watched tourist channel volcano footage on for a while. There was an amazing story of a family who would not let their timber home be consumed by encroaching lava, so they lifted it onto a semi trailer and drove it away just as their garden went up in flames. Scary stuff.



*Among the palms lies
inland lagoon.
Nearby black sand beach
unbelievably clean,
ground down from black
lava landscape.*

You appeared to be the only tourists there. As you waited on the steps of the hotel, you looked around for signs of others who might be also taking the circle island tour that day. But you remained alone shuffling your feet and looking up the street for signs of the bus.

A large silver car drove into the hotel entrance and drew to a halt in front of you. An overweight smiling Hawaiian in a colourful pre-dominantly blue Hawaiian shirt clambered out and walked towards you both with his hand out.

“You folks here for the circle island tour today?”

As you shook his hand you nodded.

“We seem to be the only ones here though,” volunteered Paul, as he handed your vouchers to the driver, who glistened with sweat, and was a little breathless. You’d read somewhere that Hawaiians didn’t mind about obesity - in fact they considered it beautiful. He wasn’t as ‘beautiful’ as Garfield had been, but he was fairly attractive, if that was the case.

“That’s right.” He paused, then added, “My name’s Bryan. I’m your driver and guide today. Because there’s only you two, I thought we’d go in my car rather than the bus.” As Paul scowled, he continued quickly, “I hope that’s okay with you?”

“It’s fine.” You answered first before Paul could start grumbling. You didn’t want to get off on the wrong foot. You turned to Paul, “At least we’ll be able to hear him easily and won’t have to bother with other people.” You hoped that that would appeal to him. He hated sharing his space with noisy tourists.

He grinned. “Yeah. That’s okay. I’m Paul, and this is my wife, Di.”

“Great. Are you ready?”

“Yeah. Let’s go.” Paul was impatient not to waste any more time. “You sit in the front with him Di, I’ll take the back seat.”

“Thanks honey.” Paul knew you got carsick if you sat in the back, but it was still nice of him to let you sit in the front. Lots of blokes would have sat in the front and let their sick wives sit in the back where they couldn’t see their distress. Mind you he may not have wanted to sit next to the already damp Bryan, but you were prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt.

As you settled into the seats, stowed your bags, and clicked your seat belts into place, Bryan said, “We’ll go look at the Captain Cook monument first, then on to the painted church. They’re both at Honaunau. We’ll go to the black sand beach at Punaluu, then head towards the Volcanoes national Park where we’ll stop for lunch.”

A ripple of excitement and dread surged through your body in response to this statement. It was real. You were really going to go and see a volcano.

Bryan drove into the kiosk car park beside the lagoon surrounded by palms and black sand. You climbed stiffly out to stand amazed at the sight of the sand. It really was black. Glistening crystals of black sand, which Bryan informed you was the lava rock pulverized by the sea over time until minute. Over millennia it would bleach until it was white. But not all white sand beaches were from lava. Many were from coral or shells that were reduced the same way as the lava.

Bending down you tentatively scooped up a handful of sand, then let it trickle out between your fingers. Your hand was clean. You had expected it to

be dirty – expected the sand to be dirty. But it was as clean as white sand. It's just that its granules were black. And the lagoon looked eerie encircled by the black sand, and the bird-life that waded and swam on it looked oddly out of place. Rather like you were looking at a photo negative.

You trudged together across the sand pointing out birds and chatting as you headed for the kiosk where food and drink were available, and where there were restrooms. It had been quite a long drive since your last stop at the painted church, which had been quaint. Built high back from a cliff, its exterior gave no indication of the beauty within. You had stood with your back to its entrance, facing out to the ocean, letting the balmy breeze ruffle through your hair, and felt the serenity of the isolated location wash over you. Well informed and a good communicator, Bryan had told you that it had been built in 1875 and was the oldest Catholic Church on the island. He'd said there was another painted church, decorated by a priest fifty years ago, past Kilauea, but that it wasn't on your itinerary. Not a fan of churches or art, Paul was glad to hear that. Though he'd agreed that the interior murals were unusual, he'd been more interested in Captain Cook's memorial, which despite its exotic setting had bored you as memorials usually did. Chalk and cheese. You were such opposites. It was weird. Your friends were constantly bemused by it. Yet you were so compatible in many ways.

After a coffee and a snack which you had sitting at a picnic table under the palms beside the kiosk, overlooking a wading-bird filled sheltered part of the lagoon, you returned to the car park where a vendor's van was parked. While artificial and real leis dangled from its awning, postcards flickered in a small rotating frame, and cheap trinkets such as ornamented key chains and pencil tops were jumbled in small baskets, displays of small lava rocks, granules and black sand predominated.

You selected a small packet of pocketed lava granules and black sand. Then you picked up a small lava rock from a tray.

"I'd like to have these. How much are they?"

Bryan shifted his feet uneasily then touched your elbow.

"Madame Pele don't like people taking her lava off the islands. You heard about that yet?"

The vendor scowled at Bryan, and pushed the packets of lava and sand closer to you across the counter.

Half-turning, caught between the two of them, you replied. "No. She's the goddess of the volcano. We know that. We saw a hula dance, at Waimea Falls Park on Oahu, about how she came to Hawaii."

"Right. Well she owns the lava as well."

"So? Why can't we take it home?"

"Because every piece of lava on these islands belongs to her. People who take lumps of lava back home after their holiday are stealing it from her. So she makes 'em have bad luck."

"Really?" You tried to keep the scepticism from your voice. Behind his back Paul smirked, just managing to stifle a laugh. Catching his eye, the vendor grinned conspiratorially, sensing victory and a sale.

"It's a fact. The post office here gets mail every day from people returning their lumps of lava."

"You're joking!"

He shook his head. "No." He was deadly serious.

"But how do they know where it comes from?"

"The people usually say where they got it from, and it is returned there if possible."

"But what about these packets of lava rock, and lava granules?"

He shrugged. "Well it's up to you. But I wouldn't take any home."

"But these people are Hawaiians." I waved my hand in the direction of the vendor, who tried to look busy tidying his counter. "They wouldn't sell it unless it was okay, would they?"

"Well they might have got her permission for these. And it is better than picking it up from the beach yourself. Still." He shook his head doubtfully and walked away.

"What a wet blanket," said Paul, who hadn't really taken to their guide from the outset. "Hurry up. Buy what you want. I want to get on and have some lunch."

"You've just eaten!"

"That was just a snack. I want a proper lunch."

With an exasperated laugh at Paul, you paid the grinning vendor for the lump of lava which you put into your pocket, enjoying the feel of the pumice surface. The packet of cellophaned granules and black sand you put into your bag with the postcards.



Volcanoes

*shades of grey
steaming caldera
sulphurous smoke
sullenly awaiting
eruption.*

*Waiting to create
more black
lava landscape.*

He was deadly serious. Bryan moved to the guard rail of the steam vent and gazed into the rising mist.

“A local woman died in one of these a few weeks ago.”

“Oh my God! How?” You stared into the glowing crack in the rocks, through which steam spasmodically issued, gushing as from a kettle boiling, fading to wisps, then gushing again.

Suddenly, the vent opened, the steam rose from the lava flow glowing below their feet and engulfed them. The woman slipped down into the hell, out of sight, but not out of sound.

“Oh my God!” you repeated, waving at the steam as you jumped back from vent railings. Pale, beaded with moisture, you covered your ears as Paul gazed at you with concern. Embarrassed you dropped your hands, slipping one into your pocket to enclose the lava rock, rhythmically rubbing it with your thumb.

Bryan’s voice sounded a long way away as he answered. “She was using it as a sauna - locals often do. And she slipped and slid in. Her husband tried to reach her but he couldn’t. She screamed and screamed. It was awful.” It

sounded so dramatic and improbable that you hoped he was making it up. You watched his face carefully but he seemed genuine.

Paul turned away in disgust. He hated this sort of thing. But you felt compelled to stay, to listen to the whole tale, to prod him with questions. "Did they get her out, at all?"

"They got her out with a long pole with a hook on it - like a fish-pole. She was scalded to death."

"She didn't go as far as the lava then?"

"Didn't have to. The steam is hot enough." He looked at her, paused, then added. "The *kama'aina* – the locals believe she was being punished by Madame Pele."

The steam reached its arms up, writhing, to encircle the kicking legs of the screaming woman, trying to draw her down, down to the racing lava.

You began to tremble. Behind you someone cackled. Completely unnerved, you turned to confront a wizened old Hawaiian woman grinning toothlessly at you. Straight out of *Hansel and Gretel* except obviously an islander. She raised her hand towards you, entreatingly. "You got a cigarette, *malahini*?"

Speechless, you shook your head at her. As if compelled you turned back to question Bryan further. You needed to know. You needed to act normally. It was obvious that he and Paul didn't see or hear anything unusual. "Why?"

Ignoring your question, Bryan directed your attention to a small building to the left, then to a long low building, hanging on the edge of the Kilauea volcano. "Visitor centre's over there, and the restaurant's over there in the hotel. Volcano House. The volcano observatory's down the road a ways. It's got some great displays telling you all about Madame Pele. I'll take you there after your lunch."

"Great. I'm starving," said Paul, as he set off towards the hotel. You gazed at his departing back and tried to figure out what was wrong. Something was missing. There were only the three of you there - Bryan, Paul and you.

"Where's the old lady gone?"

Bryan looked a little shaken, as he too gazed around.

"You did see her didn't you?" Anxiety crept over you.

“She’s ... er ... probably gone ... er ...” He looked around desperately. “There she is. Over there by the hotel.”

What a relief! As a couple appeared in the doorway of the hotel, you saw the old lady ask them for a cigarette. She seemed to be in luck, as they passed something to her. You watched as she lit it with a flash, the startled looks on the couple’s faces obvious even from a distance. “Boy, that’s some lighter she has.”

Bryan said a little agitatedly, “Let’s go?”

Together, you followed Paul towards the building. The old lady had disappeared again. Creepy! You badly needed to sit down, and coffee and lunch was a good excuse. Not that you thought you would be able to eat anything.

“So why did Madame Pele want to punish this poor woman?”

“For using the vent without her say-so. Only the white locals do it. *Kama’aina* – real Hawaiians would never do such a thing.” He shook his head solemnly.

“Why?”

“Because you always gotta respect Madame Pele. She don’t like people messing round her volcanoes.”

“And the lava vents are part of her volcanoes. I see. Like the lava rock she doesn’t like us to take.”

“Yes.”

“What about people walking across the craters? And bike-riding down the crater rim like they do on Maui? And the scientists who work on the volcanoes - the volcanists, or volcanic geophysicists, or whatever they’re called?”

He shook his head. “They take great risks.” That was all he would say.



They take great risks. You thought about the TV footage you'd seen of volcanic experts clambering over the thin crust of the lava flows to scoop containers of the red glowing molten lava as it passed them, as you gazed through the hotel's picture window at the grey caldera of the Kilauea volcano during lunch. Stretching to the horizon, it was desolate, like a moonscape, but emitting steam and sulphur fumes that indicated the turmoil that you knew lay beneath the surface. There's no way you were going to walk out onto it, even on boardwalks and with a guide. No way.

After lunch, and after taking a panorama of photographs from the Western edge to the Eastern edge of Kilauea's main caldera, Bryan drove you to the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory perched on its rim. It had a great view of the Halemaumau Crater within the Kilauea Crater - a smaller dark-grey hole in the larger light-grey hole. What a totally inadequate word 'hole' was to describe such a huge depression. They looked like impact craters seen in close-up photos of the moon, but were created from within.

As you stood with Paul on the viewing platform, you became aware of the dreadful power of the volcano. Beneath your feet, not too far below the crinkled grey crust, molten lava was rippling and seething. It was overwhelming, frightening, magnificent, terrible, awful in all senses of the word, and because of the sulphur fumes, literally breathtaking. You wanted to flee from it, give the

whole observatory part a miss and return to the lush verdant growth that you had already travelled through. But you couldn't tear yourself away. Hawaii had gripped your soul, this frightful sight the culmination of all the wonderful sights, sounds and smells that had captivated you.

Suddenly your sight focussed on something red out on the caldera. "What's that?" You pointed.

"It looks like a woman all in red," Paul said, then laughed. "Lady in red," he sang, off-key.

"She's dancing! I think she's dancing." Amazed you gazed. "It can't be safe. It's not safe, is it Bryan?"

Bryan glanced furtively out into the sulphurous distance, then shook his head. "It's nothing. No-one. You wanna go into the Observatory. There's lots of facts on volcanoes inside, and videos you can watch." Without waiting for your response he turned and led the way to the entry ramp.

You followed. Yet when you reached the entrance and glanced back to the caldera, the woman in red had vanished. What was the matter with you? Were your eyes playing tricks on you? You kept seeing things not there and hearing things. You shuddered. And Bryan was obviously uneasy about this part of the tour. He'd been quite sunny earlier during the visit to the coffee factory and the orchid nursery. You shrugged. Maybe he'd cheer up again when you left Kilauea.

Paul opened the door and stuck his head out looking for you. "What are you doing out here?"

"Sorry. Just thinking. I'm coming."

Around the walls were murals depicting Madam Pele, fiery, vengeful, and spectacular. Behind a huge screen wall was the large movie screen of a tiny theatre, where documentary footage of erupting volcanoes continued to play. On a long table by the back wall were stacks of various pamphlets, informing the visitors of geological, geographical, volcanic data, and legendary details of Madam Pele and her sisters.

You picked up a large colourful pamphlet that unfolded to expose photos of bubbling lava, ferns growing from black cold lava, red hot lava tubes, a map of the Big Island, and on the reverse side detailed maps of the Hawaii Volcanoes

National Park and the Kilauea Caldera and Chain of Craters. You began to read.

Hawaii Volcanoes National Park

E Pele e!

Goddess of the burning stones.

Life for me. Life for you.

The flowers of fire wave gently.

Here is your offering ...

This is Pele's domain. Pele, a daughter of Haumea the Earth Mother and Wakea the Sky Father, is the goddess of fire, the maker of mountains, melter of rocks, eater of forests, and burner of lands - creator and destroyer both in one. She appears among mortal men sometimes as a beautiful young woman, tempting them, oftener as a wrinkled old hag, testing them. Whatever form she takes, Pele is unpredictable and tempestuous, as only a proud and jealous female can be. She does not ask for love. She demands respect. Here you must "step lightly, for you are on holy ground," the Hawaiians said in days of old.

The mythmakers said that Pele came to the Hawaiian Islands long ago, in flight from a cruel older sister, the goddess of the sea, Na Maka o Kaha'i. Pele went first to Ni'ihau, making a crater home there with her digging stick. Na Maka broke into that shallow pit, forcing Pele to flee again. On Kaua'i she dug a greater house. Na Maka chased her away from there too. And so the pursued Pele ran, from place to place, from O'ahu to Moloka'i, to Lana'i, to Kaho'olawe, to Molokini, and Maui, each in turn; and from each successive home, the unrelenting Na Maka drove her out. At length, weary of being so harried, Pele dug deep and built high on the island of Hawai'i. Here, at last, in these huge fortress-mountains, she has found a refuge from Na maka o Kaha'i, at least for a while.

National Park Service, U S Department of the Interior



*Lava tubes tunnelling
through lush verdant
rainforest
deep in the black
lava landscape.*

Beneath your feet, not too far below the crinkled grey crust, molten lava was rippling and seething. It was hard to believe. You'd completed a long drive along Crater Rim Road, which took you past the Halemaumau crater, across the 1921 lava flow that appeared to spill from the sulphurous floor of the main caldera of Kilauea. After squeezing between Kilauea on your left and Keanakakoi Crater on your right, you arrived at Kilauea Iki Crater, a small caldera attached to the western end of the main caldera, creating a wonky keyhole shape. The thing that struck you most about the drab grey surface below was its lifeless appearance. It was dead. Nothing grew on it.

Turning you faced the lush dense green jungle ironically thriving the other side of the carpark. As you gazed in wonder at the contrasts, a red convertible pulled in beside Bryan's car.

"We meet again!" called Paul.

With a shout of “Hi there,” from Tom and a wave from Becky, they climbed out of their car, sauntered over to join you, then leant on the guard-rail to gaze at the crater below.

“Like, wow!” Tom shook his head in wonder. Paul pulled a face behind his back, miming ‘Like, wow’. Trying not to laugh, yet with a ridiculous sense of relief, you turned your attention back to Bryan who was waiting patiently by your car.

“Seeya.”

“Yeah. Seeya later.” Tom tried to imitate Paul’s accent, then laughed out loud.

Bryan led the way across the carpark to the edge of the jungle, and pointed to a steps and path combination that led downwards. “Down there’s the Thurston Lava Tube. You can walk through it if you want to. It’s part of the tour.”

“How deep is it? Will I be able to get down there?” You knew you had trouble with stairs, both ascending and descending, although ascending was of course worse. While living in the Pilbara, in the NorthWest of Western Australia, during your teens you’d had a number of falls from horses, which had left you with chronic back pain. Misdiagnosed as psycho-somatic pain, your self-belief was undermined, especially as Paul, believing the doctors, doubted that your back was ‘bad’. Another result of the ‘bad’ back was that you weren’t exactly fit. So the steps down to the lava tube were rather daunting. And you were particularly concerned about the return journey to the car park.

He nodded. “It’s quite easy gettin’ down there. You’ll be okay. It’s quite safe.”

“Come on,” said Paul leading the way.

“Aren’t you coming with us?” you asked Bryan.

He shook his head, uneasily. “Nope. I’ve seen it already. I’ll wait for you guys here. Take your time. No need to rush.”

The way down was negotiated steadily but with care, due to the slippery wet moss covering the timber steps, the damp ground between them, and the reinforcing rocks. Bordering it was lush jungle - no other word for it. Palms growing tall amidst fallen palms covered with creepers and moss, and surrounded by ferns of many varieties. You could hear water trickling

somewhere within the undergrowth, and birds singing and calling in the green light. It was wonderful. Looking down at the black hole he could see below, ahead of you Paul stepped onto a steep metal-grid stairway, then continued steadily down. Unsteadily you followed, gripping the iron railings against the vertigo, and taking it one slippery step at a time. As you neared the metal-grid bridge that spanned a gully and led immediately into the darkness, Tom and Becky clattered past you, then past Paul. He was none too pleased to receive a pat on the back from Tom as he leapt past.

At regular distances, dim lights were strung along the inside cylindrical length of the glistening jet-walled lava tube. Also the inner surface was unbelievably black. In the darkness, the sound of Tom and Becky's voices echoed eerily from round the corner out of sight. Turning, you could see the green light and fern-fronds in the entrance. The tube walls were slippery and wet, with surprising patches of Maidenhair Ferns growing on them near the lights. No longer within sight of any opening, you splashed uneasily through puddles on the uneven tube-floor. Without the lights there would be total darkness.

"It's mine ... it's mine ... it's mine ... give it baaaaaaaaaaaaack ..."

You spun around startled by the whisper of voice. "What was that?!"

"What was what?" Paul was close behind you.

"Did you hear that? What was it? Was it you? 'Cause if it was it's not funny!"

"What are you talking about. I heard nothing, and now that the energetic wonders have gone, we're alone."

"It's mine ... it's mine ... give it baaaaaaaaaaaaack ..."

You were looking right at Paul now, and he definitely hadn't said anything. Not only that but he hadn't heard anything either because he was watching you closely as you broke into a sweat and your head jerked from side to side in an effort to locate the source of the voice.

"Are you okay, Di?" He reached out his hand and rubbed your upper arm, gently, concern in his voice and touch.

"Yes, yes. It's just ..." You shook your head, then as fear and claustrophobia gripped you, the need to get out became paramount. Turning blindly away from Paul, you hurried on leaving him behind.

“What’s your problem?” Paul called after you as you rounded a bend in front.

“I just want to get out of it. What if the lava suddenly gushes into it again?”

Paul’s relieved laughter ricocheted along the tunnel walls behind you, following you. “That is hardly likely to happen. People come in here all the time.”

“Well I don’t like it. And I’ll bet Madame Pele doesn’t like it either. I just want to get out, quickly. Hurry up!”

“They wouldn’t let us in here if it wasn’t safe!” His distant voice sounded exasperated. Too bad. He could dawdle all he liked, but you were out of there!

By the time you rounded the last bend and saw daylight ahead, you were practically scurrying. Like a frightened rabbit.

Out in the air once more you breathed deeply in an effort to calm yourself before Paul to joined you.

“Here I am you scaredy cat.” Paul laughed as you turned away into the noise and smell of the humid jungle. “Where’s Tom and Becky?”

You relaxed as the slight breeze lifted your hair from your damp face.

“I don’t know. I wasn’t looking for them. I hated it in there.” You suppressed a shudder. You were drawn to its amazing walls that were so black - like jet. But that voice, that menacing whisper, what the hell was that? And why could only you hear it? “I couldn’t breathe in there. It was so claustrophobic. And eerie - creepy. Didn’t you think so?”

“Nuh.” There was no doubt about him. He had no sensitivity to atmosphere. No wonder he didn’t hear the voice. He was dead to such things. “It was just a lava tube.”

The path ascending to the car park was less steep, with less steps than that descending into the gaping entrance of the tube. So you were able to enjoy the gradual climb through the overhanging, bird and insect call echoing, fresh sweet organic aroma rising, dripping dense foliage.

Alone, of course, as Paul had bounced off up the path hoping to catch Tom and Becky, with a shout of “See you at the top, slow poke” over his shoulder.



*Open plains of vivid green
Cattle land.
Sunami-washed towns
rainbow cascades
fluted cliffs;
Orchids, Hibiscus, and African Tulips
thrive upon black
lava landscape.*

Bordering it was lush jungle. The road threaded its way along ridges, between overhanging banks, and across bridges over gushing streams.

“You want a snap of a waterfall?” Bryan broke the silence. You’d been gazing mesmerized by the incongruity of the road and the jungle – one so manmade, the other so uncontrolled. You jumped. In the back seat Paul snorted as he awoke from a doze.

“That’d be great. Where?”

Bryan pulled to a stop just off the edge of the road at the start of a bridge. You clambered out, stretched, then moved to the centre of the bridge. Paul followed with the camera which he passed to you. You could hear water falling, splashing, but the only fall you could see was away upstream, a ribbon of light against the foliage. This was ablaze with colour as African Tulip trees, Hibiscus and Bougainvillea flourished in the humid air and rich volcanic soil.

“Is that it?”

You pointed upstream in disbelief. What a let down. Surely Bryan hadn't stopped the car for this hard to see let alone photograph falls. You shrugged and snapped it anyway – it would be a good example of the coloured jungle. You turned to see Bryan coming along the bridge towards you, a puzzled look on his face. He pointed over the bridge rail to the left, back towards the side of the jungle adjacent to the car.

You looked, then laughed aloud, shaking your head. How could you have both missed it. You'd heard it and still missed it. Cascading down from the jungle a couple metres from the bridge was a very pretty waterfall. It was not particularly tall nor very wide, but it splashed lazily over rocks from tiny pool to pool, down to the fast-flowing stream. Feeling like foolish tourists you took several snaps of the fall, partly to appease Bryan, and partly from embarrassment. Laughing, you returned to the car and drove on.

As you passed through Hilo, Bryan told you about the huge tsunami that had washed away the town through which you had just passed.

“The townfolks climbed onto the schoolhouse roof and hung on tight while the tsunami washed over them. They didn't have a lot of warning. The sea just started to go out for miles, like someone pulled out a plug. Folks who realized what was going on got out of town quick, but lots of folks didn't hear the sirens.”

“Warning sirens?”

He nodded.

“Were there any deaths?”

“Yeh. Quite a few. It was very sad.”

“How high was it?”

You stared out the window at the homes nestling white against the green pasture. Picturebook stuff.

“Way over the top of all the houses. Wiped it all out. The whole town had to be rebuilt.” He smiled grimly.

“But what if it happens again? How can they feel safe?”

“It was a long time ago. And they've gotten warning systems now. That should give time to get everyone out.” Again the smile. You wonder if he might

be trying to scare you on purpose. Perhaps you shouldn't have told him you love the island so much you'd love to live there.

As you drove across the green ranch-land of the central plain, Bryan said, "That's the Parker Ranch. It's the second largest cattle ranch in the United States."

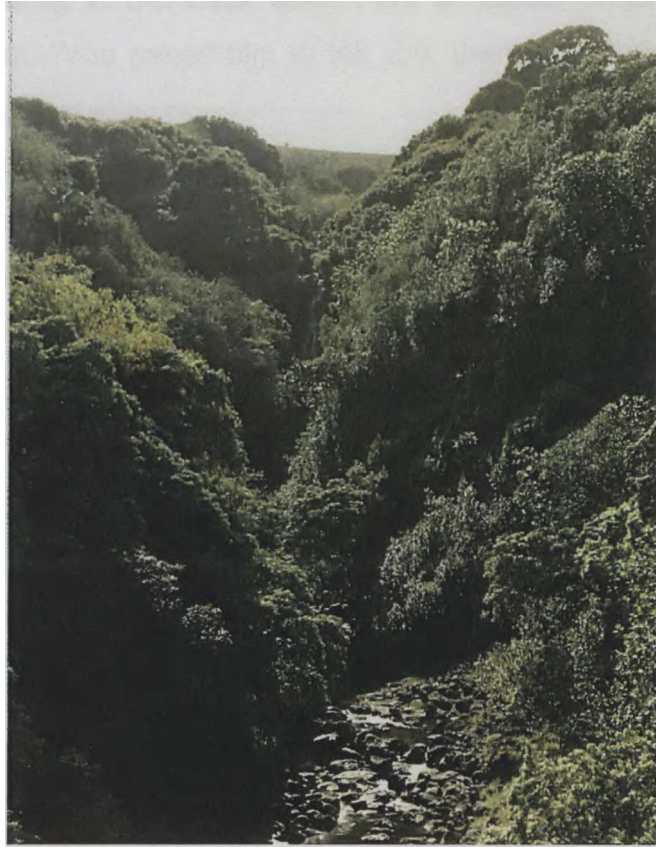
"What! Here on the island? Aren't there huge ranches in Texas?"

"Yeh. But this is the second largest under the American flag. This area is called the Waimea-Kamuela district."

"It's strange to think of tropical islands being large enough to have cattle ranches on them, let alone the largest in America. I always think of them as little, that you can walk around in an afternoon."

Bryan chuckled. "We have those of course, but they are off shore from the main islands. And Hawai'i is the biggest of the Hawaiian chain. It is still growing because Kilauea and Mauna Loa are still erupting."

"Yes, I realise that. Besides we saw by our Circle Island trip around Oahu that the islands are not small. It's just I hadn't expected there to be cattle ranches on them. And I guess that's partly because I expected them to be all jungle and mountains."



Picturebook stuff. No doubt about it. The afternoon sun sparkled thousands of star-flashes from the surface of the ocean beside their clifftop road, and gold-glazed the jungle foliage behind them.

In your pocket you fondled the pumice surface of your lava rock. It already was the best memento you had of the islands so far. You were so glad you'd bought it. You glanced at Bryan beside you, relaxed at the wheel.

"Tell us more about Madame Pele, Bryan. Please." Surely you were far enough away from Kilauea now.

"Jeez, Di," was all Paul had to say from his back seat.

Bryan hesitated then said, "Well. There's the main story they tell about her. It's common knowledge. It should be ok to tell you that one."

"Are there stories about her that aren't for tourists to hear?"

"Sure. Anyways, I can tell you this one. Madame Pele is real jealous and fiery, you know. She can also change herself."

"I read that in a brochure back there. She's sometimes a beautiful young girl and sometimes an old hag." You stopped abruptly as you flashed back to the old woman who'd asked for a cigarette.

Bryan glanced at your frozen face then back to the road in front of him. Meanwhile, unseeing in the back seat, Paul snapped. "For Pete's sake, Di. Don't interrupt him. You asked him to tell you, then you straight away interrupt him. It's rude."

Paul was obviously very tired. It had been a long day. And of course he was right. You hated it when he was right.

"Sorry, Bryan," you apologise. "I won't interrupt you again."

"No problem." After a pause he continued. "The story is about how Pele fell in love with a mortal. She and her brothers and sisters who live with her in her fiery caves, all went down to Puna coast to bathe and ride the surf. 'Cause they'd taken on human forms to do this, they experienced hunger and gathered fish and squid and seaweeds to eat. While the others were amusing themselves, Pele in the shape of an old woman went to sleep under a shady *hala*-tree. Her favourite sister, Hiiaka', sat beside her fanning her with a *kahili*."

"What's a *kahili*?" You had asked before you remembered you weren't supposed to interrupt. "Sorry."

"That's okay. A *kahili* is a feather plume. Hiiaka' was Pele's younger sister, and she lived with Pele under Kilauea. Her full name was Hiiaka-I-ka-pali-o-Pele. Pele told her not to wake her for any reason, no matter how long she slept."

"Hiiaka-I-ka-pali-o-Pele?" you pronounced slowly. "Is that right?"

"Yes. You have a good ear for the language."

"I love it. It is so musical. Anyway, go on about Pele."

"Right. As soon as she was asleep she heard the sound of beating drums. Leaving her sleeping body with her sister, she assumed her spirit form and flew towards the sound. She passed over Maui and on to Kauai, where she stood on the peak of Haupu. She saw that the sound came from the beach at Kaena. It was the sound of the *pahu-hula* beaten by the Prince of Kauai, Lohiau."

"What's a *pahu-hula*? Is it a drum?"

"Yeh. Lohiau was famous for his parties, and all the beautiful women were dancing there. He was very handsome himself and the best dancer and musician there. His favourite god was Laka-kane, god of the *hula* who had caused mischief by making Pele hear the drums in her sleep.

“Changing herself into a beautiful woman Pele joined the dancers, fascinating the Prince with her charm, talents and modesty till he fell in love with her. He took her as his wife and lived happily with her for a few days as in a dream. But the time came for her return to Hawaii. She made him promise to remain true to her, and promised to return for him soon, then left. The wings of the wind wafted her back to the shores of Puna, where her sister patiently waited seated beside her still.

“Lohiau was heartbroken and refused to eat. So he died. His people were anxious about his strange death, but an old *kuala* – that’s a prophet – had recognized that Pele was an immortal, and said that she had taken his spirit away. He was kept wrapped in state in the royal house.

“Meanwhile Pele’s absence had caused the fires of Kilauea to die, which pleased her siblings. Upon awakening she rushed away to rekindle the fires with one breath, granting her sister, Hiiaka’ permission to spend a few days on the beach with her best friend, Hopoe, a young woman of Puna.

“People believe that Pele didn’t mean to return to Kauai when she left, but her memory of Lohiau nagged her till she decided to send for him. After asking all her other sisters who refused to fetch him, she asked her younger sister, Hiiaka’. She agreed to make the hazardous journey to Kauai, providing Pele looked after her friend, Hopoe.”

“Why was the journey hazardous for Hiiaka’? Couldn’t she travel as Pele had done?” You were following the story closely. Paul, however, not able to hear the narrative clearly from behind Bryan, had gone to sleep.

“Nope. She and a wise servant woman, called Pauo-Palae, had to travel, as mortals, across land and seas to collect him, ‘cause he was mortal. So they got tired and faced the same perils that mortals would in such a crossing. They were also attacked by lots of monsters and demons on the journey. But Pele had given Hiiaka’ some of her own powers so she could fight them.

“When they finally reached Kauai, they found that Lohiau was dead. So after nightfall, Hiiaka’ entered the death chamber and restored his spirit to his body. When he was fit and well again, he told his bewildered people that he owed his life to the gods, and that he was going to visit his wife on the island of Hawaii. During their journey, Hiiaka’ climbed the Kaala mountains in Oahu and

gazed towards Hawaii. She was upset to see that her lovely *lehua* and *hala* groves near Puna beach had been destroyed by a lava flow.

“Pele, jealous and impatient for her sister’s return, had destroyed her favourite place in rage. She believed that Hiiaka’ had fallen in love with the prince, and angrily waited for her. As they traveled over land towards Kilauea, Hiiaka’ learned that her friend Hopoe had suffered a terrible fate, being burned by lava and turned to stone. Hiiaka’ angry at Pele, threw her arms around Lohiau and warned him of his doom. Though he called to Pele to tell her he had been true, she ordered her sisters to slowly turn Lohiau to lava rock. Hiiaka’ could only help him by numbing the pain.

“Hiiaka’ went after his spirit. And Paoa, Lohiau’s chief who had come with them, stood on the edge of Kilauea and abused cruel Pele, threw in unworthy offerings, and defied her power. He expected death for doing so but was angry with Pele for not believing the innocence of his prince.

“But Pele is very unpredictable. She refused to harm this loyal man. After listening to his tale, she forgave Hiiaka’ and restored Lohiau to life once more.”

“So she might be jealous and bad-tempered and impatient, but she can also be just, and compassionate?”

“Yeh.”

“Is that all?”

“All for now. We are nearly at the hotel. There are many more stories about Pele. And I made it shorter so you’d hear the end.”

“Thanks Bryan. It was fascinating. I will try to look it up when I get home. I might even be able to buy a book on her here.”

“Yeh. You might.”

At this moment you pulled into the driveway of your hotel. You woke Paul up and climbed out. After dragging himself out of the car, Paul stretched, and yawned, then rummaged in his wallet. Handing Bryan a ten dollar tip, he thanked him for an interesting day. You thanked Bryan with a little more sincerity than Paul, especially thanking him for all the information he gave you during the tour, then waved as he climbed back into the car and drove away.

“Well, that was sure great,” you said. “Boy, am I hungry. Where shall we go for tea?”

Paul chuckled. "You always come round to food." You poked your tongue out in response and pushed through the doors into the lobby.



*Vibrant sunsets
in ash-filled sky
silhouette canoe riders.
Gas torches flare
in growing dark
guitarists entertain
the overwhelmed tourists.
Hotel complexes, menageries
nestle in black
lava landscape.*

You always came round to food. It was true. It had been a long day, with only a snack and lunch for sustenance, with the latter hours ago at the volcano. After dropping off your day's accumulations, and using the bathroom, you headed out of the hotel towards the boardwalk. There had to be a restaurant down there, so that you didn't have to resort to the large 'chain restaurant' up the hill by the petrol station, opposite the main shopping centre.

You found one out on the end of the boardwalk, its table and chairs spread casually beside the burning gas flares that lined the edge of the decking. Seawater, tide driven, rippled along a breakwater to splash against the wall at the base of the boardwalk, sending spray upwards in picturesque formations, its mist drifting across the deck and over those sitting near the edge. In its usual

spectacular way, the sun slowly sank into the ocean in front of them, sparkling its surface along a golden path, and reflecting off the fine airborne volcanic ash filling the sky. As it sank the colour slowly modified from gold through to the deepest rose.

Crossing this now horizonless rose surface, were long dark silhouettes.

“What are those?” You pointed out to sea.

After squinting into the sunset, Paul answered. “I think they are long canoes. There’s quite a few of them.”

“Do you think they’re racing? It looks like they’re racing.”

“They might be. How the hell would I know.”

“Okay. Keep your shirt on. I’ll ask the waiter.” You poked your tongue out at Paul, just as the waiter materialized at your side. Caught out you laughed, and, after a moment, Paul joined in.

“Serves you right.”

You grinned at the waiter, then enquired about the boats. He replied that they were teams practising for a big race the following week, then took your order, and dematerialized behind your back.

“How does he do that?!” You laughed.

A Hawaiian guitarist sitting at the end of the decking, surrounded by amplifiers and microphones, began to strum Hawaiian songs – well Polynesian actually – on a slide electric guitar. You recognized a Maori song amongst them, followed by songs from Elvis’s *Blue Hawaii* movie. Singing along, you allowed yourself to be taken over by the romanticism of the setting. What more could you ask for – a tropical sunset, Hawaiian music, flaming lanterns, water lapping and splashing, icy lemonade, tasty food when it was served, and the man you loved. You sighed.

Paul shook his head, laughing at you.

“What?” You knew what. Honestly you were chalk and cheese. He didn’t have a romantic bone in his body. All he was ever interested in was sport, sport, and thrice sport.

“You. You’re hopeless.”

Killjoy. You turned your rapt gaze towards the sliver of sun as it flashed green, then disappeared.

Sunset vibrations.

Lie quietly

intertwined

never apart

Magic hands

holding face

breast

Eyes watching

evaluating needs

'Are you okay?'

Hands in hair

fingers cradling head

lips touching

teasing

'Again?'

Build up build up

heightened response

'You want me to go down?'

Nine out of ten.

Wetness flowing

both ways

shivery sensations

shaft slides slowly sinking

pleasurable spears

shattering control

This way that way many ways

to lie entwined, once more

'Never leave me'

Ten out of ten.

He waited till Di left the room. Leaping from the kitchen chair Paul snatched the rock off the corner of the dresser, flung the back door open and chucked the rock out into the rockery beneath the kitchen window. Full of rocks and weeds, it was the ideal hiding place for it.

By the time Di returned to the kitchen he was sitting at the table, once more engrossed in a journal. She knew something was wrong straight away. It was like a shift in the force, a silent cry for help. Talk about a touch of *Star Wars* - it was really uncanny. Creepy! But she knew straight away, and she was right. Her rock was nowhere to be seen.

“Where’s my rock? What’ve you done with it?” Di glared at Paul, furious, challenging.

“What? What are you on about?” He tried to look nonchalant, but she wasn’t buying it.

“You know very well what. My rock was on the dresser and now it’s not. And before you try to accuse me of mislaying it, forget it. You did something with it. I felt it.” That shook him.

“You what?”

“I .. felt .. it,” Di repeated slowly, as to a child.

“You know what’s wrong with you, don’t you? You’re nuts. You’re losing the plot completely. It’s a rock, for Pete’s sake. How could you feel it?”

“I don’t know, but I did. It sort of cried out to me when you did whatever you did to it. Now hand it over.” She’d just about had enough of this. She knew who was losing the plot and it wasn’t her.

“I don’t know where it is. I chucked it out the door. It’s gone.”

Rushing to the back door Di turned on the patio light, which shone feebly onto the garden beds and lawn that flanked the patio. Where was it? She needed a torch. Returning to the kitchen to fetch the big one that lived on the top of the fridge, she scowled at a grinning Paul who sat smugly, his folded arms protecting his chest.

“I don’t know why I stay with you, sometimes. We have nothing in common. And you act like a child when I don’t give in and do what you want me to. Honestly!” As she shoved the back door open, he laughed at her angry outburst. Typical. He never seemed to realise when she was serious.

Back outside Di shone the torch around frantically. Then she felt it again. In a daze she turned the light onto the rockery. The rock glowed in the beam as if it were the only thing in the garden. Hurriedly she rescued it.

“You’re okay now. I’ve got you.” she soothed.

Immediately there came a crash from the kitchen, and a cry of pain. When Di entered the room, Paul lay sprawled on his back in a tangle of chair and table cloth.

“What happened? Did you slip? Were you swinging on the chair again? I’ve warned you about that.” She sounded like his mum.

“I don’t know. One minute I was sitting here, the next I was on the floor. I’ve hurt my back, too.”

“Oh, poor you. You know the fairies made you fall. For throwing my rock away. Serves you right.” It was a standing family joke - if you hurt yourself the fairies did it to punish you for something. But it seemed very appropriate just then. And Di had a funny feeling that she was closer to the truth than she cared to admit.

Still, she helped Paul to his feet, sat him down and made a fuss.

Disappointment..

The heat of him
 near her
The nearness of him
 heating her.
He takes her face
 in his hands
His lazy eyes watch
 her hunger for him
 through lowered lashes.

His hands
 caress
 press
 seduce her.

Fingering of nipples
A glow within ripples
Lips merging
Tongues searching
 passion urging
 flesh against flesh.

Incompletion
 nonfulfilment
 frustration
 resentment
 disappointment
Murmured apology

They lie in the dark
 side by side
 apart
 alone.

The rock glowed in the beam as if it were the only thing in the garden. The potted palms around it seemed to shine with reflected light. Di tried turning off the overhead fluoro light and shutting the blind, but it made no difference. The rock glowed amongst the foliage. She had to admit it was a bit spooky. But it was hers and she was not afraid of it. In fact it was kind of beautiful, and definitely special. Maybe no-one else would notice. She moved the new potted profusely-flowering Hibiscus plant, with its gold-edged deep-pink feathery plates and bright gold crown of stamens, closer to the corner of her desk to draw attention away from the filing cabinet.

After knocking, Jan opened the door and looked in. “Wow! What a gorgeous plant. What is it?”

“A Hibiscus. It’s called Hawaiian Sunset. I couldn’t resist it. See the back of the flower is a deep gold. The sunsets in Hawaii were just like that. They started gold and gradually changed through all the pinks until they were burgundy. The volcanic ash in the air caused it.”

“What do you mean?”

“It seems that each particle of ash reflects the sunlight as it sinks beneath the horizon. We had similar sunsets up North in Port Hedland after that volcano went off in the Philippines.”

Jan delicately touched one of the petals with the tip of her finger. “It’s beautiful.”

“Did you want something?” Di was anxious to get her out of the office before she noticed the rock. So far she only had eyes for the plant.

“Oh, yes. Sorry. I wanted to know if you were coming to lunch. I was just on my way.” She smiled.

Di glanced at her watch, then nodded. “I’ll be right with you. I have to go to the ladies first. Keep a seat for me at your table. I won’t be long.”

“Okay. By the way, nice shirt.” Jan left the room. She was obviously trying to make an effort to be friendly, to act as though there were no problem between them. Thank goodness for that. Maybe things would become normal again. Di grabbed her rock, glowing but still cool, from its pot and thrust it into her skirt pocket. She could feel it through the fabric against her hip.

When Di entered the lunch-room Jan waved ostentatiously from a table near the window. It was really weird. As she progressed across the room the babble of voices faded away into silence. It was like a wave that crossed the room with her. Everyone was staring at her. At first she thought it was her Hawaiian shirt that held their gaze – it

wasn't exactly the correct Corporate image. But she didn't care. Bert couldn't sack her because of what she chose to wear to work. That would smack of discrimination. She glanced down to see her skirt pocket was glowing. Horrified, she quickly plunged her hand into the pocket to enclose the rock, and gave a wobbly laugh.

“Silly me. I left my little torch on. I wonder how long that's been on.” When further explanation seemed expected she added. “I carry it with me so I can see to unlock the front door when I get home. I can't seem to turn it off. It must be jammed. I'll look at it later.” The other girls at the table laughed, and the room gradually relaxed, until the noise of voices and cutlery returned to normal.

Di sat jammed hard up against the table while she ate the lunch she'd fortunately brought from home. She didn't know how she'd have managed if she'd had to front up to the counter with a tray, with one hand in her pocket. It was her fault though. She should have left the rock in her office.

She had to admit it was a bit spooky. Actually, it was a lot spooky. Not only did she have a rock that scared unflappable people like Paul and Jan, but now it glowed - all the time. And when she looked away from it, when she was concentrating on something else, in her peripheral vision Di could see a haze around its glow, sense a presence lurking beside it. But when she looked back to try to see what it was, the rock glowed as before. Weird.

Paul tapped at the door as he opened it and slid into the room. Quickly shutting the door, he whispered, "I'm not supposed to be here."

"What?" Now what! Di looked at his pasty face.

"I said I was going to a meeting. I had to come and hear what you had to say about lunch today. There's all sorts of rumours ..."

"Oh for Pete's sake! I told the girls what the problem was."

"Well?"

"Well it was my little torch that I use to unlock the front door. It was in my pocket and it wouldn't turn off. That's all." She stared at his disbelieving face. "I've fixed it now."

"Crap!! You don't use a torch at the front door. You go in through the side door in the garage. You can bullshit to these people, but I live with you. Or had you forgotten?"

"There's no need to be sarcastic." Di looked away. "Or rude."

"So?"

"So what!"

"So what's your explanation?" When she said nothing, he added, "You know Di, you make it hard for me too - to go on working here. People think I'm in on it with you - whatever it is."

Suddenly she was overwhelmed with guilt, remorse, shame. It was Paul's workplace first. He only got her the job so she could save money to go to Hawaii again. And look how she was treating him. Standing up, she circled her desk and embraced him contritely.

"Now will you tell me what's going on?" he asked gently.

"You won't believe it. And you won't like it either." Di crossed to the cabinet, moved the Hibiscus plant, extracted the rock and revealed it glowing on the palm of her hand. He gasped. He goggled. "It's been doing that for a while now."

“But how?” He extended a finger to touch the rock, but recoiled, as if stung, before he reached it.

“Can you see anything else? About the rock I mean?” she asked, hopefully. Perhaps he could help her work out what the haze was, the emanation, the presence. She knew she talked to it as if it were alive, but she didn’t really believe that it was. Yet there was no doubt that there was a feeling of presence.

“Oh my God, Di. You’ve got to get rid of it. You have to send it back.” Paul was tight-faced, adamant, almost angry.

“But I like it, Paul. It feels like it belongs to me. Why do you feel so threatened by it? I don’t understand.”

“It’s evil. It has to go back.”

“Okay. I realise it’s amazing. And if I wanted to, I could probably sell the story of it to one of the newspapers. But I wouldn’t do that. It’s private. It’s mine. I’m keeping it. We’ll just have to work out where to keep it so no-one else notices.”

Paul backed away shaking his head. “You’re nuts, Di. I’ll tell you one thing. You aren’t bringing it home again and that’s final. I won’t have it in the house.” He turned at the door. “So make up your mind, and get rid of it.”

“You sound like you’ve made it up for me.” Di was furious. And she was quietly pleased that she’d managed to get the last word in this time.

There was no doubt that there was a feeling of presence. It accompanied Di, and the rock, wherever she went. And people conspicuously avoided her, at work, in the street, even in her local shopping centre. Strangers would look up from their trolleys as they approached her in an aisle, then shy away, about turn, and retrace their steps to select another aisle. At first she thought that individuals were just acting oddly. But then as the incidence increased Di realised that their reactions were in response to her presence. Initially she shrugged it off as not her problem. Then she found herself muttering “Stuff them!” whenever it occurred. She’d purposely follow them down the aisle and around into their new one, speeding up as they did - virtually pursuing them out of the shop, deriving considerable enjoyment and satisfaction from the activity.

Paul caught her at it one Thursday night as Di late-night-shopped after work. Despite arranging to meet her at the Lotto kiosk in the shopping centre, arriving early, he entered the supermarket to find her. The strange behaviour of the other shoppers, scurrying along with their trolleys, all avoiding entering one aisle, drew his attention. As he inquisitively approached the aisle a woman, dragging a crying child by the hand, rushed blindly out nearly crashing into him. With a hurried “Sorry,” she ducked her head and manoeuvred the trolley with amazing one-handed dexterity around him and towards the check-out. As, accompanied by the palpable presence, she rushed headlong in pursuit from the aisle’s entrance, Di ran smack into him. He recoiled, shocked.

“Di! What are you doing?”

She laughed. “Shopping. What does it look like I’m doing?” Realising that she’d left herself open, she hurriedly added. “Now you’re here, you can help me.”

Paul took another step backwards, then looked around embarrassed in case anyone was watching. They were. Everyone in the shop had stopped to see what would happen. The noise of voices and item scanners and tills had slowly subsided. The silence in the crowded supermarket was eerie, the expectation palpable.

“What have you been doing, Di,” Paul hissed. He seemed to gather his resolve and pass the safety barrier of the shopping trolley to reach her side. Taking her arm he propelled her back into the relative privacy of the aisle, the trolley rumbling and wavering in their wake. Slowly the background noise resumed, though a little subdued.

Di shook her arm free. “I’ve been shopping, I said. What is your problem? There’s no need to cause a scene. I shop every week, or hadn’t you noticed?”

He looked at her steadily, shaking his head slowly. “Di, this has got to stop. Now.” He spoke ominously, firmly, quietly.

She tried to sidestep his serious attitude. “What? The shopping? Willingly.” She grinned. “You want to do it from now on?”

“Don’t be bloody obtuse. This is not funny, Di.” When she remained silent, he continued. “What were you doing to that woman? She looked terrified.”

“Serve her right. Serve them all bloody right!”

“What did she do to you? What did they all do, Di?”

“I was teaching them not to avoid me.” As she said it, the significance of what she was saying struck her as ridiculous, petty, downright puerile. She gasped and looked at Paul. He took her shoulders in his hands and gazed into her face, then nodded. He could see that she understood. Di looked away, as tears began to roll down her cheeks.

“Everyone avoids me, and it makes me so mad.” She wiped her eyes with the back of her hand.

“Well, that’s your own fault for carrying that damn rock everywhere you go. I told you to send it back, Di, but you won’t be told.” He turned to glare at the nosy shoppers gathering at the end of the aisle.

“I know. But it wants to stay with me. Besides, I think it’s alive somehow.” She hurried on not daring to look at his face. “I feel it. In fact I can almost see it at times. Can’t you?” Paul didn’t answer her. “Don’t you catch a glimpse of something or someone out of the corner of your eye?”

Roughly he took her arm again. “Let’s get out of here. We’ll discuss this at home.” He propelled her smartly to the nearest checkout where other shoppers gave way without a murmur. Di just glared at them, put her shopping through, ignored the checkout girl’s flustered scanning mistakes, and stalked out ahead of Paul, leaving him to carry the grocery bags to his car.

“See you home then,” she sniped over her shoulder, and marched through the parting crowds out into the car-park.

Resentment . .

*They lie in the dark
side by side
apart
alone.*

*He lies motionless
feigning sleep.*

*She reaches
running apologetic fingertips
across his bare chest
along his downy arm.*

*He remains unnaturally still,
refusing a response.*

*She tries again
venturing her palm
onto his smooth belly.*

*He tightens the sheet
denying access.*

*She recoils
masking her emotions
with shallow breaths.*

*They lie in the dark
side by side
apart
alone.*

“Don’t you catch a glimpse of something or someone out of the corner of your eye?” That’s what she’d asked Paul. But he hadn’t answered her, and refused to discuss the notion when they got home from shopping. Well, as far as Di was concerned, he could do all the bloody shopping from now on. It was no loss to her. But it didn’t solve the problem of people at work. Stuff them. As Paul would say, she didn’t give a ‘fat rats’ about any of them. The only one who mattered there was the white slug, Bert. Di had to keep in sweet with him. To do that she had to work extra hard and make sure that all her work was in on time - early if possible. She had to be indispensable to the company.

Dressed and ready to face work armed with this new attitude, Di entered the kitchen to prepare breakfast. She had coffee and porridge in winter, coffee and cereal in summer, while Paul just had coffee all year round. He didn’t eat till lunch time. She didn’t know how he did it. If she’d tried that her stomach would rumble all morning and she wouldn’t concentrate. He believed breakfast was a waste of good sleeping time, only getting up fifteen minutes before he was due to leave.

Her rock sat on the dresser in a pot-plant which had become its own at home, just as the one on the filing cabinet was its home at work. Beside it stood a shimmering young Hawaiian woman. As Di stood ‘rooted to the spot’, gaping, staring, rubbing her eyes in disbelief - all those cliched actions which, when they actually happen to a person, prove such apt descriptions – the young woman smiled at her. Reassurance flooded her system, warmth invaded her chilled body and mind, and she moved confidently to greet her.

“Aloha.”

“Aloha, wahine.”

Di smiled happily at her and to herself. Wow. She looked away, and began to make the coffee - milk and water in the mug, into the microwave, set the time and press start, then put the kettle on for Paul’s black coffee. Slowly Di turned back to see if she were really there. The woman stood there still smiling, no glimpse from the corner of her eye now.

There was a sudden clatter as Elros, hearing Di’s movements in the kitchen, entered through the cat-flap to demand his breakfast. At first he followed his usual breakfast behaviour, winding himself in and out of her legs, talking to her loudly. When she didn’t immediately respond he glanced around, then stiffened with a spiky coat, as he saw the vision. Di knew it was real. Even the cat could see her. “It’s okay, Puss-puss.

She won't hurt you." Di knew that too. She wouldn't hurt her, and Di believed she wouldn't hurt those she loved. Mind you, she wasn't sure how she'd react to Paul. Or for that matter how Paul was going to react to her, though Di had a fair idea.

Eyes fixed on her, Elros slunk warily across the room towards the safety of his cat-flap. With a hiss he banged out of the kitchen and scampered along the patio and into the garden.

"*Pupule popoki.*" Laughter bubbled in her throat. Di turned to look at her. Behind her the microwave beeped impatiently.

"Why is he afraid of you?" Di asked. "And who are you?" Di knew who she was, really. She belonged to her lava rock. There was only one person she could be.

"I am Pele."

Di exhaled her excitement. "Why are you here?"

"You know why I am here. You know what you must do."

Di looked at her rock quietly waiting in the foliage. She loved her rock. She didn't want to lose it.

"I love my rock. I want to keep it. If I keep it will you stay?"

"I must stay till you do what you must do."

Di gazed at her shimmering rainbow colours across the room. She was so beautiful, her dark eyes glistening, her oval face smooth, her tawny skin glowing, her full lips alluring, her black thick hair cascading over her shoulders and down behind her curvaceous body. Stunning. Di wanted to touch her, to feel that skin, to insert her fingers into her hair, to kiss her lips.

"Is coffee ready?" Paul thrust into the room noisily banging the door. Di jumped. He stopped, reacting to the sight of Pele with the expected clichéd response. Di laughed nervously, aware that not too long ago she'd looked that ridiculous too. Except, surely she hadn't goggled, and gurgled as he was doing.

"It's okay, Paul." Di tried to reassure him.

Pele, looking at him, smiling seductively, outstretched her hand to him. "*Aloha, kane.*" He sat down with a thump into a kitchen chair.

"Who...? What ...? Who is she?" It took him great effort to ask.

"Paul, meet Madam Pele," Di said formally.

"For fuck sake, Di. What the hell is going on here?"

"Calm down, Paul. I told you. This is Pele - you know, the Goddess of the volcano and the lava. We learned about her in Hawaii."

Not taking his eyes off her for a second, like Elros, Paul rose and sidled around the kitchen to stand beside Di at the counter. "I know who Pele is. But what the hell is she doing here in my kitchen, in my house - in Australia?"

"She's come for my lava rock."

"I might have known. I s'pose she came here in the bloody thing, too."

Looking across at her, Di asked, "Is that right? Is that how you came here? Did you come with us in my rock?"

Smiling she nodded. "*Ae, wahine*. I am in all my lava, wherever it lies, wherever it goes. It is mine alone, and none shall possess it but me."

"For Christ's sake give her the bloody thing back Di, and get her out of our kitchen. Get her out of our lives."

"But if the rock stays, she will stay too, Paul, and she is so beautiful. Don't you think?"

Paul glanced at her then started as if seeing her for the first time. "She might be lovely, Di, but there's something else too." He shook his head as if to clear his vision, then gazed at Pele again. "I don't know, Di. There's more to her than just beauty. She's dangerous."

"How can she be dangerous here, Paul? There are no volcanoes here. Besides, I love her, and I want her to stay. No wonder I loved my rock. She was inside it all the time."

"I can't stay arguing about this any longer. I'm off to work. I suggest you stay home today and sort this out. I won't be pleased if I come home and find her still here." Breaking the eye contact with Pele, Paul strode from the room, slamming the kitchen door behind him.

Di pulled a face at him through the kitchen window. "Yes, my lord and master. Not!"

The Hawaiian sunset glowed up into her face as she gazed at the amazing sequence of shots she'd captured as the sun had sunk into the ocean as they'd dined. Pity she hadn't managed to capture the green flash on film as the last fragment of sun settled behind the sea. The guitarist had played *Aloha Oi*, the palm fronds had rustled in the evening breeze, the oil lamp flames flickered and smoked, as the magic of Hawaii captured her senses.

That had been the turning point - she knew that now. That was when she felt that Hawaii was hers, to love, to live in, to wrap around her mind locking in the sights and sounds and smells and the feel of the place.

How could she explain that to Paul. He just didn't understand. He had not felt the magic of Hawaii. Sure he'd had a great time there, and enjoyed his holiday, rushing around doing all the tourist holiday things albeit with a slightly cynical attitude. But no one could say he hadn't made an effort to enjoy himself. And he'd fair worn her out dragging her with him, when many times she'd have preferred to take her time, to have just sat back and soaked up the nuances and essences of the surroundings.

She chuckled. On the couch beside her, lying on his back with his legs balanced in the air, Elros opened his golden eyes and looked at her. Reaching out a hand she scrumpled and stroked his soft white tummy. His eyes closed, as he settled back knowing all was still safe in his world. A good thing Paul couldn't hear her thoughts. She was beginning to sound a bit like a hippie with her nuances and essences. But that was the thing about Hawaii that was hard to define.

When people asked her why she liked it so much, all she seemed able to say was that it was beautiful, and colourful, and the weather was great, and the scenery was amazing, and then end lamely with "and I'd love to live there". Then they'd wrinkle their noses a little, or contract their brows at her, and take a mental step back from her. In answer to their question, "Why?" her answer always sounded feeble, like some stupid tourist who didn't know the difference between holiday mode and reality. She knew there was a difference between what a person absorbed about a place when they were there with no

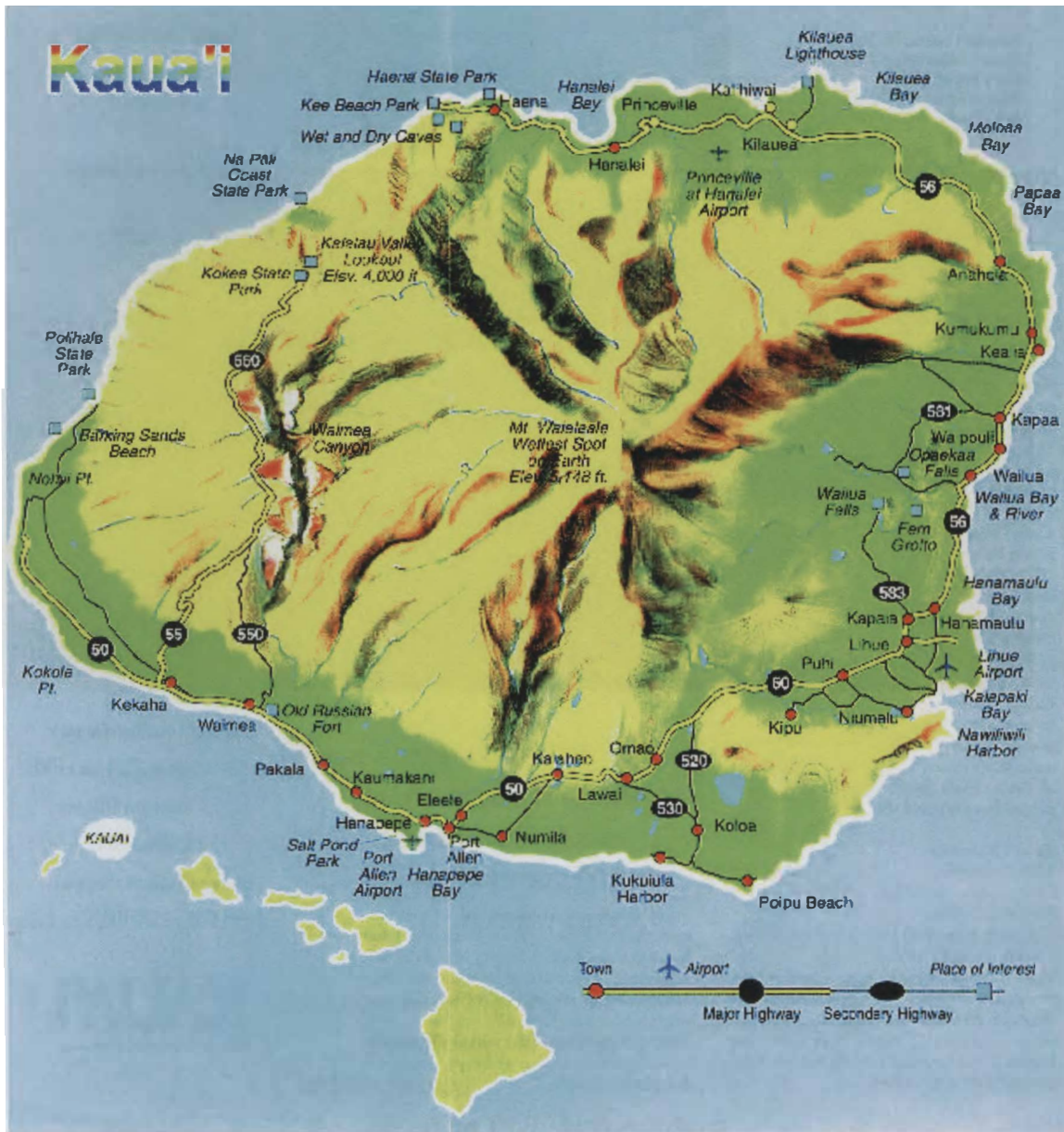
responsibilities, money to spend, and enjoyment to be gained each day, and what the place was really like to live in, work in, budget in.

When people visited Perth, they always said what a beautiful city to live in, and she always agreed. But if they moved there, would they be able to get a job and pay their living expenses easily? It would depend upon their qualifications as it did in any city. It was a great place to live, if you had an income. The housing was relatively cheap, the wages were good and people didn't have to live off tips, the education system was excellent, and the weather lent itself to fun outdoors for at least half the year.

In comparison, Hawaii superficially was a gorgeous place to live, but had a darker side to it – Garfield had filled her in on Hawaii's social problems fairly comprehensively. She knew there was unemployment there, and homeless people, and that the wages were not large, and that the houses were really expensive or mostly fibro buildings. She knew that the dampness would create mould, and that the gardens could get easily out of hand because everything grew so rapidly.

But, there was this indefinable essence of Hawaii that drew her in and held her firmly. And there was no pollution there, due to the Trade Winds that blew most of the time, and to the isolation of the Hawaiian chain. They were located out in the Pacific Ocean, far away from any major land mass that could contaminate them. No wonder she had felt so well there.

Turning the page at last she gazed at the snaps of the Kauai hotel, shopping mall, coconut groves, fern grottos and colourful canyons. It had been obvious from the outset that Kauai was different from the other islands ...



*Island of love
garden island.*

*Wetter than the rest
steamy heat
coconut palm groves
sugar cane
taro fields.*



*Village shops
laid out for tourists
in boardwalk maze
ceiling fans lazily turn
in small cafes.*

*Sleeping Giant looms
Behind hotel strip.
Timber homes
struggle with lush gardens.*

It was obvious from the outset that Kauai was different from the other islands. Well, the Big Island had been different from Oahu too – the latter had been more commercial, the former more focussed on the volcanoes with less apparent up-market hotels.

Kauai had plantations of sugarcane stretching for miles from the airport, with the 'Sleeping Giant' mountain range in the distance, and a cluster of low-rise hotels, including the hotel used by Elvis in *Blue Hawaii*, on the Coconut Coast. It seemed to be sleepier, less sophisticated. There was even a Hippie community in the Hanalei Valley where you were to go later on your pre-booked Circle Island Tour. They had proved to be a great investment so far, and this tour should take you to the fluted cliffs of the Na Pali coast that you were dying to

see. You were also to see the Waimea Canyons, which the brochure said were more colourful than the world-famous Grand Canyon, and a blowhole, and rather puzzling – one of the famous golf courses and its luxury hotel! Maybe lots of potential golfers took the tour.

Your hotel was adjacent to The Market Place at Coconut Plantation - a complex of Hawaiian pole-buildings housing restaurants, specialty shops, market stalls, and playgrounds constructed from colourfully painted antique sugar-mill machinery, all set amongst regularly planted groves of tall swaying coconut palms that dropped their lethal nuts on the wary and unwary alike. According to your hotel receptionists, quite a number of tourists were injured each year. Not a hazard you had been warned about when you booked your holiday, and if you had been you probably would have laughed.

The hotel rooms were in blocks that were arranged parallel to each other, but perpendicular to the beach. This gave most people an angular view to the sea, across expanses of lawns with its share of the palm grove, plus pockets of luxuriant garden beds. There was a pool and lanai between two blocks, while blocks of the neighbouring hotels flanked those of your hotel. It was hard to tell where one ended and the next one began.

You climbed the stairs to your room, opened the door, and said to Paul, "Don't open the bags. Don't settle in. I'm getting us moved."

Down at the receptionist desk, you confronted the smiling glowing groomed woman. "Aloha. May I help you?"

"Aloha. Yes, actually. Could you possibly move us to another room?" She blinked a couple of times, resettled her smile and asked, "Is there a problem with the room you have been allocated?"

"Well, yes, there is. It's obviously been used by a heavy smoker. It reeks of smoke. I get asthma from smoke of any sort. Because of this, we specifically asked for a non-smoking room."

"Let me just look for you. Hmmm. There is a non-smoking room on the ground floor. You will not have such nice views, though."

"At least I'll be able to breathe. And it's only for four days." You waited while she altered the data in the booking computer, and exchanged your key card. "Mahalo."

After retrieving Paul and your luggage from the first room, you located your new room. It was dark, with lower ceilings than before, and instead of a balcony it had a lanai with table and chairs. Privacy, or lack of it, seemed to be the main drawback as you found yourselves having to greet every passerby if you sat out there. But at least you'd be able to sleep.

The hotel rooms were more basic than any you had stayed in so far. The rooms were dark and compact, the walls of concrete blocks, the bathroom just a shower cubicle opposite a basin, with a toilet cubicle at the end, and the two double beds had tired orange spreads with tatty fringing. But as you'd spent little of your time so far in your hotel rooms, it hardly seemed to matter.

You'd spent ages as before at the airport, waiting for your very short flight to the next island. The transfer bus had collected you three hours before the flight, and driven the considerable distance to the Big Island's airport. Still you were there two hours early, as you had been when transferring from Oahu to the Big Island.

Upon arrival a long delay occurred while all the passengers for the transfer bus were rounded up and their luggage stowed.

"Next time we do this, let's have all our flights at night so we can use the days in between," Paul stated.

"Great idea. I didn't realise when I booked it that there'd be this problem. I thought we'd have half a day on one, then half a day settling in and getting our bearings at the next." Paul nodded as you explained. You continued. "I didn't realise there'd be all this mucking around and time wasting, so we'd lose so much of our day. Honestly."

"Oh well, can't be helped now."

As it turned out you found time to get your bearings anyway. It was not a large place like Honolulu. Rather it was a small community catering only it seemed for the tourists. The thought of falling nuts made you a little uneasy as you strolled through the grove to the beach, then back along the road as it passed the hotels and crossed the river. There were no footpaths here, except on the bridge, and in the mall area. In fact it was just like walking along a country road in Australia, except for the swaying trees being palms instead of eucalypts.

Back at The Market Place you selected a restaurant and had seafood for dinner again. Then you strolled amongst the fairy-light lit market stalls around the machinery filled gardens. Finally you sat on a bright yellow painted pipe that substituted for seating, and listened to the piped Hawaiian music that drifted from the hidden speakers amongst the foliage that was also lit by hidden lamps with a variety of coloured filters.

“This is magic,” you sighed.

“A bit artificial, don’t you think?” stated Paul. Somehow he looked past the romance to the reality, every time.

You sighed again. “Yeah, you’re right. It’s a bit contrived now you mention it. A bit like a film set.”

Just then a frangipani scented breeze wafted around you, caressing your face, and tantalising your nostrils, awaking your senses. You stood, reached for Paul’s hand, and began to walk back towards your hotel. Another sigh. “But it’s magic, all the same. Magic.”



*Shopping malls
brick, covered
sprawled in carparks.*

*Fern Grotto
nature's wedding chapel
concert hall.*

Somehow he looked past the romance to the reality, every time. The morning had begun with a bus trip through misting rain to the Kukui Grove Shopping Centre, Kauai's largest, in the town of Lihue, some distance south along the coast. This had provided you with the chance to see a little of the countryside of Kauai, and the kind of houses there. They seemed to be fairly similar to those on the other islands, mostly constructed from timber. But due to the higher rainfall, the Kauaian landscape was greener.

In the shopping centre you had discovered that Americans didn't seem to have a Post Office as such. They had a place called Mail Boxes Etc, which supplied all varieties of stationary and basic giftware that could be posted, plus all the packaging required to post them. It also acted as a mailing centre. So you bought some postcards, and mailed some others there, had a cuppa nearby then caught the bus back to your hotel in time for lunch.

In the afternoon you were collected and driven to the small launch that would take you from the Wailua River Marina to the fern grotto. It was beautiful on the river as you cruised slowly between jungle-covered banks. The breeze blew gently and apart from the noise of the motor and the passing of an occasional launch returning from the morning tours you were alone. Well the boat load of you were alone. At least it wasn't crowded, as the benches were spaced in rows across the boat, plus around the inner perimeter. You chose the latter, able to run your fingers in the rippling water occasionally as a distraction from the reactive motion as the other launches passed yours.

On the way there the guide told tales of the Menehune who were the little people of Kauai, who were reputed to have built in one night stone walls that created great man-made lakes - the fish-ponds in which the locals still fish-farmed. They were thought to be mythical until recently, when a search of the caves deep in the sides of the Hanapepe Valley unearthed the skeletons of a small race of people. And why shouldn't they be real. After all there were pygmies in Africa, and other small, and tall, races of people throughout the world.

It fascinated you, but left Paul cold. He could have cared less. You sighed.

"Tired?" he asked you. You shook your head. Well you were actually, of him and his cynical attitude, but you thought better of saying so.

"Are we there yet?" you asked like a kid in a car, and grinned. He laughed, shook his head, then gazed away across the water again.

By the time your boat moored at the Fern Grotto landing, you were glad to disembark. Never good on water, you'd found that the ride had been better than expected, but it still left you feeling a little disorientated. After a short walk, your group reached the grotto and the small amphitheatre set up at its base. Arranging yourselves on the benches provided, you waited for the previous tour group, already in the grotto, to leave and return to their boat. Their chatter echoed throughout the amphitheatre, making it hard to concentrate on the short lecture on the grotto's history and the famous people who had visited it and been married there. Finally permitted to ascend to the shallow cave shelf that comprised the grotto to gaze at the thousands of fishbone ferns that hung from the rocky ceiling above your heads, you stood silently at the guard rail, looking

down into the amphitheatre where the last group for the day were trying to hear their lecture over the racket made by your own group. With such excellent acoustics, it was no wonder that many choirs and famous singers had performed there. Its lush verdant setting was perfect for a fairy tale wedding.

Your time quickly over, you were ushered back to the boat, where during the return trip, you were taught how to Hula by your guide's assistant. Needless to say that only the women in the group would stand and attempt the dance. The men sat along the sides watching and applauding, laughing and criticizing.

At the junction on the Wailua River where it branched off to the reputedly spectacular Opaekaa Falls, which you missed out on seeing because yours was only an afternoon cruise, your launch gave way to another. The occupants all waved happily to you as they passed. Most of your own group waved back. A flash of blond hair caught your attention.

"Hey!" you exclaimed to Paul. "Was that Becky and Tom?"

"Where?"

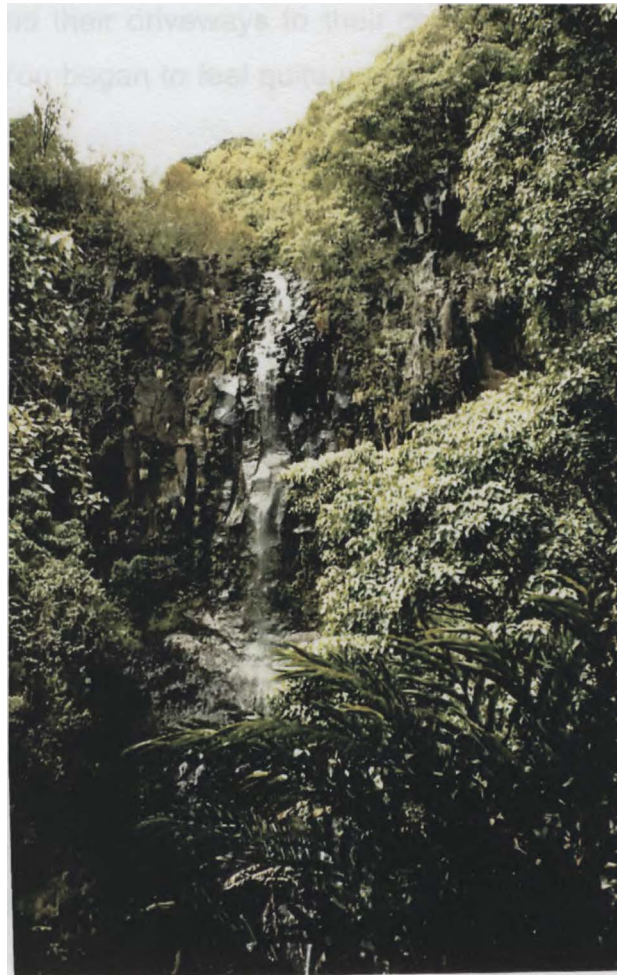
"There." You pointed at the near side of the other launch where the long blond hair of two people were flickering and tangling in the breeze. Travelling at a greater speed than yours, their launch was rapidly diminishing into the river's distance.

"Could be. It's a bit hard to tell at this distance." Paul raised his arm in an answering wave, nevertheless.

"Did you know they were coming on here?" you asked carefully.

Avoiding eye contact with you, he replied vaguely. "They said they were moving on from the Big Island when I saw them at the lava tube the other day. didn't ask where."

When you landed, there was no sign of Tom or Becky, so, relieved but not admitting it, you walked back to the Coconut Plantation, where you dined prior to having an early night. You had your next circle island tour the next day, which you now knew from experience would prove to be very long and tiring.



*Waterfalls
cascade in torrents
in threads.*

*Towering tunnel
of fragrant eucalypts
span shaded highway.*

*'Long Cane' plantation town
Restored
Historically thriving.*

“Are we there yet?” you asked like a kid in a car, and grinned. Paul threw his head back and laughed out loud. You’d only just embarked into the small white bus that was to take you on your circle island tour. You chuckled, delighted at his response. It augured well for the coming trip. As yet there were only two other couples in the bus, plus the driver, a flashy but frazzled woman called Jeanie. For a while she manoeuvred the bus from hotel to hotel, circling

nauseatingly around their driveways to their covered entries in order to collect the passengers. You began to feel quite unwell, and you hadn't even begun the trip yet.

With a full compliment aboard, she reintroduced herself, gave an outline of the tour's itinerary, then said, "If you look over there at the tallest mountain ridge you will see what looks like a man lying down. Do you know what it's called?"

"That's the Sleeping Giant," you volunteered.

"Di, for Pete's sake! We've hardly even left yet and you've already started."

"I have not!"

Jeanie continued. "According to legend, the giant Nonou went to a Laua, where he ate way too much food. Becoming sleepy he lay down for a nap, but never woke up."

"They're a bit keen on these giants and legends over here," muttered Paul, just loud enough to be heard by Jeanie. "Why can't we hear about real people. Then again, maybe not."

"You're hopeless. This is the island of love, and all you do is scoff."

"No I don't. I just like facts, that's all, and giants and goddesses are not facts." He folded his arms across his chest, which was not very wise considering the way Jeanie was throwing the bus around the twists and turns of the road. You hoped that you wouldn't get really carsick on this trip. You wanted to be able to enjoy seeing the fluted cliffs when you got there, not spend it leaning against the bus and groaning.

She turned the bus south, driving past Lihue, towards Poipu where you were to have lunch at the Kiahuna golf Club by the Poipu Shopping Village. To reach this you drove for a couple of hours along the coast then turned inland, before turning left down an avenue of tall Australian eucalypts. This was, the driver said, the famous tree tunnel. The other passengers were suitably impressed. It was a particularly dense planting of eucalypts that resulted in a vaulted tunnel, dark and shady. Due to plentiful water, unlike in most places in their homeland, their foliage was abundant, and their height impressive.

The people on the tour with you were of particular interest. Well one couple especially. They were both grossly overweight Americans, immediate

targets for Paul. With difficulty they'd pulled themselves up into your bus, and settled beside each other on one seat, with half of the husband's bottom hanging over the edge and his arm around his wife's shoulders.

Paul had chuckled and said, "Look at the lovebirds."

"Don't be rude," you'd hissed anxiously. "They're probably really nice."

She was a lot smaller than her husband, but as rotund, with gold bangles on her arms and large dangling gold earrings hanging beside her rolled neck. When she spoke to the driver to ask a question, her voice was that of a child, high and sweet. The fact that she called everything she saw "so sweet and so darling and so cute" was also extremely grating after a short while. Her husband laughed a lot, deep and heartily. A guffaw.

By lunchtime you were sick of the non-stop travelling and glad to disembark from the confined space of the bus. Lunch was a cold buffet set up in the 'al fresco area' of the golf clubhouse. You found a table along the back wall where you could command a fair view of the village beyond the putting green of the final fairway. As you sat eating chicken and salad, the American couple waddled over to your table and asked if they might join you.

Before Paul could say anything rude to them, you immediately assented. They said their names were Bob and Brenda, that they were from New York City, and looking at each other a little coyly, that they were on their honeymoon. Paul nearly choked on a mouthful of ham and cheese.

"What do you do there?" you hurriedly asked.

"Well, Bob's a bus driver. And I run my own clothing store there." As she waved her bejewelled hand in the air, her many rings flashed and her bracelets tinkled. She was not only wearing those but was seemingly covered in gold. She had several gold necklets with elaborate pendants hanging at different levels on her chest, a flashing diamond and gold brooch high on her shoulder holding in place a long silken scarf that nevertheless continually slipped from her plump shoulder, and around her waist several different gold chain belts. To say it was over the top was an understatement, but she seemed to be completely unaware of the fact. Her blond hair was carefully set in a bouffant style and she looked a little like Dolly Parton gone mad. But Dolly had a lot more class than to dress that way.

Bob was an afterthought, like a shadow to her shine. The impression was that she was rolling in money and he had none. He was large and comforting; loud and caring – a gentle giant of a man. But their weight was incredible. And he doted on her.

“So you’re being driven today, instead of doing the driving. A busman’s honeymoon,” Paul quipped. That was all you needed - Paul in one of his facetious moods.

Although Bob laughed, Brenda ignored Paul’s comment, and smiling sweetly stated in her kindergarten voice, “We’ve only been married for five days. We flew straight out here after our wedding in New York.”

“Do you mean to Hawaii itself, or have you only been to this island.?”

“No we went to Maui first. Now we’re here.” She smiled. It seemed she liked to punctuate her speech with many smiles and tinkles of laughter. “After that we go see the Big island. And finally, spend a few days in Honolulu. We saved that till last, so we can shop till we drop.” More tinkly laughter. You kept your face open and smiling, not letting any trace of irritation show. After all she seemed to be a genuinely nice person. And, after all, you weren’t perfect.

“That shouldn’t take you too long then.” Paul stated bluntly. He couldn’t help himself. A little bewildered, they stared at him. When you scowled at him, Paul added. “I mean you’ll be so exhausted after doing all the other islands you won’t have the energy to shop much. Besides,” he added winking, “you are on your honeymoon.”

Bob guffawed. She tinkled uncertainly.

“No, really. Are you going to do these circle island trips on all the islands?” you asked, smiling warmly.

When they nodded, you continued. “Then you’ll love it. But you’ll be tired. We’ve done one on Oahu, and one on the Big Island. Both were great, and we’re glad we did them. But they do make you tired. And when we get to Maui, we’ve another one to do there.” You chuckled. “No-one will be able to accuse us of not ‘doing’ Hawaii.”

They laughed uncertainly, unsure of your Aussie humour.

“You’ll love Maui. It’s such a darling island.”

Paul choked again, coughing and spluttering and gasping for air.

“Are you okay?” Brenda asked, her high pitch sounding as if she were about to sing. She held out a glass of water. “Here, drink this.”

Paul sat there waving his hands to indicate that he’d be okay in a minute or so. Gradually his face grew less red, and he smiled weakly, muttering to you beside him, “Damn fairies.”

It was your turn to choke, but you recovered with more aplomb than him. “Serves you right, but there’s no need to pass them on to me.” You laughed, feebly clutching your chest.

Meanwhile your exchange had left Bob and Brenda once more bewildered. As you all had finished your meal, Brenda suggested gingerly that you make a move. “We’re going over to the village to have a look around their stores. You want to come with us?” That was nice of them considering they probably thought you were making fun of them.

“No, thank you, I don’t think so,” you answered.

“No way,” said Paul at the same time. “I don’t want her to have any reason to waste good money on the tourist rubbish they sell in those places.”

“Paul!” You were getting quite frustrated with him. Why did he have to be so rude to people. “Don’t mind him,” you added to ward off any offence. “He hates it when I spend money. I just adore all the lovely things they sell in those shops, and he’s just trying to put me off.” You laughed heartily to show that all was well.

“Will you have another drink with us though first?” you asked.

They hesitated, then Brenda said, “Okay. If you think we have time for that.”

After Paul had fetched you all drinks from the bar, you settled back and gazed out at the scenery. It was quite pleasant sitting there relaxing, with the noon sun warming the breeze that wafted the exotic fragrances from the gardens across the patio.

“Can I ask you something? About nine-eleven?” You were hesitant. They were on their honeymoon and you didn’t want to spoil their holiday. But as soon as they’d said they were from New York, you’d wanted to ask them what it had been like first-hand. When after a visual check with each other they nodded, you continued. “Where were you when it happened? Were you caught up in it?”

"We were both at work, fortunately. We didn't get caught up in it, as you put it. But we both had friends who were killed there."

"Oh, I'm sorry," you murmured.

"Good one, Di," Paul said. "Why did you bring that up?"

"No, it's okay. We get asked this a lot," Bob said quietly. "I knew a few of the firemen who were caught when the first tower dropped. My bus route had me down the other end of Manhattan. But it was a terrible time for everybody."

"We know. How could it not be," you empathised. "We watched it on the TV as soon as it started. We were in the middle of watching a live entertainment show, when it was suddenly cut off and they showed the live footage of the first tower burning. We watched as the second plane hit, and as the towers fell. It was unbelievable! I was crying, and kept crying for days on and off. And so did most of my friends. It was horrific! What it must've been like for you guys I just can't imagine."

They sat, looking sadly at you.

"Geez, Di." Paul was exasperated with you now.

Turning to him, you said urgently, "I just wanted them to know that when it was reported that Australians felt their pain, and sent their sympathy and prayers to them, that it was true." You turned to look again at Brenda and Bob. "That we were all as shocked as most people in the civilised world were, and that it wasn't just lip-service."

"Well you've put a dampener on their holiday now."

"No. No she hasn't," Brenda said. "I understand what she's saying. And it *is* nice to know that other people really did care."

"And still do care. But I'm sorry," you apologised. "You're on your honeymoon. Paul is right. The last thing you want is a reminder of that day. That was tactless of me. I thought perhaps it was long enough ago now that you'd be able to talk about it. In fact I thought that most New Yorkers wanted to talk about it, so that it didn't become forgotten. I am sorry."

Brenda stood up, saying, "No really. It's fine." She looked at the gold watch nestling in amongst the bracelets on her wrist. "We should leave now, if we want to make that quick trip to the stores. Or the bus will go without us." Her laughter tinkled, as she turned away to waddle off hand in hand with Bob towards the village.

You sighed. You hadn't meant to dampen their spirits.



Blowholes

*boom through lava shelf
spectacular sea-spout spray*

*home of doomed giant Mo'o
legendary lizard.*

Valleys

*steep deep green
hiding Menehune caves.*

That was all you needed - Paul in one of his facetious moods. Back in the bus you drove in and around Poipu where unexpectedly there were up-market hotel complexes and apartments; and on to stop at the Spouting Horn blowhole. Scrambling over the rocks you waited as the sea welled through the tunnel beneath the lava shelf, bursting upwards in a boom of spray. Snapshots were taken and you all crammed back onto the bus for the next short leg of the trip. As you travelled Jeanie told you that Mo'o the legendary giant lizard was lodged

in the lava tube at Spouting Horn, and that if you wanted more information about him, you could obtain a free cassette at the Poipu Shopping Village.

“But we have just left there,” you exclaimed.

“Yes I know. I should have told you about it before we arrived but I forgot. Never mind. If you want it you can always return to the village later.”

“Yeah, right,” said Paul rudely. Not that he wanted you to have the cassette, of course. But he wanted to make it look as though you did.

Turning left at the historical ‘Old Koloa Town’ with its quaint restored shops and houses, and its oldest sugar mill; your bus travelled through an old Hawaiian village called Kalaheo, past the turnoff to lush botanical gardens, and on to the Hanapepe Valley lookout. There, prior to your usual scramble out to take photos, Jeanie informed the group that the valley had once been a thriving Hawaiian settlement, in particular one to which women went for confinement. It was also home to the caves where the archaeologists found the Menehune remains, though that was much further along and almost inaccessible. Further towards the west, inland along the Waimea River, there were the remains of the Menehune ditch, a vast watercourse or aquaduct made by these legendary little people of Kauai, who had populated the islands before the Hawaiians arrived from Polynesia.

At right angles with the lookout platform, the Hanapepe valley was at least a couple of miles wide and stretched away into the distance between red cliffs that formed the canyon walls. Its entire valley surface was covered by forest jungle, in multiple shades of blues and greens, that seemed dense and impenetrable. You couldn’t imagine any woman wanting to enter it, let alone to give birth there. Presumably, they had a settlement that provided them with shelter for the duration of their confinement, but it must have been tough. It was quite cool there and you could imagine that the valley would not be a comfortable place to be for long.

Back in the bus, you travelled some distance to Waimea, one of Hawaii’s oldest surviving communities, where Captain Cook first landed in Hawaii. Along the winding Koke’e Road, that converged with Waimea Canyon Road, was the next rest stop. Having lined up to use the conveniences, which weren’t too convenient - in fact they were portable toilets in the open yard/carpark – you entered the canopied area of the trading post, which sold not only the usual

souvenirs but also necessities for the locals. Amongst the trays of jewellery, you discovered a gorgeous coral beaded necklace, with a carved jade rose as a pendant.

Grabbing Paul's arm, you dragged him to have a look at it. "It's gorgeous Paul. I really want it."

"How much is it?"

"Eighty-five dollars."

"American!" Paul was shocked.

"But it's jade Paul. I won't see another like it anywhere."

"How do you know that?"

"Because I haven't seen one like it so far. And we are on our third island now."

"Yeah, well, you won't be buying another one if you see it either. Geez Di. That's meals for us for two nights."

You caressed the jade rose, cool to your fingertips. Reluctantly you put it down and turned away. Subdued you re-entered the bus and sat glumly looking out at the scenery.

"Are we there yet?" asked Paul, digging you in the ribs. When you didn't respond, he chuckled. "Sulking now, are we?" There was no answer to that, so you didn't reply.

The bus climbed steeply now, twisting around sharp hairpins as the road followed the ridge of the canyon. The views were spectacular. A yawning precipice, a steep ravine, and across the other side craggy coloured rock ridges dominated your vision.

"Don't worry," reassured Jeanie. "The bus will make it."

"This road's a bit narrow," you called out. "What if we meet one coming down?"

"We won't. This is one way up and another way down." She laughed.

"Thank goodness for that!" The laughter in the bus sounded distinctly relieved.



*Canyons striated
in red, golds, browns
tawny in the sun
indigo in the shade
dwarfing helicopters
buzzing like dragonflies
between the cliffs.*

*Fluted cliffs
shrouded in fog
parting for brief glimpse.*

The views were spectacular. Even that seen from the bus didn't prepare you for what spread out before you from the lookout of the Waimea Canyon. It was breath-taking. There wasn't just one canyon but several that merged opposite the lookout site. They certainly knew where to locate these in Hawaii. It was also very cold, with a sharp wind blowing your hair into a tangle, and

making you shiver in your cotton shirt and sarong. What you needed was a light tracksuit to put on. But you hadn't known that you would be climbing this high above sea level.

Way down over three thousand feet below ran the Waimea River, a tiny trickle threading its way along the valley floor. What looked like large buzzing insects turned out to be helicopters taking people on amazing swooping tours along the canyons to the waterfalls, flying between the striated canyon walls, flitting down to the river then soaring upwards to lift effortlessly over the ridges and into the next canyon.

You took many panoramic photos, and wished not for the first time that you had one of those fancy panoramic cameras. It was the only kind, other than a movie camera, to do the view justice – and you had neither. People milled around you on the viewing platform until you moved out of their way and further along the path to take more snapshots of the lateral canyon. The colours were clearly defined in horizontal stripes of reds, golds and browns, lit by the afternoon sun, but leaving vertical dark indigo shadows leading down into the depths of the canyons where the sunlight no longer reached. You wondered if it ever did.

Returning to the viewing platform you discovered that Tom and Becky were standing at the railing. Tom was taking photos with their snazzy camera, while Becky stood her arm outstretched as she pointed to sights that she wanted him to capture. The chilly wind blew her hair out behind her like a golden pennant, while his whipped around his face and in front of his camera lens as he tried to get the right shot.

"Hi there," called Paul, striding across to join them. Smiles lit their faces as they turned to greet you both.

"How great to see you again. Are you having a good time?" Becky asked as you reached them.

"Sure are. How 'bout you guys? You enjoying yourselves too?"

"Yeah, it's cool man."

"Isn't this magnificent," you exclaimed, raising your voice as the wind threatened to blow it away.

"Fantastic."

“Not as big as the Grand Canyon back home. You seen that?” Tom asked.

“No. But I’d like to,” Paul answered. “They’ve got white water rafting on the Colorado River there I’ve heard. That’d be great to do.”

“Hey, yeh, man. That’d be cool. I haven’t done that yet.”

“Was that you waving to us from the launch yesterday?” Becky asked.

“Yeah. We thought it was you, but then after we waved we thought we might have made a mistake,” you replied.

She smiled sunnily. “We had a great day. We went to the waterfall as well as the Fern Grotto. Did you?”

“No. We only had an afternoon tour. We didn’t realise that there was one to the falls till it was too late. But it was lovely. The grotto had amazing acoustics.”

“Yeah,” said Paul. “It was all I could do to stop her breaking into song.” They all laughed, and after a moment, you joined in.

Looking around you, you suddenly became aware that you and Paul were the only ones of your own group that you could see.

“Oh my God, Paul. I think the others have left.”

“Yeah, yeah. Don’t stress. They won’t leave without us.”

“We’ve gotta go. It was nice seeing you again. I hope you have a good holiday. Maybe we might catch you again somewhere. Come on Paul.” You waved to them as you hurried and he sauntered back towards the carpark. There, the other passengers were already seated in the bus, its engine idling, as Jeanie looked out anxiously for you.

Quickly clambering aboard and into your seats, you apologised. “I’m so sorry to hold you up. We ran into some friends and got chatting, and didn’t realise you had all left. We thought we had more time there.”

No-one replied.

Following the ridges the bus continued for another six or so miles through increasing fog until it reached the Kalalau Lookout, overlooking the Kalalau Beach on the Napali Coast.

“There used to be a thriving population here,” said Jeanie. “Families cultivated taro here, and there used to be peacocks roaming around through the tropical gardens. Now none of that remains.”

You all exited the bus and made your way slowly towards the rails that were barely visible through the white swirling mist.

Your disappointment was intense. There was so much fog that you couldn't even see the coast let alone the fluted cliffs. You stood there in the dripping stillness, your legs hard against the cold railing, peering into nothing.

Paul turned away. "Come on, Di. No point in staying here." The rest of your group were already returning, mumbling through the mist to the warmth of the bus.

"Hang on a sec," you called.

Paul returned. "What?"

"Look down there." You pointed. As you did the mist began to roll back. Hurriedly you took the camera out of its bag, where Paul had just stowed it, turned it on and held it ready. It was like a magic trick with veils. The mist rolled back exposing the fluted cliffs beside them, and a beach way down below. Quickly you took three snapshots. Then as quickly, the mist rolled back till you were left looking at a white wall of fog once more. It had barely taken a minute from start to finish.

Laughing, you ran joyously back to the bus, where you regaled the others with your news. There was more grumbling then, as some of them wanted to get out and go have another look. But the majority didn't think it was worth it and besides it was very cold out there and no-one had on any warm clothes.

As the bus wound down slowly to the coast again, you sat back happy and tired. The next part of the trip was around past where you were staying to the other side of the island. There was no through road between the Kalalau Lookout and the northern, Haena coast. So this circle island tour didn't actually circle the island. You dozed a little, and gazed out at the scenery already seen from a different perspective, until you reached the Coconut Coast where your hotel was.

As some of the passengers had no wish to continue the tour - it had already been a long day and a fine rain had begun to fall - Jeanie dropped them off to their respective hotels. Among them were Bob and Brenda.

"It was nice meeting you," Bob said politely as they passed you prior to disembarking.

"You too," you replied. "I hope you have a wonderful honeymoon."

Brenda tinkled with laughter and said in her high childish voice, "Why, thank you. I know you'll just love Maui. Bye." "Byeee."

"Thanks. Bye." You turned to Paul. "You want to keep going?"

"Yeah. Okay. You?"

"I'm pooped. But we should keep going or we might regret it."

"Yeah. Besides we've paid for it, so we should get our money's worth."

"Well, we've probably done that, but I agree."

You sat back in your seat and tried to shut out the aching of your back.



*Fish ponds
by mythical Menehune
their ancient relics
found deep in hidden valley.*

*Hotels
from native bungalows
to extravagant palaces
perched on cliffs
hanging over the sea
pounding on rocks below.*

*Emerald city
through green golf Paradise.*

You pointed. Beside the road on which you were travelling lay a great open man-made lake, held by dykes.

“So this is the famous Menehune Fish Pond then?” you asked Jeanie, who was now fretting about the rain that was drizzling down spoiling the view and making the road slippery.

“Yes. Its stone walls were reputedly built in one night. It’s still used today as a fish farm.”

The drive took you past still productive taro fields, gleaming bright green through the rain; to St Sylvester’s Church, which was quaint, white, and murrilled; and finally paused at the Hanalei Valley lookout which gave extensive views across the whole lush valley and the Hanalei Bay towards the Lumahai beach.

“This is where Elvis filmed some of *“Blue Hawaii”*, and where the movie *“South Pacific”* was filmed. They used the Lumahai Beach for the nurses’ beach in the movie. Did you ever see it?”

“When I was a little girl,” you replied. Several of the older passengers who remained on the tour also replied. It was odd how it was mostly the really young people who hadn’t wanted to continue.

“I have to call in to base to make sure that we can proceed,” Jeanie informed everyone. “There has been a lot of rain today here, and we may not be able to cross the Hanalei River. I won’t be long if any of you want to disembark to take photos.”

As it was now raining quite heavily, nobody took her up on that offer. She spoke into her two-way radio for a while, answering in monosyllables. Her expression didn’t look promising.

“I’m sorry, but we won’t be able to stay in the Hanalei Valley for very long. I will take you across the river to the town of Hanalei for a quick look but then we must return before the river rises too far. We don’t want to get stranded.”

“Does this happen often?” you asked.

“Yes. The settlements beyond the river are often cut off from the rest of Kauai.”

Jeanie drove the bus carefully to the hairpin bend that accessed the steep cliff-hugging road that descended to the hairpin bend at the bridge over the river. The rushing water was not far from the bridge, and you could see why she was nervous. In the townsite of Hanalei a little distance up and away from the rising waters, you piled out of the bus, raced around the markets and the shops in the

hope that you'd have a memory of Hanalei, then clambered back into the bus and took off smartly. Nobody really relaxed until you reached the final hairpin bend.

"As a treat, because you were forced to miss out on the rest of the tour, which would have taken you to see the Lumahai Beach, Haena, the Waikanaloa Wet Cave and the Waikapalae Dry Cave, I am taking you for afternoon tea at the famous Princeville Hotel and the Princeville Golf Course."

The thought of afternoon tea cheered everyone up, but Paul had to comment. "Famous for what?" When you dug him in the ribs with your elbow, he laughed.

The road in took you past two-storey bungalows squatting amongst landscaped gardens that surrounded the great stretches of grassed golfing fairways. The bus pulled to a halt under the cover of the valet parking bay, and Jeanie said as you disembarked, "You'll find that you are expected. If you make your way to the sectioned off lounge area you will find servers there waiting to take your drink orders. I will join you shortly."

"Glad to be shot of us, I reckon," muttered Paul audibly, receiving a frown from the frazzled Jeanie as he turned away.

"Honestly Paul. Can't you accept a bonus when you get one? Or would you rather be wading through the downpour to look at beaches?"

He had the honesty to laugh at that.

In the lounge area there were coffee tables bearing plates of afternoon tea snacks, including to your surprise, scones and jam and cream. You guessed that they had their share of British visitors to their golf course, which, you were to discover upon your return to Australia, was indeed famous amongst golfers.

After eating and drinking, the hot coffee warming you again, or maybe that was the delicious temperature of the hotel. It was luxury plus, with marble columns everywhere, huge plate glass windows that gave unrestricted views of the ocean crashing onto the craggy black rocks way below the cliff on which the hotel was built. You wandered around in your usual way, pretending that you were allowed to be where you were until you were told otherwise. It usually worked and did so this time. The carpeting in the corridors to the lifts that took customers to their rooms was plush and deep and maroon. The walls were papered in maroon textured silk, the light fittings were elaborate and expensive.

"I was going to ask why we weren't staying here," you joked with Paul. "But I can work it out for myself." You chuckled.

"I'm glad of that." He laughed. "It sure is over the top."

"No it's not. It's gorgeous. It's what rich people expect their hotels to look like."

"You reckon?"

"Yeah. And it sure makes our hotel look budget."

"Nothing wrong with that."

"I know. I know. Still it would be so nice to stay in a place like this where you are pampered all the time." You sighed. It was never going to happen, you knew that.

As you emerged from the depths of the off-limits area, Jeanie spotted you across the lobby. "There you are. We need to leave now."

You strolled across to join the group once more for the drive back to your hotel. Luckily yours was the first reached on the drop-off list.

After thanking Jeanie and paying her a tip, you waved goodbye to the other members of the tour and headed for your room. You needed to clean up and change before returning to the hotel restaurant where you knew you'd get a quick and easy meal, before crashing for the night.

You had another transfer to endure the next day, as you headed for Maui.

Paradise gained.

Feasting finished

*tourist television flickering
music swirling through minds
enhancing senses*

Sitting cushioned between legs

held from behind above below

Orgasmic tremors as

magic hands begin

breast caress.

Lift turn support onto lap

engulf nipple with long need

Lift mouths glued

bodies pressed tight

Walk to lie once more

Eleven out of ten.

Harder each time

*penetration through
patient probing*

'Sore? Dry?'

Down to moisten

*fluttering lips across belly
upward to breasts
to lips
to face
to neck*

Body suspended above body

*knees supporting chest
now wide now high*

Turn

*from behind on side
sinking mind
sensory overload*

Magic hands

*smoothing back
cradling skull*

Twelve out of ten.

Di had to keep in sweet with him. It didn't matter that they couldn't agree about Pele. Paul would come to see her as Di did, she was sure. How could he not - Pele was so beautiful. And loving them both made Di want them to love each other, and her. She had to convince him.

Disobeying his parting edict, Di hurried to work, rock in bag, Pele beside her in the passenger seat. The astounded stares of other drivers and pedestrians flowed around her as she drove. When two drivers, distracted by the vision of Pele, crashed at the traffic lights, Di laughed. Serve them right for gawking. At the office building, Pele rode up with her in the deserted lift. Thank goodness she was a little late or it would have been crowded, and Di didn't think she was ready to face everyone just yet. For all her bravado she was extremely nervous of what would happen that day.

Leaving her rock in its pot-plant, and Pele in her office reclining in the visitors chair, Di headed downstairs for Paul's office. She hadn't been in it since the day she was interviewed by Bert for the job. Paul had put in a good word to help her get it, and now she was defying him by bringing Pele to work. With a momentary pang of guilt she thrust the door open and entered.

Startled to see her, Paul growled, "What are you doing here?"

"Well I'm pleased to see you too, you grouch."

"I hope it means that you've sent that rock on its way to Hawaii, on your way to work."

"Of course not. It's here in my office, with Pele." When he gasped, Di added, "Don't be such a big girl's blouse."

Anger altered his handsome face – his eyes darkened as he scowled at her, his lips tightening and his nostrils flaring slightly as he drew in extra air. It looked artificial, like he was acting in a television 'soap'. Even the muscle in his cheek twitched. She felt a sudden urge to laugh, but thought better of it.

"I told you to stay home and sort it out, Di. That meant you were to pack the damn rock up in a parcel and take it to the nearest post office and mail it back to Hawaii."

"Did it?"

"Yes." One word, clipped. A steady gaze, serious.

"Well you may have meant that, but you forgot that I have a mind of my own. I don't actually need you to instruct me as to how I will behave and when."

"And you have made up your mind then?"

“Sure have. I want to keep her for a bit longer, until you’ve had a chance to get to know her. I know you’ll love her as I do.” He snorted his contempt. She forestalled his attempt to answer. “If, after you’ve had some time with her, you find you don’t love her too, then I might consider sending the rock back. But not unless you’ve made a proper effort.”

Paul shook his head at her. “I don’t know what to say to you any more, Di. No matter what I say, you take no notice. You didn’t use to be like this. We always talked things through, reasoned things out.” He paused, watching her, then continued. “It’s one of the things I admire about you. What about us, Di? Huh?”

“It is about us, Paul. I want us to be together - all of us.”

“Who’s all of us?”

“You and me and Pele, of course.”

Paul looked back down to his paperwork, which he shuffled mindlessly on top of his desk. “There’ll be no you and me if you don’t get rid of Pele, Di. I mean it. I’ve had enough of this nonsense. Now, go away. I’ve got work to do.”

As Di headed for the ‘Ladies’ for a good cry, she told herself that he just needed time. He didn’t really mean it, surely. She had a good cry nonetheless.

paulball26@hotmail.com

New Message

Send Save Draft Attach Tools Cancel

To: bec&tom@yahoo.com
Cc:
Bcc:
Subject: Lava rock dramas.

Dear Becky,

Sorry I haven't emailed you in a while, but I've been hearing all your news from Di. How's the new house, and what's the new Uni like? Are you enjoying your studies? And has there been much surf for Tom, or has he joined the rest of us and got himself a normal job?

I'm sorry to land this on you, but I have a problem I need your help with. It's about Di and that bloody lava rock she brought home with her from Hawaii. It's causing no end of dramas here at work and at home. I don't want to elaborate on what is happening, as it sounds completely unbelievable.

All I'll say is that she carts it round with her at work and people are avoiding her, which is making her angry and defensive. This flows over onto me as well, so I am not enjoying work much at the moment.

I remember you saying that it was unlucky to take lava out of Hawaii and I scoffed at the time. I apologise. You were quite right. I can't convince Di to return it to Hawaii. If I could get it away from her I would send it off myself, but she guards it fiercely.

I was wondering if you'd send her an email and tell her to send it back to Hawaii. I know it's an imposition but maybe you could tell her about some of the bad luck tales, and tell her that it is dangerous to keep it – or something!

Hoping you might be able to talk some sense into her,

Regards,

Paul

For all her bravado she was extremely nervous of what would happen that day. And, as it turned out, justifiably so. As Di washed her red and puffy eyes in the 'Ladies', Jan entered. Visibly uneasy, she attempted solicitude. "Are you okay, Diane?"

"Yeah, yeah. I'm fine." As she seemed to require some kind of explanation, and despite the fact that Di didn't have to give her one, she found herself doing so. "I just had a bit of a row with Paul."

"Oh. I'm sorry." What else could she say. "Come and have a coffee in the lunch room with me. No-one will be there just now." Jan put her arm tentatively around Di's shoulder, and she restrained herself from shrugging it off. No need to alienate everyone she spoke to. "Come on."

Having entered the lunch room, and procured their coffee, they sat at a table in the far corner near the window that overlooked the freeway and a fragment of the Swan River. As the door opened quietly, Jan looked up, her bland look changing to puzzlement.

"Who's that?"

Di looked up, across the room to Pele as she shimmered in the doorway. "*Aloha, wahine*. I came to find you." Her voice was soft and melodious. She looked back at Jan.

"What an ugly old woman," she whispered. "Where did she spring from? Do you think she's a new cleaner?"

Di gasped. "You're joking, aren't you?"

"Sssh. Lower your voice. She'll hear you." She smothered a giggle. "Just love the muumuu, or whatever it's called."

"You do mean the woman by the door?"

"Who else. She's the only one here." Jan looked at her askance. "Cept us."

"But she's beautiful. Young and beautiful."

"You're kidding! You must need glasses or something. She's as old as the hills. And as ugly too." As Di shook her head in disbelief, she continued. "She's all wizened up, like the witch from *Hansel and Gretel*. How can you say she's beautiful?"

Drifting towards us, Pele said, "Take no notice. She only sees what I let her see. I will take care of her."

As Jan lifted her coffee cup to take another sip, she seemed to lose her grip and the hot contents spilled into her lap. She leapt from her seat, screeching. Mopping at her

clothes with inadequate paper napkins she rushed from the lunch room, knocking chairs askew as she fled in the direction of the 'Ladies'.

Smothering a grin, Di rose to meet Pele. "We'd better get out of here." Glancing spy-like down corridors, they returned to the office. There Di sat Pele down and tried to make her understand that she could not wander around the office. "You could get me in all sorts of trouble, if people see you. I could lose my job."

"*Ae*. Then you will return my rock to Hawaii."

"No. Then I can't afford to take your rock back to Hawaii. That's what I want to do - well not take the rock back, but go back again. We could go together, you and me, Pele."

"For me to go, the rock would have to go too."

"But I love my rock. Like I love you, Pele." Di moved closer to her. "I do love you, Pele. Do you care for me?"

"*Aloha nui loa, wahine ipo.*" She smiled and shimmered, glowing in the little room till the air became balmy with heady Hibiscus and the posters looked real.

"Take me to Hawaii," Di whispered. "Can you do that?"

"*a'ole.*" Wistfully, Pele shook her head.

Di could lose her job. She was right to worry. During the rest of the day, despite Di's warnings, Pele moved around the office building at will. She fraternised with the tea-lady who brought their morning and afternoon drinks on a trolley, chatted up the cleaners as they sluiced out the 'Men' and 'Ladies' toilets, hindered the mail person by mixing his mail as he tried to deliver it throughout the building, set and jammed the photocopiers so they could not be stopped by frantic clerical assistants, and finally encountered Bert on one of his rare excursions from his suite.

Now she was in trouble. That was abundantly clear to Di. She had been summoned to the great white slug's presence. And she was going to have to have a really good explanation. But what? And what if Pele wouldn't stay in her room, but came with her. He wouldn't see the beautiful young woman unless she let him. God knows what he had already seen.

Think. Think. Di tried to think as she hurried slowly to his office. Turning as she entered the outer office, she saw that indeed Pele had accompanied her. Beautiful sweet Pele, black hair in glimmering undulations down her naked brown back, fragrant colourful lei lying across her voluptuous chest, flamboyant sarong wrapped around her slender hips. Di crossed her fingers that Pele would not let her down, and fronted Susan at her desk, ready for her appointment.

After entering his office, where his desk stood out in the blur of off-white, Di trod confidently over to face him. "You wanted to see me, Bert?"

Initially, keeping his gaze in front of him on the papers that he continued to turn and sign, he said, "I've been hearing comments about your choice of office attire. And I also was told that you know about the old lady who's been disrupting the office."

Sluggishly he raised his head to wetly gaze at Di. Waving his Witchetty grub fingers he indicated that she was to sit. By doing so he suddenly got a clear view of Pele standing behind her. That shook him. He trembled, he oozed, he boggled, he puffed. His grey lips grimaced, then his mouth opened into a never before seen welcoming laughing smile, his fat tongue lolling behind round small teeth. He friskily put his elbows onto the desk, tapped his fingertips together obscenely, and, leering at Pele, asked Di for an introduction.

Trying to remain unmoved by this embarrassing sight, Di kept her voice level and firm.

"This is my friend, Pele. She has been visiting the office with me today. I hope you don't mind?"

“Well. Well. And where are you from, my dear?” He was oily and icky, and Di tried not to look at Pele as he leched over her.

“*Aloha. Hele* Hawai’i. I am from Hawaii.” She moved sinuously from behind Di then lowered herself seductively into the chair beside her, draping one leg over the other and her hair across her chest.

His fat fingers waggled. “Delicious.”

“I beg your pardon?” Di pretended that Bert had spoken to her. “You were saying something about my choice of clothing, Bert?”

He gazed at Di as at a stranger. He shook his head. “Yes. Yes. Your clothing. Very colourful. Gives the place a splash of excitement. I like it.” He turned and ogled Pele. “It was so nice of you to pop in for this little chat. Perhaps you and your friend might like to have coffee with me.” He leered at Pele. “Or something stronger?” This was ‘two fingers down the throat’ stuff. Yukko.

Di rose. Pele rose. “I’d better get back to work then, if that is all, Bert. Thank you for not minding about Pele visiting. I realise now that I should have cleared it with you first. It won’t happen again.”

He lumbered to his feet. “No. No. Think nothing of it. She’s most welcome here. Any time. Any time.”

Pele leaned forward in acknowledgement, providing Bert with a momentary view of her breasts beneath the lei. He plainly drooled. She took her time swaying from the room, and across the outer office.

Susan looked up at Bert as he stood gripping the doorframe. “Who was that old woman?” Luckily, he did not hear her and did not respond.

Who was that old woman? The question echoed around the office day after day. Wherever Di went she saw groups huddled together, by the lift, the photocopiers, the drinking fountain, the rest rooms, gossiping. Each had a story to tell of work disrupted or destroyed. And all described an old hag as being the culprit. It was so strange. No-one had seen Pele as Paul and Bert and Di had seen her – a beautiful young woman.

At home was no better. If Pele were in the room when Paul entered, he would immediately exit again. When asked why he wouldn't stay, he answered that she unnerved him. It came to a head a week after she had manifested. They were getting ready for bed when Pele entered their room. She now wandered the house freely, no longer tied to the room in which the rock resided.

"*Aloha. Moemoe kane Paul, iki ipo Di, hiki'e ne'i.* I will sleep with you tonight," she said gently, approaching the bed.

In the process of undressing, Paul stilled. "I think not. Get out of our bedroom." His voice was deadly quiet, the tension palpable.

Pele swayed towards him, smiling enticingly. Di began to tremble as she watched her delicious movements. "Paul? *Kane ipo.* You will let me sleep with you? *Moemoe?*" A smile touched her mouth, her eyes. She radiated sexuality, shimmered sensuality.

"Go away, Pele. This is our room. It is not for you. I don't want you here." He tried to look away from her, but she was within his reach, her eyes locked on his. He licked his lips nervously. He extended his hand as if to ward her off.

"Touch me, *kane*, Paul. Kiss me, Paul." Her voice was a whispering tropical breeze, soothing, seductive. Di felt a flame of jealousy flash through her.

"No!" The cry was involuntary, wrenched from Di before she could curb it. He was not to kiss her, even though Di knew that it would help her cause. If Paul loved Pele, then he would let her keep the rock so that the goddess would stay with them indefinitely. But Di didn't want him to kiss her. She wanted to be the only one to kiss her.

Pele looked at Di, through her, caressing her with her eyes. "*Aloha nui loa, Di.* All is *maika'i.* Have no fear."

In that instant Paul touched Pele, reaching out to draw her to him. As his arm encircled her, as his hand contacted with her back, he sprang back with a cry of pain. The sound shattered the spell cast by Pele. Paul clutched his wrist, holding his hand palm up out from him.

“What! What is it?!” Di rushed to his side and gazed in horror at his palm. It was black and blistering as we watched. “Oh my God! Paul! Your hand. Quick, get it under cold water. Oh my God.” They became aware that Pele was laughing, a deep throaty chuckle that made them shiver.

“Why, Pele?” Di asked. “Why did you hurt him?”

“I am sorry, Paul. It is out of my control. Whoever touches my back is burnt.”

“Why didn’t you warn him?”

Pele shrugged. “You are warned now.”

Di tended to Paul’s burn, in the end taking him to the hospital’s Outpatients Clinic, where they had a difficult time explaining how he had been burnt. Pele remained at home, forbidden to go with them.

She wanted to be the only one to kiss her. Where had that strange thought come from. Di had never been attracted by a woman before, as she had been to Pele. She gazed at Pele's beautiful face and wondered again why no-one else saw her as she did. It was obvious from Paul's behaviour that he now saw her as someone abhorrent. But his attitude was understandable. After all, his hand was a swollen blistered mess. Every time he encountered Pele he would scowl at her. And his attitude towards Di bordered on 'nasty'. He blamed her because Pele was not only here, but still here.

He was right, of course, and Di knew she had to do something about it. But, while she was appalled at the harm Pele had done to Paul, Di revelled in her new-found friend. Her beauty, and her desirability cast a spell on her. And, at work, on 'the white slug' who had begun to visit Di unexpectedly in her office. Constrained by the sexual harassment rules, he'd drool and leer as Pele oozed charm and sexuality, giving him occasional glimpses of her untouchable body. Di almost had to mop up the office after he left. Considering her position, Pele played the game to protect Di's job - she could have let him see her as an old hag like the rest of the staff.

In the evenings they sat on the back patio – the *lanai* – drinking *Mai tai*'s that Di had learned to mix upon her return from Hawaii. She looked across at Pele shimmering in the night and once more wanted to stroke her beautiful skin.

“Pele?”

“*Ae wahine.*”

“Pele, if I touched you, would I be burnt like Paul?”

“*'a'ole iki ipo.* For you I have *aloha nui loa*. But you must beware of my back. That is something I cannot control. Touch me anywhere but my back.”

Tentatively, Di reached out her hand and gently stroked Pele's arm as it rested on the arm of the chair. Her skin was warm and smooth. Di shuddered as she felt her body tense and tingle. What was this spell of sexual anticipation that encompassed her?

Smouldering beside her, Pele slowly turned her body towards Di. “*Aloha nui loa, iki ipo,*” she breathed hoarsely.

No. This had to stop. “Pele. I love you but what you did to Paul was too cruel. You let me touch you without hurting me, so why did you hurt Paul?”

“It was not in my control, *wahine.*” Her voice was cool and confident.

“Yes it was, Pele. Most of what has happened has been in your control. The only thing you can't control is getting the rock back to Hawaii. For that you need me.”

Pele's eyes smouldered, but no longer sexually, as she glared back at Di. "Yes, *wahine*, I do need you for that. I have tried to persuade you to return my lava as gently as I could. But you have refused to listen. Be careful that your stubbornness does not cause you more grief than Paul's burnt hand."

Di drew back from Pele's physical and emotional heat, dismayed. "Pele," she began.

Pele held up her hand, palm facing Di. "No, Di. It is time. I cannot wait any longer. I need to return to my home, my family, and my people."

She stood up, seeming to tower over Di. "It is time."

Di rose and entered the house in search of her rock. She found it beside her photo album on the coffee table. Picking it up gently she stroked its porous surface that she loved so much. If she gave in to Pele's demands Di would miss her little rock. It was her most tangible reminder of Hawaii, and without it she was afraid she might lose the clarity of her memories. She decided to sleep on it. She'd talk to Paul at work the next day, if he'd speak to her of course, and make a decision about sending the rock back then. Surely one more day couldn't hurt.

Boy, was she wrong.

Everywhere they said "You'll love Maui". How right they were. Di turned to the photos of Maui, and sighed. There were pages of snapshots, the majority from the Hana Road trip, showing the rocky desert dry side, and the lush jungle side with its colourful foliage and exotic blooms, and waterfalls, and multiple staggeringly beautiful views of blue-green ocean. Maui had been a surprise, because it was like all three islands in one. It had the volcano like the Big Island, the commercial areas like Oahu, and the grand scenery and laid-back attitude of Kauai.

How amazing Hana Road had been. And how long. The circle island trip had taken all the daylight hours, including the pick-up trip to meet the tour and the drop-off trip afterwards. The small van had literally circled the larger of the two joined-island halves that comprised Maui. In fact the island looked like a reproducing amoebic cell frozen mid-split. As on the other islands, with the exception of the rain-storm on Kauai, the weather had been perfect for such a trip, sun shining, sky blue with small white clouds, the atmosphere balmy and the breeze varying from wafting to brisk dependent upon their position along the road.

Each time that she looked at the photos and then at the maps of each island that she'd inserted into the album at the change of each location, she was struck by just how much of Hawaii they had yet to see. They'd seen the main tourist sights included in the various circle island tours, but that had only been a fraction of the places to see. And things to do - like skydiving, and whale-watching, and trekking, and scuba diving, and helicopter riding, and horseback riding. Another place on the 'not been-there-done-that' list was the Mauna Kea Observatory on the Big Island. Having completed an Astronomy unit as an elective when she did her degree, the observatory on the highest point in Hawaii had been on her 'to do' list prior to the holiday; but time and the circle island tour hadn't allowed for it.

Not that she was complaining really - they'd seen heaps more than most people who seemed to spend all their time in Hawaii either shopping or lazing by the pool or ocean. It wasn't about complaining. It was more that she knew

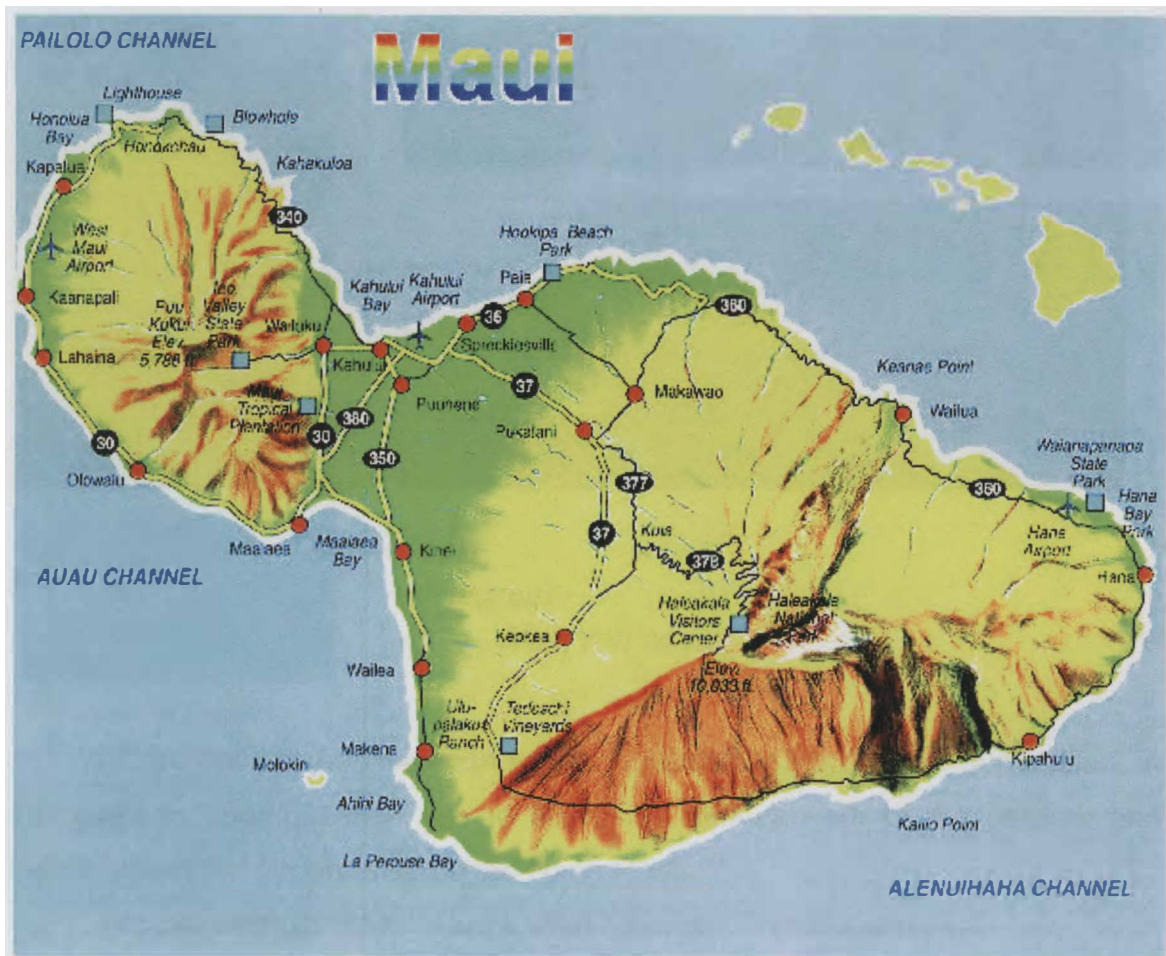
that she'd have to keep returning to Hawaii till she'd seen all there was to see. And she was saving hard to do just that.

As a step towards this goal, she'd have to compile a list of places still to see. At the top she'd put the observatory. How great it would be to be permitted to work there. Although she was rather scared by its unpredictable nature with its continual volcanic eruptions and activity, she was really drawn to the Big Island, as a great place to live. Not that they'd actually seen the lava flows either. They would've had to hire a helicopter for that, and that was way beyond for their budget.

Although it had wonderful mountains, Oahu was a little commercial for her, but then that might make work easier to obtain. Besides the University of Hawaii was there where she could study the Hawaiian language, like Becky. And though she loved the grandeur of the Waimea Canyon in Kauai, she thought that she'd rather not live there. It was a little too hippie and laid back and underdeveloped for her. But it would be nice to be near enough to visit it occasionally. Maui definitely had great possibilities, but like Oahu was more commercial.

Still, she could be a tour guide there. With all the knowledge that she had gleaned from her own tours, she would make a great tour guide - on any of the islands. That'd be a cool job. She'd be able to look at the glorious scenery all day every day. And she wasn't bad with people either. It'd be fun.

But it was just a pipe dream. You have to be American to live in Hawaii. .



*Hana Road tour
over rocky road
barely passable.*

*Panorama
ever changing
dry desert, lush rainforest
dry flash-flood courses
cascading falls, streams
jutting lava
into ocean billows
smashing.*



*Seven Pools
strung out
from fall to fall
to sea.*

“You have to be American to live in Hawaii,” said the tour guide, Dan, in response to your question, as he drove the mini-van out of the carpark and headed past the airport towards the Hana Road.

You sighed wistfully. “That’s what I thought. What a shame.”

“Mind you we make exceptions if you’re rolling in money.” The tour group laughed heartily.

“If only. What a shame about that too.” More laughter as they all agreed. Because of your tendency for car sickness - which you’d managed to control thus far by sitting up front each trip - you sat in the front passenger seat, while Paul sat squashed in with the other six couples. Dan had told them that they would all be rotating seats so that everyone had a turn on the awful back seat, but that you were exempt from the seat-changing as he did not want to have to clean up vomit today. Everyone laughed as you pulled a vomiting face and put your hand over your mouth. You were off to a good start.

As the van wound its way slowly past the houses then out into the rural area, he explained why you had to use the mini van.

“The Hana Road is quite narrow in places and very rough. The bigger buses just wouldn’t get through. In fact there’re places where I have to be real careful. There’re washaways and flash-flooding regularly. Before I left to collect you, I had to check if there’d been any rainfall along the Hana Road. And when

we reach the washaways I have to radio in and check again before we cross them.”

“Why do you have to do that? Isn’t the first weather report you get enough?” you ask him.

“You would think so, but no. On a few occasions vehicles have been hit by a flash flood as they were crossing. It all looks okay, then a wall of water is on you.”

There were squeals from the back seats as the women there peered anxiously out the windows at the fields flashing passed.

“But they’d warn you when you radio in wouldn’t they?” you persist.

Dan nodded. “Yeah. That’s why we radio in. They can tell us about every bit of rain that falls on this road. It’s also why people can’t drive cars along it.”

“What do you mean – they can’t drive cars along it?”

“Well actually, I mean that the rental companies won’t allow tourists to drive along the Hana Road from this rough end. They can drive around from the other end as far as the Seven Pools, but no further.”

“Why? Just because of the flash flooding? Or because of the rough road?”

“Both. Of course locals drive it when they need to but they don’t need to very much. Not too many people live along the rough side, and definitely not past the washaways, though there is an old church I’ll be showing you on a promontory.”

With thoughts of toilets in your mind, you ask, “How long is this road? Will we make any stops?”

“It’s long and lonely. We probably won’t even see any other tourist buses till we reach Seven Pools. We’ll have a late lunch at Hana where I reckon you’ll be glad of the rest.” He glanced at your stricken face and then added, “ You’ll find facilities of sorts at the Church, if it’s unlocked, and at Seven Pools. But if you’re desperate we’ll have a rest stop by the side of the road.” The relief in the laughter that ensued was palpable.

“Another question. Do you mind?” you ask.

“Nope. That’s fine. I like to answer questions, because it means I’m telling you stuff you want to know.” He grinned.

“Well, I was wondering why it was so dry out here,” you wave your hand at the passing scenery, “if there is so much rain that there are flash-floods?”

“Good question. This is the dry side of the island.” He chuckled. “No. Seriously. This is the dry side of the island. Each of the Hawaiian Islands has their own climate. By that I mean they have a wet side and a dry side. They are like a continent, with their flat outer edges and their mountains in the middle. Have you seen a map of Maui?”

Most of the passengers reply affirmatively. “Well, as you can see on the map, Maui has two mountain ranges joined in between them by flat land that partly circles each range. The rain strikes the Western edge and its wet and green there. But this side of the mountain is dry and desert-like. The plants here are those that grow in deserts.”

As you looked outside the window you realised that you had indeed seen this type of landscape in Western Australia where you lived.

Dan pointed towards the horizon. “See those cone-shaped hills?” When all had located what he was indicating, he continued. “Those are cinder cones - small eruptions of cinders that form cone shapes. You’ll see quite a few of them as we continue. And we get quite close to them.” He paused. “Who of you have heard of our volcano here on Maui?”

“It’s Haleakala, isn’t it?” you immediately ask.

“Yeah. That’s right. And have you all heard of the bike rides they do down it at dawn?”

“I saw something about it on the tourist TV in our hotel room. You drive up to the top before dawn, watch the dawn, then get on bikes and hurtle down the mountainside. Scary stuff!”

“Yeah that’s right. You might as well take over the commentary. I can see I’m not needed here.”

A little embarrassed, you laugh with the others, then apologise to Dan. “I’m sorry. You asked a question so I answered it. I didn’t realise it was rhetorical.”

“That’s okay. I don’t mind really. It’s nice to find someone so interested in our islands.”

You hesitate, then ask him, “Does Madam Pele have anything to do with the Haleakala volcano, or just Kilauea?”

“Ah, now that’s a good question. Have you people heard of Madam Pele, other than Di here I mean?” He chuckled again, and this time you join him. Some had, some hadn’t.

“Well Madam Pele is the Fire-Goddess of the volcanoes and the lava flows. She went from island to island looking for a home, with her spiteful sister on her tail spoiling it for her each time. She tried at Haleakala before finally she settled in Kilauea on the Big Island of Hawaii, which is the newest of the islands. The volcanoes there are still really active. So she’s mostly associated with that one. Legend has it that she had a sled race down it with a chief.”

“A kind of pre-cursor for the bike rides at Haleakala?” you ask.

Dan threw his head back and laughed out loud. “Yeah, you might say that. I like that. Shall I tell you all the legend?”

Receiving assent from all, he continued.

“Well now, Madam Pele is one of the stranger goddesses in Hawaii, because she likes to interact with the people of the islands. She sort of gets involved with their lives, and meddles whereas the other gods and goddesses prefer to remain more aloof. She’s fiery and impetuous and passionate, so it’s dangerous to cross her and dangerous to be loved by her.

“Now one day Kahawali, chief of Puna, and a friend went to have some fun with a *holua* which is a sled, on the side of a hill. Lots of people gathered at the bottom to watch the sport, and they turned it into a bit of a party with drums and music, dancers and food. Well they were making so much noise that Pele came to see what was happening.

“As a woman – you all know she can change her shape don’t you? Oh, only some do – okay well she can sometimes be a beautiful young woman and sometimes an old hag, but mostly she’s in spirit form. Anyway, she was like a young woman this day, and stood on top of the hill, and challenged the chief to a sled race.

“He accepted which was his first mistake.” Everyone laughed.

“So his second would be that he beat her, right?” you asked cheekily.

“Di!” Paul said crossly. “You’re doing it again. Let the man tell his story.”

“Sorry you guys.” You sat back contritely.

Meanwhile Dan was torn between laughter and admiration. “Good guess. That’s exactly what he did. You see, Pele wasn’t as experienced as he was with

the sled, which was narrow and the rider needed to balance carefully especially at that speed. They flew down the hill and Kahawali beat her to thunderous applause from the crowd.

“This annoyed Pele, who thinking that the problem was in the sled not herself, demanded that they change sleds and try again,. But Kahawali, thinking she was only a native woman replied, ‘Aole! No! Are you my wife that you should have my sled?’ Then impatiently he leapt onto his sled and shot off down the hill.

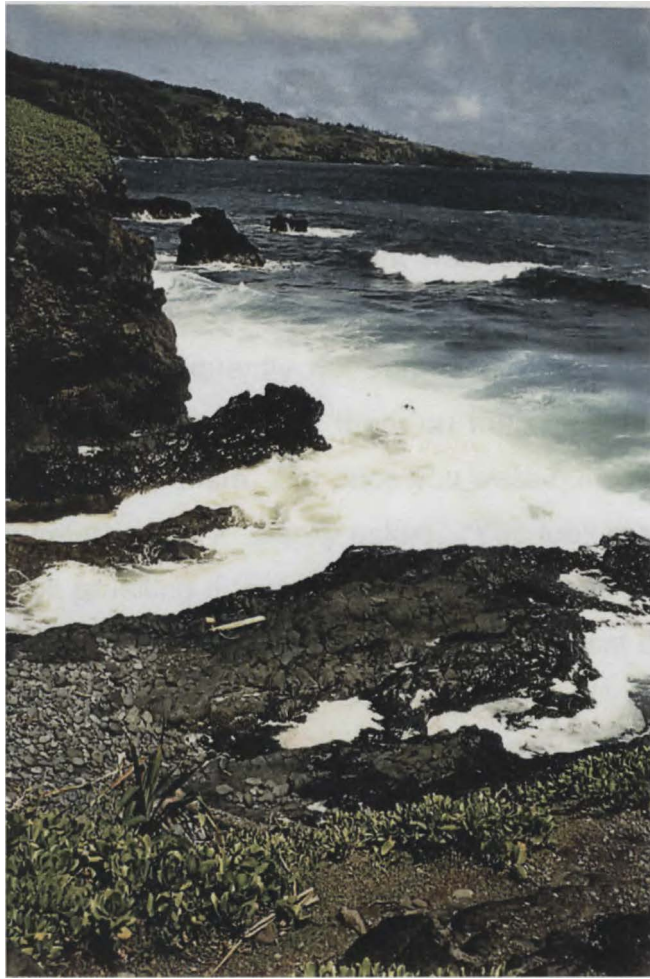
“Incensed by his reply and his action, Pele stamped her foot on the ground and caused an earthquake which split the hill. Then she called the fire and liquid lava to rise, changed back to her huge supernatural form and followed him down the hill. When he reached the bottom he turned and saw Pele chasing him with fire and thunder and lightning, earthquake and streams of molten lava.

“Grabbing his broad spear he fled for his life. Pele surfed the lava flow, overwhelming the spectators and the village as she went. He farewelled his mother and his wife, crossed a chasm by walking across his spear, and grabbed a canoe and paddled out to sea. Seeing his escape, Pele stood, a giant raging goddess on a rock by the shore, hurling great chunks of lava and boulders from the cliffs. They fell all around him but missed his canoe. Using his broad spear as a mast and sail he soon reached the island of Maui. He had a really narrow escape.”

“I’ll say. Wow.” You turned in your seat to face Paul in the row behind. “Aren’t you glad I don’t carry on like that when I get annoyed with you?” The little van rocked with laughter, and Paul just grinned. You knew he’d find a way to get you back for that one.

At the tiny Huialoa church on the Kaupo headland in the middle of the deserted impassable part of the Hana road, the much-needed and long-awaited toilet block was locked. So a rest-stop was held by the side of the road. The guys went one way, while the women went behind the low shrubs bordering the road. Greatly relieved everyone clambered back in to endure the incredibly rough ride to the Seven Pools where there were long queues waiting to use the drop-toilets whose cubicles perched out over the cliff edge.

Due to your earlier stop, your van-load were free to wander down the paths alongside the seven pools, that Dan told you were sacred to Hawaiian people. The rocky pools were strung out along a stream that fell into each in short cascades, from the hills to the shore. The first, second and third of the pools were small, surrounded by jungle, and on the land side of the road that bridged them. On the ocean side the other four dropped away becoming increasingly large and deep, before the final long cascade over the rocks to the tiny black sand beach and the ocean beyond.



Hana

flaming giant

Royal Poinciana tree

towers over lawns

lush jungle.

Tarred road

winding between

cottages, mansions

precipice, jungle

back to civilization.

The rental companies won't allow tourists to drive along the Hana Road from the rough end. That had been obvious when you had reached the Seven Pools and seen the carpark full of hire cars, all of which had driven around the good road that now lay ahead of you. Thank goodness. You had certainly had your fill of rough roads for some time to come.

When you reached your next stop, the tiny town of Hana, for a belated lunch, you discovered that too was teeming with hire cars, and coaches. It was so nice to escape the confines of the van and enter the lovely old colonial house that was now the restaurant at Hana that catered for all tourists, coach and otherwise. Among several large coaches that crowded the small carpark, you noticed a flashy convertible that you thought was just the sort of car that Tom and Becky would drive.

Inside you were consequently not surprised to see them lounging at a table with tall frosty glasses in front of them on the checked tablecloth. They waved, beckoning you to join them. For once you were quite happy to do so.

“How’s your safari, so far?” Becky asked. “You look really tired.”

“It’s been a bit gruelling if you must know. The road was so rough I feel like my spine has been shattered.” You grimaced as you sat down. “I just hope we’re going to stay here for a while.” As you let out a long sigh, the young couple exchanged a glance. They of course looked fighting fit, ready to rush out and play tennis on the old tennis court in the formal gardens you could see through the long windows.

When Paul had brought drinks over to you from the bar, you asked, “How far did you go today? Have you been to the Seven Pools yet? Or do you still have to go there?”

“We’re on our way there,” replied Becky. “We’ll wait with you till you have to leave if you like.”

“Thanks.” Paul was quick to reply, with a silly grin on his face. There was no doubt about it – he liked what he saw of Becky. You frowned, but smiled when you realised that Becky had no idea of Paul’s interest. She had already turned back to check with Tom that he didn’t mind the delay.

When it was time for your group to get their arranged lunch, you left Tom and Becky and sauntered over to the melee around the buffet. After clearing it with Dan that you had met some friends and would eat with them, you returned with loaded plates. Dan had said that he would give you a call when the rest were ready to resume the tour, so you relaxed and ate your meal chatting and gazing out at the glorious sun-drenched gardens from beneath the cooling fans within.

"We heard a bit more about the bike ride down Haleakala today. Do you know about it?" you asked the other couple.

"Yeh, and we're gonna do that tomorrow," enthused Tom. "Hey! Why don't you guys come with us. You wanna do that?"

"Great," Paul responded. Sport. Any sport. You sighed. He turned to you. "What's the matter? Don't you want to go?"

"Yes, of course. I'm just a bit worried about it though. It's a while since I rode a bike, and it might be really steep."

Paul grinned. "I hope it is."

Tom grinned too. They looked like rivals about to compete for real. Maybe they were. And their trophy smiled and tossed her head so her long blond hair flickered in the shafts of sunlight.

"We'll arrange it when we get back if you like?" offered Becky. "Maybe we could meet at the Whalers Village for dinner tonight, and give you the details then. Do you know where that is?"

"That'd be great," you answered. "And yes. It's in Kaanapali Beach, not too far from where we're staying at the Maui Park Villas. There's a shuttle bus that'll take us there."

"You want to meet in the mall square?"

"Okay, but maybe out the front of it, near the entry arch overlooking the golf course. In case it's crowded."

"What kind of food do you want? There's quite a choice."

"Let's choose a restaurant that's by the shore, because I've read that the whales come right in beside them at sunset. We'll want to be able to see that, won't we?"

"Sounds great."

"Cool dudes. We'll meet you there." added Tom. "When do you reckon you'll get back from your tour?"

"No idea, but it'd have to be before dusk. The other passengers must have made dinner plans. Or show plans. Or whatever. There's lots to do at night."

"Okay. We'll go there as soon as we're ready ourselves, and just wait for you. And you guys do the same. Okay?"

"Yep. Suits us," said Paul.

With that arranged, and hearing a call from Dan, you made a dash for the restrooms, then joined the others at the van, waving to Tom and Becky as they pulled out of the carpark, their golden hair rippling in the breeze.

The return journey was much more comfortable, and entailed views of various celebrities' houses perched amongst the jungle, usually overlooking the wonderful vistas of black lava edged sparkling ocean. You saw jungle fed waterfalls, and visited restrooms at Waianapanapa State Park. You being the only person able to pronounce this Hawaiian name impressed Dan considerably. But after you'd strolled over to watch the waves pounding the ebony rocks, and to dodge the ensuing huge white sprays, Paul told you that you were a 'smart-arse' and should stop embarrassing him in front of the other passengers.

Deflated and a little hurt, you climbed aboard the van for the last leg of the trip. You were shown the lonely outcrop of rock, off the headland, which was used as the location for the prison in the movie *Papillon*, supposedly set in South America. A little further on was an arch of black lava rock bridging the ocean from the shore to a small island. And finally there was the small island, little more than a large rock, lying a distance off the coast on which you could see two palm trees. Dan said that a father had swum out and planted a palm seed at the news that his brother had been killed in the World War II. After the Vietnam War, upon learning that his son had also been killed, he swam out once more and planted another palm. Rather sad you thought, but the palms remained as a memorial for all to see.



Whales

frolic at shore's edge

Restaurants

*strategically positioned
for thrilled tourist audience.*

Giant whale murals

on many walls.

Galleries

bursting with Hawaiian art.

You grimaced as you sat down. It had been a long day of travelling and you were very tired. Opposite you, at the table of the restaurant beside the glowing sea, sat Tom and Becky looking fresh and stunning. The sun was sinking amid the usual gorgeous colours, which the sea reflected, and the breeze wafted Frangipani fragrance in through the open windows. The shutters had been drawn back to open the restaurant uniting the inside with the outer lanai, and making the views accessible for all diners.

“How was your tour?” Becky asked.

“Extremely long,” you replied, pulling a face as you rubbed your back dramatically, then grinned.

“But was it worth it?”

“Oh yeah. For sure. The scenery was spectacular, and the contrast between the dry and wet sides was amazing. Like looking at a whole micro-continent.

“Yeah, but it was a hell of a drive just to see jungle and a church. I can see why most people only used the main road and only went as far as the Pools,” Paul said.

“Did you like them?” you asked Becky.

She smiled sweetly, her face glowing with happiness in the fading light. “Yes, they sure were beautiful. I wanted to bathe in them but Tom just wanted to get back here.”

“Yeah,” Tom chuckled. “There was no surf there man so no point in stayin’.”

You all laughed, relaxed, like old friends. Odd that. How, after only a few meetings, you felt as though you’d known them for ages. You certainly were drawn to them.

After ordering your meals of mouth-watering seafood cooked Hawaiian style, you explored this unusual friendship.

“What do you do, Becky? When you are home on the mainland I mean.”

“Actually, I go to Irvine University of California. I’m studying language.”

“Which language?”

“Languages generally – how they arose, how they modified, and merged and so on.”

“Wow, that sounds fascinating. I did a BA in English, with a focus on writing. But I’ve always had an ear for language. I did some French units as electives, but I can’t speak it very well because I had no-one to practice with.”

“What about Paul?”

“Who me? You gotta be kidding. I’m too busy with my own stuff to learn bloody French.”

Tom roared with laughter.

You poked out your tongue at Paul just as the waitress arrived laden with plates of steaming and sizzling seafood. Typical. You always got caught out. Shaking your head in disbelief, you joined the laughter of the others.

Talking between mouthfuls, you remarked to Becky that you really loved the Hawaiian language and would love to learn it. As she listened attentively,

you related the story of trying to get the Hawaiian phrase book on the Big Island while on your Circle Island tour there. Bryan, your guide, had taken you to a small local coffee plantation shop for a drink and a look at their tourist memorabilia, which was the same as at all the other places you had been. Except that this time, as you'd gone through the motions of strolling up and down their shelves as if interested in what they had for sale, you'd noticed a Hawaiian phrase book tucked down amongst the cards.

As you'd picked it up to have a look at it, Paul spotted you and said "Come on, let's get out of here. We don't want to encourage them by buying any of their crap." So you'd put the book back, making a mental note to keep an eye out for another one to buy when you had a little more time. After all, if there was one in that remote little place, there were bound to be others in the bigger stores. Right? Wrong. You'd been unable to find another phrase book anywhere. So now you would be leaving Hawaii in a few days time, with no book of the language.

"Who cares," said Paul. "You've got lots of other crap to take home with you. Including a bit of forbidden lava rock."

"Oh my God." Becky looked a bit shocked.

"I didn't pick it up from the beach. I bought it from a Hawaiian vendor at a roadside van. It's supposed to be okay if they are selling it."

"Oh, okay." She didn't sound as if she thought it were okay. "But all the same I wouldn't want to take a piece of lava home. People are always sending it back here again."

"Oh you've heard that piece of propaganda as well hey," scoffed Paul.

"Anyway, I'd sure love to learn their language as well." Becky smiled warmly at you. "In fact I think I might try to move here and go to the University of Hawaii to finish my degree, so I can study Hawaiian."

You felt an immediate pang of jealousy flash through you. It was exactly what you wanted to do, but as you weren't American you couldn't. She was so lucky. You wondered if there was an exchange program you could use through your old university in Perth. It might be worth exploring.

Meanwhile, Tom beamed at his Becky. "Hey. Yeah. That's a gnarly idea. Then I could surf at Waimea Bay all the time. Cool, man."

Astonished at Tom's naivety, Paul said, "Well that's when it has any surf there. When we saw it, it was dead flat."

"You gotta go at the right time of the year, man."

"Well, I'll tell you what. Why don't you come to Australia, to Perth, and I'll take you down to Margaret River for the Masters Surfing Championships. Then we'll see if you can surf."

"That'd be cool too, man. But I'd have to earn some money on the circuit first so we can come."

"Is that what you do? Just surf?" you asked him.

"Yeah."

"But don't you work?"

"Nope. I just surf. That's how I earn my living. It's what I do."

"So you surf professionally?" Paul asked with grudging respect.

"Yeah." Tom grinned, and flicked his bleached locks away from his face.

Suddenly there was a collective gasp from the diners nearest to the shore. Then you heard the deep call of a whale through the restaurant sound system, which sent a thrill through your body, followed by a whacking splash. Standing so you could see the ocean above the other patrons, you saw a huge black fin, backlit by the last of the sunset, lift in slow motion out of the dark cerulean waves. It hung upright for a moment, before plunging down with a smack, sending up great plumes of spray that splattered onto the tables on the beach lanai, soaking those sitting there. People laughed. People applauded. To the background buzz of conversation, the free night show continued. Like all the people in the now filled restaurant, you remained transfixed for about an hour until the sky's glow was gone and the restaurant's spotlights had taken over. As night set in, the whales slowly moved away from the shore. When they were out of sight, the sound of their calls still drifted through the restaurant, courtesy of the underwater microphones which remained connected. This was replaced eventually by Hawaiian music, low and melodious.

"That was wonderful," you sighed.

"Weren't they magic," Becky enthused.

"That was cool, man." Tom nodded his eyes alight but his body language laid back.

“It was okay,” conceded Paul. “I guess it’s a bit special to see whales that close up and not in a theme park.”

You and Becky glanced at each other then sighed. “Magic.”

Outside in the mall you made arrangements for Tom and Becky to collect you before dawn for the drive to Haleakala.



Beaches
mountains
volcano crater
shrine and church.

Surfing
hiking
climbing
biking.

You certainly were drawn to them. And no wonder. They were warm and funny, and kind too. Obviously morning people, Tom and Becky had collected you as promised, and bubbling with good humour had driven you both to the carpark at Haleakala, where a bike hire company was waiting to transport any riders who hired bikes from them up to the top carpark overlooking the main crater.

The dawn light peered over the horizon, fondled the crater rim, then crept down, out across the land below. The group of bike riders stood with their bicycles in the carpark of the Kalahaku lookout, near the Haleakala Visitor Centre. As you adjusted the strap of your helmet nervously, you glanced at Paul, Tom and Becky, all of whom were straddling their bikes confidently.

“I’m not too sure about this, Paul,” you murmured to him.

“What?” He obviously hadn’t heard you.

"I said, I'm not too sure about this. It looks really steep."

"Yeah. Great isn't it." He grinned at you. Damn. It was going to be like that. He was going to be all fired up and not care one bit that you were scared witless by the ordeal in front of you. Typical. Sports mad. What were you doing being with him?! Chalk and cheese.

You sighed.

"Come on you big scaredy cat. This'll be fun."

"Will you stay with me?"

"Yeah, yeah." He turned to ask the others if they were ready to go. "Okay let's go then."

They rode competently to the carpark entrance, with you wobbling along behind them. It was years since you had ridden a bicycle, and although you hadn't forgotten how, as the saying went, you were certainly far from confident. Paul waited impatiently for you to reach them, before pushing off down the steep road, hugging the right hand side. Not only did you have to control the bike on such an angle, but you also had to remember to keep to the right instead of the left in case any traffic was coming up around switchbacks towards you. Your basic nightmare.

"Oh my God!" you cried involuntarily, as the slope steepened. You kept your hand firmly on the brake-lever, retarding your speed, and keeping the bike to a near crawl.

"Come on, Di!" Paul called over his shoulder as he and the others disappeared over a crest at an incredible speed. So much for staying with you. At least at this speed you were able to see the incredible lunar landscape of the volcanic crater as you swung carefully around each hairpin turn. The dark grey gradually filled with sulphurous colour as the sun rose and lit the hollows of the crater. Totally uninhabitable, alien and repellent in terrain and atmosphere. But compelling as well.

Then you saw her. The woman in red. She was out on the lip of the caldera, her hair and muumuu fluttering in the breeze, sulphurous swirls drifting around her. Wobbling on your bike, your attention was yanked back to the road as you concentrated so you wouldn't crash. If you fell off on this road you would continue to roll, and could seriously injure yourself. You wondered what sort of

insurance the bike hire company had. They probably hired the bikes with no responsibility taken, if they had any sense.

When you were in control again, you looked back to the caldera, but could see no sign of the woman. Nothing. Just swirls of sulphur wafting up and eddying. Weird.

Some distance below you, you could see Paul riding between Tom and Becky. You could just discern that his head was down but turned towards Becky a little, and laughter rose faintly on the breeze. Gritting your teeth, you allowed a little more speed as you traversed a more shallow section, but braked once more as the road plunged after turning the next elbow. Nightmare was right! When would you ever reach the bottom.

Early in the ride the rest of the riders had passed you, pulling out around you carefully as you wobbled in front of them. Laughter had floated around you as they passed, but you'd just smiled as if you didn't care. What else could you do. So you were alone on the mountainside, with the island nestling in the blue of the ocean that stretched to the horizon below you. It was breathtaking, and suddenly you were glad that you were alone, with no distractions from the others. They were all taken up with the bike race, the speed and the spinning wheels, and had no time for views. Their loss.

Smiling to yourself, you relaxed, and began to enjoy your ride down the volcano. Continuing to control your speed, you began to hum the theme from *Blue Hawaii*. Not caring who heard you, you began to sing the song full-voice, allowing it to become part of the experience, the sounds swelling and fading into the amazing landscape around you.

When you finally reached the bottom car park, where the others had already returned their bikes to the hire company, you greeted them all with a smile.

"Wasn't that great! I am so glad we did that." You grinned at Paul, and laughed happily with Tom and Becky.

Recovering from his astonishment, Paul grinned at you. "What was that dreadful racket we heard as you came down? Sounded like a cat screeching. We thought you were in trouble."

Tom choked back laughter, while Becky quickly said, "It sounded wonderful. It was obviously euphoric! Actually, I wish I'd ridden down slowly

like you, with you, and taken in the scenery, instead of racing with the guys to prove that we girls can do it too.”



Lahaina

*sprawling old town
spreading Banyan tree
over acre of town square.*

Historic Court House

waterfront, whaling ship

Front Street to Cannery

*converted pineapple factory
to shopper's delight.*

Smiling to yourself, you relaxed, and began to enjoy your ride down the volcano. Sitting in front of the open car your hair whipped back around your face, but you weren't fazed. The mass of long curls would probably tangle into a huge bush by the time you stopped, but today you didn't care. Normally this lack of control would drive you crazy and you'd spend the entire ride desperately pinioning your hair with your hands, fingers spread to prevent the wisps and curls from escaping. You laughed happily and waved your arms above your head. Behind you, you could hear an echo of laughter as Paul and Becky reacted to your abandoned behaviour.

Tom pulled up at a set of lights on the outskirts of Lahaina. "What shall we do now? You guys hungry?"

"Yeah, sure. How about we go into Lahaina and explore it? Unless you two already have - been there I mean," you reply.

"Nope not yet. So that's cool then? Let's do it."

"Great," said the pair in the back seat in unison, then laughed. They seemed to be getting on really well. You suddenly realised that their sitting together created an intimacy that you weren't sure you wanted them to have.

Twisting in your seat so you could see them, you engaged them in a shouted conversation as the wind blew your words around. After a few minutes you decided to stop being paranoid and faced the front again. Besides how intimate could you get in an open car.

Having parked the car you began to stroll through the streets of Lahaina down towards the seafront. There were the usual boardwalk shops, with a cluster of them grouped around a lush garden forming an open mall. The boardwalk was on different levels so that you were continually climbing and descending, several steps at a time.

“Shall we sit down and eat somewhere here, or just grab something take-away?” you asked as you reached a food court.

“Take-away?” Tom was puzzled, then light dawned. “Oh, you mean take-out.”

“Take-out. Take-away. Same thing.” Paul had little tolerance for the stating of the obvious. You sighed.

Becky rushed to fill the awkward silence. “let’s just grab something from the food mall here and eat as we browse.”

“Will they allow us in their shops with food though?” You couldn’t do that at home, so doubted you could do it here.

“Most of these places have their goods out on the boardwalk anyway, so we should be okay.” Becky was such a conversational contrast to Tom, - you liked the way you got an educated answer from Becky in contrast with Tom’s monosyllabic surf-speak - yet they were so alike in other ways. Young and vibrant, enthusiastic and way too energetic for you. You used to be like that not that long ago. When did the rot set in. It was weird the way you matured, looking at things in a different way, from a different position. Inside you were still the same young person. And your inner image of yourself remained the same, so that it was sometimes a shock when you caught sight of yourself in the mirror. How much worse would that get as you aged?

“Di?” Recalling you from your thoughts, Paul looked at you with annoyance at your rudeness. Becky looked a little discomforted. Tom looked impatient to get at the food.

“Sorry. Right. Went miles away then. Sorry. Let’s go eat then.” Contritely, you entered the gloomy food court behind the others. Tom and Becky

immediately grabbed hot dogs from a stand. Piled high with onion and smothered in sauce, these looked so good to Paul that he followed suit. While they went off to buy drinks you were left to try and find something that you wanted to eat. And a hot dog wasn't it. In the end you settled for a chicken salad roll, minus the pickle and sauce that Americans loved to put into everything.

"Let's grab one of these tables by the garden, so we can manage our lunch better," you suggested hopefully, moving along the boardwalk to where a few tables were placed on the garden edge of it. This meant that people were constantly passing between them and the food court and other shops and stalls, but that was fine. The last thing you wanted was to have bits of your salad leaving a trail behind you as you walked.

After a moment's hesitation the others joined you at a table shaded by palms. Seeing your difficulty with your roll, Paul said, "This is not a bad idea. Though why you had to pick something so hard to manage I don't know."

"Yes, you do. You know I don't like hot dogs, with all that onion and sauce, and the only other things were fatty and greasy. It won't take us long to eat it anyway and then we can hit the shops."

"Oh can we," Paul quizzed, laughing, and raising his eyebrows comically.

"Well, Becky and I can." You poked your tongue out at him and grinned. "Well, can't we?" You waited chewing your roll, then licking your fingers where the mayonnaise ran down them. "Hey, good thing I said no sauce back there, 'cause I would have had mayo and sauce in the same roll. Sorry sandwich. They call this a sandwich." You pull a face.

Tom said, "Well it is."

"No, it's not. It's a roll. A sandwich has two slices of bread, with the fillings between them. This is a roll." You waved the half eaten object in the air to illustrate.

"We call them all sandwiches."

Turning to Tom, Paul said seriously, "Also known as a sanger."

"A what?"

"A sanger." He laughed. "At least you'll know what to call it if you ever get to Oz."

"Oh, and what's sauce?"

“Tomato sauce.”

“Tomato sauce. Oh tomayto ketchup. Right.”

Tom was riveted by this information, a fact that incited Paul to continue. “And sausages are sniggies or snaggers. And that includes the kind you put in hot dogs, ‘cept they’re usually called red snaggers.”

Tom roared with laughter, throwing his head back, momentarily gaining an audience of passers-by, who all smiled and went on their individual and collective ways. You had to admit he was a happy person, who had the knack of making others feel happy too. An attractive quality, and no doubt one that drew Becky to him.

Your lunch finished, you turned to Paul and asked, “So am I allowed to spend some money in the shops, if I find something I like?”

Paul grimaced. “I s’pose. As long as you don’t go overboard.”

Tom grinned at Paul’s facial and verbal expressions.

“So you guys go off in your own direction and we’ll go off in ours then.”

“I’m not sure I like the sound of that.” Paul was reluctant to let you out of his sight in the shops. He’d managed to curb your buying of what he called tourist crap so far but was worried that without him there you might get carried away.

“How about we all pile in the car and head over to the Cannery Mall,” Tom suggested. “It’s got better shops in it. And it used to be an old pineapple canning factory so it’s got a museum thingy in it.”

“That sounds more like it.” Paul brightened considerably. “We’ll meet back here in half an hour.” He checked his watch. “Okay?”

“Geez, that’s not very long,” you grumbled, then sighed. “All right then.”

Of course the really annoying thing was, that no matter how hard you tried, you couldn’t find anything you liked or wanted. So, at the end of half an hour of looking at bracelets and ear-rings and necklets and scarfs and copious sarongs and sandals, you returned empty handed to meet Tom and Paul.

It was a different thing at the Lahaina Cannery Mall though. There were about fifty shops in a fully enclosed air-conditioned mall, which was huge with really high vaulted ceilings. As you entered through double glass doors you noticed a large sportswear shop in the mall.

“Can we look in there for a pair of sneakers for me? Mine are falling apart.” After showing Paul where your sneakers were leaking through a split in the side, he agreed. Not only did you manage to buy a pair of really comfortable brand name sneakers, but you also found a great tracksuit, brilliant blue and fuchsia, in a type of parachute fabric. This meant it was very light to wear but would keep out the slight chill of the night air, and the slight burning of the afternoon sun. Your timing was a bit off though – you could have done with these items at the beginning of the holiday. They’d have made the Hana road trip easier, and the slippery steps of the Thurston lava tube easier to negotiate too. You only had one more day. Then you’d have to fly back to Oahu, and on home to Perth.

Impressed by the prices, Paul willingly paid for them. Putting your old sneakers into the box, you wore your new ones out into the mall.

“I can’t get over the cushioning affect. They make my old sneakers look like crap.”

“That’s ‘cause your old sneakers were crap.” You all laughed and moved on to look at the other shops and the information panels in the mall that showed the cannery as it used to be.

“We should’ve come here for lunch,” you said, looking longingly at the quiet open café in the mall centre. You turned to Becky. “I don’t suppose you want to have a coffee while the guys go look at the cannery museum section, do you?”

“Yes, I’d like that, but I’ll have an iced tea instead of coffee.” Becky took your arm and you headed for the café, waving to the boys as you left them. They shrugged and strolled off towards the pieces of displayed factory machinery. You ordered your drinks at the counter then found a table with a clear view of the mall, and a glimpse of the sea through the open double roller-doorways.

“Wow. I’m so happy with these shoes. And my tracksuit. Fancy buying both at once like that. I haven’t had a shop since I went to Hilo Hatties in Oahu. Have you been there?”

“Yeah. We had a voucher with our plane ticket.”

You nodded. “So did we. Not a bad advertising gimmick, I reckon. Not only does it make tourists aware that Hilo Hatties is there, before they’ve even

left their own country, but offers them a free gift as well to ensure that most of them will at least come and have a look. It's a great idea.

"Yeah. It's one of the first things we did after we arrived. Well after we booked into our hotel of course." Becky laughed at herself, and you joined in.

"Paul went off and saw the Arizona memorial at Pearl Harbour, while I shopped in Hilo Hatties. He didn't want to stay there once he had seen it. And I didn't want to go to the memorial. It's too confronting for me. I can't really handle the sadness of these places." Feeling the need to justify yourself, you continued. "I think they are necessary places to commemorate the dead, and for people to pay their respects, but I find them really upsetting. I hate war. I hate anything to do with war. I find I can't watch any of those old war movies that I used to watch as a child. Maybe that's the problem. I saw some really awful things about war as a child and it left an indelible imprint on my mind. I hate oppression of any sort. I can't watch anything with torture in it either – like inquisition movies. Yukko!" You shuddered, pulling a face.

"I know what you mean," Becky murmured, her gaze steady on your face.

At that moment your drinks arrived, causing a diversion and a chance for you to change the conversation.

Glancing up at Becky, who, after sipping her iced tea, had resumed watching you, you apologised. "Sorry. I didn't mean to get carried away then. Funny the things that pop out when you least expect it. What triggered that off? Oh yeah. The Arizona memorial. I couldn't go see it anyway, because I'm not good in boats. I get seasick." You chuckled, then added. "And of course another reason for not going was the fact that I could browse unimpeded through Hilo Hatties with Paul away at Pearl Harbour. It's almost impossible to buy anything, when he's there questioning whether you actually really need it." You both laughed aloud, breaking the tension. A couple at a table nearby looked up at you, then went back to their conversation.

"Ooops It echoes in here." You laughed again.



Caves

ferns and taro

palms and bananas

vibrant tropical flowers

manicured golf greens

flamboyant hotels.

Shopping

touring

snorkelling

lazing.

You only had one more day. Before leaving Tom and Becky the previous afternoon - after roaming around the Robert Lyn Nelson art exhibition at the Lahaina Galleries where you'd bought a book of his magical underwater scapes, because you couldn't afford a real one - you'd arranged to meet them next morning for a snorkel at the protected beach in front of the Sheraton Maui Hotel. It was something you hadn't yet done and time was indeed running out. When you missed the Whaling Village and Lahiana shuttle bus, which made a round trip from hotel to hotel picking up the tourists, you decided to walk along the beach from your hotel in Kaanapali. It wasn't that far after all and you were not yet in your dotage. Such optimism.

At first you passed along Bougainvillea-hedged streets, shaded by palms and shapely trees. Rounding a bend you discovered a large pink hotel, resembling an Incan pyramid with pale aqua water falling down its sloping sides.

"Wow!" you gasped. "How amazing is that. I wish we were staying there."

"We couldn't afford to, I'll bet," replied Paul.

"You reckon we could have a quick look inside? Would they let us do you think?"

"I don't see why not. How are they going to know we're not staying there?"

Giggling you traversed the driveway flanked by manicured gardens, and entered the lobby. "Look like we are meant to be here and no-one will stop us," Paul muttered. Rocky scaped koi ponds surrounded the lobby, with waterfalls gushing, trickling, and gently cascading from all directions. Bridges crossed these above them and below them, leading to the four wings of the inner pyramid.

"It's like a movie set," you breathed. "Oh I wish we were staying here."

"You can bet your boots that we really truly can't afford to stay here." Paul volunteered. "I'll admit it's pretty good though." He handed you the camera and you took several shots of the lobby, then reluctantly left its cool interior to return to the warmth and humidity outside.

Down on the beach you gazed in the direction of the hotel strip and said, "You gotta be kidding!"

"Come on lazy-bones. It's not that far."

The palm-lined beach seemed to stretch endlessly, with the ocean lapping the shore on your right, and scattered with small islands and the occasional upthrust rock. You began to trudge along in the sand, muttering to yourself about how you had already walked far enough for one day, and how you were going to be late for your meeting with Tom and Becky. But slowly the magical peace of the near-deserted beach seeped into your psyche, mellowing you, taking hold of your soul again.

"We have to leave all this tomorrow," you moaned to Paul.

"I know. Good hey. It's time we went home."

"It is not!"

Paul laughed. "Course it is. We've been here for four weeks and that's long enough. Besides I need to get back to work to pay for all this."

“You do not! It’s all been paid for.” You thought about the shoes and tracksuit that he’d put on the credit card the day before. “Well, nearly all been paid for.”

“I’ll bet there’s a pile of work on my desk just waiting for me when I get back. You can bet that no other bastard will have done it.”

Sighing, you plodded on. Tomorrow. Tomorrow. Your mind chanted in time with your steps, like an omen.

“I don’t want to go home. I want to stay here.”

“Well you can’t, so don’t be ridiculous.”

“Bugger.”

When you reached the hotel strip you had to climb over the breakwater that protected the reef and prevented the sand from washing away. The small beach was clustered with people, and the sea bobbed with masked and snorkelled heads. As you gazed anxiously Becky stood up and waved to you from their lilo chairs.

Making your way over to them you exclaimed, “Phew! Thank goodness. We thought that we had missed you. I’m so sorry we were held up, but we missed the shuttle bus. We walked along the beach instead, so we didn’t have to wait another hour for the next one.”

“No worries. Don’t stress about it,” Becky said compassionately. She certainly was a nice girl. And she looked great too in that sky blue bikini again. “We’ve been in and there are heaps of fish there. So colourful.”

“Where do we get the snorkels and fins from?” Paul asked.

Directed to the hotel bar, he went off to hire some equipment for you to use. The problem was that, when he returned with snorkels, masks, and fins, he donned his and raced on into the water. Tom and Becky followed him into the water not realising that you had no idea how you were supposed to adjust the mask so the water wouldn’t get in. After pulling the mask down you waded in to the sea as far as you could walk, then put the snorkel into your mouth, your face into the water and began to swim out to join the others.

The view of the reef was amazing and the fish were all around you. If you put out your hand you could touch them, if only they would keep still that is. There were butterfly fish everywhere, and what looked like angel fish and blue maidens but might not have been. Wonderful. It was hard to breathe through

the snorkel though. It felt as though you were dragging the air into your lungs from a long way away.

And then the mask began to fill, and you began to panic. You were out of your depth, flailing around treading water with both hands keeping you afloat, with a mask half full and nowhere you could put your feet down without squashing fish.

Then you felt a supporting hand under your upper arm, and a calm voice telling you to put your feet down onto the rocks. With huge relief you snatched the mask off your face with your now-free hand, and gasped in air.

“Thankyou. Thankyou.”

“Put your feet down on the reef.”

“I can’t. The fish are in the way.”

“They’ll swim out of the way. Don’t worry. Put your feet down.”

You did so and discovered that the reef was within easy reach of your feet. And the fish did indeed swim out of your way. What a dummy you were. Embarrassed, yet grateful, you turned to look at the stranger who’d rescued you. He was a Hawaiian man, in his late twenties you guessed, with a kind smile and warm dark eyes.

“Mahalo.” You smiled at him.

“Are you okay now?”

“I guess so. I couldn’t stop the water getting into the mask and didn’t know what to do. Mahalo.”

“No problems.” He swam away, leaving you standing on the reef with fish swarming around your legs.

With the mask and snorkel up on your head, you slowly swam back to shore. On the beach you dried yourself off and sat towel-wrapped on a lilo until the others finally came out of the water.

“Why didn’t you join us, Di?” Paul asked, after he’d shaken water from his hair all over you. “We waited out there for you and had a great time.”

Yeah, right. “Well if you had just waited for me you would have realised that I didn’t know what to do with the mask. You could have saved me the embarrassment of nearly drowning and having to be rescued by a gorgeous stranger.”

"Is that what you were doing. I thought you were waving to us." Paul laughed.

"It's no laughing matter, Paul. You knew I hadn't done this before. The least you could have done was show me how to keep water out. I tried to remember how they did it on TV, but I couldn't work it out. I realise that it is probably very simple. But I had no-one to show me. So thanks a lot."

You stood up.

"Where are you going?"

"To the Ladies to change out of my bathers and into dry clothes."

"I'll come with you," said Becky, wrapping the towel around herself.

As you walked away from them you heard Tom say, "Whoa."



*No wonder they said
"You'll love Maui."
Finale
for all vacations.
Paradise
laid in azure sea.*

She certainly was a nice girl. In the change-room Becky gave you a quick hug.

"That must've been really scary out there. You okay?"

"Yeah. I'm all right now. It's just that Paul never seems to care where I am or what I'm doing. Like on the bike ride. I hadn't ridden for ages, but he left me to tear off down the mountain, despite the fact that I might have fallen. And today was no different. It's like he's not with me any more. And we've had such a good time here. And I do love it so." You turned away from her and began towel-drying your hair in front of the mirror. Her reflection showed that she had also continued to change her clothes, her hair forming a golden curtain veiling her face.

When you were ready, you smiled and thanked her.

"Let's go get some lunch."

You looked at your watch. "Oh my God! No wonder I was hungry. It's nearly two o'clock."

Laughing you emerged from the change rooms to find that Tom and Paul had bought drinks for you both and were sitting at a table in the shade near the bar. There was a snack menu on the table so you ordered burgers and fries and sat eating ravenously. When Tom and Becky went to order more drinks, Paul leaned towards you and kissed your cheek.

“Sorry Di. I should have made sure you were okay. I just didn’t think. I couldn’t wait to get in the water. I won’t do that again.”

Though it was typical of Paul to wait till there was no-one else to hear, it was the best apology you were going to get. Never mind. It was an apology and he did mean it. You smiled back at him.

“Thanks. I love you too.”

He grinned. When the others returned he became the life and soul of the party, laughing and joking and flirting with both you and Becky. He was obviously relieved that it was all over and done with. You’d forgiven him and that was cool.

Sitting together in the shade, with the slightest balmy breeze wafting around you all, the rest of the afternoon passed pleasantly. Together, you drove to another restaurant at the Whalers Village, for your last meal. This time you failed to see any whales, realising how lucky you were the night before last.

“Well we’d better go now I think,” you finally said, gathering your things together and rising from the table. “We still have to pack and be ready for our oh so early pick-up tomorrow morning.”

“What time are you flying out?”

“Not till noon, but we are flying out from the Kahului Airport which is miles away. So we have a long drive. Besides you know how they like to have you there for a couple of hours prior to take-off.”

“Yeh. We hate that. Kahului. Is that the main one in the middle of the island? That’s where we came in. We could drive you there if you like?”

“We’d love that, but the transfer’s booked and we can’t change it now.”

“Well we can certainly drive you back to your hotel, anyway,” said Tom.

In the car you let your hair blow in the wind once more. The last time. Tomorrow would be a ride in a closed car, like the ride from the airport to your hotel had been. Arriving at your hotel you all strolled over the road to the beach for a last look at the ocean.

Putting your arm around Becky's waist, you said, "Let's keep in touch."

"For sure."

"I'll give you my email address if you like?"

"Great idea. I'll give you mine."

You smiled at each other.

"My last day," you sighed.

"Mine tomorrow," said Becky. "We fly out the day after tomorrow. Back to the mainland."

How strange that sounded. They were flying a long distance home but it was still the States. Not as far as you had to go though. You shuddered at the thought of the long haul back to Australia.

"You cold?"

"No. Just thinking about the flight home."

"It's a long one, isn't it?"

"Yep."

You all crossed to your villa where you gave her your hotmail address and she gave you her yahoo one. Returning with them to the car park, you exchanged hugs and kisses on each cheek. Then you watched them pull out and, with a wave of their hands, drive away.

Last night blues.

*Dark womb-like surrounds
but air-con chilly
snuggle close*

*Wrapped in warmth
fatigue encroaches
but desire prevails*

*Taken by strong storm
passionate power play
tenderness intervenes
with tough going
left lying united
sweating spent sated.*

*'What number now?'
Fifteen.
'Out of ten?'*

*Her life is changed forever
His continues untouched.
Tears flow for the last night
In Paradise*

*There'll be more
sooner later
back home.
tinged with sadness for
the island of dreams lost
to memories.*

*Never will sex seem the same again
Not after fifteen out of ten
In Hawaii.*

Departure

Cleared

last motel room of possessions;

Crammed

acquisitions into resisting cases;

Returned

keys, paid bill at reception desk;

Waited

glumly for transfer van;

Travelled

along coastline towards airport;

Spotted

farewell spume of far-off whale;

Fretted

sitting awaiting transfer flight;

Boarded

listened sadly to hostess "Aloha";

Landed

in Honolulu with no excitement left;

Queued

For seat allocation on homeward flight;

Mooched

past duty-free shops to diner;

Dined

on snacks as diner was closed;

Hiked

for miles along departure platforms;

Located

finally departure lounge for Australia;

Watched

as eagerly new arrivals emerged;

Boarded

plane for nightmare journey;

Wept

to leave the land of dreams.

di-n-paul@hotmail.com

From: bec&tom@yahoo.com
To: di-n-paul@hotmail.com
Subject: Bad luck lava.

Dear Di,

I haven't heard from you for a while and I was wondering how you were getting on.

Do you still have your lava rock?

I ask because since I've been here I've been hearing all sorts of stories about the bad luck people experience when they take lava out of Hawaii. All kinds of people talk about it – people in shops, taxi-drivers, and even Professors at the University.

I happened to mention to some friends in the College cafeteria the other day, that I had a friend in Australia who'd taken home a small rock she'd bought while here on holiday. They all got real upset. Then they told me heaps of horror stories about accidents people had suffered, and even a death from a fall.

I was kinda alarmed by this and thought I should share it with you. I mean, if you still have it, maybe you should get rid of it as soon as possible so nothing terrible happens to you. I didn't want to keep quiet and then find out I should have told you.

Anyway I hope you and Paul are well, and happy, and that you will soon have enough money to visit us here in Oahu.

Lots of love,

Becky xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

PS: I urge you to send the rock back by express post, and get it out of your lives.

His attitude towards Di bordered on 'nasty'. It was obvious to blind Freddy that Paul had had enough. He went to work without her and he came home alone. He hurried through tea at night and spent the evening in his study, where he had taken to sleeping on the sofa-bed. Although she missed him in the bed next to her, there was no way she was going to admit it to him. He could jolly-well come back when he was good and ready, and see if she gave a fat rats.

Occasionally he would come into her office at work and ask if she'd come to her senses yet, but of course she wasn't having any of that either. How insulting could he be? And who did he think he was anyway? Her boss? She had enough trouble with her real boss, Bert, making his unexpected visits all the time to drool over Pele, without Paul ordering her around.

And people in the office had noticed the change in his behaviour as well. Not to mention his burnt hand. She was rapidly becoming 'over' the people in the office.

And now she'd received this suss email from Becky in Hawaii urging her to send the lava rock back. It could mean only one thing – that Paul was emailing her, and filling her in on the situation. Not to mention talking about her behind her back. Well Di had had enough as well. Enough of his attitude.

Besides, after her discussion with Pele the night before, she needed to speak to him about sending back the rock. She'd had to make up her mind to do so, and wanted Paul to know that she was going to do it because she thought it was time - not because he gave her a hard time about it. Pele was becoming quite surly at having her wishes thwarted. Maybe it was time to give in to her and mail the rock home. Di supposed that she'd have to address it to the post office in Hilo on the Big Island. They'd know what to do with it, she was sure.

Di strode to the lift and descended the two floors to Paul's office. She hadn't been down there since their last argument. A pang of remorse, and guilt at her own behaviour threatened to undermine her resolve, so that she almost closed the lift doors again. But then she remembered why she had come. Pele. And the email from Becky. He obviously still fancied her or he wouldn't be emailing her. She felt the jealousy that had lain dormant well up inside her again. Damn him.

She flung the door open to an empty room. Bugger! She began pacing up and down the length of the room, waiting for his return. When he finally entered the office ten minutes later, she was standing with her back to the room looking at the wall of the building opposite.

“Di?” He moved towards her eagerly. She never came to see him, so she must have come to her senses at last.

Turning to face him, she snapped. “So, you’ve been emailing Becky about all your problems with me, have you?”

That stopped him in his tracks. He paled a little, then moved forward to circle his desk and sit down resignedly. “I’ve been in touch a few times, yes.”

“I’ll bet!” She stalked over and stood in front of the desk empowered by her knowledge and position above him. “And how is the dear sexy little miss?”

“Don’t be like that, Di. You know she is just a friend.”

“Yeah, sure. And what am I then?”

“You’re my partner. You know this is unnecessary. You are making a fuss about nothing. Really you are. It’s just an email.” A triple denial. That settled it then. He really did have the hots for little Miss Becky. Bugger.

“Right. Well as your partner I am asking you to stop emailing our business to her. I don’t need her telling me to return Pele and the rock as well as you nagging me every time I see you. Which by the way hasn’t been very much lately despite the fact that I am your partner.” Di scored a good point but was undermined by the fact that her voiced was becoming shrill, and her face was glowing. She had to calm down because it wasn’t a good look to be angry and ugly. It would only antagonise him more and she wanted to remain in control.

“I can’t do that, Di. Becky would wonder what was wrong, and she is a nice person and a good friend of ours.” He looked at her calmly, without emotion.

Just like him to show no emotions. Always the same in an argument – shut down and walk away. Well he couldn’t walk away because she was in his office this time. If anyone was going to walk out it would be her.

“Yeah. Right.”

“She is, Di. You know that. And she particularly likes you. If I remember right, you said you were both on the same wavelength.” The corners of his mouth twitched. He was laughing at her. That did it.

“I’ve had it with you and your attitude to me, Paul. I’m sick of you thinking that you can boss me round, and tell me what to say and think and do. Ever since we got back from Hawaii you’ve changed. You were so loving to me there, and now you don’t even touch me. What is your problem?”

“You know what my problem is, Di. That is a stupid question..” He looked steadily at her, waiting for the next onslaught.

“Well I was going to come in here today and talk to you about possibly sending the rock back to Hawaii, as Pele is becoming a little angry now because I am keeping her from her family. But then I got the email from little Miss Becky.” Di pulled a prissy face, pettily. “And now I’m damned if I’m going to send it back. And if you don’t like it tough titties, as they say.”

With tight lips, Paul stood suddenly then moved around the desk to join her. He put out his hand to lay it on her shoulder but she shrugged him off impatiently. With a sigh, he turned away.

“I’ve said what I came to say. I’ll go now. I’ll see you later, at home. We can continue this ‘discussion’ then,” Di said, using her fingers to create the inverted commas in the air.

She turned and stalked out of the office, as he said quietly, “No you won’t.”

Aftermath.

*She searched the house
room by room
for signs of him
no trace.*

*She belonged with him
But now it's too late
She's past her use-by date.*

*Never to feel his hands in her hair
and lifting her buttocks in the air
cradling and supporting her
with infinite care.*

*Never to hear his voice in her ear
breathing her name
as part of his game
of building up her ecstasy.*

*No more to feel his mouth on her breast
no thrusting or stroking
no sucking or licking
no hammering heart against her chest.*

*Maybe as friends
to be hugged, to be held
is better than nothing.*

*Her soul clings to his
her heart he's won
her body aches for him
her mind mourns.*

She is undone.

Pele was becoming quite surly at having her wishes thwarted. Pele had had enough. It was not like her to be so patient and Di had certainly tried her patience. She loved Di but others she'd loved in the past had been on the receiving end of her wrath. Yet she didn't want to hurt Di directly. She reminded her of her younger sister, Hiiaka. But she needed to be punished for her impertinence.

She spirited herself to Kings Park overlooking the business sector of the beautiful city of Perth, and the Swan River upon the banks of which it stood. She'd checked out Kings Park already. It was a huge tract of native bushland, dotted with man-made lakes, lawns and facilities, in the heart of Perth. Originally the cliff side of the river course, it lay level with the tops of the city's skyscrapers, opposite the flood-side of South Perth and Como. The reclaimed land below featured freeway twirls, yacht clubs and marinas, restaurant boardwalks, and a swan-shaped bell tower. A bridge spanned the river at its narrow point directly below the park, prior to the expansion of the river into a lake as the Canning River joined it before the merged waters flowed to the sea.

Pele stood by the rail gazing over the busy yet peaceful view. Cars hurried along the freeway over the bridge, ferries crossed from city to south shore, tourists strolled the paths of the park photographing the famous vista, laughing, chattering.

Rage began to swell inside Pele. And as the rage grew so Pele grew in stature. Beautiful as Perth was she just wanted to go home, to Hawaii, to Kilauea. Well if she couldn't go home she'd bring Kilauea to Perth. Striding to a high point of the park, behind the famous restaurant and its car park, Pele uprooted a nearby eucalyptus sapling and plunged it into the ground to create a fault-line in the Earth's crust. A raging titan, she held it firm as she drove towards the magma lake that she felt deep beneath her. Shutting her eyes, tossing back her head, her long shimmering black hair streaming behind her, she called the magma to her.

There was a rumbling, a trembling. People screamed and ran across the shuddering ground to their cars to drive unsteadily, fearfully out of the park. In the tall towers of the city people looked uncertainly at each other as their buildings swayed and groaned, files fell from shelves and computers juddered from desktops. Panic ensued as people evacuated first their work places, then the city.

Instead of a short earthquake followed by aftershocks, the trembling continued unabated as Pele, held her digging stick in place and stirred the earth of Kings Park, over which she now towered. Unwilling to punish too severely, Pele controlled the magma so there were no explosive eruptions to shoot molten rocks into the air. Rather she caused

molten lava to gush from the chasm opened in the car park, to flow swiftly at first across the floral clock and down along Kings Park Drive which acted like an open lava tube channelling the flow along like a stream to the roundabout then splitting with the bulk following on down to St George's Terrace while a smaller flow inched towards West Perth and Subiaco.

Another flow cascaded down the steps between the restaurants and convenience blocks, crossed the road and continued down past and around the Anzac Memorial, filling its walkway like a glowing red moat. For a while the safety railing ribboned the lava as it plunged down the hillside to the freeway below. People stood mesmerised by the way the cooling lava slowed to inch its way along the roads, even downhill, as if glued to the road surface.

More lava flowed south from Pele's position, through spectacular wildflower gardens filled with every kangaroo paw species. It consumed everything in its hurry to arc from the cliffside out and down to the old Swan Brewery complex by the rivers edge. Cars driving along Riverside Drive screeched to a halt and attempted to back up, their owners desperate to escape the spreading black mass. The only way was on foot, back the way they had come, leaving their vehicles that one by one became an inferno.

There was a rumbling, a trembling. In her office, the rock glowed red hot in its pot plant, causing the leaves of the ferns and palm to slowly shrivel. Di felt the building begin to vibrate, her timber blinds chattered against the window pane, the drawers of the filing cabinet rattled open, and her favourite photos of Diamond Head crater and Kilauea volcano leapt off the wall and smashed on the floor. The Hawaiian Sunset Hibiscus pot-plant bounced across the desk to splatter in a confusion of earth, flowers and foliage across the visitor's chair and the carpet below.

"Oh my God! An earthquake." Weird how they always stated the obvious in times of crisis. This was not the time for introspection. It was time for action.

Jan poked her head around the door. "Hurry Di. We've got to all get out. Hurry!" She withdrew and Di heard her retreating running footsteps.

Di looked at her rock, then around the office frantically. Where was Pele? They needed to get out and her rock looked too hot to handle. She needed Pele to carry it.

Rushing to the door, Di called up the deserted corridor. "Pele!" No reply, no sign of her, no manifestation occurred. What could she do? Then she heard more hurrying footsteps. Around the distant corner Paul rushed, obviously anxious.

"Di, what are you doing? We got to get out. There's an earthquake. The whole city is evacuating. It's a big one, Di!" More of the obvious. He grabbed her hand and began dragging her along the corridor towards the exit.

"My rock, Paul. I have to get my rock!"

"For fuck's sake, Di! There's no time. Forget the bloody rock."

"I can't Paul. If I leave it Pele can't get back to Hawaii." Di wrenched herself free, darted back to the office, grabbed her bag, and bracing herself for the expected burning agony, snatched the rock from the now charred pot-plant.

Di was not burnt. It felt cool and willing. She ran back down the corridor to join Paul who was slowly edging along it, wanting to escape but reluctant to leave her behind.

They fled unsteadily towards the stairwell, dodging falling ceiling panels, exploding water coolers and plummeting file cabinets as they went. As they plunged two steps at a time down the stairwell, Di thought of the fleeing people in the September 11 World Trade Centre nightmare. What if their building came down on them as they scrambled down? It was only 30 floors high, but that was enough. They'd be just as flattened - just as dead. They caught up with other evacuees pushing and shoving, desperately trying to make it to ground level faster and in one piece.

Now Di had claustrophobia to deal with as well. Paul had a strong hold of her hand. There was no way he was letting her go. Why had he come back for her? His floor was two levels below hers. He'd come up to get her. After all she'd put him through.

"Paul," Di panted. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry."

"Forget it. Save your energy. Don't talk."

"I have to." Di was struggling to breathe. "Paul. I'll send the rock back. I'm sorry for what I've caused. For what I put you through."

"S'okay. Just let's get out of here, then we'll sort out what to do." He squeezed her hand.

Tears poured down her face. Di didn't deserve him. She'd been such a bitch to him. All over a damn rock, And Pele. Where was she? Di guessed she'd not be hurt by this. She could just spirit herself away from danger. She was used to danger. Di would bet her volcanoes would tremble and rumble like a quake as they went off.

"Oh my God!" Di froze.

"What's wrong, Di? We're nearly there. Only one more floor. Come on."

"Paul. Pele!"

"What? Forget her. Save yourself, Di. She has." He tugged her hand and Di allowed herself to be towed downwards.

"Pele caused this," Di whispered.

"What?"

"Pele caused this," Di croaked.

Paul's horrified gazed reflected her own. "Shit! Let's get out of here."

They fled out through the heavy stair doors held back by those ahead of them, traversed the lobby that looked like a war-zone, and out into the dusty air of St George's Terrace. Beneath their feet the trembling continued. Such an unnerving sensation – what should be solid and safe was in reality precarious and vulnerable. They of all people should know that after their trip to Kilauea.

They became aware that the people in the street were staring towards Kings Park, from which rose a plume of sulphurous ash. In the midst of this stood Pele, now visible to all as a smouldering giant goddess with flaming hair and fiery eyes. Down the cliffside were visible red ribbons of lava, engulfing in bursts of flame anything in their path – trees, cars, buildings. As the lava reached the waters of the river and the freeway

lakes huge clouds of steam billowed skywards. Helicopters hovered overhead filming the disaster and monitoring the evacuation.

As Di and Paul watched, horrified, jets flew in from Pearce Air Base north of the city, strafing Pele as they passed her. The bullets ricocheted off her body, causing her to turn her head and glare at the annoying planes buzzing around her head. Bending down, she picked up molten boulders and threw them at the jets, miraculously missing the lead plane, which immediately took evasive action. One boulder landed in the Swan River with a huge explosion of steam, the turbulence washing the yachts moored at the Yacht Clubs into each other, masts entangling as they collided and sank. Another scored a direct and devastating hit on the Narrows Bridge, severing the link between the south side and the city completely. A minor tidal wave resulted flooding the streets of South Perth, and Riverside Drive as well, leaving many people swimming desperately in surging waters.

The jets retreated to the north, as Pele turned to face Di and Paul where they stood appalled at the havoc wreaked because of Di's inaction.

Despite the startled looks from those around me, Di threw back her head and yelled. "You win, Pele! You win!"

Down the cliffside were visible red ribbons of lava, engulfing in bursts of flame anything in its path – trees, cars, buildings. With the voice-over of an incredulous newsreader exclaiming the unbelievable to the viewing audience, the television footage revealed the titanic figure of Pele towering over King’s Park and surrounded by fly-like fighter jets, then after defeating them, suddenly vanishing. THIS IS UNBELIEVABLE! THERE IS NO INFORMATION COMING IN AS YET AS TO WHO THIS CREATURE IS, AND WHY SHE IS ATTACKING PERTH AS SHE IS. EXPERTS FROM AROUND THE WORLD ARE WATCHING THIS FOOTAGE AND WE HOPE TO BRING YOU SOME NEWS AS TO WHO IS BEHIND THIS ATTACK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. The footage shifted to focus on the remains of the controversial old Swan Brewery, the top floors smouldering above the cooling lava field that surrounded its lower floors, and reached out into the river beside it. It replayed the boulders as they landed in the river and on the Narrows bridge, and the devastation caused along the foreshores. OUR S.E.S. WORKERS ARE STRETCHED TO THEIR LIMITS WITH ALL BRIGADES MOBILISED FROM AROUND THE CITY AND SURROUNDING TOWNS. ROADS HAVE BEEN CLOSED ALL AROUND KING’S PARK, AND PEOPLE HAVE BEEN EVACUATED FROM HOMES AND BUSINESSES IN THE VICINITY, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN THE APARTMENT COMPLEXES ALONG RIVERSIDE DRIVE BENEATH THE PARK, AND BETWEEN THE FREEWAY AND THE PARK. THE HOSPITAL IS BEING EVACUATED AS WE WATCH. Ambulances were seen lined up amongst the steam and fires loading several patients to a vehicle. Fire brigades were shown in locations all around the disaster area pouring water and foam on the creeping flows in an effort to halt their progress. But this had not happened until Pele, hearing Di’s shout, had withdrawn her digging stick and called on the magma to stop pushing upwards. New lava ceased to flow, but the residue of the existing flows continued to inch downwards until all had been cooled. The broadcast finished with a shot of the once flourishing Kings Park looking like a black lava landscape, the irony of which was not lost on Di.

Huddled in Paul’s arms on their couch at home, Di murmured. “The Aboriginals will be pleased about that. But will the lava have harmed their Rainbow Serpent?”

“I don’t know, Di. But I guess that’s the end of the Brewery complex. They couldn’t possibly rebuild it after that.” He sounded exhausted.

“Oh Paul, to think this is all my fault.” Di began to cry. She couldn’t help it. Her selfishness had cost the city so much. As soon as she had heard Di’s capitulation,

Pele had withdrawn her stirring stick, and left the Park. But the lava that had begun, had continued to flow down into the city and the river. Dark steel in colour, with a crazed surface that cracked at the flowing edge to show glimpses of fiery red, it crept down St George's Terrace, flaring into flames that licked then engulfed abandoned vehicles in its path and surrounded skyscrapers. The resulting fires were enormous and way beyond the Fire Departments control, although they had tried to contain it. Slowly the lava had inched to a standstill, metres short of the Swan Bell Tower with its ancient bells, a gift to Perth from St Martin in the Field in England. THE LAVA FLOW HAS BEEN HALTED THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF OUR WONDERFUL FIRE OFFICERS! THE BELL TOWER IS SAFE! BRIGADES REMAIN ON STANDBY IN CASE THERE IS ANY FURTHER MOVEMENT AND THEY WILL CONTINUE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO COOL THE LAVA FLOW ALONG ITS EDGE!

As Di and Paul sat watching the disaster footage, Pele strode into the room and confronted them. "Well, *wahine*, you said I win! Do I go home now?"

"Yes, Pele." Di sat up and hung her head, defeated.

"We'll post the damn rock tomorrow," Paul added grimly, not looking at Pele, who stood a little larger than life-size, glowering down on them.

"No!" Di stared at Paul in disbelief. "We have to take it back ourselves!"

"No we don't, Di. We're going to post it and that will be the end of it."

"No it won't, Paul. You don't understand. I have to take it back. I have to make sure it goes back to the Big Island. I have to see it through myself." Di was frantic, her voice strident in her desperate need to make Paul understand.

"No you don't, Di." He put his hands on her shoulders in an effort to calm her.

"Yes, Paul! Yes! It's all my fault! I shouldn't have bought the rock. Bryan advised against it and I ignored him. I should have sent it back when things began to go wrong – when the rock began to glow. I should have sent it back when Pele showed herself. I wouldn't listen to you, or her, Paul. It's all my fault. The devastation." She pointed to the television screen continually replaying the footage of Pele and the lava flow that was burning Perth's city. BREAKING NEWS! A VULCANOLOGIST FROM THE KILAUEA VOLCANO IN HAWAII HAS JUST CONTACTED US HERE IN PERTH TO INFORM US THAT THE GIANTESS IS NONE OTHER THAN THE GODDESS PELE! SHE IS THE GODDESS OF THE VOLCANOES AND LAVA FLOWS IN THE HAWAIIAN CHAIN, WHERE SHE IS SAID TO RESIDE IN THE VOLCANO KILAUEA! HE REPORTED THAT KILAUEA HAS BEEN ODDLY

DORMANT FOR SOME TIME AFTER YEARS OF CONTINUAL FLOW. HE STATES THAT THIS HAS SOLVED THEIR CONCERN RE KILAUEA AS THERE SEEMED TO BE NO REASON FOR THE CESSATION OF THE LAVA FLOWS. THE REST OF THE WORLD AND AUTHORITIES HERE ARE OF COURSE SKEPTICAL AS TO THE POSSIBILITY OF THE EXISTENCE OF MADAM PELE AS HE CALLED HER. Pele snorted, her eyes glowing with anger. “Fools!” I WILL OF COURSE KEEP YOU UPDATED AS NEWS COMES TO HAND.

Oblivious to Pele’s outburst and her scrutiny as, with her arms folded across her chest, she monitored their argument, Paul persisted. “You knew enough about her, Di, to know she was impatient, and volatile. You can’t deny it.” Though spoken gently, his words cut her. He was right. Again! She did know. But it never occurred to her that Pele would go that far. As Di dissolved in tears, with her hands masking her face, Paul held her close.

“If you send it back by mail tomorrow it will all be over.” He tried reasoning with her, stating the obvious patiently. “And it won’t cost much for postage. There’s a big difference between posting a parcel and paying for airfares, Di.”

She pulled away from him. “Not for me it won’t be over. I have to take it back Paul. And I can’t do it alone. I need you to go with me.” He shook his head, so she continued. “I have enough money saved from my pay for our tickets. All we need is some accommodation money and we can use the credit cards for that. Please Paul. I have to do this.”

“If we do – I’m only saying if – we won’t be able to stay for very long. I’ll have to try to get time off work and so will you.”

Smiling feebly with relief, Di turned to Pele. “Will that be all right with you? Can you wait till we get the flights booked, and our work sorted out?”

Pele smiled sweetly, happy now that she was getting her way and returning home. “Yes, I will wait, but not for very long.”

“But how will you travel, Pele? We’ve barely enough money for our seats. We can’t afford another one for you.”

Pele beamed at them. “You will find that I will travel with my rock. You will not notice me. *Mahalo wahine, mahalo.*”

“I’m sorry, Pele, I should have done it before. It’s just I wanted to take you myself, and we didn’t have enough money to do that and have another holiday. I’m

sorry I got you so mad. But I wish you hadn't hurt our city. You didn't have to do that." Di's voice faded to a whisper on the last words, as she met Pele's smouldering eyes.

Pele gazed at Di for a moment, before allowing the fire to fade from her eyes. Shrugging her beautiful shoulders, she said. "I had to make you see I was serious. I will take care of slimy Bert for you, if you have any problems."

"That won't be necessary." Paul still wouldn't look at Pele. His anger rose quickly to the surface. "I can manage him myself. You've already done enough."

As Di gasped at his temerity, Pele stood rigid, her eyes flashing, her hair tossed in annoyance. "Be careful Paul," she warned, then turned away to drift across the room. Before exiting to the darkness of the patio, Pele exclaimed, "*Aloha wahini.*" As she vanished, her voice echoed around them.

Paul's sigh broke the silence. He said, "You can go then, Di. I'll stay here and cover for you at work with Bert. I'll tell him there's a family emergency."

"No, Paul. I said I need you to go with me, and I mean it. I can't do this alone. Please. Please come with me." Di wrapped her arms tightly around him.

"Okay," he conceded quietly. He cradled her in his arms, his head resting on top of hers.

After a while he said, "We'd better start packing, then get to bed. We've a lot to sort out tomorrow, not to mention a couple of long flights ahead of us."

Online Chatline:

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

hi ho becky

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

howdy ☺

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

ok we r comin 2 hawaii on fri 4 a week can we c u?

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

sure wow ☺ luv 2 c u both

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

u wanna stay with us 4 a bit?

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

ill ask paul hang on . . .

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

I just asked him n he sed yeh sure 4 how long?

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

4 the whole time ur in honolulu

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

we cant stay 2 long coz we gotta b back at work by end of nxt wkend

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

we gotta go 2 the big island 1st overnite but will b returning next day 2 honolulu

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

k u want us 2 meet u at airport?

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

thatd b grt wen we get back from BI

bec&tom@yahoo.com says

y r u comin in such a hurry? we thort u werent comin 4 another yr yet

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

we ll explain it all wen we c u

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

its kinda complicated

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

k cya then n we'll have a grt goss

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

bout ur weird volcano there that's been on the news over here

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

k will do as I sed it's a bit tricky

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

wow u ll b so popular here we ll have 2 have a party

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

cool if u must but wait till u hear bout it 1st u mite change ur mind

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

ok cant wait 2 c u ☺ have a safe flight

di-n-paul@hotmail.com says:

cya soon xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

bec&tom@yahoo.com says:

byeooooooooooooe xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

You didn't have to do that. You could have left the rock on Oahu, but you felt that you needed to return it to the black sand beach area where you'd bought it. It had cost extra in airfares, but you'd transferred to an Aloha Airlines flight to the Big Island as soon as you'd gone through Customs. You'd booked in at the King Kamehameha Hotel again, where Paul had arranged a car hire for the next day. Out of habit Paul had clicked on the television as soon as you entered your room, but you quickly turned it off as volcanic footage emerged on the screen. You ate silently down at the bar amongst the other tourists, all chattering excitedly about their holiday plans. Exhausted from the long flight, you crashed early and slept dreamlessly.

The next day you navigated for Paul as he drove the hired convertible along the highways to the black sand beach. The sky was overcast, the air was damp, the jungle tangled dense and dark, and the ocean slate grey. The beach sand failed to glisten in the dull light, and the birds swam in the swampy lagoon that hid amongst the windblown dowdy palms.

You took the lava rock from your pocket, rubbed it with your thumb one last time then held it aloft. "Will this do, Pele?"

"Mahalo," whispered on the breeze.

You lofted the rock into the air and let it drop where it would, turning away before it landed so that you wouldn't see.

"Let's go." Paul took your hand and you walked back to the car as the rain began to fall. After struggling to raise the convertible's roof, damp and depressed, you journeyed back to your hotel, where your bags and the transfer bus were waiting for your trip to the airport.

"I hope Tom and Becky will be there on time. I'm so over hanging round airports," Paul said as you flew into Honolulu.

"It'll be great to see them again." You were pleased that they'd invited you to stay, but you had a niggling doubt about Paul's reason for accepting so eagerly. He'd said that it would save you using the credit cards so much, which was true. And that carried a lot of weight with Paul. But as you approached the landing, your 'Becky insecurities' surfaced again, till you reminded yourself of what you had both been through. He could have made you send the rock back by mail, and saved himself a great deal of money. But he came with you because he loved you. You sighed.

"At least something good came out of our last trip here."

“Don’t be like that. A lot of good things happened on that trip. Don’t let Pele ruin your memories. Just don’t let them take over this time. Okay?”

“Yeh.”

“They don’t know why we came do they?”

“No. They’ll probably think we’re mad when we tell them.”

As you descended the stairs from the plane you could see them waving to you from behind the arrival gate railing. Their golden hair shone in the hot sunlight, as with his arm around your waist Paul guided you through the tourist crowd into the well-worn terminal to greet your enthusiastic friends.

HAWAIIAN VOCABULARY

'ae yes
ahupua'a land, division
aikane friend (slang)
'aina land, earth
akamai wise, smart
ala road, path
ali'i royalty, a chief
aloha greetings, welcome, farewell, love
aloha nui loa much love
'a'ole no
auwe alas, ouch
ha'ina end of song
hale house
hana work
hana hou encore
haole Caucasian
hapa half, part
hapai to carry, be pregnant
Hauoli la Hanua Happy Birthday
Hauoli Makahiki Hou Happy New Year
heiau temple
hele mai come here
hikie'e large couch
holoholo spend free time, take a walk
holoku fitted ankle-length dress with train
holomu'u fitted ankle-length dress
ho'olaule'a celebration
huhu angry
hui club, association
hukilau to fish with a seine
hula Hawaiian dance
iki small, little
ipo sweetheart, lover
kahili feather standard
kahuna priest, expert
kai sea
kala money
kalua bake
kama'aina old-timer, native born, local
kanaka person, man
kanalua doubtful, hesitate
kane male, husband
kapakahi crooked, lopsided
kapu forbidden, keep out
kaukau meal, food (slang)
keiki child
kokua cooperation, help
kona lee side, a leeward wind
kuleana right, property, responsibility
lanai porch, veranda
lei garland, wreath
lomi (or lomilomi) rub, press, massage
lua toilet
luau feast

mahalo thanks
maika'i good, fine
makai toward the sea
make dead
malihini stranger, newcomer
malo a loin cloth
manu bird
manuahi free, gratis
mauka inland
mauna mountain
mele song
Mele Kalikimaka Merry Christmas
Menehune dwarf, legendary race of dwarfs
moana ocean
moemoe sleep (slang)
momona fat
mu'umu'u long or short loose-fitting dress
nani beautiful
ne'i this place
nui big, large, great
'okolehao ti-root liquor
'okole maluna bottoms up
'ono delicious, tasty
'opu belly, stomach
Pake Chinese (slang)
pali cliff, precipice
paniolo cowboy
pau finished
pa'u wrap-around skirt
pehea'oe how are you?
Pikake jasmine
pilau putrid
pilikia trouble
pohaku rock, stone
popoki cat
pua flower, blossom
pua'a pig, pork
puka hole, door
pune'e couch
pupu shell, hors d'oeuvre
pupule crazy, insane
tutu grandmother
wahine a female, wife
wai fresh water
wikiwiki fast, hurry

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MADAM PELE: A Contemporary Fantasy Novel

What led me to write my novel ‘*Madam Pele*’, as a contemporary Mythical Fantasy novel – including discussions of both literary theory and influential authors of several genres.

Introduction.

In this essay I cover contemporary theoretical considerations - such as Modernism, Postmodernism and Fantasy - that led me to want to write my novel *Madam Pele* as a contemporary mythical fantasy. The influences, of various authors' writing techniques, descriptive language and narrative-plot genre, ranged from fleeting to extensive. Authors, such as J R R Tolkien (who triggered my delving into Medieval authors), C S Lewis, Ursula Le Guin, Julian May, Douglas Adams, Daphne Du Maurier, Susan Cooper, and currently J K Rowling, awakened then fed my ever-increasing interest in the mythic and Sci-Fi Fantasy genre. Along with Dylan Thomas, P G Wodehouse, J B Priestley, Somerset Maugham, William Golding, Peter Carey, Dorothy Porter, and Tim Winton, their poetic and prose styles engendered an appreciation of not only their content but also their techniques, showing me narratorial alternatives.

Naturally, my personal experiences form the foundation of the novel, especially those in Hawaii which contribute to its scope, but writing style is of equal importance. In order to demonstrate what has led me to this stage of style development and position of perceptions, my early reading history and an analysis of the above influential authors are a necessity. It is important to understand that *my* understanding of literary terminology through this pre-university period was general - I knew why I liked certain novelists and poets, though lacked the literary-theory-specific language to express my reasons.

'Travelogue' novels.

My definition of a 'travelogue' novel is one that describes the details of a journey to another country or location, as the vehicle for the story which is often secondary to those details.

As a child in Primary School I read an abridged School Edition of a 'travelogue' novel called *A Pattern of Islands* by Arthur Grimble, about the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. From this small novel, set from 1914 to 1920, with its descriptions of a young Cadet District Officer's encounters with island administration, villagers, and various marine creatures, I discovered a fascination for exotic islands which endures to this day. After describing their landing upon Ocean Island, "a tiny hump of land ... so forlornly

crouched between the vastitudes of sky and sea” (Grimble, 1961, p. 8), and the “grim civilization of Home Bay” (ibid, p. 12) with its “flagrant quarter-mile of factory buildings and workshops [where] hardly a green thing was to be seen” (ibid, p. 11), he and his young wife were transported via railway flat-cars to the Government siding. During their journey, he tells how

[s]uddenly, too, we were out of the torrid glare and running in the latticed shade of palms. The din of machinery was magically snuffed out as we rounded a bend; the dwellings of a Baanaban village over-arched by palms came in sight on the seaward slopes below us. We caught glimpses, through twined shadow and sunlight, of crimson and cream hibiscus, of thatches raised on corner-posts, of neatly matted floors beneath them, of bronze bodies in brightly coloured loin-cloths. We heard the chatter of laughing women and the shouts of children across a murmur of surf that rose muted from the trees. Scents of gardenia and frangipani floated up to us mixed with savours of cooking. The village was gone again in half a minute, but its spell stayed with us. We felt we had passed, in that flash of time, through a miraculous gateway opened for us into the real, the homely heart of the Pacific. (ibid, p. 12)

With his use of all the senses for this description, Grimble ensured that the spell also stayed with me, the reader.

I have read a variety of these ‘travelogue’ novels both during my formative and adult years, and they always have the same affect on me – that of making me desire to travel to the places described. J B Priestley wrote a long ‘travelogue’ novel *Faraway*, about a journey made by four strangers brought together into partnership to locate and claim an uncharted island they called Faraway that had tons of pitchblende “sticking out all over the place” (Priestley, n. d., p. 45). The main protagonist, William Dursley, with a lump of pitchblende and the details of its provenance, sought out the other two beneficiaries of his Uncle’s will, Commander Ivybridge and P T Riley who respectively had the Longitude and Latitude coordinates for Faraway. With the deceased Riley’s daughter, Terry, taking his place, and with the Commander’s financial partner, Ramsbottom, as their fourth member, they made Tahiti their base, from which they chartered schooners to search for the island. Once again sensual and metaphoric language was used to describe Tahiti – some of it far from flattering, but much of it extremely evocative.

William, in love with Terry, walked back to their hotel on the night before they set sail for Faraway the first time:

It was a lovely night, a night of the legendary South Seas, when the worst copra dump or most monotonous stretch of palm and coral suddenly becomes part of the Garden of Hesperides; it had a silken and fragrant beauty in it; there was half a white moon and just a glimmer of stars; there was a soft little wind among the palms; and through this nocturne in purple and silver, this island symphony of distant booming surf, sighing wind, and cicadas, they walked slowly, arm-in-arm, close together. Now and then a car would pass them, sometimes carrying a load of beanfeasting, singing Tahitians, and offering a quick glimpse of flower-crowned dark faces. William was drunk, not with wine ... but with love and romantic wonder. They picked their way through the stream-haunted garden, where daturas were giving out a very strong sweet smell. Between the black silhouetted palms, the lagoon was a bright silver. The moonlight mistily filled the great lily cups in the pond. (ibid, pp. 292 & 293)

A little later, upon their return after initial failure to reach Faraway, and rejected by Terry, the same scene is described in similar terms. “Yet now it was all different. It was rapidly shrinking into a mere huddle of canvas scenery” (ibid, p. 367). The reality of island life, and the struggle to achieve one’s goals continued despite the superficial beauty of the place. Having failed in their endeavour due to their Faraway Island having been claimed by Chile and a rival ‘treasure hunter’, William mused while waiting for a schooner to rescue them after the Commander’s death on Easter Island:

“There seems to be an awful mirage element about life now. Every place is wonderful when you’re not there, and the minute you are there it dwindles into something rather ordinary and some other place begins to look wonderful. It’s a trick of the imagination, of course, but I don’t see why one should go on being humbugged by it.” (ibid, p. 540)

While I have found this sentiment to contain some truth during my subsequent travels overseas, I have always experienced the wonder and delight in the novelty of a new location. Of course the longer I have stayed, the more aware I have become of the mundane, but this has not detracted from the journey itself or the subsequent memories of it. Priestley’s novel includes the mundane, plus the failure of the quest, but he ended it with William at home again in England where he “found himself overwhelmed by a great tide of longing for the Pacific and the islands, the distant blue magic of the South

Seas” (ibid, p. 567). So did I - his story contributing to a wanderlust that I have never satisfied.

Recently, I discovered Joseph Conrad’s stories, *Typhoon*, *The Shadow Line*, and *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’*, entailing a ship captain’s journeys, that reminded me somewhat of the original story, *A Pattern of Islands*. I read these from a different perspective – that of someone who has been and seen, and can now discern the difference between the romantic notion and the reality of travel. An additional difference is that I am now aware of the imperialism behind the protagonists’ situations within their respective narratives, a theory I had no knowledge of when I first encountered both Grimble’s and Priestley’s novels.

Following the viewing of the Elvis Presley movies of *Blue Hawaii* and *Paradise, Hawaiian Style*, my island lust was cemented. Consequently, one of my goals in life was to visit Hawaii, the ultimate in exotic island paradises. And, because I went with an appetite whetted by a *Sesame Street* program that had shown the landscape and native people of Hawaii rather than the commercial aspect of the islands, I was not disappointed. While there, my discovery of the legends of Madam Pele and her role, past and present, in Hawaiian society, sowed the seed that slowly germinated in my mind until it developed into an organised plotline.

Combining my love of Hawaii with my increasing interest and knowledge of the Fantasy genre and of Mythology, the subject chosen for my novel is consequently understandable.

Crime novel plotting.

Over the last thirty-seven years I have accumulated an extensive library in Crime/Mystery fiction, that includes the renowned authors Agatha Christie, Ruth Rendell, P D James, Ngaio Marsh, and Dorothy L Sayers; plus more recent authors such as Elizabeth George, Kathy Reichs, Sue Grafton, Minette Walters and Perri O’Shaughnessy. If asked I would say that I liked the plots, the logic, the application of the mind to unravel the clues to reveal the perpetrator before the author does. I have become very skilled at this – I have an analytical mind that breezes through jigsaws, mazes, codes, and problems, linked, I believe, to observation of minutiae. From these

novels I learned to apply my mind, and gained a firm grounding in plot construction. This I have carried forward throughout my writing, and have completed an unpublished mystery novel, *Crimmons*, which I have also converted into a television script, with outlines of sixteen accompanying episodes.

Analysis of influential authors.

As I moved through the works of various authors I rejected many and was drawn closely to others. I found that the novels that remained embedded in my mind contained these elements of satisfying plots, and mystery that was not always criminal. I was drawn towards fantasy fiction (which I deal with in more detail later in this essay) along a path of established authors – such as Wilkie Collins: *The Moonstone*, Daphne Du Maurier: *The House on the Strand*, J B Priestley: *Benighted*, W. Somerset Maugham: *The Magician*, William Golding: *The Inheritors*, and of course J R R Tolkien: *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* – while *Adam in Moonshine* by Priestley and *Pincher Martin* by Golding exposed me to the convolutions of a ‘Stream of Consciousness’ form, and the “narrative boundary-breaking or slippage, excess, and indeterminacy” (Lewis, 1990, p. 133) of Postmodernism. At University I was further exposed to novels that fell into this category, such as *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys, in which the first person protagonist changed from the male character presenting his point of view, to that of the female from her subjugated position, and *The Riders* by Tim Winton with its unanswered questions and open-ended text.

Modern and Postmodern characteristics.

Postmodernism was a term coined by the Modernists to describe the late 50’s and early 60’s during which enormous change took place throughout all art forms - art, architecture, fashions, dance, music, and literature. Modernism itself represented experimentation, innovation, and a bundle of shared characteristics from vastly diverse writers. There was a great interest in form, free verse, and voices, the utilisation of myth and quotations from past literature in an attempt to bring structure, shape and order to the futility and chaos of modern life. I have made use of these things for *Madam Pele*.

While studying literary theory for my degree, I wrote that Postmodern characteristics that apply to texts could read as follows: multiple narratives, different points-of-view, plurality of meaning, reader participation, dark themes, fractured world, open-ended texts, a wide variety of and mixed genres, boundary breaking, gaps, metafiction, and the replacement of marginalised groups in texts. [Of course there was a continuation of social criticism, either subtle or blatant and regardless of the genre.] I noted that D Lewis, in *The Constructedness of Texts*, after describing how “[m]etafiction ... refus[ed] to take for granted how stories should be told and thus implicitly comment[ed] upon the nature of fiction itself” (Lewis, 1990, p. 132), continued to state that there were three main features of postmodernism - “narrative *boundary-breaking* or ‘slippage’, *excess*, and *indeterminacy*” (ibid, p. 133). I also quoted Geoff Moss, who in *Metafiction, Illustration, and the Poetics* propounded that:

postmodernism pictures a subjective, relativistic world [and] is a process, perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change, ...where the self is decentred ... [and there is] a plurality of discourses. (Moss, 1992, pp. 54-55)

Descriptive Language.

The thing that attracted me to all these authors, apart from their narratives, plots, settings and characters, was their clever, unusual and sometimes startling ‘way with words’. Trite, one might say – in order to use words, the units of language, all authors have a ‘way with words, and that ‘way’ is called their style. Yet these authors who influenced me had a particular knack with words – an ability to create and manipulate descriptive language: utilising the economy of metaphors linking two meanings, two unconnected things, to create a new way of seeing; together with simile comparisons; the more logical connected associative metonymy turning the real into an abstraction; and synecdoche with its parts signifying the whole. With specified or unspecified tenor carried by the vehicle of the word, these language tropes were often twisted for figurative use. They could all evoke an image that was instantly recognized, including the connotations of the chosen likenesses, and the baggage of intertextuality the resultant image suggested. These images contributed to the clarity of the wit, humour and

landscape of their texts. I will illustrate this by a brief discussion of several of these authors.

A particular knack with words.

Dylan Thomas:

The thing that appeals to me about Dylan Thomas is his use of evocative language in his prose. I love his prose. It is easy, enjoyable, and engaging to read, written to be read aloud so that the music of the language can be heard. Unfortunately, I find much of his verse too obscure, incomprehensible, as if I were missing ‘the key’ to unlock the esoteric meaning of its words/images. When read aloud it creates a kind of understanding, a ‘sense’ of the verse, but the economy of the verse robs it of readily accessible meaning to the reader – even at times to the poet himself. In a letter he wrote:

I am getting more obscure day by day. I shall never be understood. ... All day yesterday I was working, as hard as a navvy, on six lines of a poem. I finished them, but had, in the labour of them, picked and cleaned them so much that nothing but their barbaric sounds remained. They are not the words that express what I want to express; they are the only words I can find that come near to expressing a half. (Ferris, 1999, pp. 106-7)

Thomas himself was enthralled with words for their own sake, a fact well documented in his many letters. He was fond of quoting the Biblical ‘In the beginning was the word’, then, depending on his mood, launching into a stream of explanatory and often agonised words about his own poetry:

I’m a freak user of words, not a poet I write in the only way I can write, & my warped, crabbed and cabined stuff is not the result of theorising but of pure incapability to express my needless tortuities in any other way. (ibid, p 107)

In a letter to Pamela Hansford Johnson in 1934 he came closest to explaining his obsession with the disturbing nature of words – words (rather than ideas) with which Thomas believed his poetry began:

There is torture in words, torture in their linking & spelling, in the snail of their course ... In the beginning was a word I can’t spell, not a reversed Dog, or a physical light, but a word as long as Glastonbury and as short as pith. Nor does it lisp like the last word, break wind like

Balzac through a calligraphied window, but speaks out sharp & everlastingly with the intonations of death and doom on the magnificent syllables. I wonder whether I love your word, the word of your hair ... the word of your voice. The word of your flesh, & the word of your presence. (ibid, p. 108)

Even in his correspondence his clever use of metaphorical language, with its intertextual reference to a quotation from Shakespeare's 'cabin'd, cribbed, confined', evokes imagery that extends meaning for the reader – 'warped, crabbed and cabinned stuff' immediately presents the notion that he believes his writing is confined and constrained, while 'in the snail of their course' presents it as a trail of words left behind the crawling pen on its journey across the page.

When in America, he later told Alastair Reid that "when I experience anything I experience it as a thing and a word at the same time, both equally amazing" (ibid, p. 109). According to Paul Ferris this:

[f]ailure to see that an image is only an image, not the reality, may have been, for Thomas, not a failure at all, but a positive capacity that was at the root of his perception. ... [H]e wrote in a state of mind where words and objects became ... essentially the same. (ibid, p. 109)

I also perceive and experience in this way, having been aware from childhood of the shape of words, the picture they make on the page, their sounds, their rhymes, their rhythms, their syllables, and the magic of their often inbuilt alliteration. I have my own notions of which words are visually beautiful, those that are satisfying and those that are irritating and downright ugly. I believed that this was a personal peculiarity, so was delighted when I discovered that both Tolkien and Thomas shared this characteristic. Although it took them in different directions, they also shared a fascination for the sounds of the Welsh language. This linguistic penchant underlies my affinity with, and explains my attraction to, the writings of most of the listed authors in this essay.

Thomas's prose, while filled with Welsh or British places, experiences, and occasions, is easily understood. In his prose I can hear him talking; I can see the people preparing for their Bank holiday picnic, for example, because I have experienced similar events, and because his language is so descriptive. With his use of rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and heteroglossic sense of voices, age, gender, and differing social groups,

his prose evokes the sights, sounds, smells, clutter, activities, turmoil, all with instant clarity and yet still an economy of words.

In his volume *Quite Early One Morning - Poems, Stories, Essays*, there are two versions of the short story *Reminiscences of Childhood* - I prefer some of the first version to the tidied up second version, although some of that is also better. I would like to see a combination of both versions – and no doubt if he had lived longer he well may have written a third version. The first seems more naive and fresh, with less of an eye to the ‘political correctness’ of the latter, though I realise that term had not been coined in his time. It is also interesting to see that the changes to the *Hunchback in the Park* poem in the second version comprised mainly of punctuation removal, plus the removal of the first version references to his two childhood ‘swan’ verses.

The opening paragraph of *Holiday Memory* is scintillating, with not a sentence in sight – phrases and clauses as sensual fragments:

August Bank Holiday. A tune on an ice-cream cornet. A slap of sea and a tickle of sand. A fanfare of sunshades opening. A wince and whinny of bathers dancing into deceptive water. A tuck of dresses. A rolling of trousers. A compromise of paddlers. A sunburn of girls and a lark of boys. A silent hullabaloo of balloons. (Thomas, 1983, p. 29)

And so it goes on - a litany of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textural sensations. Seaside and fairground are crammed into the limited space along with the people and their preparations and experiences. Textually, if re-shaped physically on the page, it could succeed equally as a poem – just the thought of that evokes a yearning in me for it to be so. Being written for radio broadcasts, the short stories within this volume were restricted in length by a time limit. Thus they have a page-number uniformity which seems artificial, and occasionally a feel of there being more to come that is left unsaid. There is a sense that the author has just begun to settle into his illustration of his point of view – especially with the essays – when the text is abruptly terminated. Unintentionally or fortuitously, these pieces have the “narrative boundary-breaking or slippage, excess, and indeterminacy” (Lewis, 1990, p. 133) characteristics of Postmodernism.

A number of these radio scripts/short stories in this volume deal with memory - *Reminiscences of Childhood* versions one and two, *Memories of Christmas*, *Holiday Memory* and *The Crumbs of One Man’s Year* - while memory assists the other pieces as

one would expect. *Return Journey* is a short radio play; and *Quite Early One Morning* is a precursor of *Under Milk Wood*, his most successful play.

With an emphasis on Spring, *Under Milk Wood* demonstrates a day in the life of a seaside Welsh town, as seen through the viewpoints of various of its inhabitants. Thomas's use of these voices/viewpoints makes the play a working example of heteroglossia – all social voices having their say in a kaleidoscope of social values and ideologies. Once again the language is startling – text, lacking grammatic continuity, strewn with onomatopoeia, a deliberate euphony and cacophany of sounds as the words roll and trip from the mouth; adjectives and nouns turned into mixed tense verbs including participles sprinkled intermittently amongst the phrase fragments; images instantly leaping off the page, juxtaposed and unrelated/individual:

There's the clip clop of horses on the sunhoneyed cobbles of the humming streets, hammering of horseshoes, gobble quack and cackle, tomtit twitter from the bird-ounced boughs, braying on Donkey Down. Bread is baking, pigs are grunting, chop goes the butcher, milk churns bell, tills ring, sheep cough, dogs shout, saws sing. Oh, the Spring whinny and morning moo from the clog dancing farms, the gulls' gab and rabble on the boat bobbing river and sea and the cockles bubbling in the sand, scamper of sanderlings, curlew cry, crow caw, pigeon coo, clock strike, bull bellow, and the ragged gabble of the beargarden school as the women scratch and babble in Mrs Organ Morgan's general shop where everything is sold: custard, buckets, henna, rat-traps, shrimp nets, sugar, stamps, confetti, paraffin, hatchets, whistles. (Thomas, 2000, p. 358)

In his essay, 'Wilfred Owen', Thomas wrote:

You cannot generalize about age and poetry. A Man's poems, if they are good poems, are always older than himself; and sometimes they are ageless. We know that the shape and the texture of his poems would always be restlessly changing, though the purpose behind them would surely remain unalterable; he would always be experimenting technically, deeper and deeper driving towards the final intensity of language: the words behind words. Poetry is, of its nature, an experiment. All poetical impulses are towards the creation of adventure. And adventure is movement. And the end of each adventure is a new impulse to move again towards creation. (Thomas, 1983, pp. 98-99)

This not only shows Dylan Thomas's attitude towards poetry, but describes his method, his approach, as he tackled his own creations. As a game-plan or manifesto for his own works, it provides us with an insight into Dylan Thomas the craftsman.

In Brinnin's book, *Dylan Thomas in America*, the author gave a detailed account of Thomas's studio, including the fact that:

on many of his manuscripts Dylan would add a single word or a phrase, or a new punctuation, then recopy the whole poem in longhand. When another addition or revision was made, no matter how minor or major, he would then copy the whole poem again. [There were, for example,] more than two hundred separate and distinct versions of the poem [*Fern Hill*]. It was, he explained, his way of 'keeping the poem together,' so that its process of growth was like that of an organism. (Brinnin, 1971, pp. 103-4)

In this book, from pages 96 to 105, Brinnin details a BBC lecture that he was to give on Dylan Thomas's time in America, and how he was perceived and received by Americans; followed by a discussion between himself and Dylan, in the latter's studio, on poetry generally, his method of writing and what motivated him to begin a work. It was fascinating to see that such an apparently disorganised person - his studio was a cluttered shambles, as his crumpled scruffy physical appearance would lead one to expect - worked in such a methodical manner when constructing his craft, either poetry or prose.

In Dylan Thomas's essay, 'A Dearth of Comic Writers', he comments, when asked by Calder Marshall whether P G Wodehouse fits his definition of a comic world perfectly, that:

[t]hose chinless, dim eyeglassed, asinine, bespatted drones were borrowed, lock, stock, and title, from memories of the Pink 'Un period and the Smart Set, from the ghostly, hansom past of the moneyed masher and the stage-door johnny. Some people like Jeeves, but include me out: I, for one, do not appreciate gentleman's gentleman's relish.

A truly comic, invented world must live *at the same time* as the world *we* live in. (Thomas, 1983, pp. 123-4)

P G Wodehouse:

Although I understand Dylan Thomas's point of view, I am inclined to disagree about the comic nature of P G Wodehouse's works. Rather than his plots or characters providing the comic element in his stories, I believe it is his use of language - his

surprising descriptive imagery, his metaphors and similes - that does so. These linguistic elements engender chuckles that swell to gales of laughter.

For example, in *Galahad at Blandings*, when discussing how Lord Clarence Emsworth had been avoiding women since his wife had died twenty-five years earlier, Wodehouse wrote that “women have a nasty way of popping up at unexpected moments, but [Emsworth] was quick on his feet and his policy of suddenly disappearing like a diving duck had had excellent results” (Wodehouse, 1979 p. 42). Just two words, ‘diving duck’, and the image evoked releases a chuckle. Having set the scene of Emsworth being glad to be free of women at his castle, Blandings, for a while, and discussing this with his younger brother Galahad over sole mornay, Wodehouse drops the next well-crafted twist. Gally informs Clarence that one of their domineering sisters, “Hermione has moved in [to Blandings] and is firmly wedged into the woodwork. Egbert’s there, too, of course. And Wilfred Allsop” (ibid, p. 42). It is his choice of words that not only creates the humour but evokes the notion that Hermione is now unmovable from the castle. There were many ways he could have said this, some requiring considerable length, but by using the metaphor ‘wedged into the woodwork’ all that is necessary is revealed. I could continue in this vein page by page throughout this book, not to mention every one of his books, but I believe my point is made.

Of course the characters, their settings and predicaments are silly; the plots are clever though often predictable - after reading your first P G Wodehouse, the twists and turns of future books’ narratives are expected, and usually awaited with anticipation. As for the “chinless, dim eyeglassed, asinine, bespatted drones ... of the Pink ‘Un period and the Smart Set, from the ghostly, hansom past of the moneyed masher and the stage-door johnny” (Thomas, 1983, pp. 123-4), they *were* of the author’s era. They were his contemporaries, their apparently frivolous lifestyles, occupations, and pastimes being fictionalised, melodramatised to create escapism during more serious times.

Wodehouse himself was unperturbed by criticism such as that of Dylan Thomas. He said:

I believe there are two ways of writing novels. One is mine, making a sort of musical comedy without music and ignoring real life altogether; the other is going right deep down into life and not caring a damn ... (Wodehouse, 1977, frontispiece)

As a part author and lyricist for eighteen musical comedies, he understood the genre well, and his over-ninety books were translated into many languages, and won world-wide acclaim as “a comic genius recognized in his lifetime as a classic and an old master of farce.” (*The Times*) According to Evelyn Waugh, whose comments from a BBC broadcast were quoted on the rear cover blurb of several Wodehouse volumes:

Mr Wodehouse’s idyllic world can never stale. He will continue to release future generations from captivity that may be more irksome than our own. He has made a world for us to live in and delight in”. (Waugh, on Wodehouse, 1977, rear cover)

While his content was farcical, his context was quite serious. Wodehouse was renowned to have meticulously plied his craft, paying attention to every word he wrote, although there is a generally held opinion that his latter works lacked the freshness and spontaneity of the earlier works. With this I am inclined to agree. Despite his language craft being highly skilled and honed in these latter works, his storylines were not accorded the same development - they did not move and grow with his times.

His character descriptions were immensely individual and refreshing. He described Lord Emsworth as “looking like an absentminded member of the Jukes family, for he ha[d] always been a careless dresser and when in front of a camera [wa]s inclined to let his mouth hang open in rather a noticeable way” (Wodehouse, 1979, p. 17), and, when upset by Gally’s news, that:

his eyes, like stars, start[ed] from their spheres and also [the news] cause[d] his knotted and combined locks, if you could call them that, to part and each particular hair – there were about twenty of them – to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine.” (ibid, p. 44)

Thus we learned a lot more about Emsworth’s appearance than a mere list of physical characteristics would have revealed. And his discourse varied according to the viewpoint from which he wrote. The Galahad novels were written in third person, allowing a multiple of viewpoints and narratives within each novel. The Jeeves stories were written as if by Bertie Wooster, in the first person, using idiomatic simplistic language, except in direct dialogue from other characters, especially the more pedantic Jeeves. We see most things from Bertie’s position, and in his terms are acquainted with descriptions of those around him:

Aunt Dahlia blew in on the morrow, and I rang the bell for Jeeves. He appeared looking brainier than one could have believed possible – sheer intellect shining from every feature – and I could see at once that the engine had been turning over. (Wodehouse, 1977, p. 80)

Wodehouse, like Dylan Thomas, spent hours carefully manipulating his language to create the humour and plot twists his particular novels required. Thomas may not have respected the content of Wodehouse's works, but he should have respected the context that reflects the craft of the author.

Tim Winton:

Like P G Wodehouse, Tim Winton has a gift of creating evocative imagery. I first encountered Tim Winton via his novel *Lockie Leonard, Human Torpedo*, in which he narrated the story of an Australian teen who moved to a small country town, fell in love, and lived for surfing. The language used is Australian in all its nuances, but it's not the idiom so much as the descriptions that so fill the senses with Aussie flavour. And it was written with his juvenile audience in mind, yet, like J K Rowling's novels, is also viable for adult readers.

He writes about:

[t]he old family Falcon [being] loaded down like a refugee boat as they rolled into this [country] place fresh from the city. The whole family tried to be cheerful about it, but the place looked awful. The town was small and crummy-looking and when they saw the house the police force had organized for them, everyone in the car went quiet. . . . It was a big old fibro joint with a rusty tin roof, and it went all higgledy-piggledy inside, like whoever built it kept having more kids and just bunged on a room every Christmas. (Winton, 1993, p. 5)

The tone is colloquial Australian, as is the setting, and the language – for example 'looked awful', 'crummy-looking', 'big old fibro joint' and 'bunged on'. As with Wodehouse's works, I could give examples, page after page, book after book, of his imagery.

I studied Tim Winton's novel, *The Riders*, while completing my Bachelor of Arts degree, and wrote an essay: '*The Riders* as an example of a Postmodern text' (House, 1997, see Appendix – A for original), which, because it was an important influence on my own work, I have here compressed and paraphrased for clarity, modifying it to

include additional and relevant comments. [I have indicated the re-worked text by using inverted commas from the beginning of each paragraph until the end.] Winton's language involved not only the use of particularly Australian metaphorically descriptive language, but also of the Postmodern characteristics mentioned earlier. I was drawn to the metafictional way he "refused to take for granted how stories should be told" (Lewis, 1990, p. 132). 'He turned the ordinary into the extraordinary, moving away from initial realism to a post-modern text, multi-layered like an onion which he slowly peeled back until the bitter centre, the tale's inconclusive conclusion, was reached.

'He introduced into the realist narrative a fantasy genre and dark themes with his descriptions of the riders at the castle keep. Despite giving the novel its title, signifying their importance, the role of these riders in the narrative is never revealed to the reader causing a sense of *indeterminacy* and the notion that they have *plurality of meanings* – a psychological journey, the psychical phenomena of Celtic myth, symbolic of the tenacious wait for enlightenment, and/or as structural narrative brackets.

'Throughout *The Riders* there is a *mixing of genre* – fantasy, mystery, and 'travelogue'. Writing in the third person, as an omniscient narrator, he moved from one character's position to another, giving the impression of multiple narrators, while in actuality there are many voices, viewpoints, but only one narrator. The uncertainty this creates, the layering of the narratorial voices, is postmodern, as is the unreliability of the dominating narratorial voice, Scully's, and the changing of tenses from past to present, usually to change narratorial voice position, at intervals throughout the text.

'There are a few metafictional moments, narratorial boundary-breaking, that cause reader confusion, destabilising the suspension of disbelief that accompanies the reading of fiction. One of these involved the change of person from third to second - "[Scully] let her stay till she'd had enough. He said nothing. What could you say?" (Winton, 1994, p.144). To remain conventional it should have read: 'What could he say?' This second person device not only asks the reader to agree with Scully, but also draws their attention to the fact that it is a work of fiction, a book, that they are reading.

'The questioning of which is plot and which is subplot is also postmodern. Realist novels have a plot, with subplots intertwined, comprising a beginning, a middle, and an end which is conclusive, providing answers to most if not all questions raised in

the text - providing a sense of closure. *The Riders* does not do this. It is clearly an open-ended text, showing a fractured world, evoking reader response and participation. Preferring not to divulge the answers, not to tie up the loose threads, Tim Winton leaves active readers to make up their own minds, reach their own conclusions, find closure where they can. This lack of authorial closure is postmodern.

‘The gap in the narrative, *indeterminacy*, is rarely temporal or spatial. Predominantly, it is textual - the reader, given snippets of information about the characters, must again actively participate with the text to decide who they are, where they fit in the story, and their psychological, psychical, or practical effect on the protagonist and his quests for his wife, for an answer, and for himself - a *plurality of meaning*.

‘Winton intermingled past and present tenses in verb and participle form, during the revelation of Billie’s worries:

Billie [tried] to think of something good, something she could remember that wouldn’t make her afraid to remember. Past the cloud. The white neck she saw....Beautiful skin. The veins as she sits down. Skin blue with veins. Like marble. And talking now, mouth moving tightly. Cheeks stretched. Hair perfect. But the words lost in the roar, the huge stadium sound in Billie’s ears as the cloud comes down, like smoke down the aisle, rolling across them, blotting the war memorial look of her mother in blinding quiet. (ibid, p. 234)(My underlining)

This long quotation shows not only Winton’s unorthodox, post-modern verb usage to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity, but also his evocative metaphorical language, ‘war memorial look’ and ‘blinding quiet’.

‘Relying on reader’s foreknowledge of the ‘other’ text referred to, intertextuality occurs in this novel between the hunchback, Quasimodo, from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Scully - both deformed physically, misunderstood because of it, yet kind with good hearts - marginalised figures brought to the centre of the narrative. Billie, the medium for this link, recognized it herself as they travelled by boat from Greece to Italy: “He was like the hunchback, Scully. Not very pretty. Sometimes he wasn’t very smart. But his heart was good” (ibid, p. 210); and again in Amsterdam: “Billie saw him come out handcuffed and bellowing like the Hunchback on the Feast of Fools” (ibid, p. 344).

The cathedral of Notre Dame also features continually throughout the novel, another means of reaffirming the character linkage as more than just coincidence.

‘The language of Winton is evocative, with descriptions both metaphorical: “Night warped by.” (ibid, p. 235) and onomatopoeic: “The sea sucked and grabbed and hissed and snatched” (ibid, p.188). The use here of active verbs usually associated with animate beings rather than the sea (which although full of animate lifeforms is of itself inanimate), makes the description dynamic and powerful. On the other hand, the actions of his characters are excessive, surreal, a little incredible. There is a ‘soapie’ quality surrounding *The Riders* - the squeezing in of *all* possibilities into the one narrative which appears to be “perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change” (Moss, 1992, p. 55) - unsettling to the reader as surreal art is to the viewer. In other words, postmodern.’

I have focussed on this novel by Winton in order to illustrate how easily the postmodern elements can be used to weave a narrative, albeit incomplete in places and with its threads clearly visible in others. I elaborate on this in the ‘Madam Pele’ section of this essay.

William Golding:

In his novel, *Pincher Martin*, Golding depicts the plight of a man lost at sea during the war, struggling to survive the elements while stranded on an isolated rock. As his health fails due to injuries and malnutrition, and his mind struggles with hallucinations and slippage of memory, the protagonist, Martin, sees his world through the ‘windows’ of his eyes – a thing we all do though some are more aware of the act of doing so than are others.

Constantly talking out loud as a reassurance that he is still alive, he struggles to maintain his identity. Unable to see himself reflected in a pool of water except as a dark shape against the sky, he states:

“How can I have a complete identity without a mirror? That is what has changed me. Once I was a man with twenty photographs of myself Even when I was in the Navy there was that photograph in my identity card so that every now and then I could look and see who I was. . . . There were mirrors too, triple mirrors. . . I could arrange the side ones . .

. and spy myself from the side or back . . . and assess the impact of Christopher Hadley Martin on the world.” (Golding, n.d., p132)

Continuing his monologue, he then discloses his view of himself as seen by others - reflecting Bakhtin’s ideas of ‘the self’ as a composite. Bakhtin focussed on the way the individual perceived him/herself - from within and not from outside. He proposed that every individual is incomplete from within but sees every other individual as complete, because they can be observed from outside. In order to see oneself as ‘I for myself’ it is necessary to see oneself as ‘I as seen by others’ - in other words, one needs to know others’ perspectives of oneself in order to see oneself as complete. Although they may show similar characteristics, each individual is non-identical, different, unique - thus there are a multiplicity of individuals.

Martin states that though his eyes are now no longer sufficient to identify him by, as they were in his pre-rock world:

“ . . . there were other people to describe me to myself – they fell in love with me, they applauded me, they caressed this body they defined it for me. There were the people I got the better of, people who disliked me, people who quarrelled with me. Here I have nothing to quarrel with. I am in danger of losing definiton. (ibid, p. 132)

Golding’s use of this Bakhtinian notion of ‘self’ as a composite, in particular of other people’s views of us, is illustrated clearly in this novel. Not only in Pincher’s discourse above but throughout the entire text Golding offers via the memory flashes and hallucinations snippets of Pincher’s past that has led him to this dire point. We the readers are given the opportunity to build up our own image of his character, physical and personal, as he loses his. His ‘self’ is de-centred, paradoxically, as our understanding of his ‘self’ centres via his disclosures.

Although it is written in third person, there is no sense of the author behind the story. We are placed outside the story watching the protagonist’s plight, observing his attempts to feed himself, provide a water supply, and create signals for rescue. We watch his deterioration – aware of it by the fragmentation of the text as much as by the nature of his ramblings. While these fragmentations, these sudden forays into memories, flashbacks, and hallucinations are indications of the author’s presence behind the text, it is only by these devices, his techniques, that this authorial visibility occurs.

With an uncanny twist at the end of the novel, creating uncertainty in the reader of the narrative's validity, the work steps over the line from reality to fantasy.

Fantasy.

Definition.

Fantasy is the implausible becoming reality – the engaging of the imagination to go beyond fancy into a secondary or parallel world/universe.

J R R Tolkien defines fantasy as that

which combines with its ... use as an equivalent of Imagination the derived notions of 'unreality'..., [combines] freedom from the domination of observed 'fact' ... with ... things that are not only 'not actually present', but which are indeed not to be found in our primary world at all, or are generally believed not to be found there. (Tolkien, 1990, p. 156)

According to the critic, Tzvetan Todorov, in his *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (cited in Abrams, 1993, pp. 168-9), "fantastic literature ... [is] deliberately designed by the author to leave the reader in a state of uncertainty whether the events are to be explained by reference to natural or to supernatural causes". To succeed in persuading readers that fantasy is a very real dimension of our actual world, authors must convince them to a "willing suspension of [their] disbelief" (Coleridge, 1949, p. 147) in the narrative as a contrived text, and to become involved with it as true. The fantasy dimension can encompass the supernatural, the surreal, the occult, the extra-terrestrial, in fact anything that is incredible, unexplainable, or that defies accepted scientific or commonsense explanations. As the reality of the inner self, fantasy, via the imagination, can also be a great instrument of moral good.

In accord with Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* (1949, Chaps. 13 & 14), I believe that fantasy is driven by the imagination rather than by fancy. Fancy can be defined as a lesser ability to combine memorised images via the law of association, and is distinguished by its simplicity. To Coleridge, fancy, relying on memory, was mere technique, for example metaphor and simile, creating links between disparate objects or ideas. Imagination is different, going beyond the surface of time and space, and operating like a collage, like the cutting and pasting of images. For Coleridge, a self-

proclaimed writer of fantasy – “my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural ...” (Coleridge, 1949, p. 147) - imagination was so much more than technique - it was the seamless incorporation of these disparate objects and ideas, their blending to form a new complete subject.

Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception Coexisting with the conscious will It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create.... It is essentially vital.... Fancy, on contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space;[b]ut equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. (ibid, pp. 145 &146)

While fancy reorders images, reassembles fixities, imagination creates by unification of the fixities.

The faculty of imagination ... assimilates and synthesizes the most disparate elements into an organic whole - that is, a newly generated unity, constituted by a living interdependence of parts whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole. (Abrams, 1993, p. 64)

Thus, if fantasy is the expression of the super-real, of dream-vision material, of the uncanny and spiritual, where it is necessary for the reader to suspend their disbelief in order to immerse themselves in the narrative, these works are governed by the imagination.

M. Saxby, in his article *Fantasy: Beyond the Rim of Reality*, states that

[f]antasy ... reflects reality through unreality, life through illusion makes visible the invisible and illuminates the darkness. It brings the wished for and the imagined into the rational world [and] arises from the human desire to penetrate the unknown and to venture beyond the here and now. (Saxby, 1997, pp. 231-2)

According to Freud (1918) the product of the imagination is always fantasy, but it helps us live our lives because our world is not always stable. For Coleridge, fantasy/ imagination is the power that helps us find the truth. He claimed it could see into the life of things, it could see the real construct of the world. His poems, ‘Xanadu’ and ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, are examples of this. But he believed that it could also fail in this task.

Yoked together as the device of poetry, fancy and imagination makes the mundane fresh beyond simple images or associations of like qualities. Imagination requires more complex thought than fancy, and the ability to use thought, metre, and rhythm as tools to provide unity and imagery.

According to Abrams

“Imagery” ... signif[ies] all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem [or work of prose] ... whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the *vehicles* ... of its similes and metaphors. (Abrams, 1993, p. 86)

The use of imagery collectively can include more than the five senses - sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. It can also include the perception of movement and the notion of temperature. Imagery can also focus narrowly on “visible objects and scenes” (ibid, p. 87) or figuratively which incorporates the use of symbols, themes, and motifs as well as similes and metaphors.

Ursula Le Guin describes imagery and imagination in this way:

Imagery takes place in “the imagination”, which I take to be the meeting place of the thinking mind with the sensing body. What is imagined isn’t physically real, but it *feels as if it were*: the reader sees or hears or feels what goes on in the story, is drawn into it, exists in it, among its images, in the imagination (the reader’s? the writer’s?) while reading.” (Le Guin, 1992, p. 196)

Narrative ‘fantasy’ has various forms: High Fantasy – myth-based, or created-myth-based like J R R Tolkien’s completely self-contained secondary world, Middle-earth, and its resident creatures; Science Fiction Fantasy - set on alien planets in space, such as Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*; set on Earth with alien invasions like Julian May’s *Intervention*; and set on both like Douglas Adams’ humorous ‘five part trilogy’ *The Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*; and Realistic Fantasy - using temporal and spatial alterations in the same ‘real’ location, usually on Earth, incorporating ghosts, dreams, psychic phenomena, magic and witchcraft such as the *Harry Potter* series by J K Rowling, and mythic characters accessed by a vehicle such as a potion as in Daphne du Maurier’s *The House on the Strand*, or magic symbols as in *The Dark is Rising* series by Susan Cooper. My novel, *Madam Pele*, falls between High Fantasy and Realistic

Fantasy, containing as it does authentic mythology presented within a real setting accessed via a small lava rock.

Analysis of influential authors.

High Fantasy.

J R R Tolkien:

As groundwork for my Honours thesis: ‘The hybrid world of J R R Tolkien’s fiction: a study of *The Lord of the Rings* and other texts in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin’s essay ‘Epic and Novel’, I studied Medieval works, such as *Piers Plowman*, *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the legendary cycle of ‘King Arthur and the Round Table’. While dealing with the fantasy elements of my thesis, I referred to the opinions of the above-mentioned and noted Fantasists - Tolkien, Coleridge, Le Guin, and Lewis. Their considerable works, and those of several other fantasy authors, have had a definitive affect upon my own writing, both technically and narratively - the compulsion for mythic authenticity within my novel has become paramount.

‘A great deal has been written about J R R Tolkien. There have been biographies, essays and articles both positive and negative about his works individually and collectively, psychologically and theologically, mythically and morally, philologically and narratively. These works discuss the influences on him, that led him to develop a ‘secondary’ world with languages, and mythical history, and discuss his borrowing from mythic, linguistic and Biblical sources of the ‘primary’ world that he used to achieve his “really long story” (LOR, p. 10) and give his ‘secondary’ world credibility. While the opinions are as diverse as they are similar, the fact of Tolkien’s influence on ‘story’ and on language is certain.

‘His lecture/essay ‘Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics’, is recognised as the definitive text on the *Beowulf* tale. His lecture/essay ‘On Fairy Stories’ is an established respected text for those studying fantasy, or narrative. His coining of the word *eucatastrophe* to mean the burst of joy experienced by a reader confronting a happy ending, “the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears (which [he] argued it is the highest function of fairy-stories to produce)” (Tolkien, 1995, p. 100) can apply to the same experience felt by movie audiences, or even sporting

achievements of personal bests. While Samuel Taylor Coleridge gave the working definition of *imagination*, Tolkien expanded on it to incorporate the creation of a 'secondary world' containing the realities of the 'primary world' enhanced by the supernatural - where 'super' is used as an intensifier, and the 'primary world' is, of course, our own world in our own time. It was important to Tolkien that while his 'secondary world' was set in Epic times his readers could still relate to his characters, and to the events and problems assailing them. Their belief in what they read was paramount if the mythology was to be understood and hopefully absorbed.' (modified and paraphrased text - see Appendix – B: the introduction and conclusion)

His has been the major influence upon me, and pervades my discourse on all other fantasy authors. My work, set in our fast-pace time, is not an emulation of his work - that would be ludicrous. But the scope of his fantasy, set in the mythical past, demonstrates how vast a single story can become. "His mythology was a living thing, always changing and growing. But some ideas came to him early and changed little over the years." (Hammond & Scull, 1995, p. 61) His attention to detail, which saw him rewriting whole sections of his mythology in order to ensure its authenticity and to iron out any wrinkle of inconsistency, was similar to that of Dylan Thomas but on a far grander scale.

His use of a Ring, its Master and its current owner as both antagonists and protagonist opened the way for me to similarly use the lava rock. His imagery is evocative, and his characters believable. From its Prologue beginning, he allowed his mythology to unfold via the development and interaction of his huge cast of characters, and via the twists and turns of the world-saving quest which encompassed most regions on his map, building up the narrative till it reached its several conclusions. Accused of not knowing when to 'end' the novel, he made sure that not only was his King, Aragorn, crowned, but that the original members of the Fellowship returned home to undertake restoration of their war-affected lands, before the primary characters, Frodo, Gandalf and Bilbo, embarked to sail to the undying lands, never to return to Middle-earth. Even then he was unsatisfied with leaving the future of his characters unknown to his readers. As a consequence he wrote a number of Appendices dealing with the Fourth Age of Middle-earth, and the fate of the main characters and their offspring.

Who wouldn't want to write like that? There is an ever-increasing list of authors who have tried to emulate his works, with varying degrees of success. Ursula Le Guin, Susan Cooper, Julian May, and more recently J K Rowling are among the more successful at creating secondary worlds on a grand scale. My work of course is on a minor scale.

Science Fiction Fantasy.

Julian May:

In *The Saga of the Exiles*, encompassing four novels, Julian May created a well laid out fantasy using time travel as a vehicle, back then forward; ESP as a means of communication, a skill to be treasured; alien life-forms as the threat to our World from its own past; and relationships sexual and platonic to carry allies and adversaries onward. *Intervention* set in the New England area of USA with great effect, bridges between these previous four novels and the three that form the following set of *The Galactic Milieu Trilogy*. The plotting is complex yet builds up in layers so that the reader retains their grip on it, and doesn't become lost despite the ever-increasing number of characters and settings. Because of her imagery, *the reader sees or hears or feels what goes on in the story, is drawn into it, exists in it, among its images, in the imagination*; suspending disbelief for the duration of all eight novels.

Her *Trillium* series creates a more primitive world akin to Tolkien's yet alien - with created life-forms in place of Elves and Dwarves. Handled with delicacy the imagery is clear and the sense of place immediate. Completely different from the prior series, her *Rampart Worlds* series used brawn and brain, sex and humour, in modern language, in futuristic sci-fi settings.

As a writer I find her range of writing intriguing, a meld of fantasy and sci-fi, heteroglossically diverse, written to be read, easily, fluently, yet still providing the complexity that keeps the interest engaged till the last page. This is what I hope that I have achieved with my novel.

Douglas Adams:

Unlike May, Douglas Adams, the author of five books comprising "the increasingly inaccurately named *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* trilogy", is

inspirational in his use of humour. An example of this, is his creation of Marvin, the paranoid android, a hyperchondriac manic-depressive robot with a Genuine People Personality (GPP) who wavers between asking “ I’m not getting you down at all am I? I wouldn’t like to think I was getting you down.” (Adams, 1982, p.73); and grumbling resentfully “I’ve been ordered to take you down to the bridge. Here I am, brain the size of a planet and they ask me to take you down to the bridge. Call that *job satisfaction* ? ‘Cos I don’t.” (ibid, p. 75) Upon arrival at the bridge he then asks “Do you want me to sit in a corner and rust, or just fall apart where I’m standing?” (ibid, p. 82) The writing is witty, the language straightforward, the characters well-named and neatly stereotypical, the plot containing an abundance of twists and turns, while the setting is obviously out of this world. Evoking continual laughter, his writing is reminiscent of that of Wodehouse, who used language with amazing clarity, creating powerful descriptions of landscape and character.

These are only a couple of examples of the many novels available that I have read in this genre, but my main focus is upon High Fantasy and Realistic Fantasy.

Realistic Fantasy.

Fantasy is the implausible becoming reality – the engaging of the imagination to go beyond fancy into a secondary or parallel world/universe.

William Golding:

An example of Realistic Fantasy is Golding’s novel *The Inheritors*, in which he gave a voice – albeit with simple language based on pictorial thoughts, feelings, and basic social skills - to Orang-utan beings, pitted against more advanced primitive man in a fight for their survival. One step outside reality as we know it, yet with an authentic tropical setting and acceptable Orang-utan behaviours, the narrative engages and involves the reader’s credibility. It is only one step outside of reality to have Orang-utans actually conversing – we already accept that they are intelligent social creatures like ourselves, and that it is only an accident of vocal cord development that inhibits them from speaking. So by defying accepted scientific explanations, Golding’s compelling tale barely stretches our disbelief. It is as though he has one foot in the realm of fantasy while the rest of him remains in our own world.

Patricia Wrightson:

A little further into the fantasy realm, Patricia Wrightson, in her novel *The Nargun and the stars*, used the Australian rural setting “to evoke [and reveal] the mythic past not of the European Settler people but of the indigenous Aboriginal people” (Stephens, 1992, p. 126) in the form of carefully researched non-sacred earth spirits. She wanted to show the Australian reader, who have only had access to European mythical creatures, such as dragons, elves, etc, “that indigenous magic did indeed have powers of conviction and interpretation unmatched by the imported kind.” (Wrightson, 1980, p. 615). As her spirits are of the trees, the swamps, the mountain, of stone, of nature, it was necessary that Wrightson used their landscape to bring *the imagined into the rational world*. They “were part of the earth and this mountain. People might come and go ... but those others ...had belonged here always.” (Wrightson, 1975, pp 61-2) She wanted us to believe that they really exist in our world, as they do for the Aboriginal Australian. But today’s world of the white Australian is one of mechanical and social progress which leaves little room for fantasy.

It was in this article by her that I first came across the idea that Australia has only ghosts from the last 200 years and Aboriginal Dreamtime legends for its mythology. As a non-Aboriginal I feel that Aboriginal legends are outside my purview - Patricia Wrightson has their express permission for the ones that she uses. She pointed out that myth could be imported into Australia, and that many had tried this, usually importing Wizards and Dragons and so on from Europe, especially the Celtic United Kingdom, via an artifact. This reinforced my idea of importing myth from Hawaii via the lava rock to Perth, an unlikely location for a fantasy to occur.

I was disconcerted to find that Wrightson had used a rock, the Nargun, which moved on stumpy legs, settled, killed, and threatened. But my little lava rock - while described as being animate - was the vehicle for Madam Pele’s spirit, and it is she who manifests to threaten and cajole.

Daphne Du Maurier:

Another Realistic Fantasy, Du Maurier’s *The House on the Strand*, takes the reader into the surreality of a parallel world, crossing the time barrier, witnessing the duality of past and present running simultaneously as the protagonist, Dick, moves in the

present but participates in the past, often traversing terrain that is no longer accessible. His altered sense of perception is caused by the imbibing of a potion which had “to do with D.N.A., enzyme catalysts, molecular equilibria and the like” (Du Maurier, 1969, p. 16), concocted by his scientist friend, Magnus, who wants his own experiences validated by his friend. Highlighting the danger involved in moving around while experiencing this dual reality, Magnus is eventually killed by walking in front of a train while in his trance state of altered perception. In the past in which he moved there were no trains. Dick, however, despite this real and dangerous outcome, cannot resist making the final journey with the remainder of the potion and loses his wife, family, and sanity.

Du Maurier set the novel in Cornwall, in the Middle Ages and in her present. Her attention to detail in both time zones, making them authentic and thus believable, facilitated the heteroglossia of both, physically at first and later socially.

The village of Tywardreath, as I had seen it a few ours earlier, had utterly changed. The cottages and house that had formed a jigsaw pattern, spreading north and west from the church, had vanished: there was a hamlet there now Small dwellings, thatch-roofed, squat, clustered round a sprawling green on which were pigs, geese, chickens, two or three hobbled ponies, and the inevitable prowling dogs. Smoke rose from these humble dwellings, but not from any chimneys, from some hole in the thatch. (ibid, p. 5)

The temporal slippage is readily accepted, a collage made upon the surface of time and space, the novel opening on the point of transition from present to past for Dick: “The first thing I noticed was the clarity of the air, and then the sharp green colour of the land. There was no softness anywhere.” (ibid, p. 1) Only after the first experience comes to an unexpected end - he inadvertently makes physical contact with a man he has been following, throwing him back into his own time vertiginous, and retching – do we learn the back-story of the potion.

How damnably typical of Magnus. He had not even told me if I must expect some side-effect from his hell-brew of synthetic fungus and monkeys’ brain-cells, or whatever the solution was that he had extracted from his loathsome bottles. The vertigo might seize me again, and the nausea too. I might suddenly go blind, or mad, or both. To hell with Magnus and his freak experiment. . . . (ibid, p. 17)

The foundation in Medieval history or mythology, or a creative alternative, gives an authenticity to the ‘secondary worlds’ in most fantasy novels.

Susan Cooper:

As a Cambridge university student of Tolkien and C S Lewis, Susan Cooper’s work demonstrates the use of myth, in this case Celtic, brought forward in time into existing locations, but also involving the passing of the protagonists into secondary created worlds. Based upon the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Old English, pre Christian poems and legends of *Beowulf*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and the persona of King Alfred, and the medieval Middle English tales of *King Arthur*, *Merlin* and *Herne the Hunter* - and symbols and artifacts such as The Celtic cross, the circle of continuity quartered by the pathways or elements of life - Cooper authenticated the magic and fantasy of her parallel worlds of her hero quest narrative. Rather than instructing the reader she textually interwove the mythology in Celtic pattern, allowing them to be absorbed through the narrative, as Tolkien did with his created myths of his High Fantasy. By the end of the five books of the *Dark is Rising* series there is a sense of the breadth of the myths covered. Underlying all five novels they carry the stories forward unobtrusively. This is how I wish to use the Hawaiian myth.

Cooper is here ... weaving a tapestry of Anglo-Saxon history and culture around historical or literary individuals who, like Alfred and Arthur, are described as “Lords of the Light”. These individuals are connected to each other through genealogy and culture. Alfred ... is parallel to ... Arthur.... [Both] held off violent invaders as cycles of invasions, defense, conquest, and assimilation [we]re repeated.” (Drout, 1997, pp. 242 & 234-5)

Because the mythic and legendary incorporates the historical, both Christian and pagan, Cooper was able to utilise, within her *Dark is Rising* narrative, historical factors, such as the ring-giving by kings, and the Anglo-Saxon burial ship at Sutton Hoo, and historical pagan beliefs, such as the possession of magical (as well as healing) properties/powers by magicians, trees and plants, birds, animals, bells, colours, gems, stone and pathways. Her novel is sign-posted throughout with medieval minor details that validate the major characters and events, like the presence of Merlin in the form of Merriman, Herne the Hunter who chases the Dark away, the Rider and the Walker, and many symbolic elements. On the tapestries in the Hall of Time, her protagonist, Will,

saw “a silver unicorn, a field of red roses, a glowing golden sun” (Cooper, 1976, p. 43), symbols of magic/peace, blood/royalty, and Light/God. Later he saw “the brightest image of all: a masked man with a human face, the head of a stag [magic], the eyes of an owl [wisdom], the ears of a wolf [intuition] and the body of a horse [strength].” (ibid, pp 55) By her use of ‘co-existing’ time, Cooper had Will move back into the Middle Ages, with all its trappings - tapestries on the walls, huge carved wooden doors, forests that “swallow up whole villages and hamlets”. (Cooper, 1976, p. 65)

When Cooper’s ship, providing substantiating detail and a location for the acquisition of a sign, is carried off by the flood waters of the swollen Thames, it equates with the usual fate of a dead king being cast adrift in his ship, sometimes aflame as a pyre. Her mentor, Tolkien also used this motif in his *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, when after death, Boromir, son of the Steward of Gondor, was set adrift with his sword and cloven horn of Gondor over the massive Rauros Falls. Both were aligned intertextually with the Sutton Hoo find of a

ship-burial of a king of East Anglia late in the seventh century on the Suffolk coast with cultural monuments ceremonial and symbolic treasures nearly a century before the composition of *Beowulf* [in which] the first Danish king Scyld Scefing ... [of] the fifth century (Wrenn, 1970, pp. 4 & 3)

was borne on a funeral-ship out to sea.

With both Sutton Hoo, and *Beowulf* there is “a blending of pagan and Christian ceremony and sacrament ... [a] Christian use of essentially pagan material; ... conserving pagan tradition with progressive Christian adaptation ... an essential and most characteristic feature of Anglo-Saxon culture” (ibid, p. 4) and of both Cooper’s and Tolkien’s narratives as well. An example of this integration between the cultures occurs with Merriman’s warning to Will.

Through all this midwinter season [the Dark’s] power will be waxing very strong, with the Old Magic [pagan] able to keep it at a distance only on Christmas Eve [Christian]. And even past Christmas it will grow, not losing its high force until the Twelfth Day, the Twelfth Night - which once was Christmas Day [medieval Christian], and once before that, long ago, was the high winter festival of our old year [pagan]. (ibid, p. 57)

As a result of the mythic and legendary material used, *The Dark is Rising* series, the *Narnia* series, and Tolkien's *Middle-earth* collection all carry the notions of heroic quest adventure, which includes fierce battles against and final success over evil often symbolised by darkness. Both contain a degree of medieval chivalry, elements of wizardry and magic, and the unreality of fantasy. In the Lewis *Narnia* series, there is a distinction between the fantasy land, Narnia, and the real world, with a specific point of entry between them. But in Cooper's series, fantasy occurs as an extra dimension intermingling with the real world, enhancing and challenging the reader's perception of reality. "Cooper allows the intrusion of myth and magic into the fictionalised mundane world, and like Lewis, resurrects Logres, the spiritual Britain of the legendary King Arthur, to influence matters in the present day. (Filmer, 1990, p. 120) In Tolkien's fantasy works, the fabricated Middle-Earth *is* the real world in mythic time – an apparent contradiction accepted readily by readers as they 'willingly suspend their disbelief'.

Ideologically, these novels champion the fight for what is right and good, and the suppression or defeat of evil in all its forms - including personal behaviour. They use religion, Christian and pagan, as vehicles for their message of heroic endeavour in the face of one's fears. As backdrop for her tale, a part of the accepted reality of life, Cooper "is sceptical of traditional religion, but articulates hope in and through the caring and commitment of human beings emphasising [that] the power of love [is] greater even than the "High Magic"' (ibid, p. 120) Lewis allows religion to intrude into his narrative in allegorical form - Aslan as Christ figure - to carry notions of Christian redemption and salvation. As storyteller/poet, Tolkien set his own 'epic' in the *heroic pagan past*, pagan meaning not Christian rather than godless, with its own form of 'doom' overshadowing it. Yet he never allows his tale to portray *hopelessness*. "Hope without guarantees" (Tolkien, 1995, p. 237) is held out before his characters in order that they continue with their quests - both in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

J K Rowling:

I include the *Harry Potter* books by J K Rowling, as they are the latest fantasy novels that have woven their 'magic' upon me, due to the great plotting and language skill of the author as she dovetails and compounds the narrative complexities moving inexorably towards the concluding Book Seven. Initially, as with Tolkien's *The Hobbit*,

the language used is simple yet descriptive and evocative. But, also like Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, with each succeeding novel the language level increases in complexity, as the age of both Harry and the readers increases. Book One opens with the lines: "Mr and Mrs Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much." (Rowling, 1997, p.7) Book Six ends with:

His hand closed automatically around the fake Horcrux, but in spite of everything, in spite of the dark and twisting path he saw stretching ahead for himself, in spite of the final meeting with Voldemort he knew must come, whether in a month, in a year, or in ten, he felt his heart lift at the thought that there was still one last golden day of peace left to enjoy with Ron and Hermione. (Rowling, 2005, p. 607)

The plotline and narrative of Book One is detailed but straightforward, the characters diverse but manageable. The plotline and narrative of Book Two not only contains the details of the new tale, but also includes those of the preceding story. And so on throughout the series, each novel becoming more profound as each compounds upon the last, and the overall tale broadens, the character number and variety increases, the sentence structure becomes more complex, and the physical size of the volumes trebles – 216 pages in Book One and 600 pages in Book Six.. And this all done to a preconceived plan – the entire series was plotted out before Rowling began to write the first volume.

Her fantasy deals with ancient witchcraft set in our time in Britain, in a hidden wizardry world rarely interconnecting and then only by accident. The narrative follows the adventures of an eleven year old Harry as he begins his schooling at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry as a first year, then on through each succeeding year to the seventh and final year – this last book is not yet available to the public.

As well as wizards and witches, the books are peopled with giants, merfolk, house-elves, Cornish pixies, ghosts, dwarfs, leprechauns, and centaurs, plus both invented and mythical creatures such as giant spiders and snakes, dementors, werewolves, dragons, basilisks and hyppogryphs. Then there is the ever-increasing phenomena such as animated painting characters, enchanted cars and statues, Animagi (wizards who can transform themselves into animals and back again), Boggart shape-shifters, and so on, some of which are actively good, some of which are neutral, and some of which are

aligned with the dark side. Her use of imagery is sharp and imaginative, drawing the reader in to the secondary world with total belief in its validity.

Ideologically, this series of novels also deals with the fight for what is right and good, and the suppression or defeat of evil in all its forms. The evil surrounding her antagonist, Lord Voldemort, is palpable, and all seven narratives deal with Harry's quest to rid the world of him forever – a thing that he initially, naively, thinks he has accomplished. But with each re-appearance of Voldemort, each one stronger than the last, he realises that it will take a monumental and probably self-fatal struggle to eliminate him. The reader's knowledge and acceptance of this fact speaks volumes for the power of Rowling's narratives. Knowing that Harry will most likely die in the final book, has not deterred the readers from awaiting its publication avidly.

Many wizards have died at Voldemort's hands and those of his followers, the Death Eaters, leaving Harry as the only person to have ever survived an *Avada Kedavra* death curse cast by Voldemort. Her clever use names for characters, spells and Hogwarts' Houses, and herbal potions has made the book easily accessible to the wide demographic of her readers. The heteroglossia of the characters is detailed and specie-specific – an example is the 'normality' of the Dursley family, displayed as Mr Dursley prepared to leave for work:

At half-past eight, Mr Dursley picked up his briefcase, pecked Mrs Dursley on the cheek and tried to kiss Dudley goodbye but missed, because Dudley was now having a tantrum and throwing his cereal at the walls. 'Little tyke,' chortled Mr Dursley as he left the house. (Rowling, 1997, p. 8)

The discourse places the Dursleys into a specific stereo-type, with the language aimed squarely at the eleven year old reader. The humour of both situations and characters allows respite from the serious underlying quest. An example of this use of humour is the way the groundwork for the giant spider scenes in Book Two are set up with constant humorous references to Harry's friend, Ron's great aversion to spiders. Upon entering the Forbidden Forest to search for Aragog, Hagrid's pet spider, Ron's fear escalates, intentionally humourously broken momentarily for the reader by the appearance of his dad's enchanted car "standing, empty, in the middle of a circle of thick trees [which

then] moved slowly towards him, exactly like a large, turquoise dog greeting its owner.”
(Rowling, 1998, p. 230) When they finally find Aragog, Ron’s fears are justified.

Spiders. Not tiny spiders like those surging over the leaves below. Spiders the size of carthorses, eight-eyed, eight-legged, black, hairy, gigantic. And from the middle of the misty domed web, a spider the size of an small elephant emerged, very slowly. There was grey in the black of his body and legs, and each of the eyes on his ugly, pincerred head was milky white. He was blind. (ibid, pp. 204 & 205)

Even this description of terrifying spiders is undermined by Rowling’s use of humour- it is difficult to fear something that is likened to a carthorse or an elephant.

Like Tolkien, Rowling leaves the reader with some hope at the end of each novel, and even though the protagonist’s death seems inevitable, there is still a chance that he and his friends, Hermione and Ron, will survive, with the prospect of future endeavours as yet untackled to finish the series.

Postmodern Fantasy.

There are a number of other children’s writers whose works have opened doors to future writing possibilities for me. They showed me that fantasy can be written in a postmodern format - with tenses mixed up, opposing protagonists presented from the first-person perspective within the same work, fonts and layouts manipulated to create whatever visual ‘picture’ the author wants, and poetry used in place of prose if it suits the content better. These authors, and their respective novels, are: Robert Westall - *The Devil on the Road*, and *The Scarecrows*; Caroline Macdonald - *The Lake at the End of the World*; Margaret Mahy - *Dangerous Spaces*; Ruth Park - *Playing Beattie Bow*; and Aidan Chambers – *Breaktime*.

I am indebted to all the authors discussed for their textual discipline and freedom, their linguistic brilliance and simplicity, and their imaginative narrative scope.

Madam Pele : the novel.

Dylan Thomas's opening sentence in '*How to begin a Story*' makes an excellent point about story itself.

The way to begin a story depends not so much on what you mean by a story as upon the story itself and the public for which it is intended.
(Thomas, 1983, p. 38)

While my novel is primarily concerned with its content, it is also about its context, about the fact that it *is* a story/narrative. The fact that it seems to be two separate stories, the one told by the other, informing the background of one and the future of the other, running concurrently and interwoven, clearly telegraphs this. My intention was not to submerge and disguise the mechanics of the writing, but to leave them visible and available to the discerning and observant reader – while asking them to 'willingly suspend their disbelief' in the mythical content. I have drawn on a range of 'devices' or characteristics that the Modernists and Postmodernists formalised in the middle of the twentieth century.

Patrick Curry touched on this idea when, in his book *Defending Middle-earth - Tolkien: Myth & Modernity*, he pointed out:

Tolkien realized ... that ... [an] authentic myth ... has to be *re-created*, in the form of a contemporary literary myth or mythopoeic fiction. While the result still partakes of myth - how could it not, when it was in his metaphysical bones? - it also includes sufficient elements of the realistic and secular novel to provide access to modern readers, and thus to enable 'these old things' to survive in a hostile literary milieu. (Curry, 1997, p. 126)

This in effect is what I have attempted to do – *recreate an authentic myth into a contemporary literary myth including sufficient elements of the realistic novel to provide access to modern readers.*

Madam Pele - Outline.

Madam Pele, the Goddess of the volcano and its lava, is embodied in every piece and form the lava takes. She is in the huge lava flows, the small pumice stones and the black sand of the beaches. They cannot be removed from her Hawaiian islands without incurring her wrath - resulting in bad luck for those who remove the lava.

Diane and Paul on a visit to Hawaii take home a small lava rock as one of their mementos. As a result, Madam Pele's spirit is transported to Australia where it gradually manifests itself. Initially felt only as an uneasiness, it grows until the goddess herself takes form - embodied both as an ugly malevolent old hag to those who fear the lava rock, and as a beautiful young Hawaiian girl to Diane who loves her rock and the Hawaii it evokes for her.

Diane finds herself loving Madam Pele with a passion that brooks no intrusion from others. Meanwhile Diane and Paul's relationship begins to disintegrate. Initially undermined by the power of the rock's influence, this rapidly collapses with the manifestations in physical forms of Madam Pele. Madam Pele is to lava what Sauron was to the Ring. And that is how she manifests - a temptress to Diane and an evil monster to others. She arouses ill-feeling, engenders passion and jealousy, causes extreme fear. Her manifestation will be ethereal rather than solid, yet create a lust in Diane. Initially she will appear to Paul as the beautiful maiden in an attempt to seduce him and create jealousy in Diane, but he will see through this form to the hag beneath. She affects Diane's behaviour, influences her thoughts and actions, alienating her from all those around her, including Paul who is afraid and repulsed not only by the old hag he sees, but also by Diane's apparent infatuation and desire for her.

As the animosity of the rock intrudes, people at work become upset and alienated, so that while Diane still performs her job efficiently the rest of the company experiences bad luck. Dissension amongst Diane's fellow-employees increases as Madam Pele's malevolence permeates the workplace, intensifying the usual office gossip into vindictive back-stabbing. As Madam Pele's frustration turns to rage and vengeance, she taps subterranean magma in King's Park, causing an eruption and lava flow to cascade down to the Swan River destroying much of the park and the city below. It becomes apparent that for the safety of all inhabitants of Perth and the outlying areas, Diane must return the rock to Hawaii. She refuses to mail it, and will only return it if able to do so in person. Finally she, Madam Pele and a reluctant Paul fly back to Hawaii to return the rock to the lava fields. As suddenly as it appeared, the lava subsides, returning to its subterranean caverns, leaving a scarred city with an apparently extinct crater in King's Park. Or is it only dormant?

Interspersed with this story, of accelerating tension and disintegration of relationships and work, is the travelogue story of Diane and Paul's first holiday visit to Hawaii. This comprises four sections - one for each island they visit - Oahu, Hawai'i, Kauai, and Maui. They embark on Circle Island Tours, travelling in small buses with tourists from around the world (though predominantly American) to see and learn as much as possible about the respective islands. From their drivers/tour guides they learn of the history, both social and geographical, of Hawaii, including land rights, homelessness, Pearl Harbour bombing, and what constitutes a (Polynesian) Hawai'ian. Tourists' behaviour which signals their attitudes, sensitivity and lack thereof, toward Hawaii and Hawaiians is also exposed during these tours. This is seen strongly during the Luau segment.

The travelogue gradually builds up a background to Diane and Paul's relationship, to the obtaining of the rock, and to her obsession with Hawaii. As the beauty of the island is exposed, the mythology infused, and the atmosphere both climatic and emotional is explored, her reasons for loving Hawaii become apparent. These are disturbed only by unnerving flashes of 'disastrous events' and her unsettling meetings with Madam Pele, while on The Big Island.

Paul settles into 'holiday mode' and enjoys Hawaii as a tourist, retaining his grasp of the reality that awaits him when he flies back to Perth. But Diane feels as if she has 'come home', that she always belonged to Hawaii, and detests the thought of the approaching return. Hawaii is her reality. Through her thoughts can be seen the magical influence of the islands, gradually consuming her, becoming obsession. This is offset by Paul's negative 'realist' attitude which is not enough to penetrate the romantic scenario she attaches to their relationship.

Through Diane's responses to the sensual influences of Hawaii - its landscape, its colour, its fragrance, its smiling people, its music, its pervasive mythology and, underlying all these, the volcanic threat bubbling and simmering below the thin crust - will develop a reader-knowledge of what comprises the island chain, and its attractions. Thus the travelogue works on three levels - as superficial background to the present Perth story, as an exposition of the complexities of Hawaiian life past and present, and as a window to the legends of Madam Pele.

The importance of Madam Pele.

I intended Madam Pele to be a major character within this tale, with her legends - concerning her flight from and conflict with her sister, Na Maka o Kaha'i, Goddess of the sea, her love for a mortal prince, and her sled race with another prince - being exposed intermittently in the 'travelogue'; while her presence in the 'present' shows her as a main player in the overall story. Thus she is seen from within her own story via the legends, and outside it via her intrusion into Di and Paul's world, and also via the beliefs of the Hawai'ian people, such as the tour drivers and the rangers from the Volcanoes National Park to whom she is a 'real' entity.

Postmodern characteristics.

I covered as many of these characteristics as possible within my novel, without the work appearing to be a mere exercise in devices. While the reader will be aware of the movement from second to third person for the same character, and of course first person for dialogue, they will, I hope, understand that it signposts a different point in time and place and will quickly find it natural. Thus, by moving beyond Modernism and Postmodernism, I challenged the straightforward method of narration without detracting from the narrative itself. Being presumptuous, I threw away the literary rule book (*narrative boundary-breaking*), used tenses and perspectives of my own choosing, and used poetic introductions to sections within the 'travelogue', and free verse for the sexual scenes – as a vehicle for passion, I find the economy of verse intensifies the context by focussing the content. I treated the text as my playground and I controlled the games I played.

I have retreated, a device at a time, until I reached the point where the narrative was comfortable with those used.

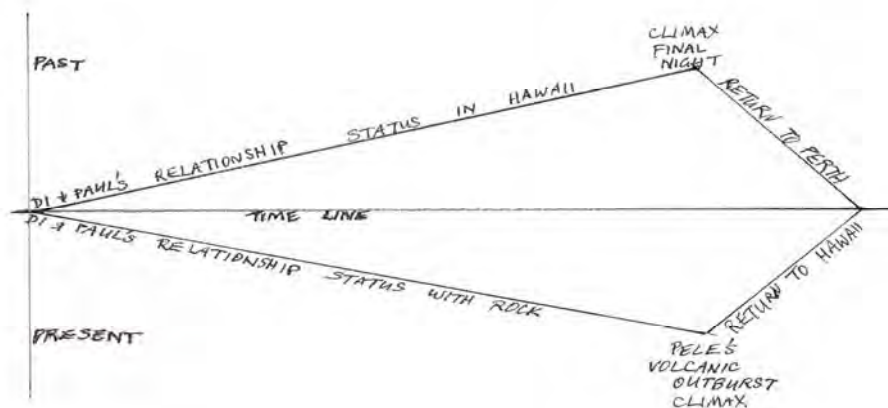
Geometric plotline.

From the outset I had a structural image in my mind regarding the plotting of *Madam Pele*. I decided to quarter the 'Travelogue' text into the four islands, as on a

pie chart. I then inserted slices of present into the pie between the quarters, with a prologue and epilogue forming the slice between the first and last quarter. This took care of the difficult undertaking of splitting the two narratives into interweaving portions.

This planned juxtaposition of the two sections – the past and the present - of the novel, had an additional function that could be visualised geometrically. The emotional movements of the plotlines mirrored each other within the text, so that simultaneously they built without intersecting to their separate climaxes, but at opposite ends of the emotional scale. After this culmination they finally reconnected at normality for the conclusion.

This process (see diagram below) could be visualised as two lopsided triangles, representing the Past and the Present, stacked with their longest sides, representing their individual time lines, together. The longer of the two remaining sides of the top triangle represented the blossoming relationship between the two protagonists, Diane and Paul, during their holiday in Hawaii in the past, peaking just prior to their departure from the islands. The bottom triangle, with its longer remaining side pointing down, represented the deterioration of their relationship in the present caused by the presence of the lava rock and ultimately of Madam Pele, reaching its lowest point as she wreaks her vengeance on Perth. The very short sides of the triangles plunge back to intersect at the conclusion.



Devices.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word ‘device’ means “1. a thing that is made or used for a particular purpose; 2. a plan or scheme for achieving something; and [that the expression] ‘leave a person to his own devices’ means to leave him to do as he wishes without help or advice.” (Hawkins, 1979, p. 169) As mentioned, in my novel I have made use of writing devices to facilitate the readability of the text. By using this term ‘devices’ I am indicating my authorial intention behind the often visible techniques used to achieve unification of content and context.

Dialogue.

A penchant of mine, I have kept the work ‘dialogue driven’, especially in the present sections. This allows the reader to slowly build up their own image of the various characters from what they say and how they react to what is said to them – a characteristic of script-writing. I have used a certain amount of interior monologue in both the present and the past to facilitate this character construction further, by exposing the main character’s ‘inner dialogue’. A twist to this is that as the reader is constructing his/her understanding of Diane, she (Diane) is in fact doing likewise - constructing her own character from other people’s views of her. This incorporates Bakhtin’s ideas of ‘the self’ as being a composite of other’s views.

The using of dialogue to tell the story is characteristic of many of the authors, Tim Winton, P G Wodehouse, and Dylan Thomas in particular, who I have chosen as influential to my style of writing. A strong example of this style development’s origin, can be found in such works as *Under Milkwood* and *Holiday Memories* by Dylan Thomas where the dialogue tells so much.

And if you could have listened at some of the open doors of some of the houses in the street you might have heard:

‘Uncle Owen says he can’t find the bottle-opener . . .’

‘Has he looked under the hallstand?’

‘Willy’s cut his finger . . .’

‘Got your spade?’

‘If somebody doesn’t kill that dog . . .’

‘Uncle Owen says why should the bottle-opener be under the hallstand?’

‘Never again, never again . . .’

‘I know I put the pepper somewhere . . .’

‘Willy’s bleeding . . .’

'Look, there's a bootlace in my bucket . . .'
'Oh, come *on*, come on . . .'
'Let's have a look at the bootlace in your bucket . . .'
'If I lay my hands on that dog . . .'
'Uncle Owen's found the bottle-opener . . .'
'Willy's bleeding over the cheese . . .'
And the trams that hissed like ganders took us all to the beautiful beach.
(Thomas, 1983, p. 31)

This use of evocative yet economical dialogue/oral language within prose, makes for a fast moving piece that can be read quickly, delivering myriad snippets of information, as essential parts of the plot, to the reader. He/she does not get bogged down in lengthy passages of background descriptions and data.

Non-essential descriptions.

Unless absolutely essential to the reader perception and understanding, lengthy passages of descriptions and miscellaneous details were in fact not supplied by me either. I had no wish to bog my narrative down with unnecessary complexities. For example, I did not and still don't consider it at all important where Diane and Paul worked - what the company did, and what they do personally within it, except for the fact that it involved paper work of some sort and that it was done in a large office complex. It could have been any office complex anywhere in Perth (well in any city actually, but I designated Perth as the location). It was a generic office, containing offices, lunchrooms, toilets, photocopying rooms, computer terminals, and staff both male and female, doing both white and blue collar tasks.

This non-disclosure of unessentials applied to all surnames, and to landscape and character descriptions that had no bearing on the movement or development of the plot. For example, a description of the tour guide, Garth, as a huge Hawaiian man, or of the American tourists who were dripping with jewellery and so big that they were unable to sit on the bus seat together, had a direct bearing on the plot. But other character physical descriptions were kept to a minimum.

Although I could have expanded upon these personal details, back stories, and experiences of the various characters, both major and minor, I found that the narrative flowed naturally when I exercised restraint, and concentrated on the economy of dialogue and action to create the necessary impetus. My narrative is simple, and my style my own

– although greatly influenced by the previously mentioned authors, I was in no way writing another *Lord of the Rings*.

Patterns.

By extracting a sentence from the first chapter, to use, often with a different meaning, to commence the following chapter, and so on chapter by chapter; I set up two sets of linking patterns for the two distinct parts of the narrative - the Hawaiian chapters and the Present chapters each had their own ‘chain of starters’. These pattern chains contributed to the sense of continuity and familiarity, while physically linking the chapters together.

Voices.

While initially disconcerting, the use of second person for Diane, and second person plural for her and Paul, in the ‘travelogue’ section of the novel, becomes easier and more familiar as the reader progresses and gradually engages with the characters and their journey. The reader finds him/herself placed in a unique position, partly watching and partly involved as the protagonist. Intentionally written to highlight this ambiguity within an omniscient narration, I wanted the possibility that the narrator could be Diane, or the reader, or both, or even Madam Pele to signpost this narrative as ‘story’. Confronted with its narrative nature, and in order to discover the details, the reader must accept his/her own role in its telling.

The ‘travelogue’ reads as an account of the Hawaiian holiday, as if told by an outsider watching Diane and Paul as they progress from island to island, yet seeming to participate in all that they do from within. The ‘inner monologues’ contribute to this impression of being a part of Diane and her journey. If I had used first person, the ‘travelogue’ would have been a diary, written by Diane, noting locations visited, tours they took, items bought, restaurants eaten in, pamphlets collected, revealing feelings and thoughts she had about Hawaii, and about Paul and their relationship. But a diary is the expected format, and I wanted to do the unexpected. I like the way the second person places the narrative, and the way it places it firmly *as* a narrative told to the reader, while drawing the him/her into an almost voyeuristic position.

By creating the narrative as a musing, a reminiscence of her Hawaiian holiday as told by Diane to herself while looking at the photographs in her album, I further

developed this second person perspective. These chapters acted as the textual segue from present to past on each occasion, as do the accompanying photographs, taking with them Diane's thoughts using second person.

Active Verbs.

I have used active verbs when referring to the inanimate lava rock in order to create a sense of unease and uncertainty, to give it animation. For example, the first time we see the rock I describe it thus: 'Humped on her desk the little black lava rock menaced the office.' I go on to talk about it as 'hover[ing] anxiously on the brink {of the mantle}, peering over at the tiled hearth below' and later still as 'squatt[ing] grumpily in the In-tray' and 'burrowing into the potting mix' of the pot plant. Thus, when this is followed by the mention of a 'feeling of presence', then a 'glimpse of something out of the corner of [the] eye', and finally by Madam Pele manifesting from the rock, there is no jarring of the plot or unexpected shock for the reader. It helps to create a natural flow-on throughout the storyline of escalating fantasy.

Free verse.

Within the 'Travelogue' narrative, I led the reader into the holiday, via the poem, *Arrival*, and withdrew them at the end via the poem, *Departure*, in matching formats. The visual layout of the free verse is a vital part of its overall message, and played a role in the poetic snippets heading most chapters - information specific for each island visited. Because I like the way that free verse pinpoints the passions while allowing freedom of expression and format, I also used it for all sex scenes that took place during their holiday - and for the sex scene that failed to take place, as the antagonism developed between them in the 'Present' narrative.

Inserts.

To add to the postmodernism of the work, I have inserted email and chat-room formats to provide snippets of plot information, and a volcano flyer from the Hawaiian National Park Bureau giving details of Madam Pele and Kilauea volcano. I have included maps of the Hawaiian islands - four individual maps at the start of each island's section showing the places visited, and an overall map of the islands as a frontispiece - to assist with the setting locations. I intend to use actual photos with accompanying poem snippets beside or below them as headings for the 'Travelogue' section. This will allow

the reader to see exactly what Diane is looking at as she browses through her photograph album, taking the reader with her into her journey. I feel that these devices will enhance the sense of the 'Travelogue'.

'Travelogue' nature.

I believe it is important to show the islands as seen by Diane, a tourist smitten by their beauty, using each as a vehicle for the other. In other words, while describing the landscape, the physical reality of the islands, thus presenting them to the reader as if the latter were travelling through them, by using Diane as the vehicle for these descriptions, her personal story is revealed. So in that sense, the 'travelogue' nature of the narrative is also a device.

Conclusion.

I hope I have demonstrated convincingly my reasons for writing my novel, *Madam Pele*, as a contemporary mythical fantasy novel – contemporary because I love the freedom of having no rules, allowing me to mix tenses, points of view (2nd and 3rd person), verse with prose, photographs and pamphlets, emails and online chat texts, and chapter patterning to form an individual novel layout; mythical because for years I have been drawn to the development of such works, especially the way they allow both reader and writer to immerse themselves in the world of imagination while still benefiting from the euphoria that the triumph of good over evil provides; and fantasy because that allows the inclusion of a tremendous variety of settings, experiences, and narrative topics for the reader and writer now living in the 21st century.

While not of an epic nature, my novel stands up as a fantasy – the implausible becoming reality with the Pele myth incorporated into the contemporary world.

Appendix – A.

Topic: **Discuss *The Riders* as an example of a postmodern text.**

If listed, postmodern characteristics that apply to texts would read as follows: multiple narratives, different points-of-view, plurality of meaning, reader response, reader participation, dark themes, fractured world, open-ended texts, wide variety of and mixed genre, boundary breaking, gaps, metafiction, social criticism, and the replacement of marginalised groups into texts.

D Lewis, in 'The Constructedness of Texts', after describing how "[m]etafiction ... refus[es] to take for granted how stories should be told and thus implicitly comment[s] upon the nature of fiction itself" (Lewis, 1990, p.132), continues to state that there are three main features of postmodernism - "narrative *boundary-breaking* or 'slippage', *excess*, and *indeterminacy*." (ibid, p. 133). Geoff Moss, in 'Metafiction, Illustration, and the Poetics' propounds that:

postmodernism pictures a subjective, relativistic world
[and] is a process, perpetually in construction, per-
petually contradictory, perpetually open to change, ...
where the self is decentred ...[and there is] a plurality
of discourses. (Moss, 1992, pp. 54-55)

I believe that a great number of these attributes can be found in Tim Winton's novel, *The Riders*. With an antihero, Scully, who behaves melodramatically, and moves from controlled happiness to extreme depression, from respectability to degradation, at its centre, *The Riders* inexorably evolves from realist to postmodern fiction.

Refusing to take for granted how stories should be told, with chapter eleven Winton turned the ordinary into the extraordinary, moving away from the realism that the first ten chapters promise, into a post-modern text - multi-layered like an onion, to be peeled back until the bitter bit in the middle, the end of Scully's quest, was reached.

He introduced a fantasy genre, dark themes, into the realist narrative with his descriptions of the riders at the castle keep. Their role in the narrative is debatable, being a form of *indeterminacy* and having plurality of meanings - psychological, psychical, symbolic, or structural. Do they represent Scully's internal psychological journey towards wholeness? Are they psychic phenomena derived from the antiquity of the Celtic myth? Do they symbolize his unyielding wait for Jennifer and for an answer to her disappearance? Are they narrative devices, bracketing the search for his wife from the rest of the text?

Although realist texts, of singular genre, often contain dream sequences, the surreal nature of those frequently scattered throughout *The Riders* adds another fantasy element to the mixing of genre. The disappearance of Jennifer, the nature of Scully's search, and Alex's death add the mystery genre to the mix. There is also an implied travel diary as Scully's physical journey is documented across the continent, showing the reality of the street life of the various countries visited, rather than the tourist spots

Winton wrote the entire text in the third person, as an omni-scient narrator who relates the action from various character's viewpoints, opening their feelings and thoughts to the scrutiny of the reader. He moves from one character's position to another, giving the impression that there are many narrators, while in actuality there are many voices, viewpoints, but only one narrator. The uncertainty this creates, the layering of the narratorial voices, is postmodern.

There are a few metafictional moments, narratorial boundary-breaking, that cause reader confusion, destabilising the suspension of disbelief that accompanies the reading of fiction. One occurred on the Greek island, while Scully and Billie, *en route* to visit Alex, trekked through villages. As they passed through one, Billie stopped to listen to classroom chanting. "[Scully] let her stay till she'd had enough. He said nothing. What could you say?" (Winton, 1994, p.144) To remain conventional it should have read: 'What could he say?' The omniscient narrator was describing actions and musings by Scully, and actions by Billie in third person particular. Directed at the reader, this second person device not only asks them to agree with Scully, but also draws their attention to the fact that it is a work of fiction, a book, that they are reading.

The unreliability of the dominating narratorial voice, Scully's, is another postmodern device. An optimist, his naive views of people were shattered all through the book - he seemed to know less and less about his own past as the quest for his wife progressed.

So many characters in the novel seemed to know more about her disappearance than Scully, but unlike in a realist novel where eventually he would be permitted to know, these answers were withheld from him. As he pursued those with knowledge of Jennifer, he allowed himself to be fobbed off with words, foiled by spite, turned aside by disdain, rather than give in to aggression to gain the required information. Until Amsterdam. There his explosion into drunken violence causes the reader to question the reliability of his calm quiet kind character traits, and wonder if Marianne was right to ask him:

‘Did you beat her much, Scully? Were you rough in bed, were you ‘ard on her, Scully?’ ‘You are a basher, aren’t you, Scully?’ (ibid, p. 281)

The questioning of which is plot and which is subplot is also postmodern. The discovery that the actual primary plot is Scully’s self-examination to ‘find himself’, his internal journey, rather than the apparent primary plot of the frustrating search for his wife, creates confusion as the narrative unfolds. Realist novels have a plot, with subplots intertwined, comprising a beginning, a middle, and an end which is conclusive, providing answers to most if not all questions raised in the text - providing a sense of closure. *The Riders* does not do this.

Scully’s frustrations are shared by the reader, who is constantly asking “Why doesn’t he go to the police? Why won’t he ask the right questions? Why? Why? Why?” throughout the narrative. It is clearly an open-ended text, showing a fractured world, evoking reader response and participation. Scully’s internal journey, at the end of which his search was over - what he sought was unequivocally dead, as dead as the riders at the castle keep - is secondary in the eyes of the reader, who like Scully, just wants to *know*. It seems Tim Winton prefers not to divulge the answers, not to tie up the loose threads. Active readers must make up their own minds, reach their own conclusions, find closure where they can. This lack of authorial closure is postmodern.

The changing of tenses from past to present, usually to change narratorial voice position, at intervals throughout the text, is another postmodern device used in *The Riders*. While the bulk of the narrative is written in past tense, the present tense chapters seem to serve the following function: 5 offers Jimmy Brereton’s views of the newcomers to the Bothy; 12 shows Billie in the plane; 15 introduces Arthur Lipp and his views of the Australians; 19 Alex Moore’s views; 35 Peter Kenneally’s concerns for Scully; 38 Jennifer (?); and 47 Irma’s reaction to being deserted by Scully with her cash. Seven different character’s viewpoints are foregrounded in present tense, providing corroborative and additional information to the narrative.

There are two odd chapters in present tense describing landscapes - 32 Australia (?); and 53 the Bothy and castle in Ireland. The question whether it *is* Australia engages the reader in active participation with the text, and their placement, their recognition of the vivid descriptions could depend upon their nationality.

In chapter 31, another oddity occurs - Winton intermingles past and present tenses in verb and participle form, during the revelation of Billie’s worries:

Billie [tried] to think of something good, something she could remember that wouldn’t make her afraid to remember. Past the cloud. The white neck she saw....Beautiful skin. The veins as she sits down. Skin blue with veins. Like marble. And talking now, mouth moving tightly. Cheeks stretched. Hair perfect. But the words lost in the roar, the huge stadium sound in Billie’s ears as the cloud comes down, like smoke down the aisle, rolling across them, blotting the war memorial look of her mother in blinding quiet. (ibid, p. 234)(My underlining)

This long quotation shows not only Winton’s clever, unorthodox, post-modern verb usage to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity, but also his wonderful imaginative descriptive language.

The gap in the narrative, *indeterminacy*, is rarely temporal or spatial. Predominantly, it is textual - the reader, given snippets of information about the characters, must again actively participate with the text to decide who they are, where they fit in the story, and their psychological, psychical, or practical effect on Scully and his quests for Jennifer, an answer, and himself - a plurality of meanings. An example of this gap, in the paragraphic chapter 38, describes a woman watching others in the Rue de Rivoli - presumably Jennifer watching Scully and Billie; or is it Irma, or Marianne, or Dominique?

She slips back into the bleak doorway to let them pass

blindly by without feeling the heat of her love. She knows where they are going. She knows everything there is to know about them she watches her life limp by ... while she decides how far to follow, wondering when enough is enough, asking herself why it hurts to need so badly. (ibid, p. 271)

The reader is required to decide whether to believe that Jennifer, torn between being free to pursue her ambitions and her love for Billie and Scully, regretted her actions. At this stage in the narrative, reader response to Jennifer, based on individual experience and personal bias, influences hopes and desires for a successful ending to the quest.

Relying on reader's foreknowledge of the 'other' text referred to, intertextuality occurs in this novel between the hunchback, Quasimodo, in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Scully - both deformed physically, misunderstood because of it, yet kind with good hearts - marginalised figures brought to the centre of the narrative. Billie, the medium for this link, recognized it herself as they travelled by boat from Greece to Italy: "He was like the hunchback, Scully. Not very pretty. Sometimes he wasn't very smart. But his heart was good (ibid, p. 210); and again in Amsterdam: "Billie saw him come out handcuffed and bellowing like the Hunchback on the Feast of Fools". (ibid, p. 344) Constant references are made throughout the text about Notre Dame, initially as a wonderful place from which you could see for miles, and where birds dwelt. Gradually the references change. As Billie left Paris her romantic notions of Notre Dame disintegrated as she reflected on the city's reality:

Paris was pretty on top and hollow underneath. Underground everyone was dirty and tired and lost. They weren't going anywhere. They were just waiting for the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame, the whole town, to fall in on them. (ibid, p. 322)

While the language of Winton is evocative, with descriptions that stun, both metaphorically: "Night warped by." (ibid, p. 235) and as truisms: "The sea sucked and grabbed and hissed and snatched" (ibid, p.188), the actions of his characters are excessive, surreal, a little incredible. There is a 'soapie' quality surrounding *The Riders* - the squeezing in of *all* possibilities into the one narrative which appears to be "perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change" (Moss, 1992, p. 55) - unsettling to the reader as surreal art is to the viewer. In other words, postmodern.

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Appendix – B.

BACHELOR OF ARTS HONOURS THESIS

Topic: The hybrid world of J R R Tolkien's fiction: a study of The Lord of the Rings and other texts in the light of Mikhail Bakhtin's essay 'Epic and Novel'.

J R R Tolkien was a renowned medievalist, linguist, and professor at both Leeds and Oxford universities during his lifetime. His knowledge of ancient languages, myths and legends is legendary itself. The fact that he managed to write and compile such an enormous quantity of creative works while still attending to the requirements of the universities is remarkable. As Tolkien said in a letter to Hugh Brogan, 31 October 1948, in reference to his difficulty in getting on with his 'Hobbit sequel': "This university business of earning one's living by teaching, delivering philological lectures, and daily attendance at 'boards' and other talk-meetings, interferes sadly with serious work." (Tolkien, 1995, p. 131)

Throughout his prolific letters, always long and detailed, runs the theme of the constant demands - including dreaded weeks of examination setting and marking, his poor health, his wife's poor health, his money worries, and the continual domestic tasks (like regularly digging the fowl house out of the snow) - on his precious time. "Yesterday 2 lectures, re-drafting findings of Committee on Emergency Exams . . . and then a great event: an evening Inklings a most amusing and highly contentious evening". (ibid, p. 103) The Inklings was a literary circle of like-minded male authors which met regularly in a local bar to read their works-in-progress to each other for critical input. It was one of Tolkien's few pleasures in which he indulged when duty allowed - one vital to the ultimate completion of The Hobbit, and The Lord of the Rings. As I said, remarkable to have written as much as he did - considering that only now, via the auspices of his son Christopher and friend Humphrey Carpenter, has the quantity of material written been made public.

A great deal has been written about J R R Tolkien. There have been biographies, essays and articles both positive and negative about his works individually and collectively, psychologically and theologically, mythically and morally, philologically and narratively. These works discuss the influences on him, that led him to develop a 'secondary' world with languages, and mythical history, and discuss his borrowing from other myths and languages of the 'primary' world that he used to give his 'secondary' world credibility. From time to time I may allude to this borrowing from mythic, linguistic and Biblical sources that he used to achieve his "really long story" (LOR, p. 10) - but I believe it is hardly necessary to cover them in this work. While the opinions are as diverse as they are similar, the fact of Tolkien's influence on 'story' and on language is certain.

His lecture/essay Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics, is recognised as the definitive text on the Beowulf tale. His lecture/essay 'On Fairy Stories' is an established respected text for those studying fantasy, or narrative. His coining of the word *eucatastrophe* to mean the burst of joy experienced by a reader confronting a happy ending, "the sudden happy turn in a story which pierces you with a joy that brings tears (which [he] argued it is the highest function of fairy-stories to produce)" (Tolkien, 1995, p. 100) can apply to the same experience felt by movie-watchers, or even sporting achievements of personal bests. While Samuel Taylor Coleridge gave the working definition of *imagination*, Tolkien expanded on it to incorporate the creation of a 'secondary world' containing the realities of the 'primary world' enhanced by the supernatural - where 'super' is used as an intensifier, and the 'primary world' is, of course, our own world in our own time.

Ursula Le Guin describes *imagination* in this way:

Imagery takes place in "the imagination", which I take to be the meeting place of the thinking mind with the sensing body. What is imagined isn't physically real, but it *feels as if it were*: the reader sees or hears or feels what goes on in the story, is drawn into it, exists in it, among its images, in the imagination (the reader's? the writer's?) while reading." (Le Guin, 1992, p. 196)

This aligns with Tolkien's approach to his 'secondary world' creation - it was important to him that while the world portrayed was set in Epic times his readers could still relate to his characters, and to the events and problems assailing them. Their belief in what they read was paramount if the mythology was to be understood and hopefully absorbed.

Epic and Novel

The Russian critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, a contemporary of Tolkien, but to my knowledge unknown each to the other, wrote an essay *'Epic and Novel'* in which he discussed the evolution of the novel, and his detailed views on the difference between and total incompatibility of the Epic genre and the Novel genre. While reading this essay, I found myself murmuring throughout the Epic section: "Tolkien does this." Yet, when I read the Novel section, I found that I continued to murmur: "Tolkien does this too." This then made a nonsense of the idea that the Epic and Novel were incompatible as Bakhtin proposed.

According to him the Epic genre is completed, impersonal, inaccessible:

We speak of the epic as a genre that has come down to us already well defined and real. ... it is already completely finished, a congealed and half-moribund genre. Its completedness, its consistency and its absolute lack of artistic naivete bespeak its old age as a genre and its lengthy past. (Bakhtin, p. 14)

whereas, within the Novel genre, he believed that:

novels become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the "novelistic" layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-parody and finally - this is the most important thing - the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality (the opened present). (ibid, pp. 6-7)

I wish to establish how Tolkien, to relate the action taking place, not only used this rigid format of the Epic, but also used the flexible format of the Novel - with its shift in the temporal centre, where the past is the past as seen by those in the present, and characters are built up from other character's views of them. Tolkien applied these features to his Epic novels, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but not to *The Silmarillion*. The former novels let the reader in to experience the ordeals and joys of the characters as they do; the latter Epic tells the tale, unfolds the events as *fait accompli* to the reader - the interaction is minimal.

According to Bakhtin:

In an era when the novel reigns supreme, almost all the remaining genres [including Epic] are to a greater or lesser extent "novelized" Those genres that stubbornly preserve their old canonic nature begin to appear stylized a stylization taken to the point of parody. (ibid, pp. 5-6)

In other words he believed that an Epic work was inflexible and stylized - with stereotypical heroic characters set in a fixed time slot - and thus no longer pertinent to the world of the Novel. It can be deduced therefore that he believed that any attempt to utilise the Epic genre within the Novel genre would result only in parody, an Epic mockery. But with no evidence of satire, Tolkien used these Epic genre characteristics to advantage, not only juxtaposing them beside the Novel genre devices within his work, but having them actively collaborate to create a **hybrid** genre of *mythical fantasy* in which both blended within the genre of Novel to tell the tale.

Patrick Curry touched on this idea when, in his book *Defending Middle-earth - Tolkien: Myth & Modernity*, he pointed out:

Tolkien realized ... that ... [an] authentic myth has to be *re-created*, in the form of a contemporary literary myth or mythopoeic fiction. While the result still partakes of myth - how could it not, when it was in his metaphysical bones? - it also includes sufficient elements of the realistic and secular novel to provide access to modern readers, and thus to enable 'these old things' to survive in a hostile literary milieu. (Curry, 1997, p. 126)

But he passed over this statement on to discussion of the notion of 'Faerie', Loss, and Consolation. However, I believe that it indicates that I am not alone in my perception of this **hybridity** between Epic and Novel.

Tolkien incorporated these (Bakhtin's) ideas of Epic and Novel genres to his advantage. Instead of seeing them in opposition, Tolkien used the Novel format to expand the traditional, static Epic into something personal, flexible, and dependent upon the individual choice of his characters. While being drawn into a familiar relationship with its characters, the reader is made aware of the epic nature of the tale - its absolute distance, and subsequently its overall unchangeable quality. In order to make his Epic become personal, he utilised devices of the Novel genre within its creation. By his use of humour, and of flawed heroic characters - those exhibiting ignoble 'human' traits such as ambition, greed, and failure as well as the usual 'heroic' traits of bravery, stoicism, and persistence in the face of adversity - Tolkien placed his tale on familiar ground, enabling the reader to draw close to his Epic. It is an Epic Novel. Contrary to Bakhtin's notions of the incompatibility of the novel with its predecessors, I believe that this is

not necessarily a contradiction of terms - rather a progression into a new category, a new genre: Fantasy. Tolkien created his secondary **hybrid** world in which both genres, Epic and Novel, coexist.

Authenticating Epic Devices

Epic within an Epic

Tolkien used the Epic genre as a base for his work.

The epic as a genre ... may be characterized by three constitutive features: (1) a national epic past - ... the “absolute past” - serves as the subject for the epic; (2) national tradition (not personal experience and the free thought that grows out of it) serves as the source for the epic; (3) and absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from the time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives. (Bakhtin, p. 13) (my underlining)

Tolkien used an Epic within his Epic - *Silmarillion* tales and poems within his *Lord of the Rings* - allowing the narrative verse of the heroes of the earlier Ages to provide an epic past to authenticate his epic present; to help create the notion of it “already [being] well defined and real completely finished, a congealed and half-moribund genre [with i]ts completedness, its consistency and ... its lengthy past.” (ibid, p. 14) Tolkien placed his Epic ‘secondary’ world into a position as something complete, “impossible to change, to re-think, to re-evaluate. It is completed, conclusive, and immutable, as a fact, an idea and a value.” (ibid, p. 17) At the end of the Second Age the physical world did change, with the flooding and sinking of the island, Numenor, and the removal of the Forbidden Lands of Valinor and Erresea to beyond the realm of Middle-earth, which became a sphere. But the history of the era was set, unchangeable - as if its inhabitants trod preordained paths.

According to Bakhtin

The epic is indifferent to formal beginnings and can remain incomplete (that is, where it concludes is almost arbitrary). The absolute past is closed and completed in the whole as well as in any of its parts. It is, therefore, possible to take any part and offer it as the whole. One cannot embrace, in a single epic, the entire world of the absolute past ... - to do so would mean a retelling of the whole of national tradition, and it is sufficiently difficult to embrace even a significant portion of it. ... [T]he structure of the whole is repeated in each part, and each part is complete and circular like the whole. One may begin the story at almost any moment, and finish at almost any moment. (ibid, p. 31)

In light of his total mythical output on Middle-earth, Tolkien told the Ring tale lifted from the cycle of the epic past. He could have told any other tale from this past in detail if he chose - in fact of course, he did tell the Tale of Beren and Luthien in verse form, plus others before and after the Ring tale superficially (some in *The Silmarillion* and some in the Appendices in the one volume paperback edition of *The Lord of the Rings*) - and given a longer life perhaps he may have. His major objective after the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* was to collate *The Silmarillion* into a publishable form - a task that proved too difficult for Tolkien. “His mythology was a living thing, always changing and growing. But some ideas came to him early and changed little over the years.” (Hammond & Scull, 1995, p. 61) Only his presentation of them changed as he wrote and re-wrote the same tales, striving for perfection.

In his work, *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien laid out in Epic form the events of the creation of Middle-earth, its subsequent population, and its wars featuring its heroes and villains - always clearly cut, good versus evil. This work conforms to the more superficial Epic structure, where the hero and his fate are pre-ordained - he cannot escape his fate. According to Bakhtin:

In the epic, characters are bounded, pre-formed, individualized by their various situations and destinies, but not by varying “truths”. Not even the gods are separated from men by a special truth: they have the same language, they all share the same world view, the same fate, the same extravagant externalization. (Bakhtin, p. 35)

This is particularly true of *The Silmarillion* where all characters regardless of race, morals, skills, or heirarchical position in the reality of Middle-earth, share these attributes.

Compiled for publication from Tolkien’s copious manuscripts by his son Christopher, *The Silmarillion* reads in the main as a mythical history text. This established the mythology of Middle-earth - “a ‘monotheistic but “sub-creational” mythology”” (Tolkien, 1995, p. 235) - as seen in the tales of a later Age, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, told in narrative verse form as entertainment, or as points of clarification, for example, by differing protagonists at the Council of Elrond held in Rivendell between the

Elves, Dunedain, Men, Dwarves and Hobbits. In this chapter, *'The Council of Elrond'*, Tolkien laid out the history of each race and of their involvement in the history of the One Ring that Bilbo found in *The Hobbit*, and that Frodo carried. With it lay the doom of Middle-earth and all races therein; inscribed by Sauron on the inside of the ring and only visible when the Ring was heated by flame:

One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,

One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them (LOR, p. 63)

Language, Calligraphy and Illustration

In addition to his use of existing mythological names, places, and words from various sources (Nordic, Icelandic, Celtic, Germanic etc) to establish an authenticity for his Middle-earth myth, Tolkien used formal 'archaic' language to describe the actions of the epic heroes, and used 'Middle Ages' rituals before departure to and after the victory of war. Thus, he placed them firmly into a distant epic past somewhere in England; an imaginary "absolute past".

Another characteristic of the Epic genre language is to use capital letters for important words throughout the text. Tolkien used this prolifically, for titles of participants (Gollum), weapons (the Sword of Elendil, the Sword that was Broken, Narsil), geographical (the Black Gate of Mordor) and temporal (the Black Years) locations, objects (the One Ring, Isildur's Bane), and abstractions (Doom, Hope). This gives the physical texts of his works an Epic appearance, which subliminally reinforces its authenticity for the reader.

He used calligraphy to advantage in all his works - his *Father Christmas Letters* with their characters' individual handwriting is renowned - but for his mythology invented several scripts. "For Tolkien an interest in calligraphy naturally paralleled his interest in language ... not content to invent languages ... without also inventing alphabets in which they could be written." (Hammond & Scull, 1995, p. 201) Aware that various mythologies reputed that Man was given writing by the Gods, Tolkien devised that "Aule, the Vala who is master of crafts, aided by Gnomes [Noldorin Elves] contrived alphabets and scripts" (ibid, p. 201) when the world was new. These, along with their accompanying languages, spread temporally and geographically through the various races (Elves, Dwarves, Men, Hobbits, Orcs), evolving to suit each kind. We see these invented languages in the forms written and spoken at the time of *The Lord of the Rings* but are aware subconsciously and through textual hints of their antiquity and authenticity. Tolkien stated

that 'legends' depend on the language to which they belong; but a living language depends equally on the 'legends' which it conveys by tradition. [Though] I began with language, I found myself involved in inventing 'legends' of the same 'taste'. (Tolkien, 1995, p.231)

To consolidate the genuine status of his myth, Tolkien not only used his art as illustration, but also as authentication - he produced three 'facsimiles' of the 'Book of Mazarbul' found in Moria in *The Lord of the Rings* - "to support ... the pretence he set up in his foreword ... that he had derived his text from ancient records." (Hammond & Scull, 1995, p. 163) According to Christopher Tolkien "[t]hey are masterpieces of fabrication: their tears, losses, and burn marks are genuine, and 'binding holes' through which the leaves of the 'real' book had once been sewn together, are stabbed along the side." (ibid, p. 163) Tolkien planned that they would be reproduced and placed within the Moria episode at the beginning of *The Bridge of Khazad-dum* but unfortunately they proved "too expensive to print as colour halftones, and Tolkien was unwilling to convert them into plain line as his publisher suggested." (ibid, p. 163)

Religious Undertones

Because of his profound belief in the Catholic religion, Tolkien wanted his myth to have religious undertones without allusions to Christianity which would drag it into the contemporary (Christian) past, that is a past contiguous with our own period. He admitted that his mythology is

a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first, but consciously in the revision. That is why I have not put in, or have cut out, practically all references to anything 'like religion', to cults or practices, in the imaginary world. For the religious element is absorbed into the story and the symbolism. It is a monotheistic world of 'natural theology'. The odd fact that there are no churches, temples, or religious rites and ceremonies, is simply part of the historical climate depicted. [It is] not a Christian world. (Tolkien, 1995, pp. 172 & 220)

This need to separate, yet paradoxically align, his myth from and with Christianity led him to write in *The Silmarillion*, a 'creation' story *'Ainulindale'* (parallel to Genesis in the Bible) for his 'secondary' world of Middle-earth. This story flows from the beginnings of the Universe through the

creation of Eru, the One; his spirits, Ainur and Valar (archangels and angels); the creation of Middle-earth itself woven from the voices of the Ainur in a Great Music; to the awakening of the Children of the Earth: Dwarves; the Firstborn Elves, and Men. Tolkien admitted that

[t]here is no embodiment of the One, of God, who indeed remains remote, outside the World, and only directly accessible to the Valar or Rulers. These take the place of the 'gods', but are created spirits, or those of the primary creation who by their own will have entered into the world. (ibid, p. 235)

Tolkien's history, *The Silmarillion*, then relates the First Age with the creation of the Silmarils by the Valar, Feanor, and their subsequent theft by the evil fallen spirit Melkor - who (like Satan) was cast out when as a result of his pride he tried to outdo Eru, The One, within the creation process. Melkor, renamed Morgoth, aided by the giant spider Ungoliant, destroyed the trees of light that lit Valinor and Middle-earth, plunging the latter into darkness, set the Silmarils into his crown, and fought countless battles with the avenging Elves, in particular Feanor's sons, and the Men and Dwarves who inhabited Middle-earth. With *The Silmarillion* stories Tolkien "set in order the mythology and legends of the Elder Days, ... [which] was primarily linguistic in inspiration and was begun in order to provide the necessary background of 'history' for Elvish tongues." (LOR, p.9)

The Second Age, told in the '*Akallabeth -The Downfall of Numenor*', told of the sinking of the island of Numenor (like Atlantis) because its people broke a prohibition not to sail west to Valinor (heaven) laid on them by the Valar (spirits). With Valinor removed from it within space, Middle-earth was recreated as its present day sphere, its continents rearranged parallel to the continental drift notion and linked to the Biblical Flood stories. The Third Age encompassed the subject of the novel, *The Lord of the Rings*, which became "a history of the Great War of the Ring and included many glimpses of the yet more ancient history that preceded it. "(LOR, p. 9)

Storytelling

In his foreword to *The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien stated:

The prime motive was the desire of a tale-teller to try his hand at a really long story that would hold the attention of readers, amuse them, delight them, and at times maybe excite them or deeply move them. As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical. As the story grew it put down roots (into the past) and threw out unexpected branches; but its main theme was settled from the outset by the inevitable choice of the Ring as the link between it and *The Hobbit*. (LOR, p. 10)

Using his 'storyteller's voice' as the device with which he related the tale to the reader - his audience - Tolkien established from the outset that this was to be an Epic tale. Epic narratives were sung or recited to an audience who were aware at all times of the presence and influence of the storyteller. In his lecture/essay *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics*, Tolkien discussed the importance of the poet at work, of the monsters' position at the centre of the poem, of the historical material as 'trimming', and of the content as 'truth' rather than 'facts'.

By means of the monsters, and merely supported by the history, the poet makes the poem what he wants it to be: a picture of man on earth [who] is doomed in time. To show this at its clearest, the Christian poet has set his poem in his people's heroic pagan past: days he realizes were "heathen, noble and hopeless." Heroism is remembered and sung, but can gain the hero and his people at most a respite before the next attack, never salvation. (Rogers, 1980, p. 45)

It is hardly surprising that in light of this Tolkien, as storyteller/poet, set his own 'epic' in the *heroic pagan past*, pagan meaning not Christian rather than godless, with its own form of 'doom' overshadowing it. Yet he never allows his tale to portray *hopelessness*. "Hope without guarantees" (Tolkien, 1995, p. 237) is held out before his characters in order that they continue with their quests - both in *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

At the outset Tolkien positioned himself as storyteller, using italics to stress and parentheses to enclose humorous, interesting, or miscellaneous asides to the reader. Here, from *The Lord of the Rings*, is an example from the opening page of Chapter one: '*A Long-Expected Party*':

At ninety-nine they began to call him *well-preserved*; but *unchanged* would have been nearer the mark. There were some that shook their heads and thought this was too much

of a good thing; it seemed so unfair that anyone should possess (apparently) perpetual youth as well as (reputedly) inexhaustible wealth. (LOR, p. 33)

However, I believe that as the tale unfolds his authorial presence becomes less noticeable, as he allowed his characters, Elrond, Aragorn, and, in particular, Gandalf to supply the historical background where needed. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that readers worldwide equate Gandalf with Tolkien himself. In answer to this Tolkien stated:

“I am *not* Gandalf, being a transcendent Sub-creator in this little world. As far as any character is ‘like me’ it is Faramir [f]or when Faramir speaks of his private vision of the Great Wave, he speaks for me. That vision and dream has been ever with me - except that I lack what all my characters possess (let the psychoanalysts note!) *Courage*.” (Tolkien, 1995, p. 232)

After the fall of Gandalf in Moria - as, grieving and apparently unsure of their way, the companions continued their journey, led by Aragorn along the path to Lothlorien - there is still a sense of Gandalf’s guiding hand, of his omniscience. This, of course, was the guiding hand of Tolkien. When Gandalf later rejoined several of the scattered companions after the breaking of the Fellowship, Tolkien’s ‘presence’ is spread between the three groups - Aragorn leading his followers through the Paths of the Dead; Gandalf setting Theoden’s riders on the road to defend Gondor; and Frodo and Sam struggling together to reach Mount Doom.

Tolkien even had his characters, Frodo and Sam, discuss their relative positions within the story of their adventurous quest, in order to consolidate the fact that this is indeed a tale. Sitting on a ledge outside Shelob’s lair, Sam pointed out to Frodo that if they had known what lay ahead of them they would never have started their adventure.

‘But I suppose it’s often that way. The brave things in the old tales and songs, Mr Frodo: adventures, as I used to call them. I used to think that they were things the wonderful folk of the stories went out and looked for, [for excitement, or sport]. ... But that’s not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually - their paths were laid that way. ... But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn’t.’ (LOR, p. 739)

After debating about the good and bad endings of such tales, Sam concluded:

‘I wonder what sort of a tale we’ve fallen into? ... I wonder if we shall ever be put into songs or tales. We’re in one, of course; but I mean: put into words, you know, told by the fireside, or read out of a great big book with red and black letters, years and years afterwards.’ (ibid, p. 739)

This is a device used by Tolkien to reinforce the Epic nature of his tale, aligning it with the Epic quest tales of the Middle Ages by having his characters acknowledge its similarity to them. At the end, as Sam and Frodo stood below Mount Doom as Mordor destructed before them, Sam once more reinforced this aspect, especially by his comparison to an ancient tale told to him and Frodo.

‘What a tale we have been in, Mr Frodo, haven’t we?’ he said. ‘I wish I could hear it told! Do you think they’ll say: *Now comes the story of Nine-fingered Frodo and the Ring of Doom?* And then everyone will hush, like we did, when in Rivendell they told us the tale of Breren One-hand and the Great Jewel. I wish I could hear it! And I wonder how it will go on after our part.’ (ibid, pp. 986-7)

These discussions also carry with them small textual examples of pointing ahead to a possible outcome of the Ring quest, or at least the part in it played by Frodo and Sam.

Prophetic Pointing Ahead

Tolkien used the epic characteristic of prophetic pointing ahead to coming events throughout the text, to indicate the enclosed, finished time-frame of the tale. These are often more readily detected with the aid of hindsight upon subsequent readings.

Prophecy is characteristic for the epic, prediction for the novel. Epic prophecy is realized wholly within the limits of the absolute past; ...it does not touch the reader and his real time. The novel might wish to prophesize facts, to predict and influence the real future, the future of the author and his readers. But the novel has a new and quite specific problemativeness: characteristic for it is an eternal re-thinking and re-evaluating. (Bakhtin, p. 31)

Tolkien used both forms; yet the flexibility of the re-evaluation and choice-making by characters such as Aragorn, and Frodo and Sam, was done within their set paths already pre-ordained within earlier chapters. And although Tolkien had no wish to *predict* the future in the ‘primary’ world, he certainly *influenced* the future of his readers, the recipients of the many messages of the tale.

Examples of Epic prophetic pointing ahead are the dreams of and divination by Tolkien’s characters that are sprinkled throughout the text. Various characters experienced prophetic dreams - none more so than Frodo - that the reader recognises as the story unfolds, but which the characters may not understand. Both Faramir and his brother Boromir experienced a dream of a shadow engulfing their land of Gondor while

in the West a pale light lingered, ... [out of which they heard] a voice, remote but clear, crying:

*Seek for the sword that was broken:
In Imladris it dwells;
There shall be counsels taken
Stronger than Morgul-spells.
There shall be shown a token
That Doom is near at hand,
For Isildur’s Bane shall waken,
And the Halfling forth shall stand.*

(LOR, p. 263)

In order to discover the meaning of this enigmatic dream, Boromir left Gondor in search of Imladris (Rivendell) home of Elrond Halfelven, whose “might ... is in wisdom not in weapons.” (ibid, p. 263) There Boromir was shown the sword that was broken newly reforged and in the hands of Aragorn; the One Ring was revealed to him (which he immediately coveted); he met the Halflings (Hobbits), Bilbo and Frodo Baggins; and the fellowship was formed to return the One Ring to the fire of Mount Doom in which it was forged and which was the only means of its destruction.

Later, after the fall of Gandalf in Moria and before the breaking of the Fellowship, Galadriel took Frodo and Sam to the Mirror of Galadriel to show them what they desired to see, but warned that the mirror might reveal things which they might not wish to see. Sam wished to see what was happening at home in the Shire, but first saw a vision of

Frodo with a pale face lying fast asleep under a great dark cliff. Then he seemed to see himself going along a dim passage, and climbing an endless winding stair. It came to him suddenly that he was looking urgently for something, but what it was he did not know. Like a dream the vision shifted and went back, and he saw the trees again. But this time they were not so close, and he could see what was going on: they were not waving in the wind, they were falling, crashing to the ground. Sam noticed that the Old Mill had vanished, and a large red-brick building was being put up where it had stood. Lots of folk were busily at work. There was a tall red chimney nearby. Black smoke seemed to cloud the surface of the Mirror. (ibid, pp. 381-2)

Sam immediately wanted to return home to stop the devastation of his beloved Shire, but Galadriel informed him that what he saw might not yet have happened, and that “the Mirror is dangerous as a guide of deeds”. (ibid, p. 382) What Sam saw happening in the Mirror was the future; and the reader sees the actual events later in the story; of Frodo, supposedly dead from the spider Shelob’s bite, lying on the path of Cirith Ungol; then of Sam urgently searching for Frodo to rescue him from the Orcs.

When it was Frodo’s turn to use the Mirror’s divination, he saw the future in the form of the re-born Gandalf as ‘Gandalf the White’, but thought that it was Saruman; he saw the present in the form of Bilbo pacing and worrying amongst his papers at Rivendell; and he saw the epic past in the form of the sinking of Numenor. This vision merged with one of ships with black sails coming to battle flying “a banner bearing the emblem of a white tree [that] shone in the sun” (ibid, p. 383) - revealed to readers and characters alike as the future, when Aragorn came from “the Paths of the Dead, borne upon a wind from the Sea” (ibid, p. 881) to turn the tide of the battle at Pelennor Fields at Gondor. As this vision faded into a grey mist Frodo saw a small ship, twinkling with lights, vanishing. This we later discover is the ship that bears Frodo and Bilbo away to Valinor at the end of the story. His visions were not yet complete; he saw the Eye

rimmed with fire, ... glazed, yellow as a cat’s, watchful and intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing.

Then the Eye began to rove, searching this way and that; and Frodo knew with certainty and horror that among the many things that it sought he himself was one. (ibid, p. 383)

The Eye was Sauron, the Dark Lord of Morgoth, the Lord of the Rings, and Frodo was to see the Eye again and be ever aware of its searching presence for the rest of his journey. Paul Kocher points out that

No one else in the whole epic dreams so constantly and so diversely [as Frodo]. ... Frodo's visions in sleep set him apart as unusual even before he leaves the Shire, and begin to affect his conduct and personality. ... For better or worse Frodo seems gifted with a power possessed only by the greatest among other races. (Kocher, 1975, p. 107)

Kocher continues, listing several of Frodo's dreams, including the dream he had at Tom Bombadil's house in which he saw Gandalf's rescue from Orthanc by the eagle, Gwaihir; and the dream "in the inn at Bree which shows him the Black Riders attacking his house at Crickhollow in a vain attempt to seize him." (ibid, p. 107)

The episode of divination at the Mirror of Galadriel is the most blatant of the prophetic pointing ahead that Tolkien used. Frodo's dreams are more insidious, accumulating in our conscience as we read, accepted by us as a part of his character, vital for his survival. There are various moments of reflection by characters, odd pieces of dialogue that occur, that point ahead - sometimes in reassurance for the reader by the storyteller, sometimes to prepare the way for future events. They are all tools of the Epic genre, used by Tolkien to prepare the reader for what is ahead, and to assist in placing the events taking place into a definite Epic past.

Epic Mythical Characters

Finally, and most obviously, Tolkien used mythical characters and creatures to people his tales, in order to authenticate them as belonging to the Epic genre. Nowhere else were Dragons found - or Wizards, Knights in shining armour, Elves, Dwarves, Shape-changers (Beorn the Bear-man), Goblins, Magical Horses (Shadowfax), Giant Spiders and Tentacled Monsters for that matter. And of course then there were Tolkien's own imagined creatures - Valar and Ainur, Hobbits (including Gollum), Ents, Witch-Kings, Waugs, Orcs, Nazgul, Balrog, and Oliphaunts. His character, Tom Bombadil, was unique, an Earth-Spirit, not aligning with any of the above categories. The fact that there were levels of power for good and evil that ranged from the ethereal to the base, added to this roll call creating sub-divisions within the various groups.

There were High Elves, and Half-Elven (including Dunedain and Numenoreans) whose powers of healing, wisdom, insight and longevity of life were renowned. There were Dwarves who had almost magical power over metal, delving vast and beautiful cavern-chambers as they mined for precious metals which they wrought into marvellous armour. There were Dragons that flew, breathing fire and scourging the earth, hoarding gold and jewels in mounds upon which they lay. There were trees that came alive, and were shepherded by Ents, entities that were physically like tall trees, some old gnarled and moss-bearing while others were like saplings. There were the Little People - Hobbits created by Tolkien to carry the onerous burden too great for more powerful folk to bear. I could categorise in this fashion for some time, but the point I believe is made. Tolkien's mythology is placed geographically and temporally in the Epic genre, blatantly peopled with recognisably Epic mythical characters and creatures. That these same creatures are now found in the Fantasy genre - the Epic Novel - is a tribute to Tolkien's incredible skill, example, and influence.

.... Mid-section omitted due to irrelevance to this *Madam Pele* essay

CONCLUSION

Temporal Games

Tolkien's **hybridisation** of Epic and Novel genres results in a novel that teases the reader with depths of time which go beyond history - rather than destroying the sense of Epic past, Tolkien incorporated it into the continuum present, the novel's present which is Epic past for the reader, and yet into the reader's present too. A good example of this is the episode of the Pukel-men at Firienfeld, "great standing stones that had been carved in the likeness of men, huge and clumsy-limbed, squatting cross-legged with their stumpy arms folded on fat bellies." (LOR, p. 825) which led to the forbidden door.

Such was the dark Dunharrow, the work of long-forgotten men. Their name was lost and no song or legend remembered it. For what purpose they had made this place, as a town or secret temple or a tomb of Kings, none could say. Here they laboured in the

Dark Years, before ever a ship came to the western shores, or Gondor of the Dunedain was built; and now they had vanished, and only the Pukel-men were left, still sitting at the turnings of the road. (ibid, p. 826)

Thus Tolkien added a layer of story beyond history, a mystery of standing stones like Stonehenge with speculation as to their origin but no myths or legends remaining to provide necessary clues. A story lost in time somewhere in the First Age, one presumes.

During the Ride of the Rohirrim to the aid of Gondor, Merry (through whose eyes the reader sees the Pukel-men), on hearing drums, was told of the Woses, the Wild Men of the Woods, rumoured to haunt Druadan Forest. "Remnants of an older time they be, living few and secretly, wild and wary as beasts ... us[ing] poisoned arrows, it is said, and they are woodcrafty beyond compare." (ibid, p. 863) Merry saw the headman, "a strange squat shape of a man, gnarled as an old stone, short-legged and fat-armed, thick and stumpy," sitting with Theoden and Eomer and he remembered "the Pukel-men of Dunharrow. Here was one of those old images brought to life, or maybe a creature descended in true line through endless years from the models used by the forgotten craftsmen long ago." (ibid, p. 864) Suddenly the Pukel-men from beyond history are present in the current story. There is a blurring of Epic past and present, deliberately perpetrated by Tolkien, blending the times together, merging the Epic and Novel, creating the **hybrid**.

Tolkien's Influence

Certain characteristics of Tolkien's work, in particular his **hybridisation** of the Epic and novel genres, has been a profound influence on the world of writers.

[The novel is] a genre-in-the-making the basic structural characteristics of this most fluid of genres, [are] characteristics that might determine the direction of its peculiar capacity for change and of its influence and effect on the rest of literature. (Bakhtin, p. 11)

Many have followed his lead in the creation of secondary worlds in which to set their novels; have used three dimensional yet epic figures as heroes and heroines. I am particularly interested in Tolkien's influence on ensuing writers of Fantasy. Although he was one of a group of writers who were tackling 'faery' in writing - his friend C S Lewis was particularly known and successful - there is no doubt that Tolkien, with his publication of *The Hobbit*, triggered a plethora of fantasy works. Students of Tolkien at Oxford University were of course especially affected, not to mention lucky. Susan Cooper was one who went on to write a famous series of books of which *The Dark is Rising* is the most famous. She too borrowed from British history and Celtic mythology to achieve credibility, authenticity.

Standards

According to Bakhtin

The process of the novel's development has not yet come to an end. It is currently entering a new phase. For our era is characterized by an extraordinary complexity and a deepening in our perception of the world; there is an unusual growth in demands on human discernment, on mature objectivity and the critical faculty. These are features that will shape the further development of the novel as well. (ibid, p. 40)

For Tolkien this development included a backward look into the Epic past, real and imagined, as a source for story content and context. He created a tale of *extraordinary complexity*, that gave the reader *a deepening of their perception of the world*, and made *demands on their human discernment*, their *mature objectivity* and their *critical faculty*. There is no doubt in my mind that both *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion* are books that require many adult readings to absorb and understand the complexities of the mythology that Tolkien created - to take in the myriad nuances of character and racial differences, of ecological messages, of ethical and moral concerns (particularly the nature of death).

Early in his essay, Bakhtin wrote:

The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, re-formulating and re-accentuating them. (Bakhtin, p. 5)

Although not parodying the genres of Epic or Serio-comical, Tolkien made the *conventionality of their forms and their language* work for him. He *squeezes out some genres* (that of satire and farce) and *incorporates others* such as Epic verse into his Novel's *own peculiar structure, re-formulating and re-accentuating them*, merging them into his creation of his **hybrid** genre of Mythical Fantasy.

Tolkien thus set the standard against which all *Fantasy Novels* are measured. To succeed, it is necessary that the blend is, as Tolkien's was, subtle, invisible except to the researching eye, so that the reader is unaware of the two genres as they intertwine, weaving a (Celtic interlace) pattern through the text. The end result should be a rich, deep, believable tale no matter the setting, for the reader should be able to suspend disbelief and enter the 'secondary' world with ease, unaware of doing so.

I will leave the last word on Fantasy to Tolkien - taken from his famous lecture/essay '*On Fairy-Stories*'.

To the elvish craft, Enchantment, Fantasy aspires, and when it is successful of all forms of human art most nearly approaches. At the heart of many man-made stories of the elves lies, open or concealed, pure or alloyed, the desire for a living, realised sub-creative art, which ... is inwardly wholly different from the greed for self-centred power which is the mark of the mere Magician.

To many, Fantasy, this sub-creative art which plays strange tricks with the world and all that is in it, combining nouns and re-distributing adjectives, [is not] a thing only for peoples or for persons in their youth.

Fantasy is a natural human activity. (Tolkien, 1992, pp. 161 & 162)

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