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# Hawaii Review

Number 14

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**GHOST ISSUE**  
with selected ghost poems and stories

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Contributors

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May Sum Loong

## THE DOLLMAKER

*Mao Zedong's widow, Jiang Qing, the leader of the so-called Gang of Four, sits in prison and makes dolls, according to the pro-Peking magazine Zheng Xiang of Hong Kong. Until now. . . nothing has been heard of Jiang Qing since last January when she was sentenced to death with a two-year suspension of the sentence.*

*She and Zhang Chunqiao, another member of the Gang of Four who is condemned to death, are held in the same prison on the outskirts of Peking. Jiang Qing stops her work to talk to the guards who bring her food, but she refuses to write a monthly self criticism.*

— J. Robert Moskin

*World Press Review, January 1982*

Straw dolls obey  
what my hands say  
They arrive from the fields  
in large loose bundles  
smelling still of the sun  
Wrenched from the earth  
bewildered  
they require  
the work of fingers artful  
as these self-assured

Creation begins  
from the moment  
the senseless bunch is laid  
at my feet  
I knot away  
shaping their bodies  
stuffing their straw-filled heads  
mouthless  
earless  
I dot their eyes  
I bind their wrists

They are almost complete  
but wholly perfect  
Straw heads and mouthless faces  
No false smiles and no treachery  
In my world straw dolls have their places

James Vink

CANA ROOT

Utopia or else — our watchword flies  
In the face of all that's sacred.  
For this the Pilgrims travelled scared  
Under billowing November skies

To trough their sheeted dead before  
The winter's end, and Raleigh sailed  
From Roanoke on a hope that failed,  
Leaving the one word "Croatoan" on the shore,

The one indecipherable word  
A grey-eyed Indian race recessed  
To conjugate migrating west,  
Falling back before the sword

And gunfire of Old Hickory,  
The Injun-killing President  
Who carved states from the accident  
That he knew small geography

Who signed the Treaty of Paris  
For the British, sketching broad  
A limitless continental road  
The skinny coast-states would traverse

From Plymouth Rock to Hollywood,  
A European nation grown  
Asiatic in scope, out on its own,  
Improvising as it could



New meanings for old words without  
Knowing that the old had changed.  
Isolation, greed and ignorance deranged  
The original premise, and the rout

Of slaves and needy to the land  
Cross-hatched the vacancy with lines  
Of complications, new designs,  
Conflicts, mis-matches without end

For those who founded family-trees  
By crossing the great water, stunned,  
Terrified and helpless, dunned  
Into giving up all certainties

And in the amnesia of that move  
Salvaging little save the thought  
To make perfect what God had wrought  
And man marred trying to improve.

## AGAIN GAUGIN

How obvious his south sea solar dream yet  
How few have felt such ashes in the mouth.

## Michael McPherson

### THAT WAS LAST YEAR

Mel played the gaji on the sakura and it really pissed me off because I had forgotten he could do that. I may never learn to play the game properly, anyway. It's hard to learn such a subtle game at my age, especially having to play against someone who's been playing most of his life.

"Aw fuck Mel, that stinks."

Mel chuckled and looked around the curtain to see if a nurse or aide or anybody was coming. He'd been inside Maui Memorial, a good place to die, for over three weeks already and had pretty much refined his routine for getting loaded. Anything becomes normal if you do it long enough. He brought out the little plastic container and straw from under the blanket and passed them over to me.

"Here," he said.

I took a big blow and passed it back to him.

"They ever say any more about this?" I asked, and held out the stash. I was rushing real nice.

"Oh no," Mel said, and planted the straw in his left nostril. He took a blow. "I told the nurse to send the head man down here any time he wants to talk about it, but not to fuck with my rights or I'll tear this place apart."

Mel hadn't actually torn apart much of anything lately, not since he'd been shot in the spine and lost all the feeling below his arms. One time a few months back he nodded out and the cigarette he'd been smoking rolled down and burned a hole in his chest the size of a quarter and so deep it took weeks to heal. He also had done a fair job of tearing up his kidneys over the past year or so, which is how he came to warrant time in this circle of hell.

"They didn't find any stash?"

It figured that they didn't, or they wouldn't be so casual. They had to know what we were doing, with all the snorting and laughing and interrupting each other all the time.

"Fuck no," he said, laughing and patting the small canvas travel bag at his side, "nobody opens Mel's blue bag, if they even touch it they treat it like a shrine. Where I go, it goes. It's your play."

He had blocked my last chance for a yaku, and it looked like I was going to get basa'd again. I hate like hell to lose at anything.

"If that little chimpo hadn't of snitched, they would know nothing," he continued. "I'd like to walk in, wherever the little asshole is now, with Eggs and B.J., you know, and just tell him, 'we'll meet again.'"

Being hapa, Takahaole, and growing up in Wailuku without a father had toughened Mel early. His Japanese grandfather, the first of his family to settle in these islands, had been a renegade, a samurai with a taste for drink and womanly virtues who had come to Maui at the turn of the century and partied a succession of small businesses into oblivion. It pleased Mel that through the lean times his grandfather had never stooped to wear the yoke of the plantation; for better or worse he had remained his own man. Mel's mother had been valedictorian of her class at Baldwin High School, and several of her classmates had gone on to become judges, state senators, local power brokers. They'd all had hopes for Mel. His mother sent him down to the Hongwanji in the afternoons to learn her ancestors' language; he learned some Japanese, but since he was the only one there who looked like a haole, he had to fight his way out of the place every day. By the time he graduated and was awarded a full academic scholarship to study Chemistry at UH he had a name on the street, a jacket full of imaginative felonies and was regarded as the foremost firearms and powder man on Maui outside of old Judge Webber. One time he even hit the armory on Market Street, a long block from his mother's house, and took the National Guard's entire arsenal, but they caught up with him after that dummy Dickie Souza left a sack of grenades hanging from the cliff at Pauwela and they didn't go off, only Dickie's mouth did.

"Now, don't be vindictive," I suggested, "after all, his uncle is a lieutenant, he's not some fucking VASCAR patrol. The boy believed a crime was being committed in the next bed, it was his *obligation*. You of all people should understand."

"Finking is not an obligation, Alvin." He said it with more weariness than conviction.

"Aw, he's fucked up somehow to be in here, right, and he's so square the only comfort he's got is to be a good citizen and turn you in, make his uncle proud."

"Fuck him. I've known his uncle from high school. He's an asshole."

"Yeah, well, it's not like you to be thinking so small. You're just sour 'cuz they cut off your demerol."

"You're right about that."

Some of the family of the guy in the next bed, Jimmy, came in and sat down on the other side of the curtain. It was weird how they had put Mel in Jimmy's room after the chimpo had gotten him removed from the new wing. The old wing was enough to keep you sick; the staff didn't deny it. They had put Mel in the room next door to Jimmy's right after the kidney surgery, then a few days later when he was feeling stronger the good looking Japanese nurse asked him if he wanted to move by the window. He said yeah, and the bed by the window in his room was empty, but instead they moved him into Jimmy's room. Mel hadn't seen Jimmy in years, since long before Mel got shot. They went way back to childhood, when Jimmy and his brothers and a couple more of the kids from Hopoi Camp were some of the best athletes in Wailuku. Mel liked to be with the Flip kids back then; they accepted him on face value, he didn't have to be proving it all the time. When he saw his first chicken fight up at the camp, saw the knives and blood and everything, he and his brother ran hard around the punawai and

halfway down the cane haul road before the kids from the camp caught up with them and said come back, everything's okay and don't worry, the cops won't come.

"It's your move, Alvin. Sometimes you have to feed."

"You know what, Mel, this game is fucked. Your mountain is always miraculous, mine is a zero. Real Buddhahead game. Nothing changes."

Jimmy had cancer. It was bad, because they'd finally cut him and found that his lymph glands were pretty far gone. He slept a lot, and sometimes his family would sit around the bed and watch him. Mel's TV, which was mounted on a high table between them, was on most of the time during the day. Mel had to tell him what the good stuff was for his pain, Jimmy didn't know anything about dope. Once Mel had gotten him on a program Jimmy would get nicely morphed out, lie back and drift in and out of conversations in his mind, sometimes talking like he was talking to a haole, other times in a soft melodious pidgin. One time he was talking to Mel's brother and later Mel asked him about it but Jimmy couldn't remember where he'd been.

The guy was a hero from what I could see, and Mel said he was like that all the time, didn't want people to worry about him. Mel told me one of the guys who grew up in the camp had called Jimmy from Boston and Jimmy told him that Mel was there and kept asking him if he wanted to talk to Mel. Another time Jimmy told Mel that if his hair started to go he would just shave it, he wasn't going to sit there and watch it fall out. These local Flips are tough, it's hard to beat them for heart; even the Japs have to admit it.

The good looking nurse caught us more or less sleeping on the job. She popped around the curtain and pulled it taut behind her. Good thing the stash was back under the blanket, but she was probably cool anyway.

"Who's winning?"

I kind of grunted, it was the best I could do.

"My friend here is learning," Mel offered magnanimously.

"Where's the Japaneese guy with the funny name, he don't come to see you no more?"

"You mean Eggs?"

"Huh?"

"Eggs. *Tamago*."

"Yeah. I dunno."

"That's Muneo's son."

She brightened. That's what she'd wanted to confirm.

"Eh, my boyfriend, he thinks he knows who ratted."

The week before the vice had taken down a 6-5 setup in the county building, up a couple of floors from their hole in the basement. An elevator case. Clearly they had some very good information, because they came away with \$44,000 cash and reams of names and numbers. So she and her honey liked to gamble. Get a little thrill to hear the Old Man's name so personal, met his only son. She was okay. You have to give people a little excitement, it's part of the job.

"Yeah," Mel nodded, "he'll give himself up some way, you know, like in a Russian novel."

"Hah?"

"Uh, guilty conscience . . . it's hard to keep people from finding out something like that, you know."

"Uh-huh. I know what you mean. You need anything?"

"Yeah. Somebody who plays faster than my friend here."

"Sure, Mr. Richard. Bumbye."

She was very sexy. Nurses in uniform have a tremendous edge that way, it seems to me, but anyway it worked for her. A friend of mine had done a full page article in the *Maui News* about hanafuda, including the best diagram of the yakus Mel had ever seen, an "S" shape with the three sets of banner cards below. It was a photograph of the actual cards, very clever. I always unfold it and lay it across Mel's legs while we play so I can refer to it and know what's going on. Looking at it didn't make my hand get any better, though, and it was pretty clear that either this play or the next I was going to have to give Mel the moon.

A gust of rain pelted the window; a dark overcast stretched down to the harbor, twin spits of man-hewn rock jutting like teeth against a windy white ocean. Just inside the mouth a pair of tugs wrestled a Young Brothers barge in toward Pier 2. Christmas presents. The most depressing time of the year, some shrink wrote in a magazine. The hospitals fill up with drunks.

Mel had told me a weird story about waking up at five or so in the morning to some commotion in the hall, an excitement of nurses squeaking by and the hard footsteps of the man. Right away he felt the cops out there, the weight of them; their heavy shadows flickering in the hall pulled him suddenly from a dream of glass rattling in wind. He was lying on his right side, facing the lighted doorway, the only position in which he could sleep. Behind him he heard a faint shuffling from the darkness outside the window; he could vaguely sense something out there feeding a swirl of commotion around itself. It was a strange moment, Mel had told me, waking into such electrified air; the dream energy had surged, flashing his eyelids back, and back, between dreams. Jimmy lay in deep sleep, sedated. Moments passed and the energy died down, moved away toward the old wing. Mel thought he heard voices in the distance over the rattle of wind on the panes. After a while two nurses came into the room; they tiptoed to look down from the window beside Mel's bed. Then one of them saw he was awake and told him that a woman from the other side of the ward had gotten out a window onto the ledge and as far as the concrete column right outside Mel's bed, which she couldn't get past. She had huddled against that cold member in the darkness while the nurses and cops looked for her, had crouched in her small darkness just inches from where Mel lay dreaming, and she had waited. After a while she wandered, and eventually the nurse with the best heart talked her down, got her back in the window. They transferred her to the psych ward right now, marched her across the lawn in the grey morning light. The psych ward is on the ground floor; jumping out the windows over there is pretty safe.

The rain continued to roll in long droplets down the window. Suicide season. Tourists here. Mel took out the stash and opened it up.

"Haole Boy called me yesterday," he began, sticking the straw up there, "and I told the asshole I'm not going to do it for him."

"Well that's good," I said, "a thing like that could get real messy over nothing. You've got lunatics involved. A lot of hard time hanging over somebody's wounded pride."

He passed it over and I took another blow.

"I know," Mel replied, "like five grand is going to break him, sitting on all that land his mother bought for him. He told me that, told me it was really hurting him, and in the same breath he tells me that he cracked up his eleven grand Harley again. I asked him, and if the guy doesn't pay, is he gonna go over there and blow up his house? Eh, I don't have legs, who does he think is gonna do that kind of job for free?"

"If he were capable of that, why would he call you? If he wants respect, let *him* claim it."

I could understand why Sherlock Holmes liked this stuff so much. It sure makes you smart.

"Hey, you can't believe all the shit he brings up," Mel remembered, "favors he's done for me, like the two hundred he sent me to cop smack for him . . ."

"That was a favor! Believe me, I know the style."

"I told him I'd send the two hundred back, but then you should have heard him whining about having my picture up on his wall."

"Yeah," I'd seen it there myself, "that's just to scare the neighbors. When he steps in shit, your phone rings. Lucky for you."

"Right," Mel said, but I could tell he was not really sure. "But the other guy does owe him the money," he continued, "and he's a punk, I had to straighten him out about something else once. Now look, the two jerkoffs stay up for days whiffing and jacking each other up, and finally Toad goes berserk and takes it out on his old lady, pa-toota, tunes her up so bad she flies back to California, then he refuses to pay what he owes on account of it's all the other guy's fault. I hate these weaklings, they make me sick."

"The way I remember this one," I pointed out in all fairness, "first he was scared somebody would kill him for starting a fire in their wastebasket; then, after you assure him he's clear, he wants to go back and put pressure on the guy. Not him, of course. You."

"Well," Mel leaned back and reflected, "the other thing is the asshole has told so many people about the plastic that it's no longer any use to me. It could be traced. The people who lost it . . ."

There was a commotion as somebody entered the room; a doctor stuck his head around the curtain, gave us a strange look and pulled the curtain tight in front of him. He was there to talk to Jimmy. Some of Jimmy's family were sitting around; his wife and kids were so quiet sometimes we forgot they were there.

"It's not what we thought," the doctor blurted out, "it's worse. Your whole stomach lining is affected."

We couldn't see anybody because of the curtain, but the doctor's voice sounded shaky, especially on "worse." Mel and I just sat still and looked at each other.

"Mr. Deloso," the doctor said, "you should look at the time you have not as time you're dying, but as time you're living."

There was a thick silence after he said that. It was a nice thing to say, but it just couldn't stand up to the coming down, the weight of amazement and hopelessness. Finally Jimmy spoke in an even, gentle voice.

"How long?"

The doctor stammered a little. He was young, and he was pretty shook up.

"Well, Mr. Deloso," he said, "it kind of depends on you. Uh, I've seen people just give up and go real fast, you know, in a week. Others have a will to go on living and live for years. Five years, maybe. The way things are going in the world, who knows if any of us will be around that long, huh? We're all going to die . . ."

I played the moon and Mel picked it up. It made his yaku, but neither of us said anything.

I checked Mel out of that dump on December 19. He and Jimmy said their goodbyes, and after I helped Mel transfer into the car I went back up for the TV and some other stuff. On the way up I thought about what I should say to Jimmy. Everything I could say sounded terrible, "Merry Christmas" worst of all. I decided finally that "Take it easy" was the best, and that's what I said to him. He looked at me with his clear gentle eyes and said, "You too." I wonder what my eyes must have looked like to him. Whatever they looked like, I was forgiven. Mel had wanted to leave the TV for him, but actually it belonged to another friend.

Mel called Jimmy a few times after that, to ask him how he felt, what kind of dope was he using, and to try to encourage Jimmy to make it through chemotherapy, to see his home again and not to die in Maui Memorial. Then the afternoon of New Year's Eve I stopped by Mel's place on the way to the airport and New Year's with my family in Honolulu and found him just lying there and staring at the ceiling. He said that Jimmy's wife had called after lunch to say that Jimmy had died in his sleep the night before, and to thank Mel and invite his mother to the funeral. Then he told me that our friend had called a couple of hours later to whine some more about couldn't he get his money collected. It was bad timing, Mel figured. Mel was feeling pretty bad and I just kind of sat around with him for an hour or so before I had to catch my plane. It's always a thrill sitting on the end of the runway when the pilot starts leaning on those turbines and then when he gooses it you get that rush of everything flying by, like you're really going somewhere.



**Aryeh Lev Stollman**

**KILAUEA**

I too once climbed that mountain  
and saw in its sulphurous depths  
Pele smile at Ashmadai  
a courtship of liquid stones and fire  
I melted like fuchsia wax  
and spilled like water  
down a jagged gulley

Gene Frumkin

## TOWARD THE CAVE OF THE THREE BROTHERS

1

We are very slow lizards who follow the earth  
inch by inch. We breathe through our mouths, our gills,  
minuscule gulps of air laden with wet dust  
and our hands paw at little clouds of mould  
whose color is too dark to see. Our lamps  
move ahead of us, their lights wandering randomly  
from one millennium to another. Each of us,  
as we grovel ahead backwards, must be asking  
how far this tunnel, no more than a foot high,  
can endure. We ask this of our skeletons, of what consumes  
and surrounds our bones; we question our blood  
and the suns that still warm the human freeways  
thick with amazing spoors.

2

Suddenly

there is a heightening in the long breach.  
We are able to rise to our knees, hunch up on them,  
heads upraised, level with backsides so when we crawl  
our torsos scrape against the tube of rock  
we go on filing through.

There was that youth  
buried in a sleeping posture at Le Moustier,  
pillowed on flint fragments neatly piled,  
around him the charred and split bones of wild cattle,  
beside his head an exceptionally fine fist axe,  
It was our first morning in paradise.  
Timeless being was a headless bear, later on a buffalo  
or a lion, it doesn't matter.

The youth  
dreamed the same dream as we do now

as we draw nearer to the antlered head,  
owl-eyed, with its full manlike beard,  
its tail of wolf or horse. Lower, the large, leonine phallus  
and human, dancing legs, their movement in profile,  
said by the Abbé Breuil to be like a step in the cakewalk.

3

We are snails of science, we struggle on the earth not sure  
the promised entryway will be open, still we  
must believe it, that God is real though he does not exist.  
Without him the four of us—Louis, the count's eldest son;  
Professor van Giffen; my wife, Rita, and I, Kühn—  
could leave no trail of our own collective  
illusion. But here we are beslimed in this snake-thin tunnel,  
scratching toward the animals drawn on the cavewalls,  
before history. Who but God could explain  
so pious a devotion even prior to his conception  
in the mind's womb? We continue the hunt  
on stomach, elbow, knee and hand, gripping damp earth,  
throats clogged, lacking his organic light.

We know God

does not exist. Our mind in conceiving him—by that very contract—  
illumined him stillborn. O we believe that he is real  
since others swear to it—how otherwise  
without such dreary hope would we get there, into the middle  
of our illusion? Deer. Bison. Musk Ox & Bear. Among those many  
animal-masters to be fed, feared and slain in solemn magical art?  
We are almost there where the silence is so old  
we wonder how this faceless One-God's Word would dare intrude.

4

At last our lamps crouch, then stand up full height  
to furrow their light out over a vast theater  
whose holiest actor is renowned throughout the Night of Beasts  
as the Sorcerer. He is a black figure on the wall  
of this ancient temple construed by nature itself. He is more than  
ancient sleight-of-hand. He is an immortal filament  
in the human eye. We gaze out toward him and recognize  
the formal substance of a god. Sometime during the ice,  
during the floods and tempests his power flickered  
then darkened out of sight. So that we who have crawled  
on our bellies to shine our lamps upon him  
might wrongly imagine this cave a mere museum. Our lamps are unsure,

they waver. The owl-eyed Sorcerer simply stares  
fixedly, as he always has even while he winks  
into our lights. His tail bobs up and down,  
his legs shuffle. He hears the sounds of our breathing  
as a gay music. Lamps weave throught the guiltless air,  
shadows of our names' dim candles. We are all dancing.

## Rodney Morales

### THE SHADOW WARRIOR

If he thought about it (perhaps he did; he never let on), he might have seen a pattern in the events of the last forty years, events that could be encapsulated within the opening and closing of a camera shutter, forming an imprint in his mind, which, of course, took it all in . . .

Isamaru Saga, semi-retired taxi driver, former photographer (his eyes got old), is setting up to take a family picture. He has balanced his tripod, mounted his 35 mm Nikon, and is focusing the lens, which are clearer than headlights, especially the painted headlights of the 1934 Studebaker that he last used as a taxi late in 1941, so late it was practically

[THE NIGHT OF NOH SHADOWS] 1942. Isamaru, wearing undershirt and shorts, could wait no longer for the next roundup. At 9:30 p.m., in the *dark* dark, he slipped on his trousers and (judging by the coconut buttons he felt) an aloha shirt. He then wiped his wire-rimmed glasses, put them on, and found his way to the front door. He grasped the door knob and slowly turned it.

"Whe' you goin'?" his wife, Tatsuyo, very pregnant, asked from behind him.

"Aido no . . . Ah-side."

"Ah-side?" Scolding: "No be stupid, now! Dey gon' arrest you. No can even see!"

"So? Good. Mo' bettah," He pushed the screen door and stepped out into the darkness.

"Mo' bettah? Kichigai man you . . ."

"Shaddup ah-ready." He slammed the screen door.

The blackout was in effect. Luckily, Isamaru knew the path to the Studebaker. He quietly opened the driver's door and got in. Started the car. The engine purred. Slowly he drove out the dirt lane to Hotel Street. He turned left, grimacing as the car scraped a rubbish can, then, squinting hard to see what lay ahead, right into Punchbowl. An invisible dog barked. Airplanes hummed muted roars that faded endlessly. Isamaru headed nervously toward Waikiki. Without the moon (lost behind a curtain of clouds) it was almost totally black. He glanced toward the invisible Koolaus and saw pinpricks of light. *Violators*, he thought. *They ought to be arrested.*

The headlights of the Studebaker were painted black around the edges and blue in the middle, as the military had ordered. Isamaru's "TAXI" sign lay somewhere on the

large rear seat. He could not use it anymore, not since those kichigai warriors had swarmed to Pearl Harbor and punctuated his worst fears. When he turned right down Kalakaua Avenue, he knew that there was *no turning back*. He would drive through Waikiki and surely be rounded up. Like Reverend Tshako . . . Jimmy Yoshihara . . . Oshiro-san, his closest friend. "Why not me?!" he had cried when Tatsuyo told him the searing news. *Why not me?* The words pounded like gongs against his temples.

He drove a steady twenty m.p.h. down Kalakaua (which he knew like the backs of his unsteady hands), past McCully, past Fort DeRussy, where there seemed to be activity in the semi-dark (the cloud curtain no longer opaque but translucent). He thought to turn left at the fork, into the prong that was Kuhio Street, but chose to confront the situation head on and stayed on the main road. The words on the Waikiki Theater marquee were imperceptible, but associations sufficed. The thought of John Wayne lassoing him by the neck gave him a jolt. Straightened his spine.

He braked. In the center of the road. More pounding against his temples. He had no sword to defend himself. No cause. He squeezed the steering wheel tightly. Like a camera lens his glass-aided eyes panned for landmarks. He could see the vague outline of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and further down, the Moana. No sailors, though. No loose wahines. *Why not me*, he said to himself, feeling a rift, a tsunami forming within. "Why not me!" he yelled. Then he trembled. A whisper: "Why not me?"

*Nobody noticed.* Even after he stepped on the gas and sped two more times around. Finally, after heading mauka on Kapahulu Avenue, he headed home.

After Isamaru parked the car he got out and began walking, feeling his way to Beretania Street. (The location of his home was destined to become part of the State Capitol lawn. Men in large machines would come and knock down the entire camp, the Armory, the service station, and then return later to take the dirt.) He crossed the street and stopped at the wrought-iron cage that surrounded Governor Poindexter's mansion. He could smell the mock orange. Squeezing the iron bars with his hands, he peered in. Nothing. He silently cursed his fate, cursed the darkness. (The moon seemed to hear; it emerged, crescent, shining.)

"Cur-runch." The sound came from the dimly seen mock orange bush. Isamaru stiffened like a cat, muscles taut, not breathing.

Now, he thought, already feeling the rope around his neck. And like a cat, a *cat* jumped through the iron bars, its eyes like two sparkling swords.

"Mearrow," it said. Isamaru recaptured his breath.

"Heah, kiri-kiri," he whispered. The cat approached and brushed against his pants leg. He knelt down, stroked its wiry frame. It purred like the Studebaker right after a tune-up.

"Mea-arru." *No moon now.* Isamaru suddenly picked up the cat (meeawrow?) and stole (with this *koan*) across the street and into the warmer cold of the *unseen known*.

The lens cap wasn't removed until

[THE DAY OF NONE EITHER] 1952 when he panned his Kodak Speed Graphic, then

focused sharply on the unexpected, new-born girl child. He peered through the lens, through the large picture window, carefully selecting angles to avoid glare. The hospital lights — diffuse — together with the high speed film he used in his camera eliminated the need for flash. He took shot after shot. The unexpectant mother and he, both in their forties now, had not expected something this delightful so late in the ball game. (Snap. Pan, focus; snap.) Their two daughters were seven and ten. (Pan, focus; snap. Snap.) He was as pinkly tickled as the Royal Hawaiian. (Snap.)

Through with the shooting, Isamaru went to the public telephone in the Queen's hospital corridor. The hospital smell reminded him of developing solution. He called Reverend Tshako, now safely ensconced in his Buddhist church in Makiki.

"Eh. Guess what?" Pause. "No, . . . girl." Isamaru laughed heartily. "No can make boy." More laughter. Pause. He said something in Japanese. Guffaws followed.

They named her Joy but would always call her by her middle name, Kyoko. Isamaru took an evening walk that day. Walks had become his refuge since the war days, a way of balancing darkness and light, a way to find the proper chiaroscuro, since everything had to be filtered by Hiroshima gray. As always he remembered to bring something along for cats to eat, should any cross his path. *Paws.* (The *mock orange* cat, fattened, had long ago left to embrace the *unknown seen*.)

Later, in his dark room, he dipped the negatives one by one into solution. Darkness had become more familiar by now. (Perhaps it helped that his ten-year-old was with him, a patient and eager assistant.) His job as photographer for a local Japanese newspaper provided enough for his family of four. Uh, five. He turned on the dim green light and gazed into the enlarger, turning the knob, expecting Joy. Instead he got (and it jolted him) a man wearing a navy commander's cap and a confident smile.

*John Wayne?* He roared when he realized what had happened.

"Whasamatta, daddy?" the ten-year-old asked.

"Look, look."

She looked into the enlarger. "Dass John Wayne."

He laughed. The Duke himself was in town, making a movie called "Big Jim McClain." He was no paniolo cowboy riding the range but rather a government agent investigating communist influence in Hawaii's longshoreman's union. Isamaru was assigned to get on-the-set photos. He was developing the wrong negatives. He straightened that out fast.

"I like do 'om, daddy."

"Be cah-ful."

"I know how," she said. He laughed again.

She did know. But she couldn't take too much of the alcohol-acid smell and finally left him alone in the red-tinged semi-dark to place the last sheet into the *unknown unseen*. He pulled the wet sheet out, in

[RAGGED SAMURAI, RIFT-RAFT, OR HELL IN THE PACIFIC] 1962 and hung it to dry.

"Daddy, we goin' show?" The spoiled ten-year-old asked.

"Shaddap. Wait." She smiled. *Wait* meant yes. She held her nose. She didn't like the *hospital* smell.

In the family Chevrolet station wagon (Studebaker long gone), Isamaru, with his little daughter (the older ones thought they had better things to do), sped down Nuuanu Avenue toward the Nippon Theater. He loved to see movies, especially samurai, or "chambara" films. Kyoko preferred "obake" movies, so she could grab her daddy's hand, scream, hide her face, and eat popcorn. Isamaru, being moved not by car wheels now but by film reels, basked in the increasingly comfortable darkness. "Sanjuro," a Kurosawa film, was showing. Toshiro Mifune, his favorite actor, starred in it as a ragged samurai. He provided a nice antithesis to John Wayne, who had already made three films in Hawaii (Isamaru had photos to prove it) and was planning a fourth. Movie goers often referred to Mifune as Japan's John Wayne, though his critic friend at *Hawaii Hochi* said *Mifune is mo' like Brando*. Isamaru scratched his head. *Nani?* he asked. *What is Brando?*

To Isamaru, west was west and east was . . . supposed to be east. He was not too sure anymore. Something in the Kurosawa movies (which usually starred Mifune as the samurai with top knot shaven off, the samurai as thief, as riffraff) addressed the rift, the drift he felt within. Was he doomed to float in the black Pacific on that raft, riding a tsunami relentlessly westward? *As long as that raft held together . . .* Movies. Photography with *seams*.

Driving his daughter home in

[SUPER-DENSE] 1972, Isamaru said nothing. He had picked Kyoko up at the police station cell block on Young Street. He had put up the twenty-five dollars bail. She was now ranting about the president . . . the War . . . the pigs . . . and on and on. She wore her black hair long. She wore a white T-shirt with something in Hawaiian printed on it, no bra, faded jeans, a black arm band on her right sleeve. *No brah, you can't arrest me, you fucking jerk, you!* She quoted herself.

Isamaru said nothing. He was a man of few words. He just drove and drove until Kyoko realized that they weren't going anywhere in particular but rather in circles. Or city squares. She shut up. She looked at her father, whom she referred to (when talking to friends) as being *super-dense*, whatever that meant. Now he seemed *deep* (whatever *that* meant). She wanted to cry. They drove through town, through Waikiki (where the Royal Hawaiian was fast becoming a pinkie among poi-dipped fingers and palms).

A taxi sign lay on the back seat of the 1971 Oldsmobile. Isamaru's eyes were not what they used to be. He did not get stronger glasses. He changed jobs.

Later, at home, Kyoko lay sleeping on the sofa. Isamaru bent over her and checked her neck and arms for rope marks. He was relieved to find none. At about midnight, unable to sleep, he took a long walk to the State Capitol. He passed the Governor's mansion (where friendlier forces seemed to dwell. Until that day at least) and walked



toward the center mural where, he imagined, Kyoko had been rounded up.

The mural was contained in a large circle; circles within overlapped other circles. At center, Isamaru knelt in the semi-dark to see better. The large circle and the circles within were made up of tiny square tiles. Pieces.

*John Wayne* wore a green beret now (Did his eyes get bad?). In the sixties, with the help of his favorite director, John Ford, he seemed to have realized that he was becoming larger than life. Note the titles of his movies: "How The West Was Won," "The Longest Day," "The Greatest Story Ever Told," "Cast A Giant Shadow." And he had licked cancer to boot.

Akira Kurosawa, on the other hand, was continuing (with and without Mifune) to de-noble-ize the samurai. (The western influence was prevalent. No wonder "Yojimbo" became the spaghetti western "A Fistful of Dollars," and "Seven Samurai" became "The Magnificent Seven.") Had he finally de-noble-ized his own stature as eminent Japanese director when in 1971 he attempted and failed to commit *seppuku*? A year earlier Yukio Mishima had exchanged the pen for the sword and succeeded in his task for failing in his task.

But east is east, west is west.

And caught . . . in the middle . . . was Isamaru Saga.

To explain his apoplexy, I was summoned to the hospital (in 1979 — shortly after the Duke finally succumbed to the Big C) to see if Isamaru was going to live or die. Luckily, it turned out to be a minor stroke. From the Kuakini hospital bed, room 304, he practically *ordered* me to go to the bakery to get him some pastry. Donuts and ladyfingers. I knew he was all right because I went.

[KAGEMUSHA: THE SHADOW WARRIOR] 1982. He had parked his 1979 Ford in the second floor lot of the apartment building. Chewing on a piece of grass, he rode the elevator to the 22nd floor. He now drove taxi part time, the Honolulu *In-ta-na-sho-naru* Airport his point of departure. He and Tatsuyo collected *social security*.

Isamaru slipped his key into the bolt lock, then opened the door.

"Surprise!" his daughter said.

"Eh? . . . How come?" Joy was there with her own little family: her husband, Rick, and their four-year-old son, Troy.

"We just thought we'd come visit," she said. Her haole husband smiled a cautious smile.

"Hi ji-san," the little boy said, running up to his grandfather, who picked him up. Face to face with Troy, Isamaru grinned his silver and gold grin at this symbiosis, this . . . He put the boy down. Troy ran to the dining table and grabbed a package. "Look what I get fo' you."

"Fo' me?" It was a miniature metal car with a "TAXI" sign on top.

"We saw it at Sears," Joy said. "Troy kept saying 'ji-san, ji-san,' so we had to get it."

"Tangkyu." Isamaru bowed to his grandson. Troy, smiling proud, enjoyed giving. "You folks gon' stay fo' eat?"

"I guess so. You know mom." Tatsuyo was busy in the kitchenette of their one bedroom apartment. The government paid part of their rent. A JohnWayne-like president was trying to lasso that away. "We were telling ma about this kid . . ." She pointed her thumb at Troy, who now sat on his father's lap. "Ever since we moved near the University, we have to take him up by the East-West Center 'cause he likes to look at the koi in the pool . . ."

"And the Indians," Rick said, laughing.

"In-dyens?" Isamaru looked puzzled.

"Oh yeah," Joy said. "Inside the Center. Not the bow and arrow kind, *da adda kine*." Everyone laughed. "He seems entranced by the way they dress, not just Indians . . ."

"What about sistahs? Dey wen' write to you?" Tatsuyo asked from behind pots and steam.

"Not lately, dem buggahs." Talk centered on Joy's two older sisters, both also married and raising children. One lived on the island of Maui, while the other lived on the larger island known as the American continent, in some place called Kalamazoo. Then Tatsuyo announced:

"We need ketchup."

"Ketchup?"

"For Troy," Joy said. "He *has* to have it on his rice."

"On rice? Ketchup?" Isamaru scratched his head.

"I'll go buy some," Rick said as he and Troy got up. The first time Joy had brought him over to meet them, she said *This is Rick*. Her father grunted and left for a long walk.

"No. Dass okay," Isamaru said. "I take 'om."

"Yeah," Joy added. "Let dad take him. He has to take his walk." Rick looked puzzled. Joy and Tatsuyo laughed. "Yep . . . and his package."

"Walk? Package?"

Mother and daughter laughed harder.

"Neba main, you," Isamaru said as he grabbed a wrinkled package from the kitchen counter. Joy and Tatsuyo began to explain as Isamaru and Troy slipped out the door.

"Don't buy him candy now!"

Isamaru was in the Pali Safeway store, walking down an aisle, carrying his package, some candy bars, and a bottle of ketchup in his hands. He was again chewing on a piece of grass. Troy, lingering behind, had picked up a sparkling silver pen, shiny as the gleam in his eyes. He ran to give it to his ojii-san.

"No. Put back. Put back." Troy walked back slowly, while Isamaru went to the cashier. Troy stopped and put the pen in his pants pocket. *He would give it to ji-san later.*

As they stepped outside a man grabbed Troy.

"Hey. Wha'samatta?"

"He stole a pen," the plainclothes guard said, and pulled it out of Troy's pocket. "See? and could I see what's in that package?"

"You crazy o' what? He only one . . ." Troy began to cry.

"Please come with me." Isamaru felt the guard's hand choking his arm. He decided to comply.

The manager came up and asked the guard what was going on.

"The kid stole this pen." He gave it to the manager. "And the old man has a package that . . ."

"Let me see." The manager reached out for the package. Isamaru gave it to him. The manager opened it. "Let's see . . ." He saw a can opener, a saucer, and a can of cat food. "Oh, Christ. Some thief. We don't even sell this brand."

"But, ah . . ." The guard's face was flushed.

"We're sorry," the manager said to Isamaru, who, while rubbing his grandson's head, was gazing out into the parking lot at a car that reminded him of the Studebaker. "You folks can go on. It's just a mistake."

Isamaru pushed up his glasses. "Mistake! Eretime, mistake!" He grabbed his package, his red-eyed grandson, and stalked away toward Longs Drugs. *Seen. Known.*

They knew him there, where he developed negatives, bought cat food. Isamaru walked toward the stationary section and picked up two silver pens.

"One fo' me," he told Troy. "An' one fo' you." The cashier told him he had a handsome grandson. Why *not* me.

Two happy warriors walked out of the store. Alongside a bush near the apartment, Isamaru looked around then opened his package. He opened the cat food can, poured the contents onto the plate, and set it down. Two cats came out from the bushes.

"Here kitty-kitty," the little warrior gurgled. His smile was like water. Isamaru laughed when Troy tapped the cat's head (*not too hard!*) with his pen.

Isamaru is not content with the Nikon and digs out his trusty Speed Graphic. He removes its flash and aluminum shield. Then he sets up a lamp behind him. Everyone is getting restless. *Hurry up, dad. Just take the picture.*

Finally he does take the picture. But not before he pushes his son-in-law, me, further into it.

But Isamaru has bigger things on his mind. While Joy and I browse through the family photo albums and "mama" cleans up in the kitchenette, "dad" poses Troy and the pen, trying to capture shadows on the wall. The miniature taxi looms large. So does the pen when Troy holds it right. The scene is contrived, but so is the opening scene of "Kagemusha," Kurosawa's latest movie.

But Isamaru gets no sword and finally sees, accepts, that what is cast on the wall is Troy's own. It is in this final letting go that Isamaru Saga ends *his* saga. As he presses for the shot, whispering "Kuroshii," *I am done*, and as whatever-it-is is cast onto the wall, *shimmering*, I find myself, unseen, undone, caught in the target of a Zen archer.

**Kathy Matsueda**

**SMALL GIFTS**

You realize it's been a while since  
she lay pliant beneath your hands  
Time has made you shy  
It's enough to pat her head as if  
small gifts are all you expect of her.

All day you take the rough of  
ships' sides upon your hands  
You shave layers of your palm to mend sea-worn bows  
You work each tool of your labor until  
it reshapes your grip on something better.

Once she slapped your searching fingers  
Once you buried shameful scars in deep pockets  
Those cuts so unlike those from glass fibre  
left your hands useless.

Now you wait for her to reach this memory  
You wait until she moves her hair from her shoulders  
It's enough  
You stroke her small back and smooth what took years to harden.

**Bill Ransom**

**THE SURVIVOR**

*"...someday they will talk about us, and they will say, 'Those two lived long ago when things like that happened.'"*

*—Leslie Silko, **Yellow Woman***

Behind your mirror the hard edge of legend  
touches and stiffens the corners of your mouth.

Think *yes*. This is age:  
the long-faced company of bitter winters  
the sweet dried berries that you hold, uneaten  
until the tired sweats of your body melt them down to stain.

Press them gently to your cheeks  
draw one faint line across your shivering chin.  
This once your hand is a stranger  
you stare at those small blue rivers between fingers.

In some distant winter you sit, alone and painted,  
mystified by hands and old stains.  
Those sleeping bushes scattered on the hillsides,  
they dream your secret story.

**Karla M. Hammond**

**PARADOX**

If I could convince you that paradox  
helps us to realize some balanced  
truth. If we saw in danger a risk  
not taken, in darkness a rising shine.  
Then how like swallows we might dip and  
swerve in perfect flight, in love, our  
shadows matched. How that graceful  
wingspan would measure some grave but  
small event. And we would know in nearness  
an awkward distance not yet reached.

## LETTER FOR A BROTHER

Revenge changes nothing, Apollo.  
Nothing changes: not insolence, not death.  
Sun breaking through a yoke of cloud goes  
undeterred. We are twins fraternal, linked  
together. I have killed for less; turned stone,  
women who would defy me. Not fickle, vengeance.  
The hand you see edging the quiver is mine, mine  
stroking the dark shafts of arrowhead. The arrows  
are sleek in their paint: swift to fletch  
the vast tarpulin of sky, meet their mark,  
inflict their gaudy wounds on those we would avenge.  
Can you forget, Brother, Niobe cursed, her children  
slayed? Silence is the only shibboleth: quells  
the whirlwind, dries tears on a face of marble.  
Can we trust incense, laurel, *hybris*, a doomed lineage?

**Thelma Ireland**

**POST STORM**

When the thunder shower ended  
Dragon flies with needle beaks  
Came and darned holes cut by lightning  
So the sky no longer leaks.



**Laura Kalpakian**

## **THE BARE ROOT SEASON**

Margaret and Franklin Whitney never had a son, but they had two daughters whose names Margaret had chosen. Franklin allowed her to choose them with only a grunt of dissent because he expected he would one day name his son Franklin III, but the son never appeared and secretly Margaret was glad. A boy, she felt, would have been a disruptive influence on their family and the two little girls were such a winsome duó from the beginning. Their charming polka-dotted portraits still hung above the mantel in the Whitney's neo-Tudor home. Later, Margaret regretted having no son: his disruptions might have been useful, he might have better prepared Franklin and Margaret for the day when their two little girls burst through childhood's frame and stood before their parents as complicated, unhappy women. For years Margaret believed if she could get the girls through adolescence, they would return to being winsome, but she discarded those illusions and took up gardening.

She grew roses and azaleas, camellias and tulips, none native to the region, all requiring soil additives, careful pruning and regular irrigation. The Whitneys lived in a temperate zone where the last rose of summer was virtually indistinguishable from the first of the new year. Margaret's garden billowed with color continually. The flowers lined up in brigades along the stone paths and waved from shaded recesses like spectators at a nameless parade. She kept notebooks of their ailments, their preferences, plantings and deaths — a flower geneology. They were a family of sorts: after all, Margaret had crossbred an elegant yellow hybrid rose and named it after herself — The Princess Margaret.

She gave her daughters stately names too, the kind that could have been emblazoned on the buildings of the small prestigious women's college she'd attended. She could imagine them: The Elizabeth Olivia Whitney Hall of Letters, The Alice Miranda Whitney Center for the Performing Arts. Both girls attended their mother's alma mater, though Randy (as she insisted on being called) was suspended for a social infraction (a man found in her room) and then dismissed for academic reasons. Not likely that an Alice Miranda Whitney Center would grace that campus. Equally unlikely were the prospects that Elizabeth Olivia would have a decorous building inscribed for her. Liz married her father's junior law partner; they had three quite lovely and well-behaved children and spent their weekends and money on a series of boats, each one grander than the last. Franklin often went sailing with them. Margaret sent her regrets; she suffered from seasickness and a queasiness she could

never quite define or deny when Franklin came home sunburnt and still rolling with the boat and the old fashioned he'd consumed.

Franklin was inordinately proud of his late-learned seamanship and of his son-in-law's boats, as if he had chosen and outfitted them himself. Margaret's good manners prevented her from mentioning that the last boat he'd expressed any interest in was the ocean liner on which they'd returned from their honeymoon cruise to Honolulu in the summer of 1941. Her good manners usually prevailed, but more than once she'd pointed out to Franklin that if he could learn seamanship at his age, he could learn tolerance as well.

"Tolerance!" he bellowed over the stone paths and the shiny camellias, "You're not asking me to learn tolerance. You want me to welcome every dope-smoking anarchist, every half-washed, half-educated, would-be philosopher that Randy beds down with under my roof like he's family."

"Some of them have been family," said Margaret before she realized that mention of Randy's three husbands could hardly help her case.

"Yes, and if she's married three men, you can imagine how many men she's slept with," he muttered, easing his bulk into a wrought iron garden seat.

"That's a very vulgar thought." She packed the fertilizer at the base of the Delta Queen roses with extra firmness; she was resolved that her roses would not take second place at the Garden Club Show and that her husband would not make her retreat.

"I told her — didn't I — the last time she was here, when she brought that longshoreman —"

"Yes, well that was two years ago. All she wants is to visit. This is Randy's home. She's always welcome."

"Fine! She's welcome! But Christ, Margaret, don't you see, it looks like we approve of her sleeping around. She'll think we approve —"

"She would never think you approve, Franklin. Not in the last fifteen years could she think that." Margaret rose from her knees and removed her garden gloves with the same flourish she would have donated to suede.

"She's never given me any reason to approve. There's a limit to what I can take. She ought to be growing up and she never does. It's always something with Randy. Three marriages. Five different colleges, rolled her car so many times, she had the only ten thousand dollar VW bug in history. And it's always me that's paid for her foolishness. I paid her fines, her court costs, her tickets. Don't forget I paid for the therapy when she got herself strung out on drugs, the doctors, the psychiatrists. God, Margaret! I paid her damn rent till she was twenty-five. I always end up paying. I mean, there's a limit and she's reached it. Has she ever given me back a penny of what I've lent her — never mind what I paid out of hand, I mean what I've lent her. Did she ever say, here dad, here's an installment on that loan — any of them? — and thanks a lot, dad? I'm about to retire, Margaret, I can't go around handing out money. I'm not a rich man.

"We could afford it."

"We can't."

"We could then."

"That's not the point. Your parents could have afforded plenty, but did they give us money? No, we made our own way in the world. Every generation should —"

"Oh, Franklin, please do save that for the jury." She went to the shed and returned with the pruning shears, their huge well-oiled jaws agape. She clipped a fading Delta Queen. "She only wants to visit and bring a friend. Maybe the friend is a woman."

"Yes and if it is you can bet she's sleeping with her too. When are you going to grow up, Margaret? You know as well as I why she's coming out here: Dad, can I have five bucks or five hundred or five thousand. That's why."

Margaret touch-tested each rose before she clipped it. If its petals were still moist, she left it for another day, but if it was beginning to go papery, unglued from the center, she clipped it, never waiting for it to brown and disfigure her garden.

"She's thirty-two," Franklin continued, "she's got to accept responsibility. Don't sniffle, Margaret. I love Randy, of course I love her —"

"You only love her when she's doing what you want, what you think she should."

"I know what she shouldn't be doing at thirty-two. She shouldn't be living like a damn gypsy. She's got to cut out the crap and grow up. I may not be around much longer to bail her out. Sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind."

"Oh stop. Please, not that."

Franklin tossed his ice into the camellias and walked to his wife. He lay his greying head against her hair and touched her shoulder. "Look at us, Margaret. Look what Randy does to us. Forty years of marriage. Children shouldn't be able to do this to us after forty years of marriage."

"After forty years," she snapped, "children are the only thing that can." She shook herself free and he stalked off, slamming the French doors to the living room. Tearlessly, she proceeded to touch and cut the roses, placing their pale severed heads in her basket.

In the bottom drawer of her spindle-legged Louis XV writing table, Margaret kept Randy's letter. It had been mailed in an envelope purchased at the post office, the kind you can buy if you go in with your letter already written and your cash in hand. Randy's flamboyant script covered two pages of wide line notebook paper and was postmarked from a city in the east where, if the TV dramas were to be believed, one lived in constant peril of one's life.

Hi Mom!

I haven't had time to say thanks for the nice Xmas gifts you sent, the sweater and the gloves and especially the MONEY [this was why Margaret didn't let Franklin read Randy's letter; what he didn't know wouldn't hurt anyone.] Did that ever come in handy! Now I've paid the last installment on my yoga lessons

and once I master the more difficult positions, I'll be able to approach spirituality. Real mastery takes years, but it's worth it. You have to be able to shed the inessentials and look to your spiritual core. Possessions obstruct vision. The spirit is all. The body is nothing. Inner peace.

Inner peace. Margaret massaged the high bridge of her nose. She could think of no one more in need of inner peace than Randy and no one less likely to find it. With her every new enthusiasm, Margaret hoped Randy would find some direction, something she could cling to and grow with — a trellis, that was the way Margaret envisioned it, to help her stand upright and bloom. After Randy's third divorce however, Margaret privately recognized that every new enthusiasm either began with or was occasioned by or was intimately, physically connected with a new man, and whoever he was who had inspired Randy to yoga lessons and Zen, he and his beliefs and his friends would go the way of Randy's former husbands, countless lovers and other passions. She'd been passionately fond of drugs and passionately against the war in Vietnam. She had gone to jail in the service of that passion. She stayed the night in the local jail with the other protestors, refusing to make her one phone call, refusing to call Franklin Whitney, the eminent barrister who could have gotten her off even if she hadn't been his daughter. She went to jail one other time too; that time she called Franklin. She was caught with her kneesocks full of dope and it was not funny or noble and still she refused to apologize to her parents, though she was abject in front of the judge.

I think what David and I are going to do [the letter continued] is drive some rich dude's car out there. David has never seen the West Coast and I think it would be good for us to practice meditation in a changing environment. David would like to meet you and Dad. He's an absolute flower freak, Mother. He says we can learn a lot from the lilies of the valley and the poppies of the field. We'll see you in a month or so. At least I think that's when we'll be leaving. *Is this ok?*

Love,  
Randy

P.S. Don't worry. I'm not going to get married again. Marriage is a bourgeois institution that only manacles your body and your spirit. David and I don't need marriage. Our spirits are perfectly tuned. Besides we believe in equality. I told him from the beginning, you do some of the eating, you can do some of the cooking too. You sleep in half the sheets, you can do the

laundry half the time. David's very spiritual, but he gets the point. David's different. At least he seems to be.

The seed of doubt: Margaret recognized it, its sadness, its significance. She glanced at the calendar, January 16. She took a silent vow: if in six months David wasn't out of her daughter's life, Margaret would do some sort of penance. That or celebrate.

As she fixed dinner she tried to imagine herself telling Franklin: you do half the eating, you can do half the cooking, or at least half the cleaning up. The Whitneys had had a maid when the children were little, a maid and a gardener, but when the girls went to college, she found the maid a new position and let her go, doing all the housework herself. At the time Franklin teased her for her budget snipping, but as he approached retirement, he instituted rigorous, selective reforms. He sold the Lincoln and bought a smaller (though equally luxurious) car. He fired the gardener and hired a high school boy to mow and edge the lawn, though the boy was forbidden to touch the garden. He suggested Margaret experiment with margarine in the cooking instead of butter and she said she had been using margarine for years. The sole she fixed that evening was served in a caper and margarine sauce.

Franklin groaned. "Not more fish."

"You know what the doctor said."

He ate his fish in uninspired bites, leaving a third of it on the plate. She knew he consumed a sirloin steak and baked potato with butter and sour cream every day at lunch with his clients and his son-in-law. They lunched at a restaurant they'd patronized for years, where they had the waiters trained to unexpendable perfection.

Determined not to be so well trained, she folded her napkin in a neat square, placed her wrists on the table and declared she was prepared to welcome Randy and her friend into the house for as long as they cared to stay.

Franklin sipped his wine. "You don't care who she sleeps with?"

"That's right, I don't care." This was not true, but one learns from living with a lawyer that the truth, if it is to have any value at all, must work in the service of desire.

Blood suffused Franklin's face. "Well I do care. And I care where she does her sleeping. If she wants to visit, you tell her fine. You just tell her no more lovers and no more money." He scrutinized his wife across the table and the everyday pewter candlesticks: there was something of the everyday pewter to Margaret herself: expensive, well-polished, but an ordinary ungleaming grey for all that. "You never give up, do you Margaret?"

"Never. Not with my children or my flowers. I never give up."

Liz called the next day and accused Margaret of being unreasonable. How could she expect Father to cast off the values of a lifetime and welcome his daughter's lover under his roof and into her bed? Then she suggested that Randy and her lover could stay with them. Randy could have Jennifer's room and her lover could sleep on the couch. Liz said she didn't care how late he crept down to the couch as long as he was

there when the boys, Jason and Adam, got up at 6:30. Margaret said no.

Even though she was resolute with Liz, Margaret was still unwilling to write to Randy, welcoming her to the old neo-Tudor homestead. She needed Franklin's tacit — not approval, something less benign than approval — his oblique acquiescence was all she required. He often capitulated gently. He finally paid the medical bills on Randy's last accident after swearing he wouldn't put out another penny on a twenty-nine-year-old woman who was so irresponsible as to drive like a maniac without insurance. Then one afternoon he wandered out into the garden, checkbook in hand and asked her how much Randy needed. He wrote the check and put it on the glass-topped table, secured by the trowel. He commented on the overbearing red of the camellias that year and left. After these incidents Margaret could never quite decide if it were she or Randy who had been granted the favor, but hers was a pragmatic nature and these are not questions a busy woman has time for.

For days following the arrival of her letter, any mention of Randy caused Franklin's lips to curl into the peculiar twist of disapproval Margaret imagined he used on juries who returned unfavorable verdicts. Margaret dug through her arsenal, brandishing the weapons that had seen forty years' service in her marriage: tears, silence, a look both hateful and piteous. But this was a different battle and Franklin's sense of their impending penury made him intransigent. "There's a limit to what I can afford and what I can take. I'm retiring so I can't afford any more and I'm not going to take any more crap. She can't have any money and she can't sleep with some man under my roof. If she doesn't want either of those, then fine, she's welcome as any child would be."

But Randy was not any child. She never had been. Even as a little girl, she'd been frail, fretful, with too much imagination and too little restraint. Margaret suffered anxiety over her, but she believed these qualities were part of the shining bubble that glows inside each child and breaks at the edge of adolescence. Moreover, Margaret saw her own young self in Randy and she expected that one day, social pressures, the pleasures, the responsibilities of adulthood would chisel away at Randy as they had at Margaret. That was the way of the world after all: one tempered one's laughter, but never quite forgot how to laugh.

Then the late Sixties intervened and whatever else her daughter's life would be like, Margaret was forced to conclude it would be very different from Margaret's own. Nothing was tempered. It was all unspeakable, uncouth, ill-bred outbursts that passed for passion. Randy espoused rebellion and called it revolution. Randy preserved her adolescence inviolate in one university after another. Even marriage didn't bring Randy to her senses. None of her marriages. And if marriage didn't do it, Margaret had reflected sadly, what would?

Motherhood. Motherhood was the reward a woman enjoyed for enduring marriage. Motherhood was the great tenderizer, the feat, the act, the event that changed women from hapless girls into women of stature and passion and wisdom. One loved one's husband of course, but the attachment to a child was visceral.

When Randy was in graduate school in the midwest between her marriages, she

called collect. "Guess what, Mom!"

"Where are you?"

"In a laundromat. Guess what?"

Margaret stiffened. "What?"

"I'm pregnant. There's going to be a little bambino in about seven months. A little rock a bye baby!"

"That's wonderful!" Margaret cried before she remembered that Randy no longer had a husband or any immediate prospects of self support. "Will you get married?"

"Hell no, I'm having this baby for fun. I wouldn't marry the father even if I could. He's not important. He's smart and pretty good looking though. Anyway, if the kid gets his brains and my looks — just think!"

Just think. Margaret licked the peppermint flavored envelope and stamped it. She'd decided to invite Randy and her friend, no matter what Franklin said. In her letter she did not mention his conditions or even his forthcoming retirement and their reduced circumstances. She decided she would present Franklin with a *fait accompli*: the letter written and mailed. She wrote out Randy's address and took her keys and purse and drove straightaway to the post office before she had a chance to regret her haste.

She had regretted her haste then, in the matter of the baby. She'd believed that Franklin should have time to accustom himself to the uncomfortable facts long before Randy came home to have the baby, as she doubtlessly would.

"A bastard," Franklin fumed, "a bastard." And Margaret could not tell from his tone if he were referring to the child or to the man who so shamelessly seduced their daughter and refused to marry her. Margaret did not tell him that the child's bastardy was their daughter's choice and that the man's participation in this venture was purely physical and probably unknowing.

Franklin suffered. His fine lawyer's lips, poised, always ready to refute or deny, could not refute or deny this and he suffered. Margaret by contrast, bloomed like a hybrid rose in springtime. She was careful to speak to Franklin in somber halftones and contribute to his lugubrious silences, but the child, the promise and prospect of a child, rose and stirred within her, as if she carried that sweet secret herself, the growing fragment of her own desire. Franklin could go to hell. The Garden Club could go to hell. Margaret would look after Randy and comfort her when she wept that the pregnancy had been a dreadful mistake, that she didn't want the baby after all, only to get on with her own young, unencumbered life. Margaret would stroke Randy's fair head and tell her to take care of her health: Margaret would take care of the child. It would be a boy. A nice, clean-limbed, sturdy little boy with round arms and smooth hands and curly hair. He laughed when Margaret wrested a kiss from his warm neck and he built sand castles when she took him to the beach and he dug contentedly in the section of the garden she reserved for him. Margaret would teach him to clap his hands and wave bye-bye and instruct him in his manners and his ABC's. She'd pack his lunches and drive him to school. The best schools. And she wouldn't care what Franklin or anyone else said or thought because love is its own reward and requires no other and her pride could never be impugned because she was — she would be

— essential. She would not end up like the women of her aging acquaintance, superfluous, purposeless, empty vessels in a well-upholstered world. Margaret would be useful, contributing, nurturing and he — the dear boy — would always love his grandma best.

When Randy called again two months later she was not pregnant. It was all quite legal and sanitary and not very painful, but she needed money and she choked and said please Mother please don't when Margaret sobbed openly into the phone.

He would have been five this year, Margaret reflected, driving back from the post office. The dear boy had achieved as much flesh and form as imagination can knit around desire. He was dearer to her than Jennifer and Jason and Adam, but then, with them she had not performed the miraculous: they did not need to be kept alive and mourned in the same moment.

The accident report stated that the Mercedes had run the red light, but witnesses said that Margaret had not even touched her brakes, simply sailed through the intersection as if there were no other car in the world and certainly no red light. Mrs. Whitney was not available for her version of the accident because she had to be rushed to the hospital immediately and could not sign her copy of the report until the following day. Her daughter and her son-in-law and four members of the Garden Club donated blood for her and Liz came to see her every day, often bringing fresh camellias from the garden. Liz said she should not worry about anything: Liz had already written a quick, reassuring note to Randy, and Father would be eating dinner with them in Margaret's absence.

They wouldn't say how long that absence would be. The doctor said she could go home in a few days, but the bones — all of them with names like Roman matrons — tibia, fibula, ulna — would take a long time to mend. Her right arm and left leg would be bound in casts for a long time and after that she would be condemned to therapy for months before she could bend and squat, dig and prune amongst the azaleas, the camellias and the roses.

Franklin came during evening visiting hours. He brought Randy's letter, postmarked the day of the accident and mailed in a prestamped envelope. "I would have opened it, but it was only addressed to you," he said, clearly hurt at his exclusion. "Shall I open it anyway? It'll be hard for you."

"No, I must learn to do these things for myself." She held the envelope in her immobilized right hand and slit it with a plastic knife she'd saved from the dinner tray.

"What does she say?"

Margaret read the letter, licked her lips and placed it back in the envelope. She was reading *Pride and Prejudice*. She put it in the book.

"Well. What does she say?"

"Nothing." Then she remembered that sickbeds are supposed to be places of reconciliation, not further estrangement. "She's not coming out after all," Margaret said, "she can't afford it."

"Let me read the letter." He held out his hand.



"No. It was addressed to me."

"Oh, Margaret, we're too old to have secrets from one another."

"We're too old not to."

After visiting hours ended, the patients had a thirty-minute reprieve before the ingratiating, infuriating and overly familiar nurses marshalled them into bed. (Just because the nurse had to help one into the toilet or onto the bedpan didn't give her privileges beyond those of ordinary social intercourse after all.)

"Please," Margaret asked the nurse, "would you be good enough to get my checkbook out of my purse and hold it open for me?" The nurse complied, but Margaret found she could not hold a pen with her right hand, so she asked the nurse to write the date and her daughter's name and the sum of Five Hundred Fifty and no/100 dollars. With her left hand and the greatest contortion and concentration, Margaret signed her own name. When she finished, the name she'd borne for forty years looked foreign to her, scrawled, the letters pressing against each other as if they might ignite.

She tucked the check in *Pride and Prejudice* and once bedtime had been declared like a truce and a hush fell over the hospital, she punched the button to turn on the light over her head and re-read Randy's letter.

Mom —

Guess I'm not going to come out after all. At least not now. I'll be lucky if I can scrape the coins together to move across town, let alone across country. It's simple — David and I have split. I had the satisfaction of throwing him out. I sit here in this apartment I can no longer afford and all I can think of is that I didn't have to wash the sheets half the time after all. Someone else was sleeping in them too, so by rights that cuts it to a third. If only I'd known, I could have saved so much time. Isn't that ridiculous? Isn't that just the absolute limit?

David really is ignorant and not spiritual at all. He was spiritual with me. He was physical with her. It makes me sick. If only I'd known, I wouldn't have wasted my time. I've failed at every relationship. I stink of failure. I'll never be able to wash the stink off me. But what the hell. I've always played the game fairly — struck out every time, but at least I haven't spent my whole life yelling foul. Foul. Foul.

Don't worry about me, Mom. This is a big city. There are lots of jobs. Maybe I'll be a hatcheck girl and be discovered by a big producer and tapdance my way to stardom.

*Do Not Worry.* I'll see you sometime soon. Love to Dad.

Love,  
Randy.

Margaret withdrew the check from *Pride and Prejudice*. The pen still lay on the table and arching her unwilling left hand around it, she printed carefully, crazily at the bottom of the check: more to come. It took her twenty minutes. Then she went to sleep.

By the time Margaret returned home, January had waned and with it the rosy flush of the new year. February gleamed a dull ochre in the garden. Brown camellias rotted unswept from the stone walks, the azaleas drooped and the aphids took their ease on the rose petals. The disheveled garden pained Margaret more than her arm or her leg. Not only could she not work, she could only get around on crutches and with help. Liz came over daily bringing Jennifer and Jason and Adam after school. Liz was cheery and brisk and insisted her mother get out of the house and sit in the garden. Margaret acquiesced, only because she was tired and could not explain how the ruins disturbed and depressed her. Liz said not to fret, it would grow all by itself. Margaret said nothing. It was a fragile garden after all; it required timing and vigilance and now it would suffer all year from neglect. Now was the busy, the working season — the bulbs had to be exhumed from the refrigerator now and laid out in beds, the ragged fibrous bulbs that otherwise would not sprout, dazzle and bewitch in April. It was now, the bare root season, that the old roses had to be pruned and the new ones planted, now, now or they would never assemble resplendently like the crowned heads of Europe.

She could not force her bones to knit any faster and she still forbade Franklin's high school boy to touch her garden and Franklin was firm on the subject of useless extravagance: he said re-hiring the old gardener was out of the question, especially with her medical expense and his retirement only months away. Margaret wilted and wept in bed at night and finally he smoothed her hair and said he would do it himself. He wouldn't go sailing that weekend, he'd stay home and prune the roses. Margaret, swathed in her winter white cast, said he didn't really mean it. He swore he did.

He swore about a great many other things the following day. A check he wrote bounced and in an apoplectic froth he called the bank and lectured them about personal service and having been a good customer for forty years. They said they would have gladly paid his check, but it had bounced by five hundred dollars and that was too much even for a customer of forty years' standing.

"More to come?" he snarled. He waved a copy of the check in front of her nose as if it might stink. "What the hell is this? More to come? Where do you expect it to come from? DO YOU THINK I AM MADE OF MONEY?" He kicked her slippers across the bedroom, upsetting the remnants of her lunch tray. "What do you use for brains, Margaret?"

"I'm sorry," she said on cue or reflex. His face reminded her of a salami, coarse, red and white with little blackhead peppercorns. She had not noticed the blackheads

before. She smoothed the bedspread over her knees and studied her rings.

"Just what in hell do you think you're doing with my money? Haven't I told you —"

"It's my money too. This state has community property laws." She wished she could cite the proper statute to convince him that he must argue with her as an equal, not as if she were a child to be cowed by mere temper. Besides, she felt shining and inviolate in her white cast, as if she were a mountain peak, enveloped with snow and only her warm face framed by the rock and the clean hard crust of snow.

"Now you're telling me my business. Well just forgive me all to hell Margaret, but do you mind if I ask how you could write a five hundred and fifty dollar check and not tell me a thing about it? How could you!" He pushed the seed catalogs off the bed and they landed innocent, openfaced and colorful on the floor. The sight enraged him. "You and your goddamned garden. You care more about your goddamned garden than you do about me. You don't give a damn about me. How could you do this to me?"

"I was afraid to tell you," she said, the hard crust of snow dissolving under the admission. "You were being so nice to me and I was afraid of what you would do."

"Do! You knew what I would do. You made sure I couldn't do a damn thing. What can I do? It's been paid now. But I'll tell you this — this much I can do — there is no 'more to come.'" He mimicked painfully. "This is it. You've pushed me to the limit. I'm taking your name off this account."

"Randy needed the money. Don't you see?" she pleaded. "She needed it. She would have —" Margaret didn't know what she would have done, only that it would have been dire and unpleasant and it was too bad that Randy failed at everything, but it was so and didn't — couldn't — matter.

"She'd have to go out and get a decent job and support herself like everyone else in America, that's what she'd have to do. You've done this. This is all your fault. You've turned her into a parasite and a lousy excuse for an adult. Always handing out little treats behind my back, weren't you? Oh, I know this has been going on for a while. Fifty dollars here, fifty dollars there. You're never going to come to your senses, are you? Well she's thirty-two years old and the Gimme Days are over. She's not getting another penny from me and you're not going to be able to buy her off any more."

"I don't buy her off!"

"You buy her love. She knows it. I know it. You'd know it too if you weren't so damn stupid. Well I don't care if Randy loves me or not, or if you love me or not. I don't want her to love me. I want her to respect me and to respect herself too, and that's more important than love." He jammed the check into his pocket and slammed the door after him so that the beveled glass in the mirror chattered and the perfume bottles rattled in reply.

Margaret sank deeper into her cold cast. Nothing was more important to her than love, nothing was supposed to be. Was it? Wasn't it love that enobled men and beautified women? Wasn't it love that gave shape and stature to life and wasn't it simple, love? Was she supposed to have shaved and pared love into genus and species, to recognize all the hybrids and varietals? Had her whole life fled and left her ignorant? Wasn't love like the roses and azaleas and camellias that needed only nurture and

diligence and protection — what she could have given him — the dear boy — who, never born, comforted his grandmother, appeared to her, bent over her knees and wept. Her cast did not prevent her from stroking his damp cheeks and weeping with him and it did not seem to matter that Margaret Whitney's nose ran unheeded down her face or that tears dripped off her chin.

Twenty minutes later she heard the car start up and screech away and she was glad he had gone. She blew her nose and lay back amongst the pillows and invited a troubled sleep. When she woke the February twilight set in and the room was dusted with darkness. Unimpeded silence crept around her and she began to hope Franklin would come back. There are ways, after all, not of rectifying the undeniable damage, but living around it, letting one's differences die a decorous death.

She turned on the lamp, poised her feet on the floor and dialed Liz's number from the bedside phone. Liz answered, her voice ripe with chagrin. "Let me speak to your father," Margaret said sharply.

"Mother, you really —" Liz began.

"Please let me speak to your father."

He took a long time coming to the phone. "I'm sorry," Franklin said. Believe me, Margaret, I'm really sorry."

Usually Franklin's sorrow required her supplication. She started to cry again. "I'm sorry too."

"I don't know what came over me, Margaret. I must have been out of my mind."

"I should have told you about the check."

"I just about had a heart attack when I saw that check, but that doesn't excuse me, not at all."

"We all say mean things now and then, don't we?"

"It'll all grow back, Margaret."

"Grow back?" She stopped weeping.

A short, moist pause followed. Franklin said: "Have you been outside?"

"No — should I?" She heard a rattle in the phone and some garbled voices and then Liz came on the phone and said Mother, Mother. But Mother — Margaret — swallowed stones one after another, so it seemed because she could not breathe, and she left the phone on the nightstand, reached for her crutches, tucked them under her arms, pulled herself from the bed and made her way out of the bedroom with Liz's far away voice squawking after her. She thumped carefully down the stairs, then past the kitchen and dining room to the living room where the French doors opened to the garden. She pressed her face to the glass and the darkness and then she switched on the floodlights and stepped outside into the grotesque shadows cast by the half-decapitated branches, the beheaded roses, the slashed azaleas, the mutilated camellias. The pruning shears lay at her feet. She moaned audibly.

Cold invaded Margaret, the cold of the February night, cold she could taste, rage she could fathom and loathing she could not dispel or resist. She used the crutches to clear herself a path through the severed flowerheads and petals. She took a deep breath

of cold. "If I'd known," she said to the dismembered garden, "if only I'd known, I could have saved so much time." The absolute limit. And she wondered if Randy would have stayed with a man who had wounded the one thing she had left to love or if Randy would have thrown him out long before he discovered what that one thing was.

**J.B. Goodenough**

**REFLECTION**

Your face in the water:  
I see the double silence,  
Mouth and water are still.

One pebble and two things  
Break because I can't  
Look at so much quiet.

The water shatters from  
Side to side, your face is  
A hundred mouths all shouting.

**Margot Treitel**

**THE BUTTERFLY HUNT**

*"Sometimes it seems to me that man is come where he is not wanted, where there is no place for him."*

*Joseph Conrad, Lord Jim*

I travel into myself through incidental scenery.  
I'm not going anywhere. There are few roads  
leading to real places. I lie on the heart,

daring it to touch me. There are exotic things  
around each corner I can't describe or even see.

If only the landscape looked like it should.  
If only the people did what I expected.

Butterflies move through the red air, no one  
notices. I've seen it all before.  
Here are the failings of another climate.

I blink my eyes. A dozen images.  
I can't count them. No one notices.

## SLEEP IN THE TROPICS

The mail is slow here but we're avid  
for more news of what happened three months ago  
and read this as if it were yesterday.

That gloss of a full page spread, lovers  
embraced on a stone that looks over the bay,  
a floppy hat in her hand, three shades of  
bright blue against white as they  
slip behind the wheel and turn the key.

Consider our few remaining possessions.  
Should we, as Ralph suggests, open the last  
can of pears and, living as kings do, inhale  
the fragrance. Then eat, drink, compelling  
each moment to be brave and exceptional.



## Alan Nagata

### DA WELL

I going tell you one true story bout my Uncle Koji. Dis really wen happen fo real kine cuz my granmudda wen tell me dis, an my granmudda, she no bull shet.

Wuz long time ago wen my uncle he wuz still one young buck. Him, my Aunty Alice, an my cousin Shinji, all dem wuz living down Ka'u side in one plantation camp. Nowadays dey call da place Pahala, but befo wuz jus one suga cane camp in da boondocks. Had plenty Japanee guys, es wuz befo all da Flips wen come.

Anyways, all Koji dem dey live in da kine shacks. Dey wuz supa pooah. Es da kine would be on welfeah if had em in doze days. All da men fokes dey work in da fields from morning to night, an dey come home all buss up cuz es wuz real crack ass job. Da wahines dey gotta cook an wash clothes li dat. An dey use to grow plenty vegetables cuz sometime dey no mo nuff fo eat. An some guys dey raise cows fo get milk, dat is if dey can afford fo buy one cow.

But my uncle, he save up fo buy one gun. He figga dat he can go up da mountain wen he get day off an shoot one pig or one goat so dey no need buy meat from da plantation stoah. My aunty, she neva like da gun aroun da house cuz Shinji wuz only one small pitot an she tell not safe. But she no can do notting cuz you know da man he weah da pants.

An da lunas an da haole big boss dey neva like Koji have da gun. Dey wuz scared Koji wuz going shoot em li dat. Da lunas an da big boss dey all live in da kine mansion an dey always going Hilo side fo buy good kine kaukau. Dey figga dat da workas come jealous so dey no like em carry gun, bumbye trouble. But dey neva need worry cuz Koji he cool head an he no grumble notting.

Da lunas an da big boss dey live fa away from da workas anyway. Da workas dey befo time live on da grass in front da mansion, but dey wen move mo close to da well down below side. Dey figga da mo close dey stay to da well, den da wahines no grumble wen dey gotta haul wata. Da haole boss he get his wata from da flume right back his mansion. He no need worry bout da well.

So one day my uncle he wen go up da mountain hunting cuz da boss give em time off. Wuz Easta or someting li dat. Koji he wen tell byebye to Aunty an Shinji an wen go mauka wit his hunting dog. He wen go bout five-six in da morning cuz him he like fo stay all day. Wen he stay on da mountain he can spok Pahala town an all da cane field all aroun, an if no stay rain den can see da ocean. He wen enjoy walking on da mountain cuz wuz all green an smell ono. Dis wuz befo da 1950 eruption so neva have lava fo him

walk on top. Jus had grass an trees an stuff li dat. An he foget about da buss ass work an da pilau lunas yelling at him all da time. He no tink bout how he no can affod fo sen Shinji go college. He no tink bout notting.

Koji he usually nail one goat by lunch time, an den he skin em an gut em an come home fo kaukau. But dis one time he no can hit one goat fo notting, an wuz already aftanoon an still yet no mo. My uncle he hard head bugga, no like give up. He wen stay until no mo bullets, an by den wuz almos night time.

*Ho da poho*, he wen tink. He wen stay all day, he been shoot all da bullets, an what? Notting. He should have go home lunch time wuz. Now wuz getting dak an he figga mo betta stay in da mountain odda wise get loss.

Muss have been horrors dat night. Koji neva bring jacket. He wuz supa cold an he wuz stahving cuz he wen give da dog his musubi. Plus he wuz shetting bricks cuz he neva like see one obake come jumping at him from da bushes. He wuz so scared he wen talk story wit da dog fo keep company. Den he wen go sleep, cuz no matta how much he wuz shaking, he wuz all wipe out.

Wen he wake up he wen yell "Ai ya!" cuz wuz late already. He wen make it down da mountain so he no be late fo work. Da lunas dey swear at you an somtimes dey give you one whack in da head cuz you no come on time. Koji wuz sweating li one hoss by da time he reach Pahala. He neva even stop his house. He wen go straight fo da fields an wen pass by da well even dough he neva drink notting since da odda day.

But wen he come da working place, jus li wuz pau hana time. All da workas dey lying aroun goofing off. Some guys dey stay fut aroun wit one torch fo burn da cane, but Koji knew no wuz time fo burn cane yet. Den he saw da buggas had sake an dey stay sucking em right in da open, an on working time yet.

"Hey you lolos, what da hell you doing," Koji wen yell. Den errybody dey turn aroun an spok Koji. Dey no say notting fo long time an jus look at my uncle. Den all one time dey buss laugh an da guys wit da torch wen light da suga cane an dey all wen go pupule, an dey stay run all ova da place.

Koji he wen take off cuz wuz mo scared dan obake. He stay look fo da lunas but neva have not even one. He wen go his house cuz had Aunty an Shinji by demselves. Dis place wuz crazy an Koji tink mo betta get da hell outa deah.

No soona he get in da doah wen Aunty whack em wit one broom. "Now is da time, now is da time," she stay yell jus li one mental wahine. Koji wen try fo calm down Aunty but she no like stay still. She go outsi an start whacking all da neighbor cow, an all da odda wahines dey doing da same ting.

Uncle wen follow Aunty all da time stay ask her "Where Shinji?" Aunty she only tell "He ma-ke, you ma-ke, we all ma-ke, die, dead."

Had plenty da kine black smoke from da cane field cuz da fire wuz going good. All da men fokes dey stay come to da camp an singing da kine Japanee fight song. My uncle he stay all shook up, he neva know wat fodo. He just stan aroun li one damn fool. An den one fella wen yell "Look Koji, he stay funny kine. Us go kill em."

"Try wait, try wait," dey tell Koji, an dey all stay smile at him jus li he one piece ono sashimi.

Koji wen hele on fo da ditch by da well, but he been run so fast dat he wen come all patai an went take one blow. Den his dog, who wuz all da time wit him, wen go to da well an drink weah some wata wen spill. Da dog wen drink, an den he start running in circles, trying fo eat his tail.

"Sonofgabitch," my uncle wen tell. "Es da wata stay make em all pupule." So Koji wen go to da well an bring up da bucket. He figga if errybody else stay lolo, might as well make same kine. He wen drink da wata an close his eyes fo wait till da ting take effek. Afta two-tree seconds he tink, *Eh, dis ting no work, I not lolo*, but wen he open his eyes he been sing an run aroun jus li da odda guys.

Koji wen go talk story wit da workas, an funny ting, dey all make sense, dey no stay crazy no mo.

"Us gotta holo holo," Koji wen tell. "Da suga stay all burn so now us gotta go da haole boss mansion an teah dat bugga down."

So all dem wen go up da place weah had da boss mansion an dey try fo get in da doah but wuz lock up. All da lunas wuz by da windows an wen da workas try fo get in da lunas smash em in da face. Den little while mo all da lunas from Naalehu town wen come fo help da haole boss. Neva take mo den half hour fo tie up all da guys an put em in da mansion fo safe keeping.

"Which one da ring leader?" da haole boss he like know. All da lunas dey point at Koji. "Him da pilau bugga." Koji he only laugh an talk nonsense. "No fool aroun wit da high maka maka," he wen tell. "Da chief whip your okole."

Da odda workas dey let em go nex day an wuz all regula afta dat. Da haole boss wen figga dey all wen drink too much sake, es why wen get out of han.

But my uncle, dey wen take em to da calaboose in Hilo. Dey figga he da trouble makah cuz he had gun li dat, so dey lock em up fo long time. He no could affod lawyer, so even dough no wuz his fault he gotta go jail fo twenny someting years. He neva even shoot da gun, you know.

Now Uncle Koji stay da Pomaikai Centa wit all da odda makule guys. He still yet little bit pupule. He all da time stay ask fo Shinji, but dey neva did fine him. Dey figga Shinji wen get burn by da fire wen all dem wuz lolo. But Koji he no unnastan dat Shinji ma-ke. Koji no unnastan notting.

I no stay make dis story up, you know. You tink I bull shet you, go talk story wit my Uncle Koji. He set you straight.

**Chris K. Taniguchi**

**CHASING THE 'TRANE**

*An Elegy for Coltrane*

Slow down, 'Trane, quit blowing  
so fast — you're leaving me in the scattered  
leaves and paper cups.  
Bring it down down low  
when you put that spike into your vein  
and the notes will blanket that  
ice-cube city jumping at your feet . . .  
There you will find salvation, a cold nirvana  
rushing through those reeds  
telling me, telling them,  
how the rainbow is found by closing the eyes  
to the wet gutters and following that line  
twisting through charcoal streets.  
Till heaven must be there against the moving brick.  
Broken-eyed, the stage lights glare into  
a harsh scream; man you cool, you cool,  
hold on to the keys and cry baby, cry;  
we love it, we clap, we hoot

**Gay Sibley**

**TIMING**

In satiety,  
the lion trails his tongue  
along his bristled lip.  
Matted and damply red,  
his great weight of a paw  
splays like a sleepy lover's  
across the steaming haunch  
of whatever he's dragged and broken.

I come upon him safely,  
unrecognized by emptied eyes  
that flatten beyond my alertness  
to frame the grand land's cape:  
grasslands rolling to cobalt,  
zebras grazing, the shadow of a tree.

Cheryle Hannigan

## THE SEARCH FOR WALTER HORACE

North

Walking on the stone wall, the kids watch the wedding reception. They are hidden by pine trees. The music, the green and yellow pavilion, the men thrown into the pool in their tuxedos. A lady spots them in their spying place and brings them cake. Already the men are wringing out their cuffs and getting into cars.

From within the cattails and stump grass, bullfrogs "harummf," red winged blackbirds perch briefly on raspberry bushes then suddenly flee; the girls shoving the rowboat into the water, lazy catfish dispersing. Only turtles are motionless on rocks when the girls row to the middle and dunk themselves, swimming beneath the boat, opening their eyes in the green water, returning to the surface, using the wooden oars as floats. Nothing left to do but become blood sisters. They scratch their mosquito bites and trade blood.

Fire engines charge into the long driveway across the street. A movie star's wife was sunbathing nude at the adjacent private lake when she saw the Piper Cub go down. She wears a terry robe and calmly directs traffic. Waiting for the news team on its way from the city, the same kids look on, examining smashed computer pieces later, the body of the small plane broken between trees. It ran out of gas. The pilot was OK.

Dawdling near the mailbox, they see the movie star drive in. They smile and wave (had sold Girl Scout cookies to the maid). He checks the mail.

"Can we have your autograph?"

He rummages briefly for some paper. They watch his arm with thick silver bangles extend from the window.

When he's gone June says, "I would say he's a — turquoise."

"But he's black."

"Not body color. If I were a green, you would look at me green."

The other side — what was it like to be there?

## To South

Spring, midday, shoppers plod through mud. June passes The Eighth Note, where she owes on her guitar (in the supermarket, she met the manager who said nothing, still says nothing). An extra fifteen dollars is in her wallet, originally Kevin's for his birthday. He wants records for his stereo, but sends her on the mission to choose ones she would like. She buys some Walter Horace albums.

Listening to Horace's Southern rock for a month, she imitates the sounds on her guitar, sings the lyrics, knows them all. Convinced her infatuation with the recording star is love, she rides a late train to Grand Central, a midnight bus to Georgia. The dingy flat she finds has a gas heated fireplace, its only asset. It is a cheap apartment owned by a mortuary director. Around 4 in the afternoon, she can smell cremations. She clears out almost all of the former tenant's possessions: doilies, aprons, trinkets. Keeps some things, throws most away. Three Glad trash bags are outside her door. Sirens scream to the nearby hospital where Agnes, the previous tenant (whoever she was), died.

Her neighbor has renovated his place. Drapes, wall to wall, color TV. Having worked construction in Hawaii three years before moving back home, he now works only when he's called, stays at home alone, laughing to himself watching "Leave It to Beaver" in the afternoon.

In the Pinto he loans her, still with its Hawaii plates, she drives thirty miles to where the rock star lives. No guts. She visits the wildlife sanctuary instead, gets red clay on her shoes. Near twilight, she floors the yellow Pinto on the black asphalt, a gentle ribbon, wants to make a left where the band lives, sees a blue pickup turning there, the driver looking at her, a friend of his? She doesn't turn in.

At a junction there's the church where they say he first played. June, skinny, combs a small grocery for Georgia style chicken salad. A young girl with a blank look (assisting — for what?) resembles Walter Horace. She wonders if she's his.

Electricians finish installing the dance floor an hour before the club's opening. Waitresses wash new glasses, silk sleeves rolled up.

Lights flash in a trial run. Switch a pattern. Now. Yeah!

June takes orders. Where were they sitting? The tray is cramped with drinks, heavy on her arm. Gradually, 500 people enter. She gets a quick beer for the sportscaster she's seen on TV.

"Would you like a raise?" a man asks her. She speaks with him long enough to get a good tip, not realizing at the time why she speaks.

"You're doing super," one of the managers says while passing her. They know June has never done this before.

Sitting next to the dance floor, the former governor, his wife and eight friends and associates order drinks on VISA. Yellow, pink is brighter there; everyone can see her

performing, clearing the napkins, poking them into wasted glasses, dumping cigarette butts; then she takes still another order from a couple in the dark, the man prodding her elbow, on the way to get the politician's drinks, the tray always heavy.

The other waitress takes it easy, talks about her baby twins. Steals June's tips. June cannot prove this, so she watches some people leaving, fumbling, dropping money on the floor, remembering where to find it (silver dollars later).

Again and again, a man wearing dark glasses orders double Cuervo Gold sunrises two at a time, tipping her with each order. Each time she stops at his table she overhears conversation about the recording studio.

The place is closing at 2. Almost everyone has left, but the music still plays. The managers are kicking out the stragglers. Looking somewhat like the rock star, the man wearing dark glasses comes over and sits next to her at the bar. She is having the drink they allow her on the house.

"Do you want to dance?" he asks.

"I couldn't. My legs are going to fall off. Maybe next time." (But June knows she wouldn't dance with him. She's too in love with the rock star.)

Finishing his Cuervo with her, he tells her, "My name is Lucky."

"I'm June. I heard you talking about Walter Horace —"

"Yeah. A friend of mine works over at the studio. We can stop in. ..."

"Have you ever met him?"

"Yeah, I've met him. He's a pain in the ass."

Closed circuit TV cameras face the sidewalk and are in the lobby (who know where else?). The receptionist talks to his girlfriend long distance. On the walls are gold and platinum LPs in frames. Lucky says they would play. . . In a nearby practice room a band warms up, and there's the longest lick she's ever heard. She didn't know anyone else that good was on the same label.

The receptionist tells June and Lucky that Walter Horace's band is recording, that they are on a tight schedule and will be for weeks. He is being polite. Get out. Stay out of our hair (maybe Lucky's friend sweeps the floors).

"Why bother?" Lucky says and June is crestfallen.

They stop in again a week later. Sorry, we can't help you.

"Do they think I'm a narc?"

"You're a saint," says Lucky.

June leaves the key to her apartment with her neighbor and misses her NY bus because it says Toronto. She spends the evening back in the flat (her neighbor still had the key). Lucky wants to take her to the club. No.

On the way out of town the next day, while nibbling pretzels, she reads the newspaper. There's a picture of Walter Horace on page 2. The article describes his impromptu appearance the night before at the club she just quit.



Is it cowardice, not to know what's on the other side?

## North

Except for her and a large, abandoned hotel, the road is empty. Its roof sags and the numerous windows are dark. She walks, breathing early summer air warmed only recently in the mountains. The hotel will be demolished, but it strikes her as something joyous — it's great to be in the NY mountains! Trees are finally in full foliage and the creek will be warm enough to swim in.

Opposite the hotel is an empty lot. An obsolete fire engine with rounded dull red fenders will remain there unless it's towed. She cuts through the lot, investigates a wooden cottage. Mustiness and old candy wrappers inside. She sits on the porch reading copies of *National Geographic* from the 40's.

When a pack of 20 wild dogs approaches, she can do nothing. She hates dogs; afraid, at least, of these. They are all untamed mongrels, gray and excited.

"Hi boys. . .Ooooh. . .yeah!"

They run frenzied, back and forth, past each other. Maybe one of their ancestors lounged on this porch as she had a moment ago. She was going to take some of the *National Geographics* with her. Instead her adrenaline equips her to run; she's angry these dogs interrupt the afternoon. They hustle past the cottage.

In her room above the pizzeria, she hears pool balls clacking and the jukebox starting over and over again. She showers.

The casino is the only place alive at night in the hamlet. She goes there, sits with the chambermaids, all ordering Rhine wine. Lights dim and older couples near the open space sit erect when a belly dancer melts toward the center. Everything is blue, the dancer's silk, the walls, your hands; her gossamer veil waves when the band plays upbeat.

"She came up from the city," one of the chambermaids says.

Bernie, manager of the casino, joins them at their table. He's very silent, almost wistful, inspecting the show. During the intermission, he buys them a round of wine after their day of scrubbing toilets, replacing towels, making beds. Tips on the dresser. June's work was those dogs.

She moves into a chair next to Bernie. "Could I do a song?" she asks.

"What do you have?"

"Mostly Southern rock."

Looking at the crowd, sparse, early in the season, he tells her, "At the end of the night."

They begin to confer. "You need something else to wear." Her jeans and halter must be covered for the older, faithful summer clientele. "Too hep," he says to himself. He returns with a white jacket. "Here, try this on."

In the ladies' room, she turns, viewing herself from all sides in the mirrors. The belly dancer is finished, making the waitresses busier than ever. June talks to the band, finds out what songs they know. As the lead guitarist plays without the amplifier, they all join in softly. She sings the lyrics to them twice.

She is walking to the center, hearing the runs of the introduction, so loud. Then it's her time. She's wailing, people have complemented her before, flailing when she's supposed to, walking to the center, to the edge, the old couples sitting sedately, chambermaids cheering her on. . .at the end, everyone applauds.

The falls gush into clear green water — cement crags on either side: a deserted electric dam since blown open; no more reservoir, just an ancient powerhouse for sunbathers. She dives 15 feet through the air and 12 feet farther through the cold current to a soft silt bottom. Some dive from the very top, twice as high, but she thinks they're crazy.

As if strewn by Providence, flat boulders, haphazardly positioned, border the creek, washed by receded flood waters. She lies on one, composing lyrics, the smell of her tanning oil in her nose. It's a new song about the casino:

People want you real, Ooo ah Ooo ah,  
ones you know want you quiet sometimes, oo ah oo ah  
happy enough to laugh ooo  
don't you steal their time. . .Ooooh

The creek, the only place where she can be truly alone.

Bernie likes the song. "I could get you a show in Vegas," he says. "One of the smaller places, but then, who knows? (He has managed other singers.)

"I'm thinking of opening a club on Long Island. You could co-manage. . .if I bought you some clothes, would you wear them?"

"They sit in a small Italian bar down the mountain.

"We could go out to Vegas together," Bernie continues (you'd be my woman). "So— I'm taking you under my wing?"

Wanting to sing along with the jukebox, she wonders how much of this is a scam, thinking up lyrics for the rest of the song:

Set my car keys on the gnarled antique wood oo ah  
drove 'til late that night. . .

thinkin' people near the cigarette machine oo oo ah  
hadn't heard a sound. . .

"June?"

He must be 50 — 55, she thinks, fiddling with her necklace, a graduation gift (when was that?), silver with two mother of pearl doves. "Lovebirds," her mother had said.

"You shrewd son of a bitch."

"Hey, I like that." He smiles at her, knows she means harm. "OK, let's flag it."

"Flag it," she repeats. "You can leave me the flag on your grave."

Laughing, "Yeah, I'm a veteran. . ." Laughing more.

She slams the door of the Italian bar.

To be desperate is to be vulnerable.

**Robert Bowie**

**DAYLAMPS**

a snuffed candle sits  
in the middle of  
a yellow tulip  
it doesn't matter  
nymphs  
will come in  
the quiet of lightless  
morning and touch  
sparklers to hang —  
tongue wicks

moondews will evaporate  
and we will see before us  
once again in revised  
fields the soft glow of  
inverted lampshades

Walter Pavlich

EXPLANATIONS TO THE MIRROR

Two hours along a quiet road  
you tramp the first tracks  
in woods heavy with snow.  
Those pines always bend  
to the darkness of snow.  
Grandmother, is this how it was?  
The corners folding, the room  
crashing down in white?

You wake next morning  
world dead in your arms  
and know the damned stay damned.  
Everything dark survives:

the eye is a pin is a river  
is a madman in the corner laughing with the walls.  
Where did the angel go?  
Who put water in his tears?  
Mother crow swallows the air  
that drunk men burn in their sleep.

No. Tell the mirror you need old hands.  
Why old women dance in the ceiling of your bones.  
That light never knocked. It entered.  
And she dumb from light left you  
with one tree leaning in its nightmare.

Maybe your dreams are wrong.  
Maybe you dissolve like weather leaving another heap  
for sky to wind down on. What then?  
Ashes, ashes we all break down.

**James Sallis**

**CONJURING**

Everywhere the children point out our lives  
in gestures of misdirection

In livingrooms they perform for relatives, friends  
Their knees fall open for a hundred rich uncles

They escape our containers, rebound from the walls  
like rabbits; we cut them in half, separate them

Old teeth snap shut inside drawers:  
behind glass walls

Where the hands of their fathers  
shake with resignation

Perry Glasser

## PANIC

The eight-foot wall surrounding Jacobi's garden was a foot thick and might have been topped with broken glass, but it was not. Intermittent vines, honeysuckle, seemed in places to grip the wall so strongly that large irregular plates of the wall's sand surface had crumbled, exposing the white plaster and gray concrete blocks beneath. To the gate's left a vertical fracture line meandered the wall's full height. In that fissure ivy had taken hold. The small green leaves would quiver in a slight breeze. The two wooden doors of the gate, painted dark brown, could have been opened outward, but the thick beam resting horizontally in the twin clasps had never been lifted. To the gate's right an olive tree flourished. The garden was precisely planned, flowering plants geometrically arranged. Out of the dark earth in their seasons grew forsythia, peonies, tulips and jonquil, gladiola and chrysanthemum, but Jacobi's pride were the roses, their delicate petals a rich, dark, pure crimson.

All the first day Jacobi sat on one of the six chrome and rattan chairs on the red brick patio. Jacobi's woman lay on a yellow chaise beside him, her eyes closed. Though Jacobi's woman was in the bright sun, Jacobi stayed in the shadow of the yellow canvas awning. The awning's scalloped edge flapped limply, but a few times the wind gusted suddenly and the canvas snapped and cracked sharp. Jacobi's woman would briefly open her agate eyes. The cloudless sky was perfectly blue, except for an occasional puff of white smoke drifting from the south. They could smell the burning.

Jacobi's woman was a good deal younger than he. Her face was without lines. She wore a white tennis shirt and red cotton shorts. Her long legs were smooth and tan, darker than the sand-finished wall. Late in the afternoon of the first day, when the sun was strongest, she sat up for a moment and pulled off her shirt, then lay down again. Her breasts and belly were the same color as her legs. Jacobi believed she slept.

Jacobi slowly sipped a collins, the sweating glass cool in his hand, the lemon taste clean in his throat. On the glass tabletop was a small black and white television. Jacobi had turned the knob several times round, but each channel showed much the same pictures. With a short grease pencil Jacobi jotted notes on a yellow pad.

Everywhere, everyone had packed their cars with children and furniture, clothing and canned goods, dogs and dishes, cats and guns, whatever would fit, and they fled. Jacobi could detect no pattern or reason. In the East and in the West they engorged the highways, frantic. There seemed to be no point but movement. Jacobi watched his television and saw an interview of a driver enmeshed in the traffic approaching a

bridge. The reporter asked the man where he went and why. The hand-held camera jiggled, but Jacobi was able to observe the driver's abject fear as he turned helplessly to the haggard woman beside him, the exquisite frustration in his stiff arms as he pressed both hands to the car's horn, the bestial rage in his rolling eyes, and then the driver suddenly punched the reporter and pushed the microphone away. Jacobi made a note of it.

They cut to the view from a helicopter, miles and miles of a four lane highway glutted with cars and buses, trucks and motorcycles, all headed in the same direction, barely moving, several vehicles mired in the soft ground that divided the east and westbound lanes, though it was a mistake to think of the lanes as having directions anymore, for all lanes were clogged going west. The air was thick with a choking gray cloud of exhaust. Then there had been a fight between the helicopter pilot and the cameraman, one or the other did not want to return to the city — Jacobi could not tell which — there had been a struggle, and the picture had abruptly gone dark. Jacobi wrote on his pad.

And, as the day wore on, Jacobi noted that the implacability of network anchormen began to erode. Their eyes would not lock on the camera but shifted evasively from side to side, as though to look directly into the camera were somehow the tacit admission of some shameful act. Sport coats and ties vanished early. The quality of the sound became fuzzy or faded in and out as technicians deserted their posts. Jacobi was not surprised when the gray-templed anchorman, once called the most trusted man in the country, drummed his knuckles on his desk, coughed, stuttered, rattled his copy noisily near his microphone, tried but could not clear his throat, visibly paled, and then simply bolted. The picture on Jacobi's screen spun drunkenly; the cameraman must have run off too. Jacobi heard inarticulate shouts and the picture settled on what he guessed were a number of thick electrical cables on the studio floor. Then the picture eroded to snow and the sound dissolved to the clicks and hiss of static. Jacobi looked at his wristwatch. 5:20. He made a note of it.

But on that first day in the placid garden there was little sense of the contagion. The setting sun cast the long shadow of the wall over Jacobi and Jacobi's woman. There was a highway not far beyond the wall, past the copse of dogwood, and Jacobi listened, but he heard no sound in the stillness of dusk other than the rustle of the olive tree's leaves and the gently flap of the yellow awning's scalloped edge. Of course there was the odor of burning, but neither Jacobi nor Jacobi's woman was yet distressed by that. The odor was faint, very distant, only a suggestion of an odor, really, and it was not so strong as the fragrance of the roses resting on their white trellis.

The air chilled. Jacobi touched his woman's arm and her eyes fluttered open. Jacobi's woman pulled her tennis shirt over her head, and they walked together beneath the white portico and through the French doors into the house. Jacobi shut the doors and, almost as an afterthought, untied the gold cords that gracefully held back the stiff green taffeta drapes.

On the morning of the second day Jacobi sat again beneath the awning, his yellow



pad and grease pencil before him on the glass tabletop. Periodically he tried the television and, as he expected, got no reception at all. He had a small battery operated radio, no more than a toy, and by holding it to his ear, his thumb firmly against the selector dial, he was able now and again to pick up distant signals, even what must have been the last commercial message — a peremptory request that, for his own well-being and more importantly to avoid social ostracism, he purchase a certain candied breath mint remarkable for its subtle taste of eucalyptus. Jacobi was unable to determine from where the snatches of talk originated. None of the announcers gave any hint of identification. They might have been broadcasting from within hailing distance of the wall or from hundreds of miles away. They told of cities in flames; of deserted vehicles like husks of dead insects littering the roads, their drivers fled on foot across the countryside; of fistfights that flowered into riots that soon became desperate pitched battles with no objective and therefore no possible victory. Doctors left hospitals, mothers abandoned children, soldiers ran from their posts. Jacobi heard several reports of planes colliding in flight and once, very faintly, a report of a cruise ship unable to dock, whose passengers had leapt into the sea intent on obtaining the shore.

The details were of passing interest to Jacobi, but the tone of the voices crackling through his radio told Jacobi more than what was said. The voices were squeezed with triumph, exultant as though these events were long awaited and finally arrived. There was much high-pitched staccato laughter, a good deal of profanity, and an occasional outburst of weeping. After the last, the station invariably went silent. Jacobi dutifully noted all on his yellow pad.

For a time he watched a bee hover before the fully opened blossom of a rose, how the furious beating of the bee's wings enabled it to remain motionless. Then, abruptly, the bee darted off and was lost to his sight.

Again on that second day, in the early afternoon, the odor of burning drifted over the wall into Jacobi's garden. Wisps of white smoke settled about the flowers and floated through the olive tree like cobwebs among the leaves and branches. There was no wind. There were no clouds.

Jacobi's woman came from the house holding a tray set with two tall tumblers of iced tea and two cress sandwiches, the crusts neatly sliced from their sides. She sat beside him on a chrome and rattan chair and they ate.

Jacobi's woman wore only a pair of blue shorts. The skin of her neck tightened and slackened when she chewed her sandwich and sipped her tea. The second day was warmer than the first. Jacobi watched small droplets of perspiration form at his woman's throat and upper chest, then trickle into the valley between her breasts. When she finished lunch and rose from her chair, Jacobi watched the long muscles of her back flex just under her amber skin as she turned and took her customary place at his side on the chaise. She moved with great grace and barely suppressed power. Jacobi stirred his tea with a long silver spoon. That second day Jacobi's woman masked her eyes with dark sunglasses. She placed her tea within easy reach on the red brick of the patio. Jacobi's woman preferred sugar. In Jacobi's tea floated a thin rind of lemon.

"The garden will be lovely this year," she said.

"Yes," he said.

A tiny dot of perspiration in the furrow of her upper lip glistened in the sun. Jacobi's woman delicately muted a cough.

"Do you think we have long?" she asked.

"Perhaps. It's difficult to say."

Jacobi's woman adjusted her sunglasses and shifted her position on the chaise. "It's a dreadful noise," she said.

Jacobi realized that all morning he had heard the din welling from beyond the wall, but until that moment he had not consciously acknowledged it. He corrected his notes, careful to include his own curious lapse in accuracy. A dull roar, something like the insistence of surf and an incoming tide, grew ever louder.

"I suppose it comes from the highway," he said.

Jacobi watched a helicopter circle overhead, wobbling atop the column of air its blades pushed to the earth, how the furious spinning of the helicopter's propellers enabled it to remain motionless. Then, abruptly, the helicopter darted off and was lost to his sight.

Some time passed. The odor of burning became a permeating stench. The white smoke thickened to gray. The air, calm all morning, became restless.

Jacobi's woman sat up. Her pointed pink tongue flicked, and the dot of perspiration in the furrow of her upper lip vanished. Her breasts shimmered with the suddenness of her movement.

"I want to go," she said. "I must."

Jacobi nodded.

"I'm sorry," she said.

Jacobi nodded again. "Can you say why?" He lifted the grease pencil over the pad.

Jacobi's woman shook her head. Jacobi wondered what might have been in her eyes, but her sunglasses denied him the necessary vision.

"Do you think the wall . . .?"

"No," he said. "I don't see how it could."

Jacobi's woman pursed her lips. "It wouldn't have mattered," she said. "I'm sorry," she repeated and she left him.

Jacobi watched her pass unhurried from the sun to the shade beneath the portico and then into the deeper darkness of the house. At the French doors the green taffeta drapes billowed in the gathering wind.

Violating his stern rule of objectivity, believing that some insight to his emotional state at that point might prove to be of some value, he jotted a few lines on his yellow pad.

On the third day, though the sky was unsullied by any hint of natural clouds, at zenith the sun shone only a weak burnished-copper red. Jacobi inspected his garden. He knelt at a rose bush and extended a finger to a blossom's petals, but his finger came away spotted by the fine gray-near-white ash that had settled on the flower. The ash

clung to the leaves of the olive tree, the honeysuckle, all that had flourished within the shelter of Jacobi's eight-foot walls. The ash eddied and whirled like blown powder over the red brick of the patio, gathered in the seams and cracks of the wall and the wooden gate, coated the chrome and rattan furniture, the scalloped awning, and the chaise where Jacobi's woman had lain with a color-dulling patina thinner than a man's thumbnail.

When Jacobi stood he slapped away the clods of black earth, twigs, and dried leaves that adhered to the knees of his slacks. He walked slowly about the garden's perimeter, his hand just touching the wall's interior, feeling the grainy texture on his soft palm and fingertips. The ash was thickest on the crossbeam that held fast the gate.

At the glasstop table beneath the awning, Jacobi sat on his chair. He brushed ash from the yellow pad. Jacobi tried the television and the radio. Only static, but he no longer required information from afar. The insistent din, swelling and subsiding but drawing ever closer to the wall, told him all he needed.

He waited. There was nothing to write.

He had not expected the sun to be so dim. He began to make a note of that, but in mid-sentence he placed the grease pencil back on the table. Jacobi reviewed all he had written on the yellow pad, four pages. Here and there the markings were smudged to illegibility. Then, one sheet at a time, Jacobi ripped the pages from the pad, tore each precisely in half, and gathered the shreds of paper into a ragged ball. He stood, approached the garden, and pitched the ball of paper over the wall.

He sat again. Time passed. He waited.

From an upper story of the house he heard the shattering of glass and what might have been laughter. As he turned reflexively toward the sound, from behind him came the deep boom of wood striking wood. Quick and calm, he went to the roses. Again the gate was assaulted and again the ram boomed against the twin doors. Jacobi had not expected such resonance. The doors sagged, dust and ash puffed into the air, but the crossbeam held. Unmindful of thorns, Jacobi's hands closed firmly about the rose bush's main stem, he strained, tugged, and the plant, its roots intact, broke free of the earth.

Jacobi straightened up. He heard a cadence chant, the roar of many voices, the boom, and he saw the crossbeam crack, splinter, seem in mid-air to hesitate, then sunder as the gate collapsed inward.

Victoria Emery

**HALEAKALA**  
**The House of the Sun**

Out there is no other shore,  
only the thick grouping of clouds  
over the plane of water.  
Clouds follow, catch up, pass one another;  
the horizon swirls,  
bends its arms around the black slope.  
The sun shivers like a drop of water  
clinging onto its shape,  
like another island  
with reflections of fire bursting  
across its face.  
Through the charred cone, a dried-out stalk,  
the chill flows and the fire  
hides its eye deep in the center.  
The surface of the mound remains still:  
rippling stone, baited fish caught on stone hooks,  
chewed bones. Light shines  
through crevices of earlobes —  
the volcano listens to its own dead voice,  
a thousand tongues swirling in its ear:

*what does water do  
when fire pushes up  
water world of fire  
fire world of water  
fire in fire*

*what does earth do  
when water rises  
when fire bursts*

*earth flows in streams  
over the top of water*

*chilling fire  
fire of water  
steam of tongues  
under the clouds*

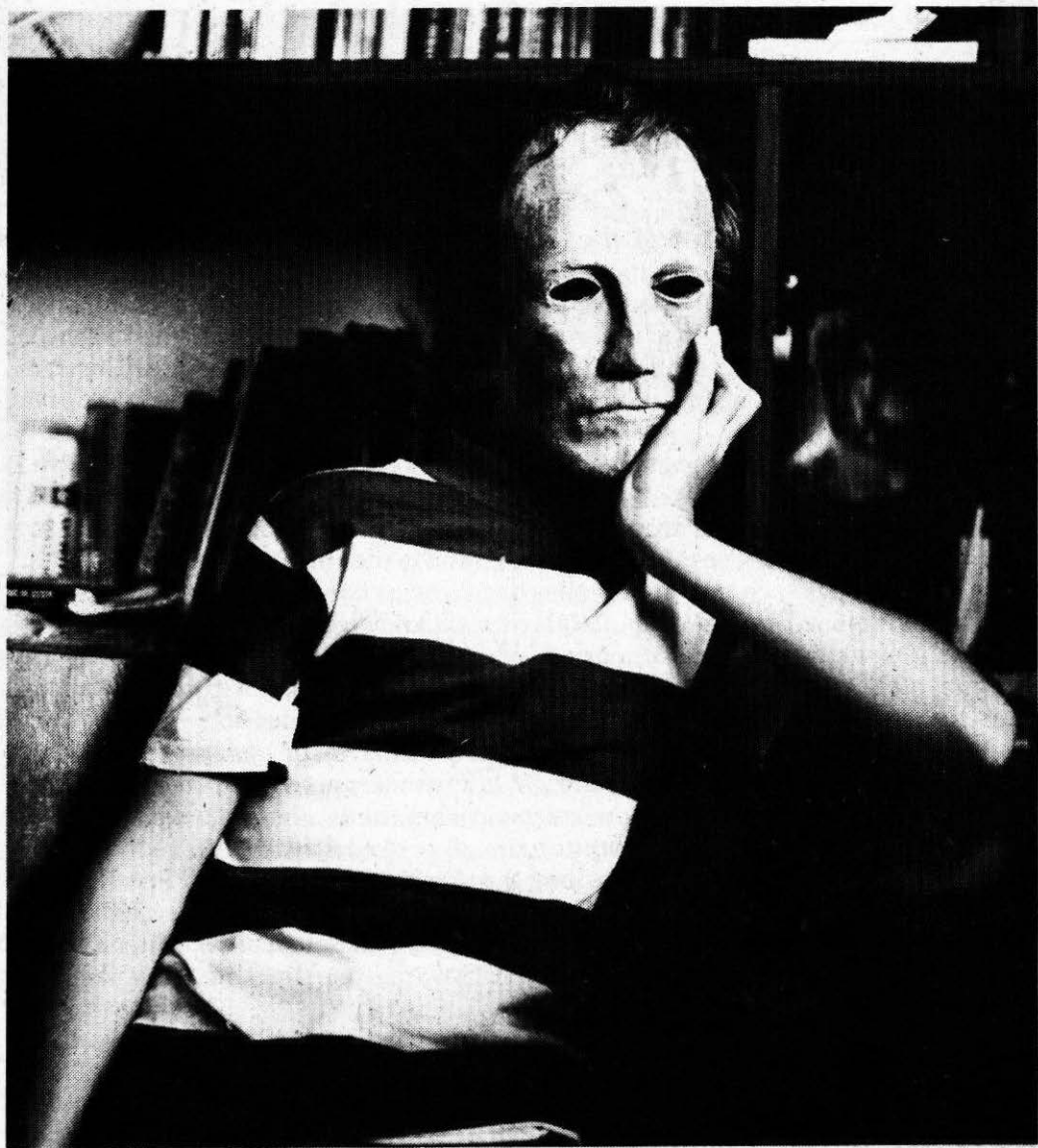
Tongues know more than they say  
when they disappear into themselves;  
they know more than they say  
when they drown in water,  
when the fire pushes up  
and the explosion is heard:

*mother loves mother hates  
mother is indifferent  
she is a fish eye  
that gleams on a soft  
belly of water*

*she is brought onto the sea  
like a white sail  
she falls she rises  
she sings she yawns she sighs*

*water splashes through her white teeth  
water splashes through her head  
water splashes splashes*

Full mouth, full eyes, ears spin with tongues  
foretelling — from the hollow of the earth  
from the deep darkness of the universe  
after the last embrace of burning sun,  
the fierce mating of fire,  
after the cooled seedings in dark rutted soil —  
the reign of the thickest water  
of the horizon.



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## Victoria Nelson

### COMING BACK

Pukoo, on Molokai's East End, has three ghosts. There is a woman in white who walks on the highway. A dead Chinaman swings from the rafters of the stone house once owned by the von Tempskis. And the creature who lives in the *haole koa* thicket on the mountain side of the road is a woman by day, a giant squid by night. In the old days this creature used to creep down to the pens by the beach to eat the pigs. There are no more pigs at Pukoo, only a bulldozed hotel site; how she manages these days is not clear.

The squid woman and the others come out on *pukani* nights when the moon and stars are blotted out by clouds.

The highway that winds around the East End stops in Halawa Valley, deserted thirty years ago when the people moved to town and to the pineapple fields on the West End. In the old days each trail in the valley had its own chant to be recited against bad spirits. The famous Twelve Winds of Halawa were known by name. Today the names are gone, the winds remain. But a driver who eases his car down the road into the overgrown valley may hear his name spoken out loud at the bend where the road crosses an ancient Hawaiian footpath. And in the empty tin-roofed houses of the valley a mirror fogs, a child cries, a white dog runs down a decrepit hallway.

One East End family allowed a brother-in-law who was not a blood relation to clean out the well. A few nights later the mermaid paid the brother-in-law a visit. The mermaid was very pretty. She had white hair and smoked a cigar. She liked men. The brother-in-law woke up to find her pulling the blanket off his bed. He jumped up and ran out of the room. The mermaid drifted next door, where she tried to suffocate the baby. Everybody got on their knees reciting prayers and obscenities. After the old grandmother had said the Lord's Prayer backwards ten times in Hawaiian, the mermaid went away.

Many people on the East End of Molokai return from the dead. The dead have many reasons for coming back. Mostly, it is to settle unfinished business. Sam Kalani's grandfather came back to his startled family because the cows from Murphy's ranch were trampling his grave. Mary Kahunanui came back to her three daughters as a loud wind in the night, but they were never able to determine her wishes. And Lena Kaupu came back.

Lena Kaupu was eighteen years old, a temperamental girl with a beautiful

Hawaiian face and stocky Japanese legs. She lived with the Lum family, who took her in after she quarreled with her mother, a plump, flashy-type divorcee who worked as a receptionist in the island's only resort hotel.

Lena hated her mother's ambitions to live haole style. When she was twelve, Lena took the exams that would have sent her to the Kamehameha Schools for a high-class education. She failed on purpose. To her mother's screams of displeasure, Lena shouted, "*Ai kukai!*" and ran from the sound of that phony genteel voice ringing in her ears.

As she grew up, Lena discovered the best way to get back at her mother. She began to hang around with the bad boys — Steamboat, Bobby Wong, Kalei, all the twenty year olds who sat jobless on their family porches drinking Primo and shooting empty bottles for target practice. They liked to get ready for the monthly pig hunts. Then one day Bobby Wong slit open her forearm with his knife for no reason at all. It hurt Lena. The doctor had to sew big ugly stitches to close it up.

Her mother had Lena put on probation by the Juvenile Authority of Maui County. They made a special trip to Maui on the airplane, sullen bandaged Lena and sullen overdressed mother. After that, Lena moved in with the friendly Lums. She dropped out of high school and started work in the pineapple fields on the West End. If people asked about her mother, she always said, "I nevah see her no more. Nevah. Lena keeps her word."

Then Lena met Stevie Hupai, one of the East End boys she had not known before. He was a year younger; Lena's friends kidded her about that. Their laughter infuriated her. She and Stevie had loved each other from the very first moment they met, at a dance. Love melted her hard young face and opened it to the world. When she walked down the main street of Kaunakakai, the old wood frame stores with their dusty verandas, sleeping dogs, and dying plantation workers squatting in the shade breathed gently in her direction. But Lena thought only of Stevie.

Stevie's mother and father did not like him seeing that good-for-nothing Lena Kaupu. He paid no attention. His parents grew insistent. They forbade him to see Lena again. If he disobeyed, they would kick him out of the house. And Stevie could not be accepted by another family in the old way, because of the curse on him. He was given to sudden tempers. When he was only a child, he had thrown his knife at his younger brother and killed him, by accident. Older Hawaiians avoided Stevie and did not like him to visit their homes.

Lena's mother stepped in. If Lena didn't give up Stevie at once, she would report her daughter to the Juvenile Authority and have her shipped off to reform school in Honolulu. Mrs. Kaupu was not really sure this would happen, but she felt the law was on her side. Lena would never know the difference anyway — her mother and the law were the same, as far as she was concerned.

After the ultimatum Lena and Stevie went driving in his brother's '51 Chevy. They drank two six-packs of Primo and discussed the possibilities. It was three years before they could marry without their parents' permission. How could they run away? Neither of them had ever been to Honolulu, except as little children. The rest of the



world seemed very far away from Molokai.

"I hate her, I hate her!" Lena screamed.

Stevie said nothing. Suddenly he raised his beer bottle and smashed it on the dashboard in front of them. He stuck the jagged top under Lena's chin. "More better we finish it like this!" His hand shook at her neck. Tears ran out of her eyes and dropped on his wrist.

"Wait, Stevie." Lena's tight voice was a distant echo of her mother's. "Yes, we will do it. Not here. We go Uncle Richard's. We fix things up first so that people will know why."

Lena's Uncle Richard had a cabin up in the mountains above Kalaupapa. They would wait until the weekend to go up to the cabin. Stevie would bring his father's pistol with all the bullets in it.

Lena wanted to compose a farewell note. Every night that week she worked on it at the kitchen table. Whenever one of the Lum children would creep up and lean teasingly over her shoulder, she covered the writing with her hand. On Thursday she produced a final version which she copied over neatly on the lavender stationary her aunt had given her for Christmas. This is what Lena wrote:

Dear Uncle Richard, By the time you read this Stevie and I will be dead. Our families will not let us be happy. But we forgive them. Because our love is bigger. We want to be married by the pastor and put in the same coffin. That is our last wish. Please bury me in my white muu muu in the closet, there is enough \$ for a bridal veil too. Aloha nui loa, Lena.

She addressed the envelope to her uncle with the command "Open Monday!" printed underneath.

Pale and silent, dressed in their best aloha clothes, Lena and Stevie dropped off the envelope at her uncle's house on Saturday morning. Uncle Richard was a wishy-washy type who hated trouble. As he handed over the key, he avoided their eyes. "What you doing there? What you folks up to?" he asked nervously. Lena could see he had guessed something was up. But he did not want to be involved.

Uncle Richard did not want an answer, but Lena gave him one. "Stevie and I take one last holiday," she said, "then we break up." She threw the envelope down on the kitchen counter. "Remember — no open till Monday!"

She knew he wouldn't touch it.

They drove up the mountain road very fast. Stevie said nothing. All the fight had gone out of him. He followed Lena tamely up the path like a little boy and let her unlock the rusty padlock on the cabin door. The single room was dirty and hot. There was no furniture, not even a chair to sit on. A rat had crawled in through a broken window and left its refuse in the corner.

The pistol hung limp in Stevie's hand.

"Do it now!" begged Lena. "Otherwise no can do evah!"

Stevie started to cry. He sobbed so loudly the birds stopped singing outside. "Cannot, cannot!" he cried, sitting down heavily on the floor.

Lena unglued the gun from each damp finger of his hand and pressed the barrel to the back of his head. A strange little voice issued from his mouth. It said: "Lena."

"We got to do it fast!" she screamed. "No time talk story!" she pulled the trigger. There was a loud report and Stevie's forehead blew off.

Lena dropped the gun and ran out the door. By the time she came back, the ants had found Stevie. So she went ahead with it.

It was against the law for dead people to be married and put in the same coffin. Stevie was buried in his parents' back yard next to his aunt and his little brother. Lena was put in the Mormon cemetery. Lena's mother did not have to buy her a bridal veil. She was buried in her best dress instead. Lena's mother married the acting manager of the hotel and they went to live on Maui.

So Lena came back. Washing the family car one afternoon, Della Lum looked up and there was Lena, big as life. She vanished as soon as she saw Della looking at her. That night it rained so fiercely that the road to Kaunakakai washed out. For a week the weather changed wildly from sun to rain to wind, every hour of every day. Then a mysterious pink car ran over the Lums' dog, Albert.

All that was Lena, the Lums agreed. But no one heard from Stevie, sleeping with half a head out in the wet behind his parents' house. For weeks the East End people were on the lookout. Nothing happened. So they decided that Stevie was dead for good. Not that he was at peace. It was just that some people go so far away when they die that they never come back, not for any reason.

Michael McPherson

MALAMA

*On the Puna coast, near the easternmost tip of the island Hawaii, in a grove of tall ironwoods planted early in this century stands a lava and mortar marker, similar in shape and height to older, mortarless markers found on trails which cross the flanks of Kilauea Volcano, and bearing this inscription:*

MACKENZIE PARK  
IN MEMORY OF  
FOREST RANGER A. J. W. MACKENZIE  
OCTOBER 1, 1917 — JUNE 28, 1938

1.  
What angry ghosts are these  
that roam the salt washed  
honeycomb corridors  
through the belly of the earth,  
fingering outward and down for miles  
from the sea to the heart of the mountain?  
Who can sleep in this grove  
in the broken night, a windy  
cacophony of flutes and drums,  
and grinding stones deep in the belly,  
the ground trembling  
as the heartbeat shifts,  
and chants of the procession  
as they mark again the passing of their king—  
is it any wonder then  
that the campers  
often in their haste  
leave food and gear behind?  
And from where comes  
this orange glowing light  
somewhere upward and ahead, around

the endlessly rounded corner in the corridor  
of the dream?

The ranger slept here, long ago.  
Alone he rode the two days down  
from his home at Kilauea. He planted trees  
in the days, trees which frame the king's highway,  
labor of prisoners in late Hawaiian times,  
and at night he lay alone by his fire  
and listening to the stories on the wind  
and rumblings in the earth's belly  
he was content, and slept  
dreaming the warm belly of the woman  
in the orange glow  
from the heart of the black mountain.

2.

At Kapoho the field zippered open  
like the incision of a great invisible knife  
and buried the town. East the blood of the land  
ran burning to the sea, and covered all  
but the little kuleana where an old woman  
wandering alone in that darkest of nights  
had found food and warmth and shelter, and today  
we see it surrounded on three sides,  
the tiny house and corral guarded by silent stone.

3.

*Mr. Mackenzie lost his life while on duty. He had stopped his car, loaded with young trees, on a hill to allow the motor to cool. The brake gave way, and the vehicle started backing up. Mr. Mackenzie reached inside for the hand brake but the car kept moving faster. It struck a rut in the road, and Mr. Mackenzie in turn was struck a severe blow, apparently by the door handle, in the region of the heart which proved instantly fatal. The car righted itself in a few feet and stopped.*

—Hilo Tribune Herald  
April 20, 1953

The ranger fell in the forest of Waiohinu,  
the shining water. Whether by door handle  
of the hand of a man he knew is not for us  
to understand. Brooks' story remains,  
told and retold, as when a fountain

for the ranger's wife was dedicated in the park  
and an account in the local paper referred  
to the "freak accident."

Whether it was then  
the cavern's roof collapsed, and the ironwoods  
rerooted to the floor  
is not recorded, either. But no one stays  
all night in the park  
on a new moon  
and talks about it. By moonlight  
a pistol is handy, as then the murderous living  
stalk their prey in favorable isolation,  
as in the killing of the young physician; the malice  
of an apparently motiveless crime. But in darkness,  
Puna darkness, a gun is nothing. Among the shadows  
of the corridors of stone  
a man's only weapon is his silence.

4.

The sun on these sea cliffs  
is the first to reach Hawaii, garland  
of islands growing eastward into its rays.  
How bright the sun dances on this deep, deep sea,  
and shines, too, on the stone monuments  
to the two fallen fishermen whose lives were lost  
where the blue water meets the smooth black stone,  
whose bodies were swept into dark tunnels  
underground, their bones now hidden in secret caves  
like the old alii. So much death,  
so much blood  
is a part of this place—  
its silence  
at morning.  
The wind in the ironwoods is hushed,  
ghostly,  
like our footsteps in the thick needles  
under the trees.

5.

What angry ghosts are they  
that cannot sleep in such deep silence?  
Do they serve the woman of the mountain  
whose rage is legend

whose love is kindness to strangers  
in strange, dark places? Whose blood  
is stone, whose orange light glows  
in blackness, black heat  
glowing orange  
in the spiral corridor  
of the dream,  
dreaming heart of the mountain.

## KING CORAL

I dreamed you  
  alive again, Michael,  
  on the lanai  
  behind my house,  
rolling joints  
  out of your long, grey  
  beard  
  and laughing  
how you'd fooled us,  
  crawled away  
  like an old cat will  
  when he knows  
it's his time,  
  so before  
  we could find you  
  your boat man  
had carried your ashes  
  and spread them  
  over the reef  
  that among us bears  
your name;  
  so your death was  
  a rumor,  
  a puzzle it took  
us days to solve—  
  I dreamed us  
  sitting among broken boards,  
  as we sat the day back  
of Moki's,  
  talking the book  
  of the town's passed days:  
  clear-eyed,  
unbent,

you were laughing, laughing  
back from the dark azure  
deep of your grave,  
saying,  
we'll all live  
till the last of us  
crosses.



**Mari Kubo**

## **THE MATCH**

The cold awakened me. My lover's arm was thrown across my breasts but the blanket was thrown off my body. Seeing my body — a white shape in the dark — filled me with humiliation. When I reached down for the blanket a hand moved it away. I turned toward my lover, just as his other hand squeezed one breast. It was done as if my breast were a dumpling.

I pushed myself away. He pulled me toward him and kissed me. I opened my eyes and I looked into a scaly face. Sometime during the night my lover had turned into a demon.

He must have seen the horror in my eyes. He released me and lay back. I moved to the edge of the bed, hands covering my mouth. The digital clock on the bedstand read 3:09. Since it was winter, there were four hours till dawn. We lay there for almost an hour, neither of us moving. I pretended to be asleep, but I knew he could hear my quick breathing. He kept his arms folded behind his head. Finally he sat up and searched the stand for a cigarette. It was done quietly. He lit it. In the brief flare of the match I saw the outline of his head, the hair disheveled but cut neatly at the neck. Except for his huge muscled back and the scales, he might have been the same person.

He drew on the cigarette. The numbers on the clock flipped several times. Upstairs someone was walking. A car passed outside: from the sound of its wheels through the window I knew it was raining. He exhaled.

I leaned forward and put my arm around his shoulder. He shrugged it off and stood. I don't know why — I began to cry.

"Do you think I like being like this?" he demanded, his back toward me.

If I had said: "No, and I hate you for it," would it have satisfied him? Some perverse honesty made me say: "Do you think it matters to me?"

When he turned it was as if he were observing me from a distance. Perhaps the demon wanted a demon woman, someone as strong and violent as himself. Knowing how I hate the taste of nicotine, he crushed out his cigarette and kissed me. My mouth was numb. I stroked his hair. He pinned my wrists then smiled.

I may not have been the woman he wanted me to be, but I fought. At times he was everywhere, duplicating himself. Trying to take hold of him was like putting a finger on a lizard's tail. I struck to the right, he was on the left. I struck left, he wasn't there. When I finally pinned him by the shoulders he vanished. I had been sitting on his back: I fell forward on my face. I heard his laughter. The tears blinded me. I did not look up.

When I awoke, sunlight was slanting across the bed. He was standing at the mirror, tie on, combing his hair. The demon features were gone.

"Are you going already?"

He looked at me in the mirror. "Yes," he said, "I have a busy day." He must have seen my look. "Are you going to cry? Don't cry."

"I'm not."

He came and kissed me on the forehead. "Have a good day."

"You too."

I wrapped a blanket around me and stepped to the window in time to see him appear on the sidewalk below. Sometime during the night it had snowed. Here and there in the yard blades of grass stood up. He skirted the snow close to the walk, his shoes crunching the ice. He disappeared around the corner, holding his briefcase close to his side.

Snow lay on the rooftop of the neighboring apartment. Against the violet of the early morning, 15 smoke stacks rose like cemetery angels. The morning sun cut the wall of the apartment diagonally in an angle of soft gold.

I don't know whom I address when every night I say a prayer, but for all the wrong I have done I ask forgiveness. And for this, my greatest sin: my love for a demon who during the day assumes the shape of a man.

**Bob Green**

**SOJOURN**

Bereft of any myth, instructed only  
In the history of the ego,  
The young, already benumbed  
With some unspecific dread, come  
Here where almost no one comes  
At all: to feel something:  
To love or to fight  
(or a curious intermingling . . . )  
Hidden there, the watcher knows.

Only one truck at a time  
Up or down the nighttime road  
To the Heiau. They park just below  
The altar. Some visitants  
Bring plants and stone  
To permit safe passage.  
Some bring only  
Knives and reds and beer.

On top, near where the watcher waits  
And sees, the light is pitiless  
And clear. The watcher weeps,  
If watchers weep, to witness  
Such foolish sacrifice. Here all human  
Life looks hunched and dry and small.  
Ancestors' bones seem not to live  
In the minds of these children.  
Only some impulse to be  
Somehow more alive.  
Or safely dead. This is bitter  
Wisdom. This is what  
The watcher knows.

Crouching in the slanted dark,  
It is you who is watching. No one  
Is likely to find you  
Ever, except by blindest chance.  
Nonetheless, your fear dissolves  
Almost everything. Your animal is lost  
In time. And you now feel  
What it is  
To be a Ghost: you have  
A cautionary tale to tell  
To the living, and you know  
That almost no one  
Will learn to hear.

## HUMAN SACRIFICE

*The eye of the demi-God  
Opens slowly, to disclose  
The day in all its possible colors.  
This is sunrise and morning  
At the heiau,  
The house of images.*

When my student Henry, a huge  
Quarterback-thick kid from Paukukalo,  
Hurt his hand in a big beef, and  
Couldn't write, I went out to his place  
(About a mile from the heiaus) to  
Help him study for the police exam.  
His uncle, who worked for the syndicate,  
Said being a cop would be his only  
Chance.

Henry's house was filled with guns and  
Flags and stereos, but you could see  
Both heiaus from there, even the overgrown  
One, where (it is said) they practiced  
Human sacrifice. Henry thought I was  
Cool for not getting mad at him for  
Screwing up again. I said, "Henry, go  
up to the heiau, and have a look around.  
That's your assignment for the class."

Four days later, Henry returned to  
School, hair shorn, shirt unwrinkled, and  
With no visible weapons, sure he had  
Aced the test. (As it turned out, he had.)  
"Hey, teach," he said, "me and my friend  
Went up to the heiau, but it was closed.  
Man, there's nothing up there at all."

He turned his huge round head delicately  
In the bright air to see if I would  
Laugh.

*The eye of the demi-God  
Closes slowly, to disclose  
The evening of the day.  
His lidded sheathing  
Burns the colors down to blood  
And darkness. This is  
The sun's sacrifice called night  
At the heiau,  
The house of images.*

Jennifer Martin

LANDSCAPE

The owl also  
and the raven  
heard blood.  
The moon was on  
its last branch  
and trembling.  
Plates were breaking  
beneath the house,  
the shouts.  
The stars shook  
on the rim  
when small feet  
went lipping into bramble.  
The power of the dog  
was a jaw  
that hung dislocated.  
At midnight, scale  
and vine lifted  
on the north side.  
Yellow root broke  
uphill into arrow.  
Blood was in the thicket  
of the rose  
on the hands  
and the tongue  
made a word  
flat as a host,  
disembodied.

**Victoria Emery**

## **THE SNAKE**

The teacher blew her nose and cleared her throat. The children, sitting on the exposed roots of the White Lime, raised their heads above wooden lunch boxes and stared at her. For a moment she hesitated in the doorway, hand at her throat, then walked off briskly towards the slope at the end of the school yard. The children hastily wrapped pieces of cheese and cornbread and followed her, keeping their distance. They stopped at the edge of the bank. The teacher picked her way down the slope, gravel rolling under her sandals. She paused, back rigid, and faced the stone goat house partially hidden by the overhanging branches of a walnut tree.

Behind the children, the teacher's husband and the village milk woman pushed through the school gate and quickly crossed the yard. The milk woman shoved the children aside and strode down the gravel slope. Trying to keep his balance, the husband followed, arms spread at his sides. The three of them stood at the entrance to the goat house and whispered together.

"This is absurd, I'm telling you," the husband said. He shook his head.

The teacher cleared her throat.

"Smoke it out," the milk woman insisted. "It's the only way to get rid of it."

The husband ran his fingers through his hair, nodded, then bent and crawled through the small door. Soon the goat emerged, head first, butting at the doorframe, its round eyes yellow and greedy. The teacher's blouse picked up the off-white color of its coat. She grabbed its horns.

"Look at the purple spots on its udder," one of the children whispered. They pulled closer together, shoulders touching, bodies swaying. The girls held hands. "It's been milked by a snake!"

The women grasped the tether firmly and tugged the goat up through the gravel. When they reached the top of the slope the children parted, encircling them.

"The fire is ready!" the husband shouted from the small window. The children murmured and pressed even closer together. He scrambled out the door, and soon flames burst through the window and smoke rolled above the hut. A startled flock of sparrows flew straight up into the air from the walnut tree.

"Snake!" The scream reverberated through the group of children, and they pushed away from one another, opening up a path between them. They jumped up and down and beat the ground with their feet, pointing and yelling, "There it is! There it is!" Thrusting forward, then shrinking back again, they moved in unison, bodies



interlocking in diamond-patterned ropes of color. "There it is!"

The smoke began to tear off and disappear through the branches of the walnut tree. Sparks flickered, settled as ashes on the blackened window. The teacher lingered for a moment at the edge of the slope, gazing over the roof of the goat house. She turned back and walked towards the school. The children followed. While they quietly took their places at their desks, she shuffled through a grammar book.

"Page 76," she said. Her head thrown back, she began to lecture in a clear voice.

## GRETA'S LAW

He was working at one side of the counter, his son, Miljko, at the other end. Friday was market day, and after school the boy came to help out. They were hemmed in by village men who sweated around their collars and woolen caps, by their wives, by the smell of the horses and oxen hitched up in front of the store. He was sweating too, but his white shirt, damp against him, remained unsoiled. He moved behind the counter slowly, his eyes heavy lidded. There were five or ten people in the room, he didn't care to count. At times he could hear a shuffling behind the door that separated his shop from the kitchen on the other side of the house. The door had been sealed for years, its upper half fitted with thick stained glass; greens, sky-blues, rose and dark wine reds glowed faintly, fused together, and cast a dark purple stain over the counter. He thought of the pine forest across the valley, of the smell of air and rain, moss and berries, of Greta walking down the path in the warm shadow under the trees.

He reached for a whetstone and handed it to Miljko. While he waited for the boy to wrap it in newspaper, he noticed Taca pushing her way to the counter. She scrutinized the shelves that ran the length of the wall. He sold everything from farming implements, domestic utensils and fabrics, to inexpensive cosmetics like the popular heavy-scented violet cream. Taca bought a bottle of kerosine and a box of matches.

"We need help with the harvest this year," she said, giving him the money. "My folks asked if Greta can give us a hand."

His step quickened towards the cash drawer. Turning his eyes aside, he put the change into her hand. She dropped her purchases into her wicker basket and waited.

"We'll pay well," she said quietly. But still he didn't look at her. She shook her head and walked towards the door. "She can work hard when she wants."

He glanced at his son, then towards the doorway. Years ago, Taca and Greta singing in the turned field. "I would pick the flowers with you." Knotted earth, long white arms, bent backs. "But I would never let you kiss me." Taca spoke again; he didn't hear what she said. "I know my wife better than you do," he mumbled, but she was already in the street.

Ten years had passed since the war and fifteen since he married Greta. He had been a successful merchant, but after the war much of his property had been confiscated and he was left to run his own store as a government employee. With much effort he resigned himself and maintained the store to support his growing family. Three girls

and two boys. The eldest, Miljko, was fourteen. The girls came a couple of years apart, then five years after his youngest daughter was born they had another boy. Greta nursed him, as she had all her other children, until he was already walking. "Stop it. It's disgusting," he had yelled, and gradually she weaned the boy.

He took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. The store was empty now, and it smelled of corn fields and sun-dried dust. He told his son to go home and watched as he picked up his school bag and quietly slipped around the counter. The boy seemed too thin and pale, his eyes dark against his face.

From behind the door came the rattle of pots and pans, water splashing, footsteps back and forth across the floor. He glanced at the stained glass window, its design only a specter passing rapidly across his mind. Greta can't see my efforts to get through another market day, he thought — horses and oxen, the smell of dung, the villagers sweating in front of the counter, their wives and children sneaking off to peer into the bedroom window. She sees nothing of it. And it had been natural to him that Greta didn't have these concerns, until other people had him wondering about her. He thought of the villagers' eyes: sly, pretending indifference. No one ever knew when Greta was carrying until she began to show. It was as much a surprise to him as to the neighbors. Men made jokes, women looked at him coyly. He was vaguely aware that the village women knew of ways to practice birth control, but he never mentioned anything to Greta. She considered the decision of having children hers because it was her body. He had always thought that this, along with other things that people considered peculiar about her, was a law of sorts, the law of Greta's youth, of her womanliness. He didn't think he had to know everything about her. But then he had never expected the strangeness. Perhaps her father knew and her brothers, and they had slipped her to him when she was very young and while he was under her spell. When he first saw her at the village fair, he couldn't move away from her, he couldn't stop looking at her. And one evening, after he'd proposed, when they were sitting on a bench in front of her house unseen by others, she had rested the tips of her fingers on his arm, scarcely touching it, lightly, and the feel of her touch had traversed his body like an invisible wave.

He shook his head. Could a marriage like this be an accident? — the work, the efforts, the store — or had he been doing it because of his own need, his sense of duty? He felt the need of it. No one else in the family felt that need to make sacrifices, to suffer. He alone would die satisfied that he was dying for his family.

He looked at his watch. Closing time. The villagers liked to finish their shopping early. Wearily he bent down and tied strings around the bags of flour, sugar, rice. They empty so fast. He could see his daughters' eyes watching him around the table, huge, smoldering like their mother's. And it seemed to him he was always aware of his children, that he would be alone and desolate without them. Without her.

She was standing in the doorway, her youth still evident in the fine, silky muscles of her legs, the honey of her skin. A soft wave of auburn hair hung lightly from her forehead over her eyes, shadowing her face. Somehow this was bothersome to him. He

looked at the sunlit house: ornamented metallic plates advertising Frank coffee and Singer sewing machines, remnants of his former merchandise, were displayed on the walls. A shiver passed through him. It seemed as if a spell had broken over everything: the long-dead fixtures on the walls; the storage house with its wooden hope chest and broken loom forced into a narrow space; the dusty yard where chickens settled in the dust with their wings spread and a pig lay on her side, still, voiceless; over the darkened hallway and the baby's eyes, green as his mother's, in the hall behind her.

Late in the afternoon the storm broke out. Black clouds blocked the sun. The window fogged and flies buzzed in the yellowed corners. With the side of his hand he wiped the glass and looked outside. His children rushed around the yard chasing chickens into the coop. The wind whipped Ljilja's faded red dress around her thin body, her blond head with its tightly curled hair bobbed like a bush. She looked up at the sky and cringed. The chickens cackled shrilly, the wind fanned their feathers. Jela, his youngest daughter, stood grinning in the middle of the yard, holding a stick in her hand and watching the chickens. She wore her brother's old jacket, which pressed the pleats of her skirt around her legs. Like he, she was dark and gaunt, but her green eyes gleamed like jewels under her shiny brow. He considered her the handsomest of his children.

Suddenly rain splashed against the window; from the stove the smell of bean soup rose sharp and clear. Hurriedly he stepped outside. Something flew from the storage roof and made a rattling noise in the back yard. He called in the children.

"We don't need the rain now," Greta said. "One more week and the harvest will be over." They sat around the table and she broke off a piece of bread and handed it to the baby.

"Taca came by the store today," he said quickly. "Her folks want to know if you can help."

Greta lowered her eyes. "If the rain doesn't crush the wheat."

He nodded and dipped his spoon into the bowl.

The wind was still raging in the dark forested hills across the valley. He walked outside and looked at the sky. Behind him Greta blew out the lamp in the children's room, and from where he stood in the slanted shadow of the roof he saw an enormous cloud, its edges torn by the wind. The cloud cast its cool, unfiltered light like a lamp trapped in the grey thickness of the sky. He looked at it for a long time. When he turned back towards the house he saw Greta standing in the doorway.

"What are you doing out there?" she asked. "Was that you I heard last night?"

"Me?"

"I heard you. Only I was too tired to look."

"It wasn't me. I never get up at night."

She shrugged.

The pig squealed, and he went to the pen and poured some water into its dish. An iron rod leaned against the wooden planks of the pen. He started to pick it up,

hesitated, then glanced back at Greta. Her still figure was outlined in the doorway. The pig slurped water from the dish. He grabbed the rod and carried it back to the house, then locked the door and tested the handle.

In the soft darkness of their bedroom he could see every object clearly: the small round table, the white bedspread with tassled edges, the decorative cushions embroidered with birds and flowers. Greta always kept the room locked, and she kept it perfectly clean, unlike the rest of the house. He got into the bed as carefully as possible, so as not to disturb the arrangement of linen, pillows, and soft woolen blankets. Greta stood in the middle of the room and he smelled the violet cream. He pulled the covers over his shoulders, and when she got into the bed he turned away and moved towards the outer edge. He felt her hand crawl under the covers, white, rounded. He pushed it off. "Come," she said, her voice husky. She threw her arm around his waist, her leg pressed down over his thigh, her breasts against his back. The warmth of her body seemed to strike at him from all directions. With all his force he pushed her towards the wall. "Let me get some sleep," he said. His eyes closed, he lay still until she fell asleep. Later she woke and began to push him back, her knees propped against the wall. In the morning she got up first.

The market day rush was over, he had hardly any customers. Small groups of villagers passed by the store on their way home from the fields. A woman, sunburned and tired, carried a child in one arm, a basket over the other. He decided to close the store early. Besides, if anyone needed something they could come to the house and call him.

From the hall he saw Greta sitting on the bed in the kitchen. Taca sat at the other end, her lips moving as if she were praying silently. The sight of the women was disturbing to him. He stepped across the hall but suddenly slipped on something wet. "Damn," he yelled, struggling to retain his balance. Taca rushed to the door and stared at him. He picked up a rag from the water basin. "The shit on the floor wouldn't bother her," he said, then wiped the floor and walked reluctantly into the kitchen.

Slowly Greta raised her head and looked at him. He had forgotten how green her eyes were, as green as some dangerous mountain shrub. She seemed frightened and he was sorry for her, but he couldn't change the angry tone of his voice. "What's the matter," he demanded. From outside came the voices of the children playing in the yard. He wanted to go out and yell at them but instead pulled out a chair and sat by the stained-glass door. On this side it was coated with grease, the colors murky. Taca stirred as if she were going to leave.

"I was sitting here," Greta said, "when I heard a knock at the front door. The children were still at school and the baby was taking a nap. I walked into the hall. The door was half open and a man stood there — on the step. He had dark hair, you know, and dark eyes — calm, like the eyes of an old, old man. He was wearing a suit and a striped tie and he carried a leather bag. I thought he was a clerk or some kind of official." She sighed and her chest rose. A strand of auburn hair fell over her forehead.

"He asked me if I wanted a job."

Greta looked at him, not moving her huge eyes. In one quick moment he realized why the loose strand of hair had always bothered him: one old woman in his village, always apart from the others, picking up discarded bottles, pieces of broken china, scraps of colored paper, her hair hanging over her eyes. Like a shiver of alcohol the image cut through him and he felt he was going to pass out.

"I was just going to let him in," Greta said, "when I looked down and saw he had goat hooves for feet."

"Horrible," Taca muttered.

"I slammed the door," she continued, "but I saw how the corners of his mouth snaked up like a dog's." Her voice trailed off in small rasps and she brushed back her hair. "I trembled all over."

He leaned back heavily in his chair and looked into the hall where the iron rod stood against the water basin. He didn't notice it.

Nell Altizer

## GHOST STORY

Lie, darling, down for the night.  
The deer skull we saw  
candid and white as sand  
has settled down to the clay shadow.  
We lean in this New Mexican land  
other directions. And Uncle Juan  
is telling ghost stories.

Beyond the *barrio*  
a Navajo dreams in a syllable  
I cannot understand.  
The wolf is there in patterns  
of adobe dust, dark and residual as stone.  
Lie down, I say.  
See how your sister hunkers down her shade  
while Uncle Juan tells ghost stories.

Scary as dreams. God dreams  
us in a dream the Navajos say while they weave  
voices of brown and gray in public  
places now, their earrings  
turning in displayed and silver spheres.  
Now that the deer's eyes  
are shells open at last to ocean,  
we may watch. These women  
pray into cloth  
their dreams of bone, of us,  
weaving our shapes in corridors of birds  
that fly down the deer's eye  
their firm geometry.  
While Uncle Juan tells ghost stories.

Hush, Sara, hush. He told us  
long ago God died. Hush, hush.

Pretend the Indians are dreaming us.  
The Navajos will tell you the deer's  
skull dreams God,  
will tell you with dreams and thread  
ivory as listening  
that they too know God,  
dreamed and dead,  
and, like your Uncle Juan,  
tell the ghost stories.



## Shiho S. Nunes

### *excerpts from* **GROWING UP WITH GHOSTS**

I came home one summer to learn that a friend of the family for whose marriage my parents had been go-betweens had been lost in a fishing accident earlier that year. He had been swept out to sea, his body never recovered. There had been fruitless weeks of searching the waters in the area, and skilled divers had been sent for from as far away as Kauai.

From my mother I heard several strange stories about his death — how that fatal Sunday was to have been the day to take his small son along but how, unaccountably, he had changed his mind and gone alone; how his widow had found an inexplicable set of wet footprints on the upstairs porch the morning after his disappearance; and how, before the Kauai divers were hired, his sodden ghost had appeared to tell her to discontinue the search — lodged in a crevice, his body would never be found.

Strangest of all was the story my mother told me of how the parents, living in Japan at the time, learned of their son's death. She heard the story directly from the mother herself when the parents returned to settle their son's affairs.

It was warm for a day in early spring. The sun was bright overhead, and from where she stood below the wall handing her husband the bundles of sticks, she could see the beads of perspiration on his face as he pounded away on the fence he was building. All of a sudden he was seized with a violent chill. In spite of the sun and his heavy winter clothes, he shook so hard that his teeth and bones rattled, and it was all she could do to help him down from the wall and get him to bed.

That night she woke from a dream to see her son by the bedside, his eyes fixed mournfully on her. There was no night light, but she could see him in a faint, watery radiance that made shape and features clear. She thought he was sitting on the *tatami*, for the torso was close to her bed on the floor. She could not see his legs folded under him; then she remembered that ghosts are not supposed to have feet.

She was frightened but not enough not to recall an old wives' tale that spirits can be dispelled by warm human breath. Gathering all her strength, she blew at the figure. It shook and shimmered in waves and seemed for a moment to dissolve. But instead of dispersing, it gathered form and receded from her like a leaf blown on the wind, taking the walls and floor with it a great distance away. And then it moved up again to her bedside, floor and walls with it. Three times she blew, each time with failing breath, before the image shimmered and disappeared into nothingness.

She woke her husband, and they sat up wordless for the rest of the night. The wire from Hawaii the following day merely confirmed what both knew in their hearts.

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### *My Mother's Story*

A young relative had died suddenly, leaving behind an infant not yet weaned, and family and neighbors had gathered in the modest home for the wake. Whether the infant missed the mother's nursing or it sensed the presence of strangers in the house, it would not stop crying. Sugar water, gruel on a twist of cotton, rocking, patting, crooning — nothing would comfort it, and the heartrending wails, often drowning out the priest's prayers, caused more tears to fall than did the simple grief of the husband.

It fell to my mother and father to take the baby home that night and to look for a wet nurse the next day. After the mourners had left, we said good night to the husband and set off for home along the river path, my parents in the lead, my aunt carrying the swaddled baby, and me bringing up the rear.

You must picture for yourself what it was like in the country in those days before electric lights. The house of our dead relative stood on a high bank above the river. The path came down a gradual slope to follow the river a ways before it turned off to where we lived some distance away. Except for the bobbing lights cast by the lanterns my parents and I carried, it was absolutely pitch dark; only long familiarity with every stone and pothole in the footpath kept us from stumbling. All around us there was nothing but the sound of rushing water intermingled with the baby's wails.

We made our careful way down in silence, I almost treading on my aunt's heels to light her way. By the time we reached the bottom of the slope, the child had exhausted itself into a kind of petulant whimpering, but as we started along the river's edge, it burst out again in a fresh fit of crying that threatened to choke it and all but drowned out the sound of the river. We stopped and clustered around my aunt, each trying, but helpless, to comfort it.

And then, out of the darkness of the bank above us, from the direction of the house we had left, and rising above the rushing water and the baby's cries, came that single long-drawn call in a young woman's voice — "Ho-o-o-o-i" so clear, so piercingly sweet, so compelling it echoes in my ear to this day. Instantly, as if smothered, the baby stopped crying, and all the long way home it slept and let out not even a whimper.

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Father Paul, a great friend of my husband's late aunt, told her this story many years ago. A light sleeper, Father Paul was disturbed several nights one month by odd shuffling sounds that seemed to come from the library directly beneath his room. He spoke to the rectory housekeeper about it: could there be rats behind the books on the shelves? Mrs. Souza seems to have taken that a slur on her stewardship, for she remarked to friends that some of the priests were very untidy in their study habits, and she was forever straightening the library shelves. Rats indeed! The remark came back to Father Paul and amused him greatly.

Early one morning soon after, Father was awakened by a loud thud from below, as if something solid had been dropped to the floor. Curious now, he got up and went downstairs to the library. All he saw when he turned on the lights was a book lying open on the floor, a white envelope inserted between the open pages. He looked up, and in the row of books on the topmost shelf he saw a vacant space, obviously the place from which the book had fallen. But how? The windows were locked, the door closed, nobody was about.

Puzzled, he picked up the book and turned it over. It was an early edition of the *Daily Missal of the Mystical Body*, a beautiful book, leather-bound, gold-embossed, the pages much worn. On the fly leaf was written the name of Father Gerard, the old Belgian priest who had died unexpectedly in his sleep not a month ago. It was then Father Paul remembered that the old priest's books and papers had been relegated to the top shelf of the library to await disposition.

Now thoroughly excited, Father Paul opened the envelope. Inside were three one-dollar bills and a folded slip of paper with the words: "For anniversary masses, for the repose of the soul of N\_\_\_\_\_."

It did not shock the good father to note that the missal had fallen open to the Votive Mass for the dead, nor to learn the next day that the anniversary of the parishioner's death fell on that very day. Of course, he wasted no time in completing what Father Gerard had left undone.

Who tipped the missal off the shelf? Was it Father Gerard's ghost? According to our aunt, Father Paul didn't say, but he did say that his slumbers were never again disturbed.

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My mother was a consummate storyteller and a very *kura*, a treasure house, of stories of old Japan. She drew on folk tales, myths, legends, ghost stories, beast tales, histories, and more, and her inspired telling of story after story in the years when we were growing up brought to life a procession of characters and creatures out of Japan's ancient past that today are as alive to me as when we listened at her knee.

My favorites were the magic animals. There were many stories of *kitsune*, or fox, the special emissary of Inari-Sama, the Rice God. Often with malevolent purpose, the fox could assume the semblance and manners of a beautiful woman, so real that they could trick a man into marrying the creature. There was *tanuki*, or badger, another trickster less baleful than the fox, whose favorite guise was a monk. Then there was the snake, who also often took human form, and others more blood curdling, like demon spiders who sucked the life blood, and spectral cats who demanded human sacrifice.

Most fascinating of all were the *tengu*, mountain spirits half man and half bird, who made their homes in the topmost branches of ancient pines and cryptomeria. My mother described the chief of a *tengu* colony as tall, red-faced, long-nosed, and fierce-eyed, wearing a feather cape and a peaked hat bound under the chin, and tall wooden *geta* on his feet. He could fly through the air and bound from tree top to tree top with the greatest of ease.

My romance with the *tengu* began with my mother's stories of Yoshitsune, the legendary warrior of the Minamoto clan, and the giant Benkei, who became his devoted follower, and of their famous contest on the Gojo Bridge at Kyoto. I remember a song I learned about them and a language school pageant based on that duel that my father directed when I was about ten years old. According to legend, Benkei was fathered by a *tengu* and as a child on the Island of Nagami, he played with *tengu* on the wooded slopes and learned his warrior skills from them. The boy Yoshitsune, who was spared the usual fate of children of defeated clan leaders, secretly practiced swordsmanship alone in the hills at night with a wooden sword. Legend says that the *tengu* befriended him and taught him all they knew of martial arts and strategies. The story of Yoshitsune and Benkei, inseparable in battle and in death, is one of the most stirring in Japanese legend and history, but in my memory they are curiously linked in another way through their supernatural *tengu* background.

Like many other country-bred people of her generation, my mother believed firmly that *tengu* inhabit the remote woods of Japan to this very day. For me, too, they assumed a reality more substantial than those of badger, fox, or cat because of a story she told of a happening in her part of the country around the turn of the century, when she was a girl of nine or ten. The incident was widely reported in the papers and caused a considerable stir before it dropped into obscurity as another unexplained mystery.

A boy about the age of eight or nine disappeared one late summer day from his home in a mountain village. For many days parents and neighbors searched the forests, ravines, and scattered dwellings on the mountainside, but finding no trace of him, they gave him up as dead.

One morning several weeks later, when it was well into autumn and the weather had turned cold, the boy's sister went outside to fetch water and found her brother sitting forlornly and vacantly on the ground near the well. He was shivering in his summer cottons now in tatters, his face and hands were filthy and covered with scratches and welts, he had lost his slippers, and his feet were cut and bruised. He was

skin and bones. Strangest of all was his look, like one who has not quite come out of a dream.

Pieced together, the story coaxed bit by bit out of the boy as he recovered was a strange one. He was playing, he said, in the woods near home when a tall man with a red face and beak-like nose descended from the trees. He wore a ceremonial *hakama*, or outer skirt, a cape of feathers, a black hat, and tall geta on his feet. If the boy would go with him, the stranger said, he would be shown wonders he had never seen and travel to places he had never been. In the stranger's arms, the boy bounded to the treetops from where he could see cottage roofs small below him and the mountainside all around. Then they set off through the air, flying at great heights. Sometimes he was carried on the stranger's back, sometimes in his arms, and always the cities, villages, rivers, islands, and mountains they traveled over were seen from the air.

The boy was questioned by many, including reporters and doctors from a university.

Did he know where they traveled? Could he describe places, name them? Yes, he could. There was this bridge, there was this causeway to an island, there was this large temple at the top of a wooded mountain, and the place where this river forked and went separate ways before it became one again. And he would name them — bridge, causeway, island, temple and mountain, river and confluence — a child who had never left his village since the day he was born.

How did they live? What did he eat? Was he ever hungry? No, they had plenty to eat — fruit and rice dumplings and sweets, of which the stranger had an endless supply. (The boy's stools had shown the usual fare of one lost in the mountains.)

Was he ever cold? No, the feather cape had kept him warm.

Where did he sleep? In the tree tops, in the crook of a branch, never on the ground.

How did he get home? They dropped down from the trees and he was left where he first met the stranger.

Was he ever afraid? Sometimes.

How did he come by his scratches and bruises? How did his clothing get so tattered? But to some questions the boy had no answer.

All the physical evidence pointed to one lost in the wilds who had miraculously managed to survive and make his way home. This was the story generally accepted, the rest judged the fantasy of a frightened child lost and alone in the wilderness. But the boy was unshakeable in his story of his airborne travels with the long-nosed stranger in the feather cape.

Rob Wilson

THE NEED TO SPEAK

Hair black and dripping with sleep  
she hands me a yellow rose  
from her father's garden in Manoa:  
something *otherworldly*  
she says, just like you

and lonely at birth  
she turns up again  
in her raincoat and graveyard eyes  
rudely awakened from oblivion  
in the need to speak

One night I dream she's wearing rain—  
white, swaddling clothes  
crawling into language on my bed

Marjorie Sinclair

## GARDENS AND ORCHARDS

Some years ago I spent a summer walking along the Kona coast on the island of Hawaii. The coast had a beautiful vast loneliness enhanced by the gentle slopes of the mountains Hualalai and Mauna Loa; this was before there was much hotel and condominium development. One of my favorite places was a cove south of the village of Kailua. A few Hawaiian families lived there in small wooden houses hidden under mango trees or among the spreading *kiawe* trees and crown flower thickets. The cove was almost a perfect semicircle. On one headland *kiawe* and coconut trees grew abundantly. In a heavy tangle of vegetation stood a crumbling church with the coral and lava walls of missionary construction. At one side of the church were the remains of a cemetery, the headstones sagging or broken. The other headland was grassy. Near the point was an old house, its wood a shining gray from years of salt wind and rain. At the back of the cove the Hawaiian houses clustered together. A canoe shelter thatched in palm fronds rotted on the beach. A small pier jutted into the clear green water. Children fished along the shore and played in small canoes made of galvanized iron. In a very short time the children came to know me. They called me "Lady."

One day I asked the children about the house on the point. I noticed that they never went near it, yet they freely wandered everywhere else in their relentless and restless search for play. Minnie, the oldest and my special friend, said no one lived in the house. No one had lived there for a long long time. I pointed out that it looked well kept and that there was even a small garden at the back. "A spook lives there," Alika, Minnie's brother, said. "I scared go there. Bumbye I *ma-ke* dead." As he spoke the final two words, his voice grew husky. The children looked at me with their large brown eyes, larger at the thought of a ghost. They drew in their breaths and muttered among themselves. Keoni put in, "My Pa see one ghost when he go fish by the house." I smiled and said that maybe I should take a look.

In my explorations of the cove, the remains of the church had interested me more than the house. I had seen other deserted houses along the coast — they all had a sad air of decay and of vanished life. But the church was inviting. I liked to go inside where it was shadowy and cool. I could hear the geckos clack their small bells and the birds rustle in the rafters. The pews had fallen apart, and the old pulpit was now little more than the skeleton of a box. Once in a corner underneath a broken pew I found a few pages of a hymnal printed in Hawaiian. I could imagine the rich voices singing together.

The children's words, however, made me curious about the house. I had more difficulty getting there than I had imagined. I had to cross an area of clinkery lava rock with many hidden holes. Then I had to push my way through a dense entanglement of *naupaka* and tall razor-sharp grass. When I finally reached the open grassy area around the house I was grateful to encounter the seawind again. A solitary coconut palm at the front cast a small patch of shade. I stood in its shadow and studied the house. There was no glass in the windows. There were rusty hinges but no door. It was a stark saltbox kind of house, faintly New England in appearance but with a porch across the front. The garden at the back was dried up, the plants brown and crisped by the glaring sun. I hesitated about moving any closer, not that I expected to encounter a ghost or even an occupant; I simply felt that the house had an air of privacy. I might be intruding. I smiled at myself and wondered what I might intrude upon. A gecko or a mouse? A spook, as Alika said?

I had just decided to move a little closer when suddenly I saw a young woman standing on the porch. I had not observed her coming from the house. She wore a long blue denim wraparound skirt and a white high-necked blouse with long sleeves. Her brown hair was wavy, parted in the middle and drawn back in a small bun at the nape of her neck. She looked rather like a picture I had seen of Emily Dickinson. She walked down the steps of the porch and came toward me. Her eyes were very clear.

"Won't you come in? You must be hot." Her voice was high and her tone formal. "It's a rather crumbling old house," she apologized.

I followed her up the stairs past the rusty hinges into the living room. I expected emptiness and was surprised to see a few pieces of furniture in the large room which ran the whole width of the house. In one corner were the rusted remains of what once must have been a pedal sewing machine. A small vine had grown up through cracks in the floor to twist in and out of the curved design of the legs. An old mahogany sofa, the back carved with leaves and fruit, stood at an angle against the wall which adjoined the porch. The upholstery was rusty horsehair and in one place a hole showed the dirty stuffing. On a small table stood a kerosene lamp whose shade had a large piece gone. On a larger table was a china bowl on which someone had painted roses and violets. There were three straight-backed chairs of splintering wood. The furniture looked as if a great wave from the sea had washed it into the room, leaving it without arrangement.

"Please sit down," she said. "I'll heat water for tea." Before I could refuse she had opened a door and gone into the kitchen. I sat on the edge of the sofa. It felt shaky. The seawind came through the doorway and the other house openings. I could hear no other sound. Once again I had the feeling of being an intruder, yet the young woman had been friendly and seemed to want me to come in. I wondered whether there might be someone else in the house, but I heard only creaking boards and the sea outside.

I looked around the room. There were no pictures on the walls, no ornaments of any kind except the hand-painted china bowl. No signs of the sea edge, not even a shell or a glass ball picked up from the beach. Outside, the sun seemed to grow brighter as it continued its late afternoon descent. Its rays streaked across a rugless floor and



revealed little balls of dust and two or three small feathers which must have blown through the door or the glassless windows.

The young woman returned carrying a tray with a brown teapot and two yellowed cups neatly arranged. There was also a plate of filled cookies. She offered no sugar or lemon. She put the tray on the smaller table, poured a cup of strong tea and handed it to me. I noticed the cup had a fine tracery of cracks.

"I should tell you my name," she said. "It is Charity Potter. Charity is so old-fashioned. I used to hate it. Now I quite like it."

I told her my name. Then at a loss for something to say, I commented, "The water is beautiful today. Such a deep blue."

"It's beautiful every day," she said. "Even when it storms."

She passed the cookies. I took one. It was stale and tasteless, and I laid it on the edge of the saucer. I said, "It's good of you to ask me to tea."

"I've seen you with the children. They seem to like you." She laughed self-consciously. "They don't much like me. They run away." Then with shyness, "I do like children."

"You have no family of your own?"

"Not now. My little girl died. Some time ago, she died; and my husband."

"I'm sorry," I murmured. "Then you are alone."

"Yes. I quite like being alone. I prefer it," she added with some emphasis. Her clear eyes hardened. Who knows what old bitterness or pain there can be in an old shattered house.

I wanted to ask her how she lived, where she came from, how long she had lived in this decrepitude. But I could not, and we fell constantly into silences. Outside, the sea crashed on the black lava shore and wind clacked the coconut fronds. The silence was a burden for me. I wanted to say something, anything. Her words, "I prefer it," echoed in my mind and kept me from speaking comfortably.

During the silence she sat, relaxed and graceful, sipping her tea. The bitterness had gone from her eyes. Then abruptly and nervously she insisted on making another pot. "I like tea very fresh," she said. "I don't like it sitting long in a pot." I tried to say I must go, but she was quickly back in the kitchen. She kept its door closed.

I wondered how I would break away without offending her. In some curious fashion she seemed to be reaching out, she was filling me with a sense of obligation. I was linked to her loneliness. Like a net it fell over me — I must, I said to myself, stay a while longer. I guessed that Charity Potter did not often talk to people. And her clear gray eyes could be commanding.

This time along with the tea she brought a chipped plate of saloon pilots. When she passed them she said, "I'm afraid my china is rather old."

I nibbled a saloon pilot. It too was stale. Crumbs dropped on the floor. I tried to pick them up in the dust.

"Don't bother," she said. "In this old house nothing matters much. That's why I like living here. I can be a little messy."

"It looks very orderly to me."

"That's only because there isn't very much to be disarranged." She had a way of shutting off topics at the beginning. And with a tone which was faintly sharp. Yet in spite of her sharpness there was softness. Her very appearance — the white blouse, I could see, was handmade with the smallest of stitches; the denim skirt, an old one, was wrapped with elegance around her hips and hung in graceful folds to the floor. I noticed also a small cameo brooch at her throat. Her hands were pale, her hair had a reddish tinge. All in all a soft and private Emily Dickinson kind of girl.

"Have you lived here long?" I ventured.

"On and off for several years. If I go, I come back here. I guess I'll always be here."

The silence came again. The sea crashed and the sound took away something of the quivering air of uncertainty in the room.

When I finished my second cup of tea, I stood up and said firmly that it was time for me to go. The atmosphere she wove around me was oppressive. I had come to the end of my polite lingering.

"Please," Charity said, "before you leave, let me show you my little collection. I seldom have the opportunity to show it to anyone."

She went through a door opposite the kitchen. There were doors to close off the rooms inside the house. But no door for the front entrance. I felt this must somehow be significant, a clue perhaps to her life in this dusty splintering place. In this house life was lived separately and in compartments. I felt totally alone. And my mood of uncertainty grew darker and heavier. The sun had moved further down the sky. The big triangle of light through the naked front opening was heavier, like a spill of syrup on the floor. The room had grown shadowy in the corners.

Suddenly she returned carrying something which appeared to be an old-fashioned sewing basket. She put it on the sofa next to me and opened it very carefully. She took out two bits of coral, trinkets picked up from the beach. She held up one of them for me to examine. "What does it look like?"

I saw a rounded animal form, with a long straight tail. "A mouse," I said.

"Of course not. It's a cat. I have even named it Cary."

It didn't really look like a cat, but she had made it one and given it a name.

She held up the other piece of coral. "And what's this?"

"A bird," I could say with certainty.

"Yes, a sweet little bird, like a wren. I've spent many years collecting these pieces of coral from the beach. I like the little ones. Those with natural forms. They're my companions."

I suggested she might display some of them on her table. In a tone of surprise she exclaimed that no one ever came, so why put them out. "They like the old basket. They're comfortable there."

She closed the basket and laid her hands on top of it. It was a gesture of finality. "Everything is more comfortable when it isn't disturbed," she said and took the basket in her arms. She rose. At the entrance to the inner room, she said goodbye and closed the door behind her. Her voice had grown sharp again. I felt guilty — I must have done what I didn't want to do. I had intruded.

The sun was low in the sky when I reached the little pier. The children were all waiting, their eyes lustrous with anticipation. Minnie said, "You went inside. We saw you. Was it the spook?"

"She's not a spook. She's a real person."

"No can," Alika said. "No one stop that house. My Momma say no one stop that house for long time."

I looked down at him. "She gave me tea and cookies."

"You ate? Bumbye you get sick, eat that ghost stuff."

The children began to chatter; each tried to out-shout the other. What she look like? What kind of cookies? What taste? What she say? How you know she no ghost? A ghost can look like a person. I put my hands up and they stopped.

"She has a name," I said.

"What name?" they chorussed. Charity Potter, I said.

Minnie put her small brown hand on my arm. "That lady *ma-ke* long time ago."

"She couldn't have died. I talked with her most of the afternoon."

"Come with me," Minnie said. I decided to yield to the whims of childhood and followed her along the path that leads to the old church. The other children tagged along. At the edge of the cemetery she stopped. "Go look!" she said, pointing to the gravestones. "The one behind that old tree trunk."

I stepped carefully among the stones and the weeds. "There, there!" they shouted. I stopped at a tombstone which was tilted so much it seemed ready to fall at any moment. I saw faint lettering, but I had to kneel on the ground to read it.

"Charity Potter, wife of Reverend William Potter. Born June 8, 1814. Died November 10, 1841. 'I made me gardens and orchards.'"

## Contributors' Notes

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