

THE RAINBOW SYNDROME: A THESIS
IN CREATIVE WRITING

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PREFACE

THE RAINBOW SYNDROME is the result of an opportunity provided by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Oklahoma State University to specialize in a specific content area within the field of language arts education. This opportunity led directly to what I consider to be the major development in my graduate program--my commitment to write and teach writing as a career. This thesis is directed toward the first of these goals.

I am indebted to my committee chairman, Dr. Leon Munson, who advised and encouraged me on this and many other projects. During the two and one half years in which this collection took shape, I benefitted from the sound criticism of co-adviser Dr. Gordon Weaver, a writer who taught me again and again that good writing is hard work. I thank Dr. Edward Lawry for his support and critical interest.

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INTRODUCTION

As James E. Miller notes in his introduction to *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, James's most important contribution to the theory of fiction was "to call attention to the transcendent importance of point of view."¹ Since James, point of view has become a prime concern for anyone concerned with the principles involved in creating a work of fiction. Percy Lubbock goes so far as to assert that "the whole intricate question of method, in the craft of fiction, I take to be governed by the question of point of view--the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story."² Although accused of oversimplifying James's concepts,³ Lubbock's treatment of point of view in *The Craft of Fiction* was followed by the gradual development of a doctrine that dominates most books about writing.⁴

That doctrine is challenged, and the usual distinctions of point of view refined,⁵ in Wayne C. Booth's *Rhetoric of Fiction*. Booth finds inadequate the traditional classification of point of view according to the variables of person and degree of omniscience. He points out that to describe the great narrators like Tristram Shandy or Strethers of *The Ambassadors* in such terms "tell us nothing about how they differ from each other, or why they

succeed where others described in the same terms failed."⁶ Booth's attempt to produce "a richer tabulation of the forms the author's voice can take"⁷ outlines his rhetoric of fiction. Most central to understanding the rhetorical operations of a fiction are the concepts of the implied author and narrative distance.

The implied author is the author's "second self,"⁸ the implied persona or intelligence to whom the reader attributes final authority for all that happens in a fiction. Although a real author's support for a particular theme expressed in one of his books may change, the implied author's support cannot vary. To the implied author are ascribed all the moral norms, meanings, themes, significances, etc., that may be apprehended in the work. "Our sense of the implied author includes not only the extractable meanings, but also the moral and emotional content of each bit of action and sufferings of all the characters. It includes, in short, the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole; the chief value to which *this* implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form"⁹

If the purpose of rhetoric is to persuade, then it is the purpose of every implied author to induce the reader to share his vision and to embrace those values contained in it. The major means for achieving this involves the manipulation of narrative distance.

In a fiction, the reader, the implied author, the narrator (or narrative voice), and the characters are separated from each other by various degrees and kinds of distance. The nature of the distance separating any two elements may be moral, intellectual, emotional, or physical-temporal. The effect of establishing and manipulating distance is the creation of irony, a difference in knowledge or insight between the implied author and a character or the reader and a character. For example, Ring Lardner's story "Haircut" is narrated by the barber; the reader reads only the words the barber speaks to his customer. The barber tells a number of "humorous" stories that the reader must gradually realize are *not* to be understood as funny, but rather as revealing the shameless bigotry of the barber. This growing reader awareness increases the moral distance between the reader and the narrator, and therefore creates irony at the narrator's expense. If the story is successful, the reader will share the implied author's moral norms and not those of the barber.

The principles of narrative distance operate in each of the stories in this collection. In general, the stories deal with problems of character identity. The main characters find themselves in situations that call their self-images into question. Complicating their problems in many cases are either the illusory popular conception of Hawaii as a romantic paradise (as in "The Rainbow Syndrome," "A Matter of Style," "Postcard from Lahaina," and "The

Auteur"), or conditions of the specific milieu (as in "The Red Dust of Lanai," "The Summer Game," and "The Player and the Giant").

I will briefly discuss how narrative distance functions as a means to achieve major intentions in each story.

In "The Rainbow Syndrome" narrative distances are manipulated between the implied author and the main character Burton, in order to enable the reader to understand that Burton is not the man he thinks he is. The story is told in a generally effaced third person limited omniscient voice. However, the voice is made conspicuous at times to bring the reader emotionally closer to Burton. For example, in the opening the voice exhibits some of the nonsense characteristics Burton believes form his character: "Burton still knows what he looks like, by god."¹⁰ The "by god" should be recognized as the very words Burton would use. In passages like this, the narrative voice is thus employed to reveal Burton's image of himself as a hard-nosed realist.

Much of the time the voice remains more distant from Burton to allow the reader to view the character in a way he does not view himself. For example, the reader is *told* that Burton was frightened the day his chest tightened on the beach (22). Burton never *thinks* of his fright; that is not part of his self-image.

Joseph Kamahale, the big Heinz Fifty-seven Hawaiian, confuses Burton's sense of order. Joseph tries to drink

a thousand beers in ten days, and Burton soon catches himself imagining what it would be like to be young again. Nevertheless, he remains unaware of how deeply the experiences at Joseph's house are affecting him. Intellectual distance is manipulated to again reveal the contradiction between Burton's view of himself as a realist and the implied author's view of his romantic side. "It's such a waste," Burton remembers thinking about Joseph's drinking, then falls asleep as the reader learns that Burton was actually beginning to imagine *himself* as the man who drank a thousand beers.

The gradual revealing of Burton's romantic side should function as foreshadowing for the scene when Burton does nothing to disrupt the bet after he catches Joseph's son Danny drinking beer under the house.

The intellectual distance between Burton and the implied author (and the reader) should remain intact at the end. Though Burton *feels* the momentary rejuvenation accompanying his thought of sharing a beer with Joseph, the feeling does not produce a conscious recognition of how the rainbow syndrome affects his own life.

Unlike the first story, the main character in "A Matter of Style" has no clear image of himself. Pierce, a xerox repairman, blames himself for leading a strangely boring life in Hawaii. In this mood he is oddly attracted to the ideas of his barber, Reuben Stovall, who believes that everything in life is simply a matter of style--pro-

jecting strength and hiding weakness. The story intends to depict how Pierce's aborted attempt to copy Reuben's "style" produces an experience in which he is able to momentarily assert his own strength of character.

As in "The Rainbow Syndrome," the story is told with a generally effaced third person limited omniscient voice. However, the voice in "A Matter of Style" reports more details of the main character's thoughts because Pierce is a more articulate and reflective character than Burton.

Several types of distancing are involved. By centering on Pierce's consciousness the voice is intended to establish a moral distance between Pierce, an essentially honest man, and Reuben, whose values appear crude by comparison: "Well, you're certainly one to talk about natural style, Pierce reflects as he regards the shiny silver jump suit Reuben is wearing" (35). By remaining close to the main character's consciousness, the narrative voice is also able to share Pierce's sensitivity and affection for his work and family with the reader. The intended effects are to *reduce* the moral distance between Pierce and the emerging moral norm of the story, and to *increase* the moral distance between Reuben and the norm.

Emotional distance is also manipulated. At various points the narrative voice moves away from Pierce's innermost consciousness, summarizing his thoughts rather than reporting them directly. This manipulation is employed both to provide economical exposition, as in the paragraph

summarizing Pierce's life in Indianapolis (36), and also to allow a relatively high level of descriptive rhetoric depicting his sensitivity: "Pierce loves to feel tense muscles and thoughts grow limp and dim under the soapy rub of Reuben's fingertips" (38). Emotional distance is also developed simply through the use of names. For example, by referring to Pierce by his last name only, the voice may reinforce how Pierce's self-image is dependent on how others see him. Reuben and Chuck Hinson both refer to him by last name only, while calling for him to "assert himself." Reuben suggests the means--trapping fish in Hanauma Bay.

Unable to play the role Reuben has outlined for him, Pierce finally commits one act that arises directly from his conscience--he destroys Reuben's fish "trap" in the coral reef. The voice describes this scene from a point just outside Pierce's innermost consciousness. Here Pierce is intended to realize, or rather *feel* his own strength of character for the first and only time in the story. The exact nature of the feeling is left unsaid; the voice reports only the outward sensations--strain, exhaustion, and the burning relief of the air (52). The absence of conscious reflection should at this point give the reader a stronger sense of directness and importance of the experience, and why Pierce tries to make it last.

The first two stories treat Hawaii as a place that tempts one to believe that dreams and fantasies can come true. Both Burton and Pierce are aware of the temptation

and the gap between the popular conception of Hawaii and the reality of living there. Both characters are out of place--Burton living in Waikiki, but unable to go to the beach; Pierce longing for a change in his life while fixing copy machines.

The main character of the third story, "The Red Dust of Lanai," suffers from the opposite problem. Shigeo Masuda, a young pineapple plantation worker, is a fitting part of life on the island of Lanai. He is urged by his girlfriend to leave Lanai and go with her to attend the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. Though Shigeo receives advice and tries to weigh the problem in his own mind, in the end reason is irrelevant. The major intention of the story is to make the reader understand that Shigeo will remain on Lanai, because he correctly senses that his identity is tied to this island.

Manipulation of emotional distance is the primary means to achieve this effect. Once again the point of view is third person, limited omniscient. The voice does not center quite as closely to the main character's consciousness as in the previous stories. Shigeo is relatively inarticulate; his *thoughts* could never express many of the things he feels, so the voice expresses it for him: "Expectation, affection, strength--Shigeo feels conflicting patterns of force impress his body in a bizarre mesh" (64). The voice also summarizes most of the aspects of Shigeo's life--his work, his respect for Antomino, jeeping up the

mountain, his private hunting game in the pineapple fields, his friends, and his ambivalent feelings toward Maxine.

The reader is moved close enough to receive Shigeo's exact thoughts only twice. The first time occurs in the lodge when the voice reports Shigeo's flashback memory of hunting with Antomino. The second time occurs in the jeep with Maxine. The second shift is most important, for it comes at the moment of greatest emotional intensity in the story. At that moment he thinks not of Maxine, but the mountain of Lanai: "*Drive up the high trail where the stones shake away everything you know. Let the mountain take you*" (67). This brief shift deep into Shigeo's consciousness is designed to enable the reader to share more completely Shigeo's emotional realization of his life priorities.

There should be little doubt, after that, that Shigeo will stay on Lanai. The fictional interests that should remain are what Booth calls qualitative and practical. Qualitative interest remains if the reader wants to know what consequences Shigeo's decision will have on his life; practical interest remains if the reader cares about Shigeo in such a way as to want to know more about his fate after losing Maxine. The mealy bug scene and the final sentence are designed to satisfy both interests by assuring the reader that Shigeo's life will not change very much.

"The *Auteur*" concerns the subjective nature of human experience and the way this necessarily affects how meaning

is made. The development of this theme involves the manipulation of both physical-temporal and emotional distance.

The story is narrated by a character who calls himself the Film Phantom. In one sense, he is Booth's typical self-conscious narrator, describing events as if he were a director making a film. He frequently comments on his art: "Don't get too involved--the artist must remain objective" (73). Whether or not the film Phantom actually *is* objective is the central question of the fiction. At times he appears to resemble a camera eye, objectively viewing a scene. But his selection of subjects and particular viewing angles, etc., are meant to betray the fact that he is indeed *not* objective. Instead he is affected by the people he films, and the reader should come to realize that the Film Phantom's movies are subjectively tainted.

Manipulation of physical-temporal distance among characters is one method of attempting to reveal the Film Phantom's lack of objectivity. For example, the Phantom not only films Carol from the coffee shop (where he is a customer seen by others), but also films her in a bedroom scene where his own presence is impossible. He also warns against getting too close to one's subject, yet "comes into view" himself near the end.

Emotional distance is also manipulated to demonstrate the subjective nature of the Phantom's art. The Phantom sometimes mentions himself in discussing a scene, drawing himself closer to the other characters, especially Carol.

The reader should be drawn into the phantom's consciousness when he stops Carol and says "Now eye-to-eye. Wide and tense, right into the lense. Freeze the action for a moment as I halt her, hold her, capture her forever" (87). Of course physical-temporal distance is also being manipulated at the same time--both Carol and Charles *see* the phantom confront her. These manipulations should combine to destroy the Phantom's objectivity.

"The Summer Game" involves another character who does not quite fit into the situation in which he finds himself. Warren, a summer cane cutter at Ewa Sugar Plantation, likes working there, but is shy and withdrawn. He stays on the edge of things, unsure of himself. He does assert himself one way--by making a private game of trying to outwork old Santos, the best cane cutter at Ewa. Santos is an outcast, considered crazy and dangerous by the rest of the crew. But on the last day of summer Warren learns that Santos has been secretly playing the same game all summer long. The major intention of the story is to demonstrate that through this experience with Santos Warren achieves a measure of emotional growth. The major means employed to achieve this intention is the manipulation of emotional distance among characters. These distances should be detected by the reader, thus creating irony.

The major areas of distancing involve Warren and the other workers, Warren and Santos, and Santos and the other workers. Events in the story are designed to bring Warren

closer to Santos and the other workers, while Santos remains isolated from everyone except Warren.

The effaced third person narrative voice seeks to establish Warren's isolation from the crew simply by informing the reader: "Warren did not participate in the ceremonial bantering . . . Warren wasn't very good at kidding around with the rest of the crew. He could never think of the right thing to say" (94). The voice also explains and interprets Warren's relationship with Santos, indicating Warren's admiration for the old Filipino, even though ". . . they had never spoken, though Warren always wondered about Santos's opinion of him as a cane cutter" (98). Santos's own isolation from the crew is described directly by the voice and confirmed in the dialogue. "'Santos doesn't make sense,' DeMattos went on. 'Santos *pupule*'" (107).

Warren feels most isolated just before he speaks to Santos before entering the cane fields on the last day: "They were all watching him--he knew it. They would single him out" (113). However, the distance between Warren and Santos should be reduced when Santos speaks for the first time. Communication follows as the voice tells the reader, "It hit Warren. He was being challenged" (113).

In the final pages of the story the reader should understand that Warren is drawn closer to Santos and the crew in some ways, while remaining distant in others. He and Santos share a secret now, yet Santos quickly detaches

himself once again: "Warren could detect no movement at all in the old man now. He seemed fixed there, like the trestle across Highway Seventy-Six" (114). Similarly, Warren now finds himself the center of attention among the crew, and he is able to shout with the others, joining in the spirit of the cane cutting in a way he has never managed before. He remains distant from the crew in another way when he does not share Santos's words with them. To the reader, this action should seem justified, since the crew would neither understand nor appreciate the relationship of Santos and Warren.

Warren does not "figure out" what has happened to him; he only senses a change. The cane that once burned bitter now smells bitterly sweet.

The story in "Postcard from Lahaina" depends upon the function of intellectual and emotional distance between the reader and the main character to create irony. The nature of the narrative voice (the source of all reader information) is therefore crucial. The third person limited omniscient voice employed here is designed to be flexible enough to let the reader share Michael Tanner's consciousness through much of the story, while still providing the reader with information or insights unavailable to Michael.

The voice begins by telling the reader *about* Michael. The reader learns various details of Michael's life--his divorce, his ex-wife's remarriage, and most importantly, his present attempt to "let go" of the lives of his two

daughters. Gradually the voice begins to report Michael's thoughts, sometimes summarily, sometimes directly in Michael's own words. The voice allows the reader emotional intimacy with Michael by sharing his thoughts, but also attempts to maintain an intellectual distance between reader and character, keeping the reader aware of things Michael loses track of. For example, even though he is trying to let go of Cynthia's life, he still thinks to himself that he is "still her father" (122).

With his wider view of the situation, the reader should be able to see how Michael is unable to resist thinking about those things he knows are dangerous to someone trying to let go. He worries about deceiving himself about the past, yet his last thoughts are of him and his girls playing on some swings--the "lie" he thought about having made into a postcard. In the last two paragraphs the narrative voice distances the reader from Michael, revealing the sunset Michael does not see, but which completes (for the reader) the postcard scene.

"The Player and the Giant" deals with an improbable event, the disappearance of the ocean. The central problem facing the story is how to achieve credibility, how to induce the reader to believe in the world he encounters, without applying inappropriate standards of realism. To achieve this, the narrative voice employed is intended to be straightforward and authoritative, but not obtrusive. The goal is to create a convincingly objective tone that

will allow the reader to accept fantastic events without question.

Again the principle of narrative distance is involved. The voice must be properly distanced not only from the events, but from the characters as well. A third person limited omniscient voice is employed in order to focus on the thoughts of the main character Mitsumo. The voice must be equally convincing in depicting Mitsumo, for the reader must accept not only the improbable outer reality of the vanished sea, but also Mitsumo's private inner reality of the Sleeping Giant and the perfect shot.

The voice treats the ocean's disappearance as fact: "Mitsumo Takara slept soundly the night the ocean vanished" (131). The voice makes no attempt to explain the event. Questions are raised by various characters, but these are dealt with quickly because, not only is the question of *why* the ocean disappeared irrelevant, questions and explanations about the manner of its disappearance are potentially destructive to the story's fragile existence as fantasy.

The milieu cannot bear any "realistic" examination and neither can the character of Mitsumo. Mitsumo must be believable, however. To accomplish this, the voice maintains an even distance from Mitsumo by reporting mostly his thoughts about golf, the perfect shot, and the Sleeping Giant. The intent is to clearly establish the order within Mitsumo's private reality. The reader must believe that it

would be out of character for Mitsumo to choose to do anything but continue to attempt the perfect shot, even after the Giant too has disappeared.

The final story, "The Man Who Drank a Thousand Beers," involves the same characters and general setting as "The Rainbow Syndrome." The final story focuses on Joseph Kamahele, the big Hawaiian who attempts to drink a thousand beers in ten days. Like Burton in the first story, Joseph has an inaccurate self-image--he thinks of himself as a man who always earns the great respect he enjoys. Unlike Burton, he discovers his mistake. The major intention of the story is to reveal the irony and intensity of the experience when Joseph confronts the fact that he is not the man he thinks he is.

Several manipulations of distance are involved. The third person limited omniscient voice focuses on Joseph, sharing with the reader Joseph's thoughts and actions. Intellectual distance should exist between Joseph and the reader in varying degrees throughout the story. For example, the spectacle of Joseph drunkenly singing "And you could never be more happy!" (157) should call his actual happiness into question for the reader. The repeated references to Joseph as the strongest man in Waikiki should cause the reader to begin doubting Joseph's "strength" in various ways early in the story. But by the time of the scene outside the courthouse, it should be clear that Joseph himself is beginning to feel that

title is wrong. A different kind of intellectual distance remains, in that the reader may perceive larger irony in Joseph's inaccurate title. Joseph's own reaction is emotional.

Manipulation of emotional distance among characters is also important. Emotional distance should develop between Joseph and his friends as he begins to doubt that he deserves their praise. Also, the emotional distance between Joseph and Danny should be obvious. Joseph wants to become closer to Danny, to know what his son is thinking, but fails. He manages only a momentary elimination of the physical distance that has existed between them until the final scene. Even this closeness is momentary, as Joseph pushes his son away and flees, unable to face the tourist with the camera.

Whatever effects the following stories actually achieve for individual readers will still be due in great measure to the rhetorical principles discussed above.

NOTES

¹"Introduction," *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, ed. James E. Miller Jr. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), p. 15.

²Percy Lubbock, *The Craft of Fiction*, (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1920), p. 252.

³Robie MaCauley and George Lanning, *Techniques in Fiction*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 99.

⁴MaCauley and Lanning, p. 99.

⁵Norman Friedman, *Form and Meaning in Fiction*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), p. 141.

⁶Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 149.

⁷Booth, p. 149.

⁸Booth, p. 71.

⁹Booth, pp. 73-74.

¹⁰Page 19 of this text. All subsequent references to stories in this collection are indicated by page number in the text of the introduction.

¹¹Booth, pp. 125-27.

THE RAINBOW SYNDROME

Burton steps firmly out onto his lanai. Burton Bettelheim. An old man, tall and somewhat frail, with sallow spotted skin. Dressed in plain khaki clothes, because although there are lots of folks his age in Hawaii dressed in splashy-colored tourist garb, Burton still knows what he looks like, by god.

He leans over the black iron railing of his lanai and looks out toward the ocean. It is only just, this view of his. A man has a right to a good look at things, especially at his age. And he isn't so privileged anyway; the Hawaiian Crown is only nine stories, a dwarf among the other giant hotels crowding toward the beach at Waikiki. From Burton's vantage point here several blocks from the water, the best he could hope for would be a clear view into a neighbor's living room--were it not for the small gap between his hotel and the next, a crack in the wall of high-rises ahead that allows him to glimpse just a piece of the ocean.

The gap is his focal point, his referent. He likes to spend a few quiet minutes here each day just looking out, putting things in order. Today he looks out through his private window to the sea, wondering why, for Joseph Kamahela, the crazy three hundred pound Hawaiian, every-

thing has to be a test of manhood.

Burton remembers it was his neighbor Patterson who first described the big Hawaiian, an enormous dark-skinned man, always shirtless, with layers of heavy brown flesh lapping over his belt in deep folds. "He's at least part Hawaiian," Patterson said, "and a pretty good-natured guy most of the time, but one hell of a drinker. Parks cars at the International Market Place--when he works. Mostly he just sits on the porch all day, watching people walk by. He's lived in that run-down house next door for years. All this kind of grew up around him. In a way, I guess he's one of those characters the brochures says bring romance to the islands."

It was the only time Patterson used the term, but the image stuck.

"A romantic *relic* you mean. Well, that's not *me*, by god," was Burton's reply.

Burton shakes his head slowly now, takes a couple of shallow breaths, and looks over the edge of the railing. Nine stories down to Joseph Kamahele's tiny wooden slat house, the source of the gap, sandwiched between the two high-rises on the corner of Liliuokalani and Cleghorn Street. There is a large mango tree shading most of the brief front yard and half the roof of the house, which sits on a three-foot elevating crossframe. Joseph Kamahele lives here with his boys, the Three Terrors: Stephen Kaponu, and Danny, the oldest, who likes to throw Burton's

laundry into the swimming pool. The social worker says they're good boys, but need stronger parental guidance.

Burton remembers the dimly-lit living room inside the house, where roaches scurry away beneath the furniture and light seeps through the cracks between floorboards. He remembers he and Joseph and Chun Lee sitting around the splintered coffee table, playing poker.

Chun Lee, the shriveled Chinese in the faded *aloha* shirt and baggy pants, is winning, of course--Burton remembers this very distinctly. He doesn't have much use for Chun Lee, except that he is rich and he wins--constantly--you have to give him that. But Burton knows the Oriental gets no respect from the big crazy Heinz Fifty-Seven Hawaiian sitting on the floor, who suddenly slaps his cards down on the splintered table and lifts a can of Primo to his lips, draining it in one series of long leisurely gulps. Finished, he bangs the empty can down on the floor and stares across the room at Chun Lee, who is holding a pat hand and sipping his beer quietly.

"Look at you, Chun Lee," the big Hawaiian says, staring into the smaller man's eyes. "Money dry you up--make you skinny and bad-tempered. Before-time you used to drink pretty good. Now look at you."

Chun Lee sets his beer down quietly. "I have an ulcer," he says.

"Yeah, lot of waste-time you make, going around counting everybody up," Joseph counters. "Now you got

money and no time to enjoy it. Now you're even too weak and skinny to drink. You give me some of your money and I'll show you how a man drinks."

"Suppose I did," Chun Lee replies slowly, "what would you do?"

Burton, who is losing, looks up from his cards, wondering what the crazy Hawaiian will say to that. Joseph sits motionless for several moments, matching stares with Chun Lees.

"In ten days," he says finally, "I can drink one thousand beers."

"That's a helluva lot of beer, Joe," says Burton, thinking *you fat-assed sonuvabitch*.

But the big man on the floor just sits there.

"I'll take the bet," Chun Lee says finally. "Nobody can drink that much."

"I'll show you who can drink," the big Hawaiian brags. "But you pay for it, man."

"So will you, Joseph," Chun Lee nods.

Burton steps away from the railing and sits down in a chrome and plastic lawn chair. His doctor has warned him not to stand in the sun very long. Once, standing on the beach beneath the tall crescent concrete walls of the Sheraton, the tightness came, grabbing his chest, and he sat down frightened in the hot sand, his jaw hung slack, drawing in quick gasps of air. But he was all right.

And he is getting used to the periodic tightness now. But he no longer goes to the beach.

He looks out through the gap and traces the low silhouette of an oil tanker on the blue horizon. Burton prides himself on his good eyes, though he has to admit it's tougher to see in the evenings now. He likes to go for walks just after sunset, when it's cool and there is still enough light. A distinctly separate community exists in the shadows of the big hotels. More slat houses like Joseph Kamahele's tucked between the concrete towers.

But mostly there are plants. Green growing things sprouting from every patch of soil splitting the pavement. From the ninth floor, Burton notices only the tops of trees, like the tall silver-ringed coco palm extending three-fourths of the way up to his lanai from the spot where the pavement was poured around it. A family of white doves nests serenely in its crown, suspended in quiet isolation in the gap between high-rises.

Walking along Liliuokalani in the evening, he can see how the greenery holds its own against the encroaching cement. Yard after yard is dominated by the stiff forking branches of plumeria trees, with clusters of the waxy blossoms leaning out over the walk, close enough to touch. And where no soil is left, it is brought in. In front of the Venture Isle, five-foot red and green ti plants grow up out of spray-painted oil drums.

Burton remembers he was out walking the night the

bet began. All around the greenery children are playing as he paces slowly up the walk. Burton doesn't get along well with children, one of the reasons he never married, he once remarked. They close in around Burton's path, some throwing frisbees, but most watching a few lucky boys riding skateboards up and down the sidewalks and into the street. Burton is surprised at their ages. Most are twelve or under, but some appear to be high schoolers, at least. They skate magnificently, weaving around obstacles with supreme skill and apparent unconcern. Style is everything.

Burton is approaching Joseph's house when a series of shouts clears the sidewalk for a boy he recognizes as Danny, Joseph's oldest son, a slim, shirtless, deeply-tanned boy with a self-confident air. He snaps his board into a full-speed glide with three quick striding thrusts, and shoots straight for Burton. The old man stops frozen in the middle of the walk as the boy approaches, balanced perfectly on the speeding board, one hand on his hip and staring off toward a distant high-rise. As the old man starts to stumble out of the way, the boy leans imperceptibly toward the street and careens around him, his elbow just brushing Burton's as he passes.

Scowling, Burton twists around awkwardly amid scattered laughter and sees the boy squat down on the board and swing out into the street through a driveway, skating down another half block until he curls to a stop

in front of his two brothers waiting on the opposite sidewalk. "My chance!" My chance!" the smaller one yells, and the rider steps nonchalantly off the board, gives him a special wave with just his thumb and pinkie, and slides the board toward them with his foot.

Back up the street, Burton shakes his head helplessly and turns back toward Joseph Kamahale's house. Patterson, Burton's neighbor in 904, is standing in the yard beneath the mango tree, grinning at him.

"He got you too, huh?" he laughs as the old man approaches.

Burton looks at the light-complected figure in shorts and an *aloha* shirt with pink and purple orchids. He doesn't like Patterson. He's too moon-faced, Burton thinks. Too romantic, like that fool sidewalk painter down on Kalakaua who calls himself the Rainbow Man--paints people as surfers, hula dancers, even sharks--anything they can dream up. Well, not *this* old fool, by god. Burton nods a gruff assent as he passes, but Patterson grabs his arm and points back in the direction of the children.

"What would you do," he asks, if for just a moment, you were their age again?"

Burton stops and looks back at the children, all converging on the skateboards now, running and screaming, crawling all over each other like insects.

"Hide," he says and turns back toward the house.

Inside, they are all discussing the rules. They

decide to make the rules firm: Ten days, starting tonight. Twelve-ounce cans of regular six-point beer. Chun Lee will pay for it and also for the time Joe misses parking cars. No low carbohydrate brands and no special vitamins or drugs. Someone to stay with Joe at all times, while neighbors and friends help take care of the boys and watch out for the social worker. The beer will be stored under the house where she won't see it.

"I don't like it. The welfare woman is sure to cause trouble," Burton complains to a man with green teeth and one good eye--Henry Okuda, the big Hawaiian's friend who lives down the street by the big candelabra cactus tree. He looks at Burton and shrugs.

"Aw, cool head main thing," Joseph interjects. "I get a mail today from Department of Social Services. Tell me I got to get a better job. Provide support, you know. Say I should go pick pines for Dole!"

Henry Okuda breaks into a bizarre cackling laugh, cupping his hand over his bad eye as he rocks back and forth in the chair.

"I still don't like it," he says.

The screen door swings open and Danny enters, carrying his skateboard. He glances at Burton, who glowers, but the boy never misses a stride as he lays his skateboard down in its customary place in the corner by Chun Lee. Burton wants to intimidate the boy by threatening to tell Joseph about the incident on the walk, but knows

the big Hawaiian wouldn't mind his boys having a little fun at Burton's expense. The old man feels a hot sensation in his neck and cheeks. It doesn't seem that long ago that he didn't have to rely on another man's disposition to deal with those who insult him.

But the heat slowly fades. You have to know who you are, damn it, and Burton is a realist. He knows who's holding the cards. He takes a couple of quick shallow breaths and concedes defeat.

Danny goes over to Joseph, who is eye to eye with him, but three times as big, sitting on a worn rattan sofa.

"Ey, we go over to Yamoto's with Ann-guys for shav-ice. You got any money?" the boy asks.

"Is that local girl?" Joe demands.

"Yeah," the boy replies, rolling his eyes toward the ceiling indignantly, "local girl."

Joe reaches into his pocket and pulls out some coins and hands them to Danny, who palms them silently and turns to go. The boy doesn't bother to look at Burton as he pushes open the door, but the old man turns and watches through the window as Danny crosses the yard, holding the coins aloft and giving that special victorious thumb and pinkie wave to a group of kids waiting across the street.

Joe stands up. "Now time to begin!" he says and heads for the kitchen.

"There's still something I don't understand," Burton

says to Chun Lee after the big Hawaiian has left the room.

"What's Joe wagering in this 'bet'?"

Chun Lee remains silent.

"His pride, man," Henry Okuda says finally.

Burton shakes his head as the big Hawaiian returns with a case of Schilitz.

"They once offered Joe a lot of money to go on *Hawaii Five-0*," Patterson explains. "The guy says all Joe has to do is throw up his hands and yell 'Oh no!' and let them shoot him. Joe told them to take their camera and shove it, didn't you, Joe."

"You said it, man."

Henry Okuda covers his bad eye and cackles once more.

Burton is unimpressed. *Moon-faced bastard*, he thinks.

"OK, everybody drink up!"

"I don't need this," Burton retorts, setting his jaw.

"You need *something*, man," Joe replies. "You too *sour* when you're sober."

The clouds spread thinly overhead now, after the rain. The narrow strip of ocean ahead has turned a soft pastel blue, still a more substantial shade than the azure tint above the line separating sea and sky. Burton's eyes soften to reflect the dimmer light as he looks out through the gap. He should relax here in the chrome and plastic lawn chair, but he cannot.

He leans forward and takes several short breaths,

almost panting. Burton gave up smoking ten years ago, but his breathing hasn't improved at all. He knows better than to start again, though. You have to consider the consequences, he thinks--not like that crazy Hawaiian down there, who pretends that all his problems will dissolve in bottles of Asahi and San Miguel. At least Burton doesn't have any moon-faced illusions about this place. Not like that flower-shirted idiot next door--Burton turns toward the adjoining lanai to see if Patterson is watching--a man can live without all that.

Burton can still smell the rain. The streets below are still wet, the same as they were two days ago, when Steve and Kaponu came out from beneath the shadow of the mango tree to splash eagerly in the disappearing puddles as the tropical sun quickly dried the pavement. Danny stayed aloof, standing out of view in an alley across the street, where a rainbow shower tree dropped pink and white petals on a row of grey garbage cans. He would watch as cars passed by, then knife across the street on his skateboard when the way cleared. It was Burton's turn to laugh when he swept by a startled Henry Okuda, come by to check on the big Hawaiian's progress.

Kids seem somehow different now, Burton reflects. He can't be sure he could communicate even if he *were* their age. It *would* be interesting, if for just a moment. . . No. He resists. That's the first sign of senility, when you start fantacizing about youth.

It's all that beer that has him upset. Burton had only two himself that night. He can't drink much anymore; his system won't take it. It wasn't always like this. He had a wooden leg, they used to say. This time he just watched the big Hawaiian put it away. He learned to appreciate Joe's style. He didn't just gulp it down, as Burton first thought. There was a certain rhythm involved. Though he drank each can quickly, he would wait several minutes before attacking the next, giving the brew a chance to drain a little further through his system. About every third beer Joe would eat something--a piece of bread or some potato chips, to help absorb the alcohol. And every thirty minutes--you could set your watch by it--he went to the john.

Joseph drank twelve the first hour and forty before Burton lost count. It's such a waste, he remembers thinking, watching the glossy trails of sweat run down beneath Joseph's powerful brown arms. As he watched the dark figure before him grow dim and blurry, Burton could almost imagine himself as the man who drank a thousand beers, sitting there triumphant, indomitable--

Burton lies quietly in the chrome and plastic lawn chair. Quietly, while the hotels turn a strange pale green as the sky slowly darkens around him. Quietly, until finally the tightness comes, as the walls swell higher, glowing green, filling up the dark cracks in the sky.

The living room is the same, except for a large cardboard box stuffed with empty cans of Schlitz and two wooden cases filled with empty bottles of San Miguel.

"What's the count?" Burton asks.

"Three fourteen," Patterson announces in a clear voice.

Burton leans back in the rattan sofa, reflecting. This is the end of the fourth day. Joe is running behind. Burton looks at the big Hawaiian, a dark hump leaning against the wall by the cases of San Miguel. His expression is cold and glassy-eyed, but firm.

The screen door swings open and Danny enters. He is stopped by a stern look from Joe.

"You too tired for play today?" the big Hawaiian asks, frowning.

Danny shakes his head with an air of unconcern.

"Yeah, well try go outside, will you," Joe demands.

Burton catches just a trace of a sneer as the boy pushes open the screen door. He watches Joe stare through the screen for several moments, then look down at the beer in his hand. Burton knows the big Hawaiian has ordered the boys to stay away from the house except at dinner and bedtime, in case the social worker shows up when he is drinking. Burton has told him this is stupid, that it won't help anything, that he should drink over at Henry Okuda's and to hell with the welfare woman. But Joseph is adamant. Burton takes a couple of shallow

breaths and says nothing.

There are just the three of them, and the room is still for a few minutes as Joe glares down at the floor, brooding silently. Finally, his voice startles Burton.

"Ey, step that bug, man!"

A four-inch cockroach is running along the floor beneath Burton. He raises his foot and stomps down hard. Then slowly he lifts his shoe, and to his surprise, the insect races out from under it and escapes through a crack between the floorboards.

The big Hawaiian laughs heartily. "Nobody kill off ol' man cockroach," he says. "Not even Burton!" He laughs again and twists the cap off the last bottle of San Miguel.

Burton feels his cheeks and neck redden and he stands up stiffly. "Hell with you," he says and pushes open the door.

Burton descends the steps and is halfway across the yard when a tumbling noise beneath the house distracts him. He looks back, but no one inside appears to have heard it. He walks stiffly up to the side of the house and bends over and peers down between the planks in the elevating crossframe. Staring back at him through the darkness, a can of Primo in his hand, is Danny. One of the cases, stacked four high, has been pulled from the top.

The old man hesitates. He has the advantage this time and knows it. For a few moments he stares back at

the boy and the cases of beer under the house.

"If they catch you, Joe loses the bet," he says finally and turns back toward the Hawaiian Crown.

The sea looks sleepy, growing grey in the fading light as the gap ahead is bridged by flights of birds. Burton leans over the edge of the lanai as he looks out, putting things in order.

He feels no satisfaction in being right about the social worker. He wasn't there when she discovered the beer and the bet, but Patterson told him how she threatened to return with a policeman and a court order for the boys. He wasn't there when Joseph vowed it would be over his dead body and sent the boys over to Henry Okuda's, intending to hide them out until it all blew over. Burton is sure the crazy Hawaiian will hold out to the end.

Burton takes several short breaths as he runs his hand along the railing. He's lost track of the days now. It doesn't really matter since Chun Lee called off the bet after the welfare woman came by. The Oriental hasn't been around since--off counting people up, as Joseph would say. Patterson was disappointed, of course--said it was a shame, and took a tour of the Dole pineapple cannery.

But the big Hawaiian keeps right on drinking anyway (though no one's keeping count), pretending he's proving something to the world. You have to know who you are; Burton repeats to himself as he looks out toward the ocean.

It's like the roaches. You find your own crack, by god. You don't have to be a goddam dreamer to take a stand.

Burton comes down now, to the street where the hotels have cut off the last rays of the sunset, casting the neighborhood in shadows, growing too dark for the old man to walk. The house next door is quiet, a single amber light burning beneath the lowest branches of the mango tree. The Hawaiian remains inside, warning everyone to stay away, but Burton knows he is really waiting for them there--waiting in his crazy drunken fantasy to show them all how much man he is.

Burton stands there, watching silently, until he hears a noise behind him and turns around to find another small figure watching the house. Danny.

In the dim light, Burton cannot see his face. But the boy raises his arm and gives the old man his specialty, the thumb and pinkie wave. Burton nods and turns back around and they both look toward the light beneath the mango tree, sharing a view of the house ahead.

Then Burton takes a breath, a deep one, filling his lungs with the rich tropical sea air. He holds it a moment, feeling the sharp rejuvenating thrill of the pressure against his chest--maybe he'll share a few with Joseph; the old hollow leg--until finally he exhales, releasing it slowly, reluctantly, as the boy behind him disappears into a crack in the shadows of concrete.

A MATTER OF STYLE

"Well, I tell you, Pierce, snorkeling is just like anything else in life--a matter of style."

In the vibrating barber's chair Pierce sits quietly and stares into the mirror, watching Reuben Stovall arrange bottles of shampoo and cream-rinse conditioner on the shelf behind.

"What you've got to master, see, is your own image of yourself. When you go after those fish you've got to see yourself as a natural part of the ocean. You belong in the water and everything in it belongs to you. You move and breathe with the natural rhythm of the sea. When you can do that, the fish are yours." Reuben turns back around and with gently pressing fingers begins to contour the shape of Pierce's head.

Well, you're certainly one to talk about natural style, Pierce reflects as he regards the shiny silver jump suit Reuben is wearing. A panoply of gleaming mirrors arrays both their images around the private room against garish green walls and walnut cabinetry. A plush gold carpet squishes beneath Reuben's feet.

"Are you saying it's all a state of mind?"

"That's right. You're a lousy snorkeler, Pierce, because you don't project yourself in the right style

when you're in the water. Ability doesn't matter that much. You become what you project yourself to be."

Pierce sees a flash of orange, then feels the color softly cover him as Reuben drapes a polyester cape over three quarters of his body and fastens it around his neck.

"I don't know. Sounds a bit too simple to me."

Much too simple, really. Pierce remembers projecting in another context. He was servicing Xerox copiers in Indianapolis three years ago when news of the transfer to Honolulu came. Neither he nor Cindy could believe it at first. He had spent a couple of years behind the scenes trying to arrange the transfer, but when it came it fell right into his lap. Their daughter Christina was only five then, and he and Cindy spent entire evenings projecting their life style in distant Hawaii. He could clearly envision them escaping all the banality and tedium they knew in the Midwestern suburbs. It hasn't worked out that way. Lately the tedium has been catching up with him. Routine, at work and at home; it isn't any different here.

"That's right," Reuben goes on. "It's simple. Deceptively simple. Anyone can talk about developing a certain self-concept. But when it comes to disciplining your mind so that you actually become that person . . . well, that's something else again."

Pierce nods. Discipline. Maybe that's part of the

problem, anyway. His mind wanders a lot these days. Maybe he wouldn't feel so listless, so dissatisfied with everything, if he just had more discipline.

He remembers he used to have it, back when he was just another short-haired kid with a skinny black tie servicing copiers. In those days he threw himself into the routine, polishing rotating selenium drums with zealous strokes. He was a master at refining the dry electrostatic exchange of energy and form--stirring and sifting black powdery toner, inhaling its narcotic scent until the correct brew produced clear, clean copies. Xerography--he even looked the word up once--born of Greek roots and nurtured by the mechanical mysteries of science. To secretaries all over town he was First Minister of Technological Wizardry, the man who could eliminate ghost images, the grey speckled smears around borders of undersized copies. Yes, he had discipline in those days, and a certain style too.

"Mind over matter, Pierce. Mind over matter. That's the key."

In the mirror Pierce regards the stylist silently. Reuben is the only one at the Regent Men's Hairstyling Salon who calls his customers by last name only. Fortunately, Chuck Hinson over in Personnel had warned Pierce about it the day he finally got an appointment.

"Remember now, you have to call *him* Reuben, not Stovall. Real sensitive bastard." Pierce knows this is true.

Once he simply asked for a haircut and Reuben looked at him in disgust. "I don't give haircuts. I style hair. You want a haircut, go get a hatchet and a highchair."

"See, most people think of the ocean as a place where you can discover yourself," Reuben says, reaching back among the bottles. "They should look at it the other way--as a place where you can demonstrate who you are."

Pierce feels a chill as Reuben squirts a blob of cold green shampoo on his head and begins to work up a cool dry lather. He closes his eyes as the massaging fingers magically relax hidden points of pressure and strain in the scalp and temples. Pierce loves to feel tense muscles and thoughts grow limp and dim under the soapy rub of Reuben's fingertips.

"OK, we'll ease you on back now."

There is a barely perceptible hum as Pierce feels the softly vibrating chair glide back toward the rinsing sink that looks like marble and feels like procelain. The back of his head is gently wedged in the neck of the basin, as water, warm and cool in alternating pulses, washes through the soaped hair, drowning out the tingling residue of Reuben's fingertips. Eyes still closed, he lets the soothing spray bathe his scalp, erasing burdens and misgivings in a frothy flow.

He remembers anticipating the ocean. Long before he ever snorkeled, he had grown to love the water in his mid teens, after his grandparents bought a cottage on the

southern shore of Lake Michigan. But he had never seen the ocean before Hawaii. It must be bluer than fresh water, he imagined. But the taste, the feel of the Pacific is what began to dominate his private speculations as the move to the islands approached. He could sense the salty blue web of water wrap his body, seeping into skin and consciousness. He would immerse himself, absorbing its strength, then explode from the water, crashing reborn on the sun-baked beach, where he would acclimate himself on the warm sand, feeling the salt claw at his skin and crinkle the hair on his arms and chest.

"How often do you snorkel, Pierce?"

A towel envelops his head as the vibrating chair curls back up into an upright position.

"Oh, not as much as I'd like to. Weekends mostly. Christina's in school now, and Cindy's got other projects during the week." Tonight it's macrame. She doesn't have to tell him anymore; he can predict these things in advance.

"Well, that's part of your problem right there." Reuben begins to towel his hair just dry enough for the cut with a series of buffing rubs. "The first thing you've got to do is learn to assert yourself."

Pierce nods. That's what Chuck Hinson over in Personnel told him when he was promoted to Supervisor in charge of service training. "Assert yourself, Pierce. You serviced these machines eleven years; make these

clowns understand how important this work is. And remember, on this job you have to be cold-blooded. Remember what happened to Grubb."

Pierce shifts his weight in the chair as Reuben flips the wet towel into a hopper. Remember Grubb. They always reminded him whenever there was a problem with one of the service trainees. "He was going along fine, a hell of a supervisor for a while," Chuck Hinson likes to say. "Then he lost it somehow. No energy, no drive; couldn't bring himself to do what he had to. Started letting these fuck-ups work on twenty thousand dollar full-color copiers. Gave the whole Service Department a bad name. About the best you could say about the guy is that he quit before we fired him." Pierce flinches. He catches himself thinking about Grubb a lot these days.

"Well now, let's see what we can do with this furry mess."

In the mirror Pierce watches Reuben lean inward to part the hair and comb it down in preparation for the cut. When their images are close together like this Pierce always makes comparisons. They are both thirty-six and roughly the same medium height and build. But Pierce is always struck by the difference in their faces. His own is soft, almost pudgy, with features that seem indistinct next to Reuben, whose face is sharp and lean, accented by a thin dark mustache and wide brown eyes.

Although he has never been snorkeling with Reuben,

Pierce thinks the stylist would make a good instructor. It takes a strong personality to inspire confidence in the water. He remembers thinking that the first time he saw Reuben zipping off to the beach after work in his silver Porsche. "A 911-S, not one of those four-banging pseudo-Porsches." Reuben likes to describe sprinting up the Pali Highway "to blow the carbon out." Occasionally a girl might accompany him, but Reuben has reservations about that. "Never waste a fine automobile on a woman," he likes to say. "No matter what they tell you, they don't really appreciate it." Pierce can recall hearing how several of Reuben's romances came to abrupt ends when the girl asked if she could drive.

In the mirror Pierce watches the damp hair fan out in a light brown blossom above his head as the stylist snips off three-quarters of an inch, measuring the cut hair against the longer strands behind. Pierce always speculates at this point how he will look at the finish. He squints into the mirror, but is too far away from the image to perceive the tiny lines around the eyes and the slight slackening of facial muscles he has noticed in recent years. He realizes what he is straining to see and bites his lip.

Why worry about it? he speculates silently. It seems like ever since coming to Hawaii he wondered a great deal about his looks and his impression on women. He doesn't meet as many since they made him supervisor.

When he was on regular service calls he was permeated with impressions of secretaries and office girls: impatience, rush, frustration, boredom--his visits often appeared to give them a welcome respite from these things. Of course, they've probably all forgotten him now.

Pierce shakes his head. It's just another symptom of the boredom, he decides. Grubb must have felt the same way.

"Shake that head one more time and you'll take this ear home in your pocket," Reuben says, pulling back the scissors.

"At these prices, I'd expect a silk purse, at least."

"Well now, if you don't think you're paying enough, Pierce, I can have Peggy adjust your bill for inflation."

As if by command, the blonde receptionist leans in the doorway.

"Sharon just called. Wants you to ring her back when you're free."

Pierce glances up at Reuben, but the stylist, intent once again with comb and scissors, acknowledges the message only by curling his lip. Sharon is a name Pierce has heard for several months now. She must not like to drive, he reasons.

"Twelve and four," Reuben says.

"Twelve and four?"

"Rating system. The first number stands for how

many beers you would have to have before you'd consider going to bed with her. The second number stands for how many thousand miles you'd have to be away from anyone who would recognize you."

"Peggy or Sharon?" Pierce laughs.

"Take your pick."

Pierce laughs again and stares into the mirror at the man hovering over him. Chuck Hinson blew it. Right here's the perfect man for the job--confident, meticulous, cold blooded . . .

"Just exactly where do you snorkel, Pierce?"

"Hanauma Bay mostly."

"Hanauma? There's no spear fishing there; that's a marine conservation district."

Pierce shrugs.

"Ah, it's the hunt, not the kill--right, Pierce?"

Reuben snaps on the dryer, drowning out the reply. Unlike the other stylists, Reuben uses a heavy dryer with a loud blower that engulfs all other sensory experience. Pierce relaxes as the stylist tugs at his hair, curling locks around the cylindrical brush blustered by the hot whining rush of air. Pierce closes his eyes. By relaxing completely, the overpowering sound is dampened and he can sense the numbing thrill of the vibrator beneath him.

He thinks of Hanauma Bay, where the light-headed stupor of his air conditioned office life is offset by the

blue intoxication of the ocean whenever he can manage. At Hanauma he can submerge himself beneath the azure ceiling of water, linked to the vacuous world above only by the thin plastic pipe of the snorkel. Beneath the surface he explores the moss-covered coral for fish. Reuben is right; the surgeonfish and wrasses attract him like glittering alien beings, their sharp colors diluted only slightly by the five or six feet of water.

He remembers once reaching for a blue and yellow butterfly fish when another hand brushed against his own and startled him. He looked up into soft brown eyes peering through the mask. The hand pointed downward toward the fish escaping through a gap in the coral. Together they pursued it through the maze until it gained anonymity in a school of similar species. Swimming around the school, he noticed the trim lines of her body gliding through the water with easy rhythmic strokes. They both gained the surface atop a high ridge of coral. She lifted off her mask, emptying the small amount of water it contained with a smile that sent a cool tensing sensation across his face, neck, and chest--a sensation he had not felt in years. Then with a quick splash she was gone--a gleaming ripple in the water. A few minutes later he reached the beach where Cindy was helping Christina build a sand castle. He had done nothing. She had seen nothing. He said nothing.

Reuben shuts off the blower and begins to comb the

hair back into its proper shape. He makes a few finishing touches with the scissors, then steps back. "There, how's that look?"

Pierce stares into the mirror. His hair is fluffed so it seems to hover like a light brown cloud around his head. Once again he is perplexed by the delicate nature of Reuben's finished creation--subtlety is not a quality the stylist projects: "Let's try some of this spray; it'll nail that down like an iron cap." But he exaggerates. The mist drifts down like a spicy haze, so the style remains something fanciful and light, bound by an invisible aerosol web. Pierce is amazed. The pudgy features of his face now seem delicate and refined.

"Looks good," he says.

Reuben nods and kicks off the vibrator.

"Tell you what, Pierce. If you promise not to spread it around, I'll tell you a place in Hanauma where you can get the best look-see at those fish you'll ever have."

Pierce looks up at Reuben.

"Of course, you'll have to trap them in the reef, but that's no problem the way I've got things fixed. All you've got to do is swim naturally and not scare the fish off. Think you can manage that?"

Pierce says nothing.

"Over on the Diamond Head end of the beach there's a single coco palm with scratches all over the trunk. You know where I'm talking about?"

"I think so."

"Well, you wade straight out toward the island of Molokai from that point until you come to a high underwater ridge about forty yards out. There's a dead end channel in the reef just beyond that. It's a little deep, but I've got a rock wedged in the only gap in the coral, so there's no way out. Herd them back there and you've got them cold-cocked."

Reuben unpins the cape and empties its contents into the sink.

"Thanks," Pierce says, standing up. "I might just try that next time out."

"Don't mention it. Just tell me one thing before you go, Pierce. Who did your hair before me--Lawnboy?"

On the beach Pierce squints out over Hanauma Bay, watching sunlight reflect off the rippling water. From this angle the water's blue cast conceals the submerged coral city just a few yards out, where the circling periscopes of snorkelers betray its existence. Pierce looks beyond them, past the tall grey volcanic walls of the encircling crater which forms the bay, out toward its seaward mouth, where the hazy silhouette of the island of Molokai sits on the horizon.

Pierce likes this side of the bay; most of the beachgoers are over on the shallower side, where there are better swimming areas and less rocks. On the mat

beside him, Cindy, her hair pulled back in a tight bun, is letting Christina rub Hawaiian Tanning Butter on her legs and back. Leaning back on his elbows, Pierce watches the child varnish the prone figure beside him. He remembers that not long ago Saturday afternoons like this used to make it all seem worthwhile.

Cindy is getting ready to send Christina for a coke. He knows it. Just watching her lie there on her stomach with the sun tan oil making her body shine, he can tell. He thinks of Grubb. Grubb had a family too; did he ever feel like this?

Cindy reaches for her purse. "Chrissy, will you go get Mommy a coke? You want anything, Jack?"

"Maybe later."

He lies back on the sand and closes his eyes. It's the same problem at work. Those trainees all make the same mistakes. But that's all right; it's just that they're all so damned *bored* with it. Why should he have to push them so hard? Service doesn't have to be dull. Besides all the people you get to know, each machine is unique in some way, an individual challenge. Lots of people don't understand that. Too many trainees these days think it's supposed to be monotonous, think they're selling their souls for a living wage. How stupid. You don't get bored because of the *machines*. The boredom comes when you don't *care* anymore.

He remembers what Grubb said before he quit.

"Anybody can do this shit. I want to do more with my life than help the world make copies." But that was a cheap shot, the kind of sour grapes you'd expect from somebody who blew it. No, Grubb was wrong. Admit it now, you'd never quit your job as some sort of gesture. Too much of *your* life is invested in Xerox, no matter how many other guys there are like you.

Christina is back with the coke. "I'm going in for a while," Pierce says. Cindy waves without looking as he stands up, grabbing gear and feeling sand cling to his skin, then peel off and slide down his back.

The water is cold at first as the ocean's pulse surges around his feet, then retreats with a foamy wash. Lining himself up with the scratched coco palm, he slips on the flippers and wades in deeper, heading out toward the live seaward side of the reef. Molokai is a grey film on the horizon ahead as he wades in quickly, splashing water over his face and chest. The ocean makes his skin tingle and he begins to breath deeply. He tight-ropes over underwater coral ridges until the water reaches wast-deep.

He pauses, watching the bobbing periscopes of other snorkelers around him. He reflects that he has never understood his fascination with the ocean. He's never been a good snorkeler, though there's really nothing to it. He always screws up somehow--losing a flipper, getting too much water inside the mask, not breathing

properly, choking on the mouthpiece. But he keeps at it anyway, like an obsession.

Pierce frowns as he moves on, realizing that he relies more and more on the ocean to relieve the boredom. He wonders why the water doesn't bore him too. Something tells him he should be content that it doesn't, but now he wonders if he isn't just fooling himself somehow, secretly pretending the pursuit of candy-colored fish is somehow significant.

He shakes his head as he steps over a rock. It's stupid, when you think about it. What is it you're looking for anyway? Adventure? Hell, they're only fish. Protected by the U. S. Government, too; you can't spear them. But like Reuben said, it's the hunt, not the kill. You don't have to be cold-blooded here. It's confidence you want to develop in the water, and discipline. Discipline, that's the key. You had it once, back in Indianapolis servicing nickel copiers, and you lost it. Now you think if you learn to assert yourself in the water it will carry over somehow. That's it, isn't it? It's stupid. It's silly. But you've got to start somewhere, or you'll end up like Grubb. Reuben says it's all a state of mind--you just protect yourself in the water. Well, all right then, goddamn it. If that's what it comes down to, then let's do it with style.

Pierce comes to a high ridge and knows this is it, Reuben's ledge. He looks around. Most of the snorkelers

are further in, exploring the shallower areas. Through the refractive medium Pierce can see fish all around him. A great many fish and still not too deep. He slips on the mask and snorkel, pausing momentarily above his own reflection--a rippling grey silhouette with traces of color and detail at the edges surrounding the single dark eye of the mask.

He dives in, feeling the mask press hard against his nose and eyes. The deep muffled rush of air through the snorkel seems to swell and shrink inside his head as he adjusts to the thicker environment. The flippers propel him boldly through the water. *Breath naturally; move with the sea.* He leans through the surface expectantly as cold ripples stream through the hair on the back of his head and neck.

He spots a school of surgeonfish swimming along a jagged channel through the reef. Manini, a dozen or so. They retreat leisurely as he pursues them along the coral corridor narrowing toward a seaward dead end. He sees his chance, but now they are too deep. A gulp of air and he dives straight down, the mask crushing against his face.

It works. They retreat back down the corridor, all except a pale orange one with dark bands, intimidated by his flailing arms. Pierce knows this is the trap; he can see the channel is blocked by Reuben's moss-covered stone anchored at its end. There are no escape routes

through the porous walls or along the sandy floor. He closes in, moving through silver reflections and ripple shadows on the reef. Sparkling orange, the surgeonfish darts back and forth, then retreats against the far wall of the entrapping chamber, seeking freedom in the cracks and creases in the seaweed-covered rock.

Carefully, but firmly, Pierce moves closer, down and in, the weight of the water crushing the mask harder against his face as he approaches. The fish stares back, pectoral fins beating regularly to maintain position before the rock. Close enough to touch now. Reaching out slowly, Pierce freezes. In the grey eyes of the surgeonfish he sees fear.

He wavers. The fish escapes.

Lungs bursting, Pierce breaks the surface, panting, his body flashing hot and cold as he treads water. For a moment he paddles aimlessly, catching his breath.

The water turns cold. He shivers, his flesh thin and numb, exposed to the stabbing liquid chill around him. He looks around once, at rippling reflections of the grey volcanic walls of the bay. Then he dives. Down to the heavy moss-covered boulder wedged in the reef. Deep inside the coral chamber he grasps the rock and tries to wrench it free. Anchoring his feet against the surrounding coral, he thrust backward as clutching fingers scrape smooth grey streaks in the boulder's green skin. Wildly he tugs against the rock until the sharp coral slices

his hands, releasing blood into the water in tiny red wisps.

He needs to breathe. A bubble swells below his throat, pressure from the pit of the stomach, pushing upward, making his eyes bulge into the partial vacuum of the mask and the blood pound in his brain.

Tearing off the mask, he strains once more against the rock: Blood, bone, and muscle against compacted fire in his lungs, until finally the rock dislodges, tumbling him backward. Swallowing seawater, he fights to the surface, gasping, grabbing at nothing. He struggles in the water, choked and blinded by the salty splash, until gradually his breaths grow longer, slowly, unconsciously, he gains control.

Exhausted, he floats on his back with the gentle rocking rhythm of the water. He feels only the burning relief of the air, and gradually his breathing slows and the pounding in his brain ceases. Consciousness is returning now, but he fights it back, pushing thought out of his mind.

Instead, he floats, trying to savor the moment, trying to make it last.

THE RED DUST OF LANAI

Shigeo Masuda wheels his battered green jeep into the tiny parking lane in front of the Lanai Lodge. He swings out of the vehicle with the rough grace of a sturdy young man who has just put in a full day in the pineapple fields. Antomino is waiting for him sprawled in a wicker chair on the glassed-in porch.

"One hot day down on the plain, eh?" he greets Shigeo falling into a chair beside him.

"You said it." Shigeo rubs the back of his still grimy neck for the hundreth time today. It has been a tough afternoon operating the boom spray. Twice the main tank developed leaks, drenching a quarter acre of ratoon crops with hundreds of gallons of insecticide. The smell lingers with him where he sweat feverishly beneath the tanks to cease the drain of valuable chemicals. But he knows Antomino understands and will say nothing.

"You want to smoke?" Antomino offers him one of the blunt black cigars he always carries in the pocket of his flowered shirt. Shigeo shakes his head. Tobacco in the late afternoon makes his throat parched and raspy. Antomino shrugs and lights one for himself. Antomino is in his late fifties, lean and tan with an expression that seems at once good natured and calm.

Shigeo regards the relaxed figure intently. He thinks of Antomino as someone he can count on. It was Antomino who taught him how to hunt the feral goats in the island's cavernous gulches--how to patiently squeeze off a good shot instead of firing excitedly at the first sighting. And it was Antomino who gave young Shigeo the keys to his own jeep to challenge the steepest rocky trails of Mount Lanaihale shortly after his father died--a bizarre feeling of detachment that engulfed Shigeo's consciousness like a narcotic.

Later, when he began to work in the pineapple fields after school, he grew accustomed to seeing the Filipino's enormous rust-colored flatbed truck rumble by, raising above the fields of copper red clouds that slowly melted into the earth and sky. And it seemed Shigeo could never drive down Frazier Avenue in the evening without noticing the red tip of Antomino's cigar in the shadow of the tremendous Norfolk pine blackening his abbreviated front yard.

In the past couple of years, however, Shigeo has encountered Antomino only occasionally at the lodge. The Filipino sold his tiny square iron-roofed house and is now living on the island of Maui. The transition has become important to Shigeo.

Antomino leans back after a preliminary series of puffs on the black cigar. His forehead contains four deep wrinkles that squeeze together whenever he lifts his

eyebrows.

"Things pretty quiet here, eh?" he asks.

"Yeah, the same. You go Maui again soon?" Shigeo's eyes follow the wisps of smoke upward. He wishes the drifting haze could help soothe the taut muscles in his neck and back.

"Maybe tomorrow. Maybe next day." The Filipino flips an ash neatly into the empty paper cup on the table beside him. He is waiting for the younger man to say what's on his mind.

"Tell me, Antomino," Shigeo says finally, "You drive a truck here twenty years. You buy a house. You raise kids. Now you run round like hell. Why?"

Antomino crosses his legs and watches another guest emerge from the south wing and walk past the two men to the small indoor window marked "Office and Bar," where she orders a beer. He looks back at Shigeo and his expression grows more distant--the way he looks when talking about the old days.

"You know most of it," he begins. "Before Anita die she say 'Take care Ernesto--he four, five year older than you--he join the Army, go fight Vietnam. He get back OK, but now he go school one more time in San Francisco. Get on the GI Bill. So I say 'Antomino, you release your bond. The Army take care Ernesto now.' So I look around and say 'Now time to start over. Now time to see ol' friends. Now time to start something new.'"

He pauses as the lady walks past again with a can of Olympia. She sits down at the end of the porch and stares out. Antomino looks down abstractly at his feet.

"So one day I go back Maui. I grow up there, you know," he continues. "I go back Wailuku only second time twenty years. Stay one, two days. Never see nobody. Then I go this little bar on Mill Street, name I forget. New place. Most old places gone now. But this place I find ol' friend from before the war--Herbert, Hobart, something Gonsalves--I never know his real name. We call him Turkey, cause he's always squawking about something. Used to live Paia. That guy was a gambler and a good pool player. But when he was Paia he never work. Lay the pipe--odd job like that. Just like chain gang. Would be rich a couple months, you know."

He shakes his head and smiles wryly at Shigeo, who nods. He has only been to Maui twice to visit his cousin. He knows the place mostly from Antomino's stories.

"He was a terror, that bugger," he goes on. "Used to get two, three wahines, go drink Wailuku. One time we all go one hotel Wailuku. Drive down from Paia. Who the hell was in the car--Lureen, I think. This before I know Anita. Turkey, he go pass out--drive the car right off the pier. Shee, that car was in bad shape! Top all smashed. Rest of us, we're OK, but Turkey, he cut his leg bad. When I see that blood I thought he die for sure. That one tough bugger. We wrap his leg up and he say

'Go back hotel make love now!' Crazy, you know."

Antomino punctuates this judgement with a wink.

"But Turkey, he settle down later. Get him skinny Filipino wife. Pretty wahine. They all the time together still. They move Wailuku, and Turkey he get himself a taxi car. Drive rich tourists all over hell. Fifteen years ago now. Now he got whole fleet taxi cars. So he say to me, 'Antomino, what you do now? You still drive that truck Lanai?' I say, 'yes.' I already tell him Anita dead four years. He tell me, 'maybe time now you come back with us, eh?' I say, 'maybe so.'"

The wrinkles squeeze together as he looks through the window glass.

"I think it over long time, you know. Twenty-two years I been Lanai. Drive the truck. Make good friends-- know *everybody*. Hunt on the mountain. Have a damn good time. But I think about it and I decide this island just no good without Anita. I decide maybe, maybe I start over. Drive the taxi car. Once a while I come back, you know. But it's not the same for me."

Silent a moment, he looks up at Shigeo and smiles.

"You stay for dinner?"

The question breaks off the young man's thought and he jerks his head slightly before answering.

"No, uh, I can't. Six o'clock I meet Maxine. She move to Honolulu next week, you know."

Shigeo looks at the older man. Slowly, through a

slight tightening of the stomach muscles and a moist cooling effect on his arm and shoulders, Shigeo feels his own image brought into focus. *Hold it steady now and remember just to squeeze. Wait till the bugger raise his head . . . OK, he see you.* Awareness of the change in body chemistry slowly dissolves, but the link remains. Antomino regards him steadily and responds.

"Maxine go school sommore?"

"Yeah. She go UH, be big businesswoman."

Antomino nods. "She want you go Oahu with her?"

"Yeah," Shigeo answers, meeting Antomino's eyes.

"She like me to go."

A pause. The woman at the end of the porch has finished her beer and is reading a hiking map. Antomino looks thoughtfully in her direction, then back at Shigeo as he speaks.

"You worried about Oahu not the same like here, eh?"

Shigeo says nothing, but the older man continues.

"Lanai not the same for me now. Anita and me, we meet over here when I come drive the truck for Dole. And we always together most the time, you know? Anita and Ernesto, they always the best part of this place for me. Lanai not the same for me without them. But when I go back Maui, I go back something not the same too, you know? More people, more problem--just like Oahu. But I think maybe drive the cab I forget, eh?" He shakes his head. "Those days gone for good, but I remember still."

Lanai, Maui, neither one the same for me now. So maybe better I never leave. Who can say?"

Shigeo rubs his eyes. His back is beginning to ache where he sprained it working underneath the boom spray tank.

"What would you do if you go Oahu?" Antomino asks. "Go school sommore too?"

"I wonder, you know. Maybe take agriculture--become great scientist. Or maybe business--become a tourist. Ride round in your taxi car."

They both laugh. Shigeo looks through the glass at the lengthening shadows of the Norfolk pines outside.

"I got to go," he says finally, standing up. "Maybe I come by tomorrow after dinner. You still be around?"

Antomino looks at the lady with the map. "Maybe I be here."

Shigeo hesitates, then nods and pushes open the white doors.

The air is cool as it blows through the evergreen branches above him. Shigeo is thankful for the elevation and the pine trees of Lanai City that create the mood of a cool mountain village. It was hot today down on the dry pineapple plain of the Palawai Basin. On his seat atop the boom spray he felt the dust settle down on his body as it mixed with the insecticide coating his skin and the sweat working up underneath, until it formed a translucent grimy paste that completely clothed him. He

must have seen at least ten pheasants and countless quail today. From his vantage point he would line them up in imaginary rifle sights. Twenty birds had fallen on the red roads and rusty-green pineapple leaves of the basin-- a good haul.

He swings into the jeep, and after considerable gear grinding, starts down the brief hill to the heart of Lanai City. Sides are being chosen for some sort of frisbee game in the park where he is to meet Maxine later. Mrs. Hirayama waves as he passes Lui's and the "Dis'n Dat" Store turning onto Ilima Avenue.

Shigeo has often wondered what would happen to the tiny business district and the twenty-five hundred people it supports when they build the hotel. It could go up any time now. But this island is different, they say. The company has a plan. "Limited growth" they call it. The basic character of the island will remain the same. Hunting, fishing, agriculture. They all say that. They are phasing out pineapple on Molokai. But the company only leases those lands, he reasons. It's more expensive to operate there than on Lanai.

Shigeo's small two-bedroom house lies near the end of the street back toward the highway into town. A note on the door says his mother is at the Pine Isle Market where she has worked once or twice a week since his father died. He sheds his clothes as he heads toward the bathroom and a needed shower. Standing in the tub, he

lets the water spray weakly at first, watching the dirt peel off his skin in brown-edged waves.

Maxine has not arrived when Shigeo pulls up in front of the bowling alley on the south side of the tiny park. Feeling refreshed, he props his feet on the passenger seat and watches the kids toss a couple of frisbees around. Shigeo figures he knows most everyone on the island except some of the younger kids, so he watches with curiosity, trying to pick out unfamiliar faces.

He is distracted a few moments later when he sees Kiyono emerge from Lui's and cross the street toward him. Kiyono is about the same age as Shigeo; shirtless with a deep tan and wearing plastic sunglasses. Kiyono operates a crane on the dock at Kaumalapau Harbor. His uncle had the job until he ripped the ligaments in both knees and had to take early retirement. This is the busy season on the dock; today probably well over a million pineapples were loaded on barges headed for the big cannery in Honolulu.

Shigeo raises his hand in greeting as the shirtless figure walks silently over to the jeep and leans in the passenger side. Kiyono speaks first.

"Ey, how come you don't throw the frisbee, man?" he asks, glancing back at the kids in the park.

"Bad arm," Shigeo pleads, rubbing his shoulder.

"That's OK," Kiyono laughs. "Everybody too tired for

play tonight. Hey, you see that big buck Richard shoot yesterday?"

Shigeo shakes his head.

"Big bugger. Must go one-eighty. Tomorrow I go hunt the big ones Kuahua Gulch. You want to come?"

Shigeo stares into the shadowy reflection of the plastic sunglasses. He and Kiyono often hunt the small axis deer in the brushlands in and above the gulches dissecting the northern arm of the mountain. Their fawn-like spottings help them blend into the surroundings, and it is a good hunter who can catch a buck silhouetted against the horizon for an open shot. Shigeo has brought down three with his Remington.

"Mmmm. Maybe," he says at last. "Tomorrow Saturday. Maxine may like us do something. I ask her and let you know."

Shigeo always asks.

Kiyono gives a shrug that says "no big think," and begins punching at the glove compartment button.

"Maxine still go Honolulu?" he asks as it will not fall open.

"Yeah, she go."

Kiyono says nothing, but gives up on the glove box and watches the frisbee game, which appears to be breaking up.

"I see you later man," he says finally. "I think that's her coming now."

Shigeo nods as he watches Maxine approach from across

the park, a slim figure in light blue shorts and a blue print blouse that ties around the middle. Charcoal brown hair hangs long behind her back. She approaches with a well-measured pace that exhibits neither enthusiasm nor reluctance. Shigeo has noticed this quality before: Control. A grip on the drives and passions that could wrench the course of her life from her own hands. "Tough wahine. She wear you down." That's what his friends told him when they first started seeing each other.

Yet it was not always so. Sure, she would listen to him with a kind of respectful detachment when he described the things he loved. And she firmly put him off that day at Manele Beach when the salty blue rush of water had enveloped his body and he reached for her beneath the swelling surface.

But there were other times. Like the late afternoon when the storm caught them jeeping the rugged Munro Trail high atop Mount Lanaihale, where the planted pines draw moisture from the clouds to replenish the dry plains below. The wind blew cold as they huddled amid thrashing tree ferns and she sought the warmth of his body tensing beneath the damp canvas cloth enwrapping them. The wind that day seemed to drive them shivering deep into the moist earth of the mountain's crown.

Lately the sober image is stronger. Her decision to leave for the University of Hawaii is well-reasoned and firm. "No future her," she complains. "Not for me to

pick pineapples and run cash registers," she says with conviction. Shigeo's swelling sense of loss is compounded by the sting of these arguments.

Shigeo moves his feet as Maxine climbs into the jeep. They regard each other silently for a moment. Her smile, soft through gently curving lips, subdues more intense expression of the eyes. Expectation, affection, strength-- Shigeo feels conflicting patterns of force impress his body in a bizarre mesh. He is held secure for an instant until perspective returns along with conscious resolve.

"Where you want to go?" he asks quietly.

"I don't know. You pick."

"Manele Bay?"

"Oh, Linda and Yoshiro down there." She looks at Shigeo, who says nothing. The frustration in her voice is quick and sharp. "Just no place to go on this island. Nothing to do and everybody watch."

A trigger mechanism. Shigeo feels the conflict snap on with a short electrical burst that could swell into anger momentarily. His voice is firm.

"We'll go Garden of the Gods."

"It's hot and dirty there," she protests.

"Nobody around and we can watch the sunset," he says, intending to argue the point no further.

Maxine makes no reply, but begins to put her hair up with a clip. Shigeo reaches for the keys.

The Garden of the Gods lies seven miles north of the

city, past the cultivated land. Shigeo wheels the jeep expertly over the rough red pineapple roads, boiling up swirling red clouds of dust that pursue the vehicle like the trail of a rocket blast. By the time they pass through a brief forest of ironwood and eucalyptus trees and into the flattened canyon of the Garden itself, the fine particles of dust have swept around their skin and clothing like smoke, working down into pores and garment fiber like a stain. Shigeo drives over the reddish-brown iron-rich volcanic sand and around the boulders and occasional grey-green scrub brush atop the low gully ridges, until he reaches Three Mormon Rock, a grey silhouette of three hatted figures solemnly staring across the channel at the island of Molokai.

He pulls the jeep off the trail, laying blurry tread marks across the rippled sand. Shigeo is at home here on the dusty scalped surface of the natural rock garden. He will sometimes come here alone in the late afternoon to watch the setting sun splash prismatic colors on the dry sand and rocks strewn across the flattened canyon--like a rainbow pressed into the earth.

He leans back into the seat and surveys the arid canyon. The sun is low in the sky and its glare offers no view toward the sea. Maxine, sitting upright, looks vacantly through the windshield. Shigeo's eyes return to her rigid figure. He takes her hand.

"Want to talk?" His voice is soft.

With her right hand Maxine reaches into her purse for some kleenex. Finding none, she wipes across her face with her hand, leaving white finger marks on her forehead.

"Have you thought about going to Honolulu?" she asks, finally looking back at Shigeo.

He does not want to talk about this. He wants to stare into her eyes and call to life the sensations that underlie their relationship. But she resists. The image remains impassive, but Shigeo can sense the cold intensity in her eyes. Honolulu? School? Shigeo hates school with its chalky words and numbers. What is there for him? Here he has his work and his respect. Only last week Lorenzo said he was in line to be supervisor of the boom spray operation. That means more money and responsibility.

"Have you thought about it?" she repeats.

"Yeah, I think about it a lot." He squints into the sun. "But I don't know. I just don't see what good it would do."

"What good to stay here?" she snaps back. "You going to spray bugs the rest your life? Let them run you round: 'Over here, over there, Shigeo!' And what happens when the pineapple goes? You going to guide tourists around?"

Shigeo exhales slowly, releasing some of the anger welling up inside. Maxine watches him for a time before the softness returns to her eyes.

"I want us together," she says simply.

Shigeo leans forward and finds her lips moist,

pressing urgently. He moves with strength, enveloping her with his arms as the press of her body meets him. The weight of his embrace forces her breath and she gasps. He rocks back and freezes for a moment on the marks on her forehead--an eerie white burst. *Drive up the high trail where the stones shake away everything you know. Let the mountain take you.* Her eyes are open and pleading. His awareness poised over an invisible precipice, he sinks slowly back into the driver's seat.

Gutted. Minutes pass before resolve fills the void and the voluntary muscles gain complete control. He looks over at Maxine holding her head in her hands.

"Let's go back," is all he can say.

The jeep erupts into life and Shigeo winds it around the shadow of the Three Mormons back toward the trail home. The sun still well above the horizon, he wheels the jeep through ironwood and eucalyptus and back into the pineapple fields when a white puff of steam escapes from the hood.

"Shit!" He pulls to a quick stop in the dust and raises the hood, now more grey than green. The whine from the radiator cap is now clearly audible as steam sprays out around the neck.

"Overheated," he says, walking around to reach the plastic water jug in the back. "We got to wait a few minutes."

Maxine says nothing, but stares with frustration at

the propped hood. Shigeo walks around to the front again and listens to the decreasing whine. Leading the tourists around. No, it can't come to that.

He looks out over the fields. On this side of the road the pineapple stretches all the way to the horizon, but there are no other jeeps or trucks in sight. Out of habit he leans over and begins to inspect the rusty-green leaves for mealy bugs.

On a nearly mature plant he spots an ant carrying a dust-speckled mealy bug down the leaf of a shoot growing beneath the fruit itself. Shigeo remembers how amazed he was when he learned how the ants cleverly move the bugs from plant to plant--before signs of the wilting disease they produce begin to show. This could be an old bug, however, being carried off to slaughter because it no longer secretes the sweet substance the ants love to eat.

It doesn't matter, though. He will have to spray here in a few days.

The whine has stopped. He tests the pressure cap with an oily rag. The boiling subsided, he empties the precious two gallons of water into the thirsty radiator. He climbs back into the driver's seat without a word. Maxine is smiling now, and Shigeo returns her affectionate glance as the jeep lurches forward once again. As they drive toward Lanai City, an oasis of pine trees on the edge of the plain, he knows what he will do.

Tomorrow he and Kiyono will go hunting.

THE AUTEUR

Shoot this scene in natural light. It's just an ordinary coffee shop, but with a different, distinctive mood. A few notice it as they walk in--a gentle humor that tempers the hard edge of the outside. They sit along that row of little round wicker tables by the windows, where the morning light seeps in through yellow bamboo curtains, spreading softness all around. It's a mood difficult to capture with a camera. I know. I'm the Film Phantom.

Behind the counter a girl with soft eyes like Jeanette MacDonald speaks of sweet rolls and coffee. Close-up of her smile as she greets a customer.

"Good morning, John."

"Good morning, Carol."

Pull the camera back for a wide angle shot as she watches the slightly stooped figure of John Decker amble toward the last vacant table, moving rather gracefully for a man his age. Watch him smile at her.

All the regular morning partons of the Seaside Lanai Coffee Shop know Carol, who works a split shift 9-1 and 5-9 Monday through Friday. Catch the familiarity in her voice as she asks the old man if he wants his usual coffee black. John always drops by to drink a cup before walking down to the Honolulu Yacht Harbor. Kona Coffee is twenty

cents at the Seaside Lanai.

"Sit down when you've got a moment," the old man invites her.

Low angle shot of Carol in her flowered smock and island slippers behind the counter, a flat formica board supported by a pole. She smiles back at John as she brings him his cup.

Now pan the row of wicker tables where the nameless extras in this scene watch her work: next to John a bald sunburned man reading the morning *Advertiser*; by the side window a surfer, the usual stock beach party bit player--tall, bronze, and blond.

They all collect here, like the players on the old reels before them. I've filmed it many times from this same corner by the cigarette machine. There's no need to get closer; you can film from any angle, anywhere.

Here's Mrs. Willis from Connecticut, noted for her intimate complaints. Paise the angle for a straight-on shot. Mrs. Willis is retaining water, so she hasn't felt like going to the beach lately and is losing her Copper-tone complexion. A closer shot of them both as she tells Carol her cable TV is messed up today and she'd like a jelly doughnut and coffee.

"I'm sure they'll fix it, Mrs. Willis. They're pretty good about that." Zoom in closer to catch the smile that complements the reassuring tones of Carol's voice as she pours another cup.

Sometimes Carol makes no conversation. It depends on the mood, a delicate synchronization of film and audio. Plastic plates and spoons don't tinkle and chime in sharp resonance. The tone here is subtler: Quick close-ups of the bald sunburned man folding his paper to read the sports page; the surfer running his hand through his long blond hair; Mrs. Willis stirring coffee with a delicate swirling dip of her spoon. A soft cadence needing vocal harmony.

"Have a good day," Carol says as Mrs. Willis sets her cup and plate on the empty table next to mine. You can see her smile at me as she sits down.

The Seaside Lanai is an apartment-hotel. Long or short stay, all the conveniences of home. Not prestigious, like the Halekulani or the Royal Hawaiian, and not exactly by the sea, either--the beach is two blocks and several high-rises away. It's just a moderately expensive aqua-blue eight story in the heart of Waikiki. The coffee shop is its best feature, and we who come here regularly appreciate it most. Many are surprised to find me here in the morning--they think I come out only at night. But that's bunk.

A shot of the old man's table now as Carol sits down next to him. On sunny mornings like today John likes to sit by the wide middle window and feel the sun warm his shirt and skin.

"How are you this morning, my dear?"

"Just fine, John." She smiles. *My dear.* Always

the gentleman. She laughed the first time he called her that.

Over the shoulder close-up of John Decker from the girl's perspective. You can see his pale blotchy skin as he reaches for his pipe. His face was once smooth and tan with bushy black hair brushed straight back above his forehead like Dale Robertson in *Fighting Man of the Plains*. Now the white hair is thinning like you've seen it so many times before, disintegrating like the ice crystal on the windowpane in *Dr. Zhivago*.

"You mind?" He takes out a match.

A blur on the edge of the frame as Carol shakes her head.

Look at John Decker, a versatile performer before being cast in this role. The girl is familiar with some of his parts, but I know them all: son of an antique dealer, merchant mariner who dreamed of being a cowboy, international importer-exporter--the credits go on and on. I've reviewed the old reels. You can see by the look in the old man's eyes that he has a special interest in Carol. The reels show that she reminds him of a brown-haired girl in Galveston, when he was twenty-two and getting ready to sail aboard the *Queen of Castille*.

There's more and it's all on film--reel after reel. Fashion them together any way you wish. If you're an *auteur*, you can synchronize different reels of different characters and make a movie. Unwind them at your leisure.

But never think you can tell the whole story; it's all filmed continuously. And don't get too involved--the artist must remain objective.

Cut to Carol now and you can see from the unreserved friendliness in her face that she is unaware of the special association in the old man's mind.

"What are you up to today, John?" she asks.

"Well, actually I'm going down to check out the *Summer Lady* this afternoon. Going to make a little swing around the island tomorrow. You're welcome to come down and help me caulk cracks, if you have nothing better to do."

Carol has once been aboard the *Summer Lady*, the twenty-five foot yacht John bought when he retired to Hawaii just before his third and last wife died. He has been renting a small one-bedroom apartment at the Seaside Lanai for a couple of years now. "It's got everything I need," he claims.

And I know what "everything" consists of--I've seen it all on other sets. Piles of papers, relics, and mementos: some etchings by Escher, an untranslated novel by Mussolini, a picture of Bob Steele in a ten-gallon hat.

"I'm afraid I can't this time, John." She would like to go, but Charles is taking up most of her time these days. Charles from Florida. Charles with the Big Plans. She thinks none of this shows, but I've filmed it too many times.

"Perhaps another day," he says.

"Sure," she assents.

The old man smiles. "That's a beautiful necklace you're wearing, my dear."

Close-up of the choker-length string of white puka shells around her neck. Her fingers reach up and touch them.

Flashback to a high angle shot of the International Market Place at night. Zoom in gradually until you can see Carol and Charles walking along a row of shell jewelry displays.

Move on the end of the row, where a skinny old man in a flowered T-shirt and a straw hat rests on a mat of imitation kapa cloth, a dozen or so necklaces spread before him. As Carol approaches, he pushes everything aside except one radiant white string of shells.

"This one for you," he says. One eye is atrophied; the other regards the girl with a sharp glint.

She kneels down and examines the choker-length lei. The small evenly-matched shells have a lustrous white sheen.

"This one's pretty," she admits.

"Try it on," the old man urges.

"Here, let me," Charles interjects. Quick shot of Charles' face and you can see he's obviously a leading man.

Close-up as he slips the strand around her neck and screws it together in the back. The old man holds up a

mirror, reflecting a delicately balanced white crescent against her skin.

"This the best kind of shell you can get, I tell you," the old man says. "Look at that hang even. All same size and every hole center. Puka means 'hole', you know," he adds, glancing at Charles.

Carol spins around to let him see.

"Those others all bad compared to this," the old man goes on. "Liberty House you pay three, four times as much, easy. Look, stainless steel string; last you a lifetime, man."

"We'll take it," Charles says.

Carol reaches forward to kiss him on the lips.

"You never regret it," the old man chants, rocking and nodding beneath the hat. "You never regret it."

Return to present with a profile shot of Carol and John sitting by the middle window. "Thanks, it's new," she says, still fondling the necklace.

The old man nods. "Say, I haven't seen Alex this morning," he adds.

"Oh, I think he's pouting about something, but he'll be in . . . in fact . . ."

Cut to the doorway and in comes Alex, obviously in a fowl mood. The reels quickly identify Alexander Uchino as the other man in Carol's life, the one who's losing out. Focus on Alex as he dumps himself in a corner, then straightens up, self-consciously, like Lon Chaney Jr. does

in *Of Mice and Men*.

Back to John's table as Carol gives him a look that says she has to take care of Alex now. The old man nods.

Track the girl across the room to Alex's table, where she sits down.

"How's it today, Alex?"

"OK--sore head is all." He has a low quiet voice.

"Too much Primo this weekend, eh?" Her head nods with the words. "You want some aspirin? I've got some."

"Naa. Minor problem." He takes out a cigarette and lights it.

"Want anything today?"

Medium close-up as he shakes his head like always. Carol has mentioned several times that he ought to do more than just hang around, but Alex always reminds her that he's held a steady job for over a year now as a clerk at the Weikiki Surf, and that he's in line to become Assistant Manager. Alex is over thirty, but you can see he tries to look younger, like all would-be leading men. His face is pock-marked, but well-groomed black hair and the hotel's regulation silky *aloha* shirt soften his appearance.

Carol waits. She knows he has something to say.

Close-up on Alex now, as he takes two puffs, then looks into Carol's eyes as he speaks.

"Ey, we know each other from long time now, eh?"

Shot of Carol, head inclined slightly as she regards the questioner.

Flashback to a snow-covered campus somewhere in the northern Midwest--Minneapolis, perhaps. You can check the reels. The snow is streaked with grey and shoveled into mushy piles along the sidewalk where a girl now walks stiffly against the cold wind. Close-up of the slick black surface of the pavement ahead. Grease and gasoline splotches lie on the pavement like rainbows dashed against a charcoal sky. Now slowly dissolve into an image of rippled golden sand, kicked and sprayed by a girl's bare feet. Pan upward as the bikini-clad figure races ahead, splashing into the water. Quick flashes in color montage: prismatic spectrum of tourists whirling around the tall hotels; tan faces, smiling and squinting in the crowded heat; the shaded relief of cool green mountains; and a final lingering aerial arc over the blue expanse of the Pacific.

Getting accustomed, that's what it comes down to. I've filmed it many times. There are good times to be had, of course. Invitations and vows of mutual respect are cheap on the beach. But it doesn't take long to penetrate a tourist city's facade of beachcomber values.

Alex. Alex was a constant. He was "between" jobs at the time, but with no real motive other than what he said straight out or with a line so obvious anyone could see through it. Flashback to Alex at the same table in a Primo T-shirt explaining local culture to Carol, the new coffee girl. "Old Hawaiian custom they don't let *haole*

girls in that club without local boy. I can escort you if you like."

He'd lived in Honolulu all his life and knew places it might have taken her years to discover. There were no commitments, but they saw quite a bit of each other. One afternoon at Magic Island he calmly suggested that he move in and was surprised by her polite refusal.

Return to present with a profile shot of them both at the table.

"Yes, we've known each other a while now, Alex."

"Tell me then, why every time you're too tired now to do things like before? Is it me?"

Catch the slight frown in her face as she tilts her head toward him. "No, Alex, you know I like you."

Now focus on Alex as he shakes his head slowly. "Not like before. Before you liked to go out, have a good time, maybe drink a little bit. Now you got no more time for that. Always busy now. Is it that *haole*?"

A real frown now. "You know I've always done things with other people."

"This guy--he's different, though, eh?"

Watch her mull it over. Different. Yes, Charles is different, at least from Alex and the others. You can film it all from this angle.

"Maybe."

"This guy--he feel for you like I do?"

"Look Alex, let's just be friends. Don't think of me

that way."

On Alex now. "How you like me to think of you? You like me to think of you up in some rich *haole* guy's hotel room? You like me to think of you that way?" Close-up as the muscles in his jaws tense, then relax. "Ey, sorry. I didn't mean it like that."

Her voice is firm. "I know. Forget it. But look, I like him Alex. You'll just have to live with that."

A wider shot as they both sit silently for a moment.

"Yeah, OK. I'll live with it." He snuffs out the cigarette and gets up.

"Alex."

He turns, but she knots the corners of her mouth and says nothing. He goes on.

A static shot as Carol sits quietly for a few seconds. Then pull the camera back as she returns to John's table. The old man smokes his pipe and says nothing. He has played this scene before and knows she has the next line.

"John," she says finally, "do you ever think about the things you . . . missed out on?"

"Sure. Lots of things. I never had a son, for example. And there are silly things, too. I never won a contest, never met royalty . . . and I always wanted to be a movie actor."

"You're kidding."

"No, in cowboy picture."

Carol laughs. Cut briefly to a fuzzy black and white:

profile of a young man with a white hat, vest, and a six-shooter. He is sitting alone at a saloon table, sipping a tall glass of warm beer.

"Well, maybe you'll still get your chance, John," Carol says, laughing again as she gets up to take care of a couple who just entered.

Close-up of the old man now as he shakes his head and smiles, his eyes following the girl as she assumes her duties behind the counter. You can tell from the distant look in his eyes that he is filming. But John is much too close to his subject to be a real *auteur*.

The newcomers are tourists, an elderly couple. Film them from Carol's perspective as they sit down by the side window. Focus first on the old man as he unshoulders the strap containing his Pentax camera and extra lenses. You can see he's about sixty-five and white skinned, but with a crisp pink tint now covering his nose, cheeks, and lower legs. The lady wears a full-flowing pink and blue *mu'-umu'u*. The reels probably show she has a pair of support hose wadded up in her purse.

Both look tired and ill-treated. But he takes her hand and squeezes it, as if all that is not enough to shatter the dream that transforms ugly planes of concrete and steel on the edge of a crowded beach into the gleaming white elfen towers of a fairy city by the sea.

Filter the light so the room is bathed in a warm golden glow.

Dissolve the transparent radiance of the windowpane into shadow with the evening's switch to internal illumination. Ease the pace even more now, because the atmosphere of the shop is more subdued at night. Slow, pulsing waves replace the rippling rhythm of morning mood. The ventilator fan, spinning somewhere eight stories up, pushes soft columns of air around the room--capture its presence through the slow steady sway of bamboo curtains. Pick up the faint hum of the refrigerator as it sweats to preserve perishable sweets.

The couple by the side window are now newlyweds. You can tell by the earnest looks that mask fatigue and promise devotion. I've filmed it many times. Probably they've followed up a day of sun and sightseeing with a walk along a moonlit beach and then back through the clutter of lights and noise in Waikiki, until finally drawn, tired and disoriented, toward the warm and unassuming glow from the windows of the coffee shop. They collect here in the Seaside Lanai, just like the regulars.

Focus on Carol now as she smiles, nearing the end of her second shift. With couples like this, Carol is tempted to give away treats on the house in gesture of *aloha*. But if she did, she'd never last out the week. "We sell *aloha* these days like shells along the shore," John once said. You can see she regrets it.

The evening regulars are quiet and melancholy. Like Lum over in the opposite corner there. Lum's here every

night after he gets off work selling shoes at Liberty House. Watch him follow the girl's movements with a kind of detached harmony, like bit players you've seen in a thousand films. Lum has no lines--just lets the day dissolve quietly into his cup before going home to his wife and kid in Makiki.

Next to Lum is Madam Fong, who does palm readings at the Longhouse next door. Madam Fong wears a few of the psychic's usual gaudy vestments and cosmetics; just a long grey gown and a black bandanna. "The Gypsy Nun," Carol calls her.

Sometimes Madam Fong sits by me on her evening break. I can play back the reels: "The spirits of each of us inhabit this place and determine its character," she says cryptically, and traces the rim of her cup with a long lavender fingernail. "The spirits are not illusions; they are projections of our essence, like shadows."

But tonight I'm alone in my usual place here by the cigarette machine.

Now come in for a close-up of Carol, the long *mu'umu'u* she wears this evening concealing the stool she rests on behind the counter. Calm and attentive, she directs everything from a certain subtle distance. There are so many of us who come to sit along the row of wicker tables--like extras providing local color in a big production--that she has to maintain some of that distance, even when she comes around to sit down with someone along the

row.

But that's good. Never get too close. Carol and I get along fine. At night we play the game of darting glances. She's good at it--most would never catch her except with eyes riveted on some innocent item. But you can film from any angle. An eye to eye is seldom necessary.

It happens, though. The twin theaters across the street were holding a Clark Gable Festival one evening when I came inside after a showing of *It Happened One Night*. You can see the marquee clearly from the side window there. Carol was just standing there at the counter, pouring the coffee, when she said it. "How stand the Walls of Jericho tonight?" A relaxed, friendly voice. "You know, I always wondered," she went on, "if Peter and Ellie ever got to that romantic island in the Pacific he talked about behind the blanket wall. But that would be another movie, I guess."

Then it was eye-to-eye. "No, everything is filmed," I explained. "You don't need a sequel. All the old reels are preserved and you can play them over and over again, each time with new discoveries. Of course, they decay and grow ambiguous with time, but when you know what scene is playing you can search for detail."

She was dubious. Night owl philosophy is the nature of the evening shift. "We all film," I told her. "Thematic movement is beyond our present capabilities, but we can alter cast and setting. And our interpretation changes

with perspective." At the table here by the cigarette machine I listed the evidence: a hundred reels she could recall, a thousand she could not.

But tonight Carol has other things on her mind. Low angle shot from my perspective of her sitting there behind the counter. The low cut *mu'umu'u* she is wearing reveals the puka shells around her neck. Charles will be here any minute. You can tell she is thinking about him by the way she looks off in the direction he usually approaches.

Close-up of her face and you can see things are not all fine. The reels show Charles is some sort of construction contractor from Florida staying at the Princess Kaiulani. He is about to wrap up a big deal on a shopping mall in Halawa and will be going home soon.

I get up and exit. It's time to back off a little; you can sense these things after a while. The figures on the screen captivate--sometimes even an *auteur* is drawn too close. But the shadows out here by the coco palm are just as good for filming, though you lose that sense of immediate presence if you remain at a distance too long.

Now slowly pan the coffee shop. The theater across the street will let out in a few minutes and fill the shop with customers, but right now the row of tables is nearly empty. You can hear the muted voices of the people along the row: the newlyweds' faint whispers and Madam Fong's low hushed tones as she explains to Lum how the spirits spoke to her today.

Close-up of Carol as a dark silhouette passes in front of the middle window and she turns her eyes to follow it. Notice how her expression changes to one of frustration.

Cut to a straight-on shot of the doorway from the counter as Alex enters the shop. He dumps himself in the corner like a sack and stares across the room at her. Menacing, but Carol has handled him before. Get a profile of them both as she sits down across from him.

"Hello, Alex."

Hold the shot as he continues to stare at her.

"Have a bad day at work?"

"I never work today." He watches her eyebrows wrinkle into a frown as she realizes he is drunk. He scowls and stares off toward a stack of styrofoam cups on the counter. "This is a cheap place. Everything is *plastic*--no glass cups."

Closer in on Carol now, as she seems suddenly tired. She regards Alex silently for a moment, then stares down at the table, her eyes half-closing. "Alex, what is it you want?"

A shot of them both as he looks sharply at her once again. "Tell me something," he says. "You ever feel for me at all?"

She exhales slowly and stares out the window. Charles will be here any minute.

Alex leans toward her. His voice is firm. "You ashamed to answer that?"

"No, Alex. Look, what do you want me to say?"

"Up to you."

Exhaustion. Pick up the slight wheeze in her voice.

"Let's talk about it tomorrow, Alex. I just don't . . ."

"I know--big rush! Well, you can forget about tomorrow for me. You're afraid to *give*, and if that's the way you like it, then I say *kiss off!*"

He bangs the chair against the wall as he gets up. You can hear the door click shut behind him.

A quiet blur remains. Gradually focus a wide angle view of the shop, completely still. Carol slumps over the table, her head in her hands. The newlyweds have left. Madam Fong sits motionless, as if in a trance. Lum stares into his cup.

The door bangs open and the girl jerks up. They flood in now, the crowd from the theater. There was no sign of their approach. Shots of their faces, frantic and faminous, melancholy and obscure. Too quickly they spill in, waves of them pushing forward, filling up tables and forming lines. Shouting orders and invitations; staring off into space. Faces, baring teeth in smiles and sneers, stretching their features into grotesque distortions.

She retreats behind the counter, but they press around her, the faces, pale and pleading.

"Take anything you want!" she screams, then runs out of the shop.

Outside is another face. Charles.

Pull back and pick up pieces of their encounter--two figures in the distance joined by muted fragments of sound: . . . I'm OK--really . . . just left early . . . wrapped it up . . . a ten o'clock flight . . . let's go to your place . . . a celebration! . . . yes, your place Charles.

The pieces, changing images and sounds, blur and fade in the distance as moments pass. But they survive. The reels have them now.

Let them embrace. Let them shiver in exhausted relief. Hear tender voices; watch them turn. Angle the shot from here as they approach, almost to the tree . . .

Now. Now eye-to-eye. Wide and tense, right into the lens. Freeze the action for an instant as I halt her, hold her, capture her forever.

Then break away, silently, back down the street toward the theater.

"Who the hell was that?" His voice is taut in the distance.

"No one," she recovers. "it was just the Film Phantom."

"The *what?*"

She laughs. Hear the laughter echo as they turn down the street toward the Princess Kaiulani.

Dissolve into a renewed calm. Shoot from directly above them as they lie motionless. The perspiration that moments ago formed a moist sticky paste, expelling and absorbing body heat, now covers her arms and breasts and

torso with a kind of filmy chill, a slick glassy sensation hardening in the darkness. She lies quietly, the inner stirrings of her body now faded inside the cool shell forming around her. Beside her Charles has just closed his eyes. He lies with his face toward her, crinkled hair covering his forehead. Silently she watches his last conscious energies slip away, until his breathing assumes the slow regular rhythm of sleep.

Eyes long adjusted to the darkness, she turns toward the ceiling, tracing her boundaries around the four corners of the room. Each corner solid, confining.

Let the scene linger. From the lanai a soft breeze floats through, rustling the curtains. She clinches her eyes to shut away consciousness, but it holds her.

She gets up carefully, not disturbing Charles, and goes into the bathroom, closing the door behind her.

The light is harsh and blinding first. From a straight-on shot she squints into the mirror which gives shape to the heavy-browed frown she feels and reveals the necklace still hanging around her neck, surrounded by strings of red dotted marks on her skin. She sits down on the commode and reaches behind her neck to unscrew the clasp. She holds the white lei up closely in the light, and you can see the minute distinctive features of each shell: spots, chips, and imperfections. Some are darker or less round. All bear the corrosive marks of the sea.

Cut to a pair of scissors lying on the short shelf

beside her. With thumb and finger she holds the necklace up by one end of the clasp and watches it dangle over the turquoise tile floor. With her other hand she takes the scissors and snips the monofilament just below the bottom shell. The pukas slide quickly down the string and bounce off the floor with a staccato sound--twirling, spinning, dancing in the air like popcorn. Slow the motion down as they spray and scatter in small and smaller hops, sliding and spinning until a last speckled one whirls to rest beneath the limp strand. Standing up, she regards the blue floor now flecked with white. Only a few have shattered.

She flips off the light and steps out into the dark bedroom. The bed is not visible from this distance, but she knows Charles is sleeping quietly. In the darkness she finds her clothes and dresses quickly.

A burst of light--John Decker is a little late as he pushes open the door to the Seaside Lanai Coffee Shop. A wide shot as Mrs. Willis brushes past him on her way to the beach with a bright yellow bottle of Polynesian Sun Secret. The air conditioner hums away as the hotel manager directs the efforts of some workmen who are stringing wire above the counter. Some strangers occupy John's table by the middle window and the rest of the row is nearly filled. He looks around. There's no chair by me, but he spots a vacant seat at the surfer's table over there.

The old man nods good morning and eases down beside

the blond figure.

"Can I help you, sir?"

High angle close-up as he looks up at the new voice.

"Yes, certainly. A cup of coffee, please. Black.

And where is Carol this morning?"

"She quit."

"Quit?" An uncomprehending stare.

"Uh huh. Yesterday, I think." A blur in front of the old man as she turns to take care of his order.

The old man takes a couple of short breaths and stares silently in the direction of the counter for several moments. Absently, he asks about the workmen.

"Muzak," the surfer says stiffly. John looks at the younger man, who shakes his head slightly and stands up to leave. John watches him stride out, sandals slapping against his heels.

"Here you are sir. Would you like anything else?"

A shot of them both. The new girl is a blonde, tan and freckled. A Westerner, perhaps. The old man looks up, shakes his head, then stares vacantly across the room after the girl as she moves out of the picture. As he gazes, the sounds of the shop slowly fade.

I come into view for only a moment. It's just you and me now, John. And you are already gone, sitting alone in black and white at a dark saloon table with your ten-gallon hat and pitcher of warm beer, wondering if you should approach the girl at the bar.

Drink up. Drink up and lay your money down, John Decker.

Freeze the frame and dissolve.

Outside now. Outside, shooting straight up into a bright tropical sky, where wispy morning clouds glide by in the tradewinds overhead, swept securely out to sea. Pan slowly downward now, to the mountains, to the city-- until just before fade-out the camera freezes on the Seaside Lanai, where tiny dancing shadows float slowly up the face of the blue building and disappear.

THE SUMMER GAME

Warren liked to watch them burn the cane fields. He liked to watch the runners race along the edge of the field after the backfire had been set, pausing only to lay their flaming brands at selected points along the base of the thirty-foot green wall of cane. Today the wind had whipped the flames quickly through the field, raising clouds of heavy grey-brown smoke well above the dark outline of the Waianea Mountains rising in the distance beyond the plain. The red flames consumed the green, licking away everything but the bamboo-like stalks encasing the sweet juicy brown sugar pulp.

It would all be quite beautiful, Warren thought as he watched, if it weren't for the acrid smell of burning cane.

The fire was nearly out now; Warren could see blue sky beneath the dissipating cloud of smoke. He smiled. After three months on Ewa Plantation, Warren appreciated how the burning was an integral part of the sugar harvest in Hawaii. He knew how the fire cleared away the dry tangled mass of leaf trash, leaving the juice-laden stalks unharmed and ready to be cut. He gripped his machete expectantly.

Lately Warren had been trying to take it all in--the

sights, sounds, and smells of the cane fields--trying to savor his last few days at Ewa. He was summer help, and summer was nearly over. He'd had lots of other summer jobs, ever since he was thirteen. But this was the first one he would miss. Ewa was special.

He didn't really know what made it so. As summer help, Warren was many things on Ewa Plantation, and today he was a cane cutter. It was his job to enter the charred reddish-brown field and chop off the exposed cane stalks protruding from the ground in thick twisted rows. The stackers would follow behind, piling the cane into bundles to be picked up by the tall red tractor crane waiting to load the harvest onto the giant cane-hauling trucks lined up at the edge of the field.

A machine would normally handle the cutting too, but last week Ewa Plantation's tractor push-rake had thrown a rod and parts had not yet arrived from Honolulu. So now ten men with machetes lined up one to a row at the field's edge to harvest the cane in the old way.

The cane cutting crews were makeshift. Most of the cutters were Japanese, but there were always a few Filipinos, maybe one Korean, and even a *haole* or two on hand as well. This time there were five men Warren knew.

Down at the far end of the line was dumpy old Henry Sakagawa. Henry could have named everybody in line for Warren; the pudgy Japanese had lived and worked at

Ewa for nearly forty years. In the middle of the line were three boys roughly Warren's age: Kenji and Yoshiro, a couple of full-time guys from Wahiawa; then tall, brash Kelsey, another summer laborer. Finally, next to Warren at the very end of the line was Santos, the old Filipino who was Ewa Plantation's master cane cutter.

"Go! Go!" DeMattos the *luna* shouted, and they charged into the field shouting, the younger voices sounding above the rest.

"Banzai!" Kelsey yelled, baring his teeth at the two Japanese boys next to him and brandishing his machete above his head like a crazed samurai.

"Watch out you don't commit *hara-kiri* with that knife!" Kenji shot back.

"Kelsey don't need a knife for the cane," Yoshiro added. "He should just *bite* it off!"

Other shouts and threats echoed along the edge of the field.

Warren did not participate in the ceremonial bantering as they began to attack the cane, but he did not ignore it either. Warren wasn't very good at kidding around with the rest of the crew. He could never think of the right thing to say. So usually he just smiled or nodded and went along with the rest. It was better that way.

He liked to stay on the edge of things, where he could see what was going on. Now, as he sliced through

the first stalk with a quick fluid stroke, Warren could see the entire line of cutters advancing on the tangled rows like eager athletes taking the field. He could see Yoshiro's grimace and Kelsey's square jaw thrust out as both boys slashed at the first stalks protruding from the cane bunched in front of them. And Warren knew it was Henry Sakagawa's high piercing voice he heard shouting "Ey, give 'em!" to goad on the younger men around him.

Everything was easy, everything as it should be, as Warren lifted back the cut stalk with the hooked end of his machete, lopped off the soft sugarless top, and tossed the cane behind him. He worked swiftly, as he always did.

But the broad scene, the sights and sounds around Warren, narrowed quickly today, because today he was intent on something else. Tomorrow afternoon they would lay off the summer help. That meant today was the last chance he had to finish his rows ahead of Santos, the old Filipino working next to him.

In the corner of his right eye, Warren could see the thin spidery figure in the wide-brimmed straw hat and checkered work shirt laboring silently on the next row, wielding his blade with an easy grace that always amazed Warren. Always, when they were this close, he would watch the old man's hands. Like most of the men who handled cane, Warren wore heavy cotton gloves for protection. Not Santos. He swung his machete and grabbed

the splintered cane barehanded. His hands were like claws, thin and leathery, with dark scaly calluses on each palm.

Henry Sakagawa said that when Santos was younger his hands would bleed every day. But Warren had seen the Filipino dig long slivers of cane out of his dry cracked palms without drawing a drop of blood.

Crazy Santos. "Santos *pupule*," they had warned him the first time Warren saw the old man sharpening the long hooked blade of his black machete in the tool shed. "Don't make any sudden moves," he warned with a sly grin. "They say he chopped up a man on the big island once."

Warren hewed a twenty-foot stalk with a firm flat stroke. Santos was different from the rest of DeMattos' crew. The *luna* was right--Santos never spoke. Anyone who worked with the old Filipino had to learn strictly by imitation. Except when the cane had to be cut by hand, Santos was a ditch-man, controlling the flow of water to growing crops with his hoe. He was the best at letting just the right amount of water from the irrigation ditch into each furrow.

But it was as a cane cutter that Santos was renowned. "Never be anybody like him again," DeMattos liked to say. It was understood that no one could finish a field ahead of Santos and do as good a job. Of course, there was no precise way to tell who finished first or cut the most. The "rows" of charred cane were tangled and overlapping. But still it was obvious that even the younger men had

to push themselves to keep up with the old Filipino.

Of course, despite all the taunting, the cutters didn't really compete with each other. The fields were marked off by the numerous cane-hauling roads that crisscrossed the Ewa sugar plain. In an average burnt-over field, everyone would have to cut three or four rows apiece, and it didn't really matter who finished their part first. All the year-round guys had pride in their work, especially old Henry Sakagawa, who usually went back along all the rows to make sure that each stalk had been cut and properly topped off.

But why did Santos always finish first? Warren had to admit he would take a certain secret pleasure in beating Santos just once. It was a little game he played to get through the hot summer days in the cane fields. Of course, he would never push himself just to win. That would be pointless. It meant something only if he could do it working as usual.

Kelsey had finished first once. But he hurried and missed several stalks and left the sugarless tops on others. Santos said nothing, of course, but Henry Sakagawa had to go back along each of Kelsey's rows, cutting and tossing.

"Well, what the hell," was all Kelsey said.

Warren separated two twisted stalks and chopped them both off near the ground. An ache was already developing between his shoulder blades. He glanced over at Santos.

Despite his exertions, Warren still felt as if he were a spectator watching an expert at work. Santos was a technician, examining rather than attacking his work, and yet the cut cane piled up behind him.

Warren liked to work next to Santos, so that he could pick up the shythm, the natural movement of the old man's hands as he swung the blade and grabbed the cane. And although the Filipino was always absorbed in his work, it seemed that sometimes, for just an instant, the old man's eyes would flicker and he would take notice of Warren. But the younger man could never be sure, for they had never spoken, though Warren always wondered about Santos's opinion of him as a cane cutter.

Warren stepped up the pace--it was a small field, only three rows apiece for the cutters, and they could afford to work just a bit faster in the late afternoon sun. But it made no difference to Santos; he kept his regular rhythm: chop, grab, chop, toss--and drew steadily ahead. By the time Warren started his second row, Santos was already several yards in front.

As the afternoon wore on, sweat dripped off Warren's nose, tasting salty and bitter with the acrid smell of the burnt cane. Gradually, Warren recovered his wide view of the field. He saw them all moving across the scorched landscape: Kelsey with wide sweeping slashes, Kenji and Yoshiro in short hacking bursts, Henry Sakagawa with relaxed steady strokes.

The last row was the toughest. Warren could feel the pace slowing, the line of cutters becoming more and more crooked, as they neared the edge of the field. Warren narrowed his view again only at the end, when Santos tossed the last stalk over his shoulder and turned for an instant to view with hawk-like eyes the littered field and the other cutters advancing toward him. There was only this momentary recognition in the old man's eyes; immediately he began to chop stray stalks along the edge of the road.

Warren had looked up purposely at that instant. Unless they cut cane again tomorrow, this was probably the last time he would see Santos finish a field.

The red tractor crane had already begun to lift dirty piles of cane onto the waiting trucks when the cutters finally finished. The stacking and loading would continue until the field was cleared, because sugar sap in a burnt-over field deteriorated rapidly. But the cutters were through for the day; an old rusty yellow Ford truck with wooden slat sides waited on a side road to take them back to Ewa.

"You ready to go or what?" Kenji, who was already aboard, shouted at the rest of the crew.

They needed no additional prodding in the late afternoon heat. Wiping dirt and sweat off his forehead, Warren climbed in back with the rest, settling down in a corner next to the cab. Santos climbed aboard last,

moving all the way up to the opposite corner and squatting down in the space always left for him. He said nothing, just took off his straw hat, looked down, and began to rub his hands together, peeling the dirt off his palms in tiny rolls. Warren tried to relax.

DeMattos poked his head back through the glassless rear window of the cab. "Everybody on?"

"Ey, when you going to re-upholster?" cracked Yoshiro, patting the splintered wooden floor.

DeMattos shrugged.

"Wait for me!"

Warren leaned around and looked through a space between slats and saw stumpy-legged Henry Sakagawa run out from behind a tall clump of sugar cane in the next field amid catcalls from the truck.

"Ey, this bus don't stop for that!"

"Supposed to shake the leaves so we know you're there, man!"

"You sure you're *pau*? Don't hurry your business!"

Henry puffed up to the truck. "Got enough room for me?" he said red-faced, and reached for the wooden railing. But before he could grab hold to pull himself aboard, the truck lurched forward.

"Hey!"

"Go for broke, man!"

"Faster! Faster!"

Warren laughed with the others as Henry ran along

just behind the truck in quick jerky steps, until Kelsey extended his long muscular arm and pulled the older man up. The old Japanese swayed a bit unsteadily and clung to Kelsey as the truck picked up speed.

"You need to grow a couple more legs before you start chasing cars," Kelsey grinned as he helped Henry hunch down against the railing. Warren could see them all settling back now, the heat and the dirt forgotten as they began to rib each other.

"Henry runs faster on payday," Yoshiro explained.

"Used to be so," Henry admitted, catching his breath. "Used to be Wahiawa ladies come to Ewa first of every month. Everybody rich a couple days; get all you want. No more." He shook his head sadly.

"What's the matter with Honolulu girls?" Kelsey objected. "Only thirty minutes to Hotel Street, you know."

"Honolulu girls all *haoles* now. Business women. Got to have reservations and credit cards. Better to stay home with my wife."

One of the older guys laughed and slapped his knee.

"Well, don't sell *haole* girls short," Kelsey warned. "They've got good taste. I had to work in this godforsaken place all summer because they like their men rich as well as damn good looking."

"Aw, man! Getting deep in here," said Yoshiro, raising his feet.

Henry chuckled. "Tomorrow your last day, eh?" He was talking to Kelsey, but his eyes wandered back to Warren for just a moment. Kenji and Yoshiro also looked back.

They were doing it again--giving him the opportunity to jump in, to say something amusing or silly. But Warren could think of nothing, so he just nodded and smiled.

"Yeah, you clowns will be on your own after tomorrow . . ." Kelsey went on.

Warren could see them all clearly from the corner. Henry and Santos, Kenji and Yoshiro, and the rest of them. All were looking at Kelsey now: "You know, you guys all look alike to us *haoles*, but I'll tell you what--I'll never forget how ugly this crew was."

Warren laughed. It was comfortable to be here and to laugh. He didn't like to be in the center anyway. That was the nice thing about summer; you could pick your own place in things. In school he was stuck--always the new kid, the Williams boy. The family had moved a dozen times since he was ten. Commander Williams was always being transferred--from Boston to San Diego to Pearl Harbor.

Sound faded as Warren watched the dust boil up into swirling red clouds behind them as the truck rumbled along the cane-hauling road. The dust obscured everything--the cane, the voices . . .

It was luxury to be able to watch like this. You could do it if you weren't in the middle. It was better to stay on the edge of things where you could relax and see the whole picture. The same principle applied everywhere. Warren tried not to draw attention to himself at school. He was no scholar; on the football team he played offensive guard.

Summer was better. He could design his own summers, and since he liked to work, that's what he did. Last summer he worked at the Hawaiian Holiday Macadamia Nut Factory on the big island. In a way, it was a lot like Ewa. He wasn't really close to any of the other workers. But on the last day they gave him a present--a tie dyed T-shirt that said "Nuts to You" on the front. They gave it to him in the glassed-in lobby, where Jack Lord's saddle was mounted above a display of Macadamia Nut Brittle.

He could still remember how embarrassing it was--smiling faces of co-workers, many whose names he had never learned, but who had nevertheless judged him worthy of a gift. You could never tell how it was going to be when they picked you out.

Warren looked over at Santos, still staring down at his callused palms. The old Filipino stayed on the edge of things too, never joining in the heckling with the rest of the crew. It bothered Warren a little that they were alike in that way, because everyone thought Santos was

crazy. They would have to put up with him only another year or so, however; Warren had overheard DeMattos saying they were getting ready to retire Santos. Warren wondered what would happen to the Filipino after that . . .

The truck hit a bump and Henry Sakagawa's voice faded back in above the rumbling noise.

"Yeah, I know that guy long time ago. Used to cure pain with a needle--practiced acupuncture, you know? He come over here from Molokai back before statehood. Come into my place one day and say his name was Bluebell. Has to be same one. Has to be only one Bluebell from Molokai." He paused amid smiles. A couple of the older guys nodded their assent.

"He come in with his wife. *Big wahine*--three hundred pounds, at least. She had a big gallon jug of opihi in her arms. *Hooo-boy* that woman smelled bad! She say 'give him a haircut.' I was the barber then, you know. Anybody in Ewa cut hair in those days. We didn't have the electric clipper, just the hand clipper . . ."

"Why didn't you just let Santos skin him with that big black knife?" Kelsey interrupted, grinning.

Henry glanced quickly at Santos, who sat up straight, glaring at Kelsey. Santos's eyes were hawk-like. Kelsey seemed surprised by the confrontation, but regarded the old man steadily. Warren felt his stomach muscles tighten.

"The guy wanted to pay me with needles!" Henry pounded the floor for emphasis. "Wanted to stick pins

all over my leg! Said I feel better later." Yoshiro and a couple of others turned back around toward Henry and laughed uneasily.

"I tell him I feel better *now* when I get my money . . ."

The truck shuddered to a stop in the dirt yard outside the Ewa Plantation Sugar Mill. The trailing cloud of dust swept over the passengers, choking off the rest of his words. When it had passed, Kelsey and half the crew had already dismounted, heading for the showers. Warren was the next to last to get off. Santos remained behind.

Warren didn't look back. He knew Santos would wait until everyone was out of sight.

One of the best things about Ewa Plantation was the shower at the end of the day. The water always soothed Warren while it rinsed away the incredible layer of grime compacted on his body from a day in the sugar fields. Only the younger workers who didn't live in Ewa used the mill showers; most of the men went home to their own small wooden-frame houses just a short walk from the mill.

As Warren emerged wet but refreshed, he saw several other workers gathered around a bench in the locker room. Kelsey, the reigning arm-wrestling champion, was straining against Yoshiro, who was about twenty pounds lighter.

"Hmmmph!" Kelsey snorted, and plunked his opponent's arm flat on the bench. There were scattered claps and a few dramatic hisses. Kenji shielded his eyes in mock

amazement.

"And still champion!" Kelsey boasted, rubbing his arm. Sweat coated his skin, making the hard muscle shine. He tossed back his head and laughed. "Any of the rest of you wimps want to see what a man's grip feels like? How about you, Warren? Last chance!"

All eyes were on Warren as he dragged a towel across his own bulky arms and shoulders. He looked back at Kelsey and the others gathered around the bench. In his father's basement Warren had once bench-pressed two hundred fifty pounds. He figured he might be able to take Kelsey.

"I pass," he said and shoved the towel into his locker.

"All right, what about the rest of you panty-waists?" Kelsey grinned around the room triumphantly. "Well, what do you say, girls?"

When he had dressed, Warren headed for his blue Chevy Nova parked in the oil and grease-stained dirt lot next to the mill. He was about to climb in when DeMattos the *luna* came out of the mill.

"Your check will be ready tomorrow, Warren," he said, walking up to the Nova.

"Thanks."

"There's something else, though. The boss says we're going to hire some new guys full time next month. Strictly unskilled labor. I wondered if you'd be interested."

Warren hesitated. This was a new thing. Summers

had always ended on time before. "I don't know. I'm supposed to enroll at the UH in a couple of weeks."

"Well, think it over." DeMattos cocked his head. "If you want to stay on permanent, I think I can arrange it." He turned to leave.

"Well, thanks--oh, hey! There *is* one thing I wanted to ask you about." Warren's eyebrow wrinkled as DeMattos turned back around to face him. "Today, in the truck . . . I was wondering . . . what's going to happen to Santos when they retire him next year?"

DeMattos threw up his hands. "Who knows? Probably sit around his house and drink *La Copa* all day."

Warren pictured Santos sitting alone on the steps of his tiny iron-roofed house, watching from the shadows beneath the bright red and green branches of his flaming poinciana tree.

"Santos doesn't make sense," DeMattos went on. "Santos *pupule*. Ask Henry Sakaga; he talks the best stories about Santos." He gestured toward the pudgy Japanese just emerging from under the huge grey sliding door of the mill garage.

"Thanks," Warren said as the *luna* turned to leave again.

"Henry!"

Warren watched him change direction in the middle of a step. "You got car trouble?" Henry asked, approaching the Nova.

"No, I just wanted to talk to you," Warren replied, leaning back against a fender. "DeMattos said you could tell me about Santos--what's going to happen to him next year, I mean."

Warren watched the older man hesitate a moment. Warren seldom asked questions like this, but he also had never seen Henry Sakagawa refuse to talk about anything. Warren felt a secret satisfaction as he watched the puzzlement in the older man's eyes quickly disappear.

"Nobody knows about Santos," the Japanese began, shaking his head. "Teofilo was here when I first come to Ewa back before the war. Not too many Filipino guys at Ewa back then, but everybody say to me, 'Stay away from that one, Henry. Stay away from Santos.' Used to be every Saturday night we watch Filipino guys get crazy drunk and get in the truck and go Wahiawa and bet on cockfights. But Santos don't like to socialize like that. Always stay home, except for one night when the fields too wet for work all week. 'Ey, too boring to stay at home and drink,' they say and they take Santos along that time--how, I don't know. That night there's one big fight in Wahiawa, and Lui Mendoza come back without his thumb."

Henry paused and ran his hand through stiff black hair streaked with grey.

"Santos should have got him a wife, you know? Then he could just sit back and watch the cane grow and get

soft and fat like me!" Henry patted his stomach proudly.

Warren smiled.

"But Teofilo stay away from everybody most the time. You ever watch him cut down a field? Whack! Whack! Out there he's the master. Out there he can be proud. But next year he has to stay in town with old Masaru and Eduardo-guys. Sit around and wait for the check, you know?" Who can say what Santos will do then? Maybe stay, maybe go someplace else--who knows?"

Henry looked off toward the green Waianea Mountains.

Both men were silent for a few moments. Then Warren looked directly into the older man's eyes.

"Do you think Santos is crazy?"

Henry looked away from Warren toward the rows of tiny wooden-frame houses spreading away from the mill.

He shrugged.

Warren took a last look, as he did every morning, at the blue stripe of the Pacific Ocean on the horizon just before he turned off the freeway, coasting down the ramp onto Highway Seventy-six into Ewa. He would not see the ocean again until evening; thousands of acres of sugar cane would block his view.

Highway Seventy-six was still hardly more than a paved cane-hauling road. Along most of it, the narrow strip of asphalt was flanked by twenty and thirty-foot green walls of growing sugar plants. There was barely

enough room for him to avoid the giant trucks that rumbled by.

Warren liked this road; it gave him a sense of place, a feeling for what the land here had always been. He'd never lived long enough in one spot to feel like he really knew it, so he looked for signs, place markers, wherever he went.

He leaned forward against the wheel as the Nova passed beneath an old wooden railway trestle left over from the days when the cane was always harvested by hand and the planters used tiny steam engines on narrow gauge tracks to transport it to the mill. Ewa was like that, he thought. Old things out of place among the new. You could never tell what was going to last.

Warren stepped on the accelerator. He was late today, the first time all summer. He had overslept after lying in a fitful daze most of the night. He hadn't bothered to speak to his parents about DeMattos's offer to stay on. There was really no decision to make; as much as he liked Ewa, he certainly didn't want to make a career out of cutting cane. It was good for a summer, no more. It occurred to him that he wouldn't look forward to summer nearly as much after he took a year-round job. And he didn't want Ewa to become just another job.

The Nova's tires squealed as Warren turned onto the short connecting road into Ewa. The twin rust-colored smoke stacks of the sugar mill appeared over the green

canopy of monkeypod trees ahead. Warren realized this was probably the last time he would ever see that sight. He began to develop that peculiar prickly feeling he always had on last days.

The men were already standing around the truck when Warren pulled into the dirt lot. He parked next to the mill, where Yoshiro was filling the five-gallon water jug with a hose.

"Better get your knife," he said as Warren got out. "Going to burn another field today and the tractor's still broke. Same crew."

Warren went into the long metal tool shed attached to the mill and picked up his machete. When he came out there was some commotion around the truck.

Kenji came running out of the crowd.

"Get DeMattos!" he shouted. "He's going to kill him!" He ran past Warren into the mill.

Warren looked back toward the truck instead. The crowd had parted around two figures facing each other. Santos was brandishing his machete at Kelsey, both edges of the black blade gleaming in the sun. Weaponless, Kelsey stood tense, towering above the Filipino. The crowd moved back, every eye on the two men.

Warren stood frozen by the shed.

"Teofilo!" Henry Sakagawa came running out of the mill. "Teofilo! Stop!"

He ran up just to the length of Santos's reach and

halted.

"Teofilo, let him go! Tomorrow he's gone away!"

Santos continued to glare at Kelsey, who was watching the knife.

"Let him go, Teofilo!"

Santos glanced at Henry, then back at the younger man in front of him. Finally, he lowered the knife.

"What the hell's going on?" DeMattos shouted, rushing out of the mill with Kenji behind him. "All right, what is it?" His voice fell just a bit as he reached the truck and realized the emergency was over.

"Hell, I was just trying to apologize to the bastard!" Kelsey complained.

Warren didn't hear much of the rest of it, thought it must have been a good thirty minutes before they all finally climbed into the truck. DeMattos was talking very quickly and threatening everyone before they got aboard. Then his voice fell and he spoke in soothing tones.

The ride to the fields was silent. Warren didn't watch the crew this time. He looked down at his own feet and thought about how different the last day had always been. He didn't want to remember Ewa this way.

When they reached the field, the cutters lined up along the edge as usual. But there were no jokes, no challenges this time as the runners set the field aflame and the acrid smell of the burning drifted back over them. The cutters remained silent.

Warren didn't see the whole line this time as he stood with the rest. Only Santos--down at the end, holding his machete with both hands and watching the fire intently.

For a few minutes, Warren just stared. Then he began to walk slowly toward the old man. They were all watching him--he knew it. They would single him out. It didn't matter now.

The Filipino turned sharply as he approached.

"This is my last day, Santos. I wanted to say goodbye." That was it. He turned to leave when Santos's voice stopped him.

"Better you work hard today. Maybe you finish first one time."

Warren turned back around, but the Filipino had already moved away, watching the fire devour the field.

Maybe you'll finish first . . . Warren stood motionless as it sunk in . . .

He absorbed it silently. The rhythm, the speed he thought was natural . . . He looked at Santos standing there in his wide-brimmed straw hat, gripping his machete with both hands. The Filipino glanced quickly, almost imperceptibly, at the younger man, but Warren caught a tiny flicker in the old man's eyes as his claw-like hands tightened around the knife and pointed it very slowly toward the row of twisted cane before him.

It hit Warren. He was being challenged. For a moment he just stood there, watching the smoke curl up

above the field. Then he shook his head slowly and returned to his place in line.

"What did he say?" Yoshiro, who was standing next to Warren, asked.

"Yeah, what did he say?" Kenji echoed. They began to gather around Warren now. The field would take a few more minutes to burn.

Warren hesitated, looking around at the faces.

"Nothing," he said finally.

"That figures. I never understand that guy," Kenji remarked, shaking his head.

"Yeah, Santos *pupule*," Yoshiro added.

Henry Sakagawa looked suspiciously at Warren, then shook his head. "Well, we going to cut cane or what?"

"Just stand back so you don't lose a leg, boys!" Kelsey boomed.

"Ha--just don't cut off your head!"

"Is that you I smell burning?"

Shouts sounded all along the edge of the smoldering field now as the line reformed. Someone slapped Warren on the back.

Warren just stood there for a moment, then looked over at Santos, watching the fire burn low. Warren could detect no movement at all in the old man now. He seemed fixed there, like the trestle across Highway Seventy-six.

Warren turned away. He listened to the shouts, the boasts and threats sounding along the edge of the field,

and his mind slowly cleared. He took a deep breath.

"Let's get it! Warren shouted suddenly and gripped his machete with both hands.

"Yeah, let's get it!"

"All right!"

The voices echoed all along the line.

Warren had no idea what would happen when he entered the field this last time. He didn't know what it would feel like, as he stood there watching the last clouds of grey-brown smoke swell up above the charred field.

But the smell was exhilarating--pungent, aromatic, and bitterly sweet.

POSTCARD FROM LAHAINA

It is an hour before sunset, and Michael Tanner sits alone in a small seaside cafe on the island of Maui, trying to let go.

He is here in the Hawaiian Islands, trying to let go of the lives of his two teenage daughters, Jenny and Cynthia, whom he loves. He is trying to set them free in his mind, trying for the first time to live with the sense of loss, as he listens to the waves lapping softly against the short sea wall that runs along Front Street in the restored whaling village of Lahaina, Maui. The girls are waiting for him back at the Pioneer Inn, so that he may have this hour alone before their last evening together.

His expression is distant as he looks out the window at the late afternoon shadows stretching toward the green West Maui Mountains rising behind the town. In the past week Michael has spent his private moments reviewing the breakdown of his marriage--his slow, steady estrangement from Margaret, the divorce, her impending remarriage, the growing distance between him and his daughters. He has regretted mistakes and fixed blame; it is the approaching void in his life that concerns him now.

He is only beginning to sense the mood that makes him light, makes him transient, when he turns his glance

back inside the cafe and sees the girl who looks like Reina.

He is startled at first. Of course it can't be Reina, not the girl he used to know in Denver. That was twenty years ago; Reina would be twice this girl's age by now--he realizes this immediately after the shock of seeing her sitting there across the room, alone, next to the window by the sea. This is probably a college girl on vacation, he reasons. Must have sat down while he was looking out the window.

He leans back. Her skin looks slightly pale in the late afternoon light, not the rich russet color he remembers. And her hair is not quite the natural silky yellow hue Reina's was when the sun shone directly on it in the Colorado Rockies. But from this distance her expression looks remarkably the same: soft, eyebrows curving gently downward at each end. And she seems completely relaxed in her blue print blouse, gazing quietly out at the sea.

Yes, this is how he remembers Reina--quiet and comfortable. Not at all like Margaret.

It's funny, he reflects, what an embarrassing complication this Hawaii trip has become for Margaret, coming like it does, just two weeks before her marriage to that schmuck book binder from Dallas. Of course, six months ago when he made the reservations with the travel agency in Joplin, she didn't know she would be getting married

at all. She was all for the trip then. "Sure, take them" she said. "Neither of the girls has even seen the ocean."

Now the tune's changed. Now the trip's supposed to make things harder on everyone. Harder on her, maybe.

Michael shakes his head and takes a sip of coffee. He hasn't enjoyed Hawaii much. Waikiki had an amusement park atmosphere, he thought, like a seaside Disneyland for adults. Every conceivable kind of tropical fantasy was for sale within a block of the beach. There was even a sidewalk artist who offered to paint people as anyone or anything they wished. A fat man from Nebraska had himself painted as a giant sea turtle on a surfboard, riding the waves with reptilian grace.

Michael grins as he remembers laughing at the fat tourist's audacity, and wondering what kind of foolish image his own mind would paint. It would never be anything as outlandish as that, he remembers thinking. Probably just a portrait of him and his girls playing by the ocean during one of those soft tropical sunsets you always see on postcards. Maybe as a personal touch he'd have the painter add some swings, the kind he used to take Jenny and Cynthia to play on in Truman Park . . .

The grin fades before Michael notices its existence, as another thought crowds into his mind. A year ago he would have included Margaret in that portrait. It would have been a lie even then, but he would have included her.

He turns his head and tries to look past the girl who

reminds him of Reina, through her window to the sea and sky beyond. He can see across the channel where the sun still hangs above the island of Lanai. The sunsets here in Lahaina are the best in the islands, he's been told. He and the girls flew in from Honolulu three days ago, and watching from the west balcony of the Pioneer Inn that first evening, he anticipated the colors of the rainbow splashed across the sky with crystal reflections around the sleek yachts anchored in the channel.

But that first sunset was blue. Across the channel the island of Lanai was a blue-grey shadow beneath the thick pastel patches of cloud covering the sky.

And the town itself was blue, the atmosphere quiet and subdued. The yachts rested motionless on calm blue water, while other sunset watchers spoke in hushed voices. Later, he and the girls walked along Front Street, and even Jenny was silent, watching the waves lap gently against the black stone base of the short sea wall guarding their walk.

He appreciated the mood, the quiet contrast from the amplified light and noise of Waikiki. This was the beauty of the outer islands, they said--the slower pace. You could feel it even in the tourist towns like the restored whaling village of Lahaina.

But it depressed him somehow, the gentle repose. Resting for a moment with bare feet dangling over the sea wall, where just the tips of the waves licked his toes and

curled back, he could see the grey-weathered backs of the false-front 19th century buildings leaning out over the water on stilts.

Michael shifts his glance from the window to the girl. Of course, if this really *were* Reina, he would sit down beside her and say, "I just want to look at you a moment." That's what he used to say when he could think of nothing else. Anyway, Reina always seemed able to tap his thoughts, to sense what was on his mind--something Margaret seldom did.

The girl turns and Michael looks down into his cup. Forget it; this is foolish. He takes another sip of coffee. That's not Reina, he tells himself. But a thought lingers--what could he say to her, to Reina, after all these years? Though marriage wasn't for her, she had a permanent image of him as the solid, dependable type. "Husband and father in three years," she predicted a week after they'd met. He made it in two. He recognized the essential truth in Reina's image of him long before that, however, She had him pegged. He was the perfect insurance salesman, planning out the course of his life like an ascending payments chart. "You'll have a steady life, Michael," she liked to say, emphasizing "steady." They would both laugh, but he believed her.

He frowns into his cup. A steady life. He could never explain to Reina about the divorce and the distance between him and his daughters. He would have to

lie. What irony. He can remember finding a good reason to lie at one time or another to almost everyone he has known--to Margaret, to his daughters and his best friends--but never to Reina. He bites his lip and tries to think of what he could tell Reina about his life. What could he say about his girls? "Jenny's the youngest," he could begin. "She gets her license next month. She's been pestering her mother and I about a car"--he pauses in mid-thought, realizing the decision has been taken out of his hands--"but I don't know if she's ready for that." In his own mind he would have to admit that the divorce was hardest on Jenny, being the youngest and all. Of course, Cynthia was more mature. "Margaret and I are both proud of her," he could boast. "Cynthia took top honors in her class. Now she's thinking about a pre-med program at the University of Texas . . ."

Not the University of Missouri, he reflects bitterly. That's the hardest part to take, their moving out of Joplin for good. And all for that schmuck book binder in Dallas . . . He stops himself. Don't get started on that again. Look on the bright side. At least it will get Cynthia away from that degenerate Conoco grease-monkey she goes out with. That's one subject she won't even discuss anymore. It's stupid, wasting herself on a jerk like that. "It's my business," were Cynthia's last words on the subject. Now whenever he brings it up, she clamps her hands over her ears like she did when she was

five. Sure, he's willing to concede that it's her decision in the end, but he only has her best interests at heart. Besides, goddamn it, he's still her father.

He remembers worrying about her yesterday, the morning after the blue sunset, when he drove their rented Toyota up the 10,000 foot slope of Mt. Haleakala to see the House of the Sun. He couldn't shake his depression--it hung around him like the blue-grey clouds they passed through on their way to the summit. It was early morning--the brochures said that was the best time--and Jenny curled up in the back seat and slept most of the way up.

But Cynthia was awake. He watched her in the corner of his eye, sitting beside him and staring out the window in silence. It was a purposeful silence, he thought, noting how she kept quiet even as he and Jenny groaned in disappointment when they finally reached the top and found the giant volcanic crater of Maui hidden, filled with more clouds spilling in from the windward side of the mountain.

"Let them live their own lives," he says aloud.
"You're out of it now."

But he worked so hard for them all--eighteen years as an agent before they finally put him in charge of Midwestern Life's Joplin branch. "You earned it, Mike." That's what the boys in the office had said. He was respected because he knew the business and because he had worked his way up. Worked his way up through all the late night explanations of financial planning and triple

indemnity and cash values. Through all the hostile attitudes, the cynical telephone voices of would-be clients accusing him of preying on death. The worst were the ones who couldn't bear to talk about it; throbbors, the agents called them. "You've got to look life in the face," he would tell the reluctant ones. And then his voice would soften. "Insurance is just a way of protecting the people you love." And he meant it.

Michael notices that the couple next to him are staring. He meets their gaze and they look away. He looks around the cafe and sees the girl by the sea window is watching him too. He looks into her eyes for a moment and they both smile before turning away.

Staring down at his cup again, Michael remembers how he and Reina used to look at each other like that while he collected his thoughts. He can't recall many of their conversations. The topics would probably seem silly today, he reflects.

Still, he enjoys remembering his year in Colorado. His major advisor arranged the internship with the company's Denver branch following his BS at Northeast Missouri State. She was a student at the University of Denver. He remembers he never deluded himself, not even in the beginning. Though she was always so at ease, so *comfortable* around him, he knew this was just her natural way and had nothing to do with him. It lasted only a couple of months anyway, and he never heard from

her again.

He remembers best a series of golden days. Sunny autumn afternoons when they put the top down on his '49 Ford and drove into the Rockies, up the Big Thompson Canyon toward Estes Park. He didn't really like Estes Park. Things were deliberately quaint there, like in Lahaina. It was the rough beauty of the mountains around the tourist town that drew him.

There was one day in particular, when they left the car at Wind River Pass and hiked a steep mountain trail toward the Twin Sisters Peaks.

He remembers how the aspen trembled that day, though the wind was nearly calm. He knew the scientific explanation--how aspen leaves flutter in the slightest breath of air because their flattened stems are set at right angles to the leaves. He preferred Reina's explanation (though it amused him even then)--that aspens tremble because they are the nerves of the earth, reacting to the touch of those who walk on it. That's why aspen grows so quickly to heal the wounds of a forest fire, she explained. Aspens feel the pain.

This she told him amid the golden glow of the Butterfly Burn, the stand of gilt-leaved aspen spreading like the wings of a golden butterfly over the ancient scars of a fire on the western slope of the Twin Sisters Peaks. He remembers little else they said that day--just the deep golden swirl of leaves in the cool mountain air.

Michael takes another sip and looks out his window toward the green West Maui Mountains swelling up behind the town. The mountains in Hawaii are odd, he thinks. Green and lush, even pink, in places where the Rockies were bare and stone-faced. In Colorado the appearance of sharp colors like the Butterfly Burn stirred his senses and helped lighten his mood. Here color and mood seemed beyond his control.

He couldn't shake the blue introspective mood that still held him when they returned to the Pioneer Inn yesterday evening after driving all day to see Haleakala, Iao Valley, and most of the other places on the map. He tried to think of other things--his work back in Joplin; there would be a backlog by now . . .

But it was no use. Driving back down the mountain yesterday, his thoughts returned to his girls. He decided that Cynthia was already gone, lost to attitudes and events that had long since passed him by. What he would get from her now was a kind of distant tolerance, easy to maintain when you're four hundred miles away in Texas. Of course, he has to admit that at times during the trip she's seemed less distant, almost warm. They both have. It's ironic, how they seem to think better of him now that he's being removed from the scene.

Removed from the scene--the thought reminds him once again of his idiotic failure to pack the Minolta. Their last vacation together and not one picture. The girls

didn't seem to mind. "Memories are better than pictures anyway," Jenny said. Still, he wanted to record this somehow. More than once he thought about having someone take that sunset picture of the three of them. He had the idea of making a print of it into a postcard. But the sunset was never right, and besides, who would he send the card to? Not Margaret. No point in that except revenge, and they were both past that now.

He looks over at the girl by the sea window. The card would have a different effect on Reina; it would fit her permanent image of him. He can imagine the calm, knowing look on her face as she receives the card: It bears no written message, not even a return address. Just the picture of him and his daughters playing on some swings by the ocean, the sunset lighting the sky behind them. A small smile of recognition, of confirmation, stretches the corners of her mouth as she studies the picture--the predictable vacation scene, the slightly-balding but still trim provider with his two beautiful teenage daughters. She puzzles for an instant over the slight incongruity of the swings, but quickly accepts them as an emblem of his basic domesticity. A steady life.

He exhales and shakes his head. Fantacizing again, he realizes, just like that fat tourist from Nebraska. More than that--it's a lie. Even if he could get Reina's address after all these years, the picture would still be a lie.

Michael swallows, his throat making a dry hoarse sound as he mulls it over. This whole trip is a lie; he finally admitted it yesterday evening when they emerged from the Pioneer Inn and saw the sunset over the island of Lanai. This looked like the one he had been waiting for-- bright colors filling the sky. But instead of lifting his spirits, the sight made him feel cynical. Looking out over the channel, he watched weekend sailors relax on their yachts, while teenage surfers rode long pink waves right up to the edge of the sea wall. Disneyland again, he thought. Those people were fooling themselves.

And so was he, he admitted to himself later. It was time to look life in the face, the way he told the throbbers to just before getting their John Hancocks on the dotted line. It was fact that there was nothing he could do to change things with either one of the girls now. He just needed to accept that.

He knows there are moments when it's easier to accept things. When Margaret finally insisted on the divorce, he told himself again and again the girls would be better off in a home without shouting. He didn't really *believe* it, until one instant late at night, when there was a pause in the argument, and he thought he could feel them in the next room, listening in the darkness. The divorce was easier to face after that moment.

Michael looks once again at the girl by the sea window. Those days in the Rockies were really just

moments too, moments that persist in his mind somehow. He enjoys recalling them; he can admit that. If this really were Reina, he would say to her, "remember that day at Wind River Pass . . ."

He closes his eyes and sees her leading him up a steep rocky trail through a tall forest of aspen. The white-boled trees tower above him as he climbs higher and higher, his breath growing shorter with each step. The trail grows steeper and he falls behind as his chest begins to hurt. She disappears ahead, but he struggles on, until at last the pain in his lungs and legs is too great and he collapses at the base of the largest tree. On the ground he reaches out, and as he touches the aspen's powdery white skin, the forest begins to tremble, shaking loose the gold aspen glow above him. It falls, a shower of golden leaves, swirling around him as the pain dissolves--

"Sir?"

The face in front of him is blank.

"Can I get you anything else?" The tan Oriental features of the waitress take shape. She is smiling, one brow lifted curiously.

"Oh." He glances over at the table next to the window by the sea. The girl is gone.

"No. Nothing else." He manages a smile, but the waitress is no longer looking at him as she writes out a check.

When she is gone he stares at the empty table by the window. Then he looks down at his watch. It is late; Jenny and Cynthia will be wondering where he is. He lays him money on the table.

Outside, Michael walks silently down Front Street, back toward the Pioneer Inn where the girls are waiting. It has been a long, tiring day, and he walks slowly, reflecting over his daydream about the aspen grove. He tries to sort it out: There really was a day with Reina, but not a day like that . . . it's hard to say where memory ended and the dream began. He grimaces. Self-deception is the worst kind of lie, he tells himself, and it's just that kind of fantacizing that he has to avoid in the years ahead. After all, there are other memories, real ones, that are worth preserving.

He glances up as a sea bird glides by, its wings gleaming in the last rays of the sun. The bird turns grey as it dips into the shadows stretching out across Front Street, then white again as it rises above the rooftops. He remembers a late afternoon in Truman Park-- just he and the girls are there, playing on the swings. It's early spring, the air fresh and clean, as he stands between them and pushes, swinging first Jenny, then Cynthia higher and higher up into the warm sunlight above the sycamore trees. He remembers no words, only flashes of color at the top of the arc and the sound of their laughter fading up into the warm sky . . .

It's cooler now; the tradewinds rustle leaves and paper around Michael as he walks. All along the sea wall, tourists and townspeople have gathered, looking out across the smooth water of the channel, where the yachtsmen are carefully hauling down their sails.

He does not see the anticipation in the faces around him, and passes unnoticed along the water's edge as the sky begins to glow above the island of Lanai.

THE PLAYER AND THE GIANT

Mitsumo Takara slept soundly the night the ocean vanished. He dreamed of the perfect seven-iron shot he had holed out that morning on number fourteen at the Garden Isle Country Club. It was beautiful, the way the ball soared in a gentle high arc above the trees as it approached the green. It was the arc, the curving form of flight, rather than the ball's fortunate bounce into the hole that intrigued him.

And when he awoke, it was not the excited cries outside that struck him--there were always such sounds along the beach by the Kauai Sands Hotel--it was the silence behind them. He arose and stepped through the sliding glass doors to his second floor lanai, where the broad fanning leaves of a queen palm brushed softly against the railing in the morning breeze. A crowd had gathered beneath the line of grey-green ironwood trees shading the beach below.

All were looking out where Mitsumo looked, toward an ocean desert surrounding them, a vast empty basin, shimmering red and pink beneath the bright sun, like the color of raw flesh. The solid surface sloped away from the edge of the sandy beach into a sparkling pink plain stretching all the way to the hard line of the distant

horizon.

More and more people were gathering along the beach, and Mitsumo hurried down to join them.

On the beach he could see the sand was still moist below the mark of the last tide. There were no fish lying stiff in the pink mud, but the coral reef around the island remained, blackening in the sun like ridges of unearthed coal. Children, held back by their parents, stared in fascination at the sight.

"It's a miracle!" one man cried. "The work of the devil!" another countered. "The *Menehune*," a third suggested, referring to the legendary little people of Hawaii who secretly built great works at night.

"The color's all wrong," complained a man as he dug his hands into the sticky sand and mud. He wore a green patch that read *Geological Survey*. "It shouldn't be red like this," he said, flinging sand away in disgust.

"Perhaps it's an illusion--a mirage," a woman suggested.

"No," said a wise-looking man with a beard and tattered clothes. "It is a sign that our former way of life has passed, that we must start anew." Several people nodded at this and began to crowd around him.

"We must begin at once!" the bearded man pleaded. "The world we knew has crumbled--the truth we believed in has vanished like the sea. We must not look back, but join together and build a *new* world. One that will

endure." Cries of assent rang out.

"There will be sacrifice," the bearded man warned. "Accept the limits of our new existence. We must work unceasingly and learn to live without those foolish pleasures which almost destroyed us." Many applauded, but others began to drift away, back toward the hotel. At the airport all flights had been canceled, someone complained. There was talk of forming an expedition to reach the island of Oahu, a tiny grey-tipped peak on the pink horizon.

"There is nothing to seek there," the bearded man called to the dispersing crowd. "We must all work together now if we are to survive." Behind him a clerk was explaining to several tall men that the hotel had run out of liquor. In the breezeway-lobby a fight broke out. Tourists began to demand their money back.

"We will lead by example," the bearded man said confidently to those who remained. "The others will join us when they see there is no other way." From his shirt he produced a long sheet of kapa cloth. "I will record your personal skills here," he said, "and together we shall begin our task."

It was all very confusing to Mitsumo as he stood in line with the rest. In Honolulu he sold office furniture. Surely there would be no need for office furniture salesmen in a world born anew.

"I'm a golfer," Mitsumo said when it was finally his

turn. The bearded man paused and frowned at this, but silently recorded it with a stick dipped in dye made from the leaves of the taro plant.

When a list was made, work began under the bearded man's sure and simple direction. There were only a few at first: strong-bodied men began digging irrigation ditches, while others combed the island for water and gathered children into groups. But as the sun climbed higher and temperatures rose, discomfort and fear drove more and more to join the rebuilders. "We are all one," the bearded man said to those who came. A camaraderie was developing; personal needs were forgotten as everyone shared in the labor.

Everyone but Mitsumo. He stood alone in the shade beneath the grey ironwood trees and watched, until he grew bored with that and wandered next door to the Country Club to practice his putting.

It might work out, he thought as he sank a twelve-footer on the practice green. The greens were all turning brown, baking beneath the hot sun, and huge bare patches were beginning to appear in the parched fairways lined with wilted hibiscus. But Mitsumo felt reassured. All the familiar landmarks remained. The green central mountains of Kauai still rose abruptly from the plain. Only their lush color was fading. Mt. Waialeale, the world's wettest spot, usually obscured by heavy grey clouds, stood out above the rest. Mitsumo could see

traces of dry rust forming around the edges of the green peak.

But it was always a closer landmark that drew Mitsumo's full attention.

Beyond the practice driving range, the Sleeping Giant lay quietly, stretching in a mile-long profile above the dry sandy bed of the Wailua River. Not everything is changing, thought Mitsumo, though he could see the Giant growing tanner by the minute as he lay. To Mitsumo, the Giant looked even more real, lying there in his new brown skin.

Mitsumo always thought he could wake the Giant from his massive slumber, if only he could drive a ball into the sleeper's eye. Imagining what it would be like to see the Giant's huge craggy muscles ripple awake, shaking the pandanus trees and lifting clouds of swirling red dust above the sugar cane fields, Mitsumo would stand on the practice tee and hit ball after ball at the small gap between the Giant's coco palm brows and huge boulder cheekbones. Each ball would fall miles short, but Mitsumo was not discouraged. It would take a perfect shot, he told himself.

Of course he mentioned none of this to his friends and associates. For them, he pretended the Giant was only a mountain.

Tourists would often remark how life-like the Sleeping Giant looked. Mitsumo always chuckled at that.

They didn't share his secret. The truth was that Mitsumo regarded the Giant as an old friend. He trusted the slumbering figure; he knew that no matter what else happened, the Giant would always be there: silent, motionless, eyes forever closed until the perfect shot was struck.

Mitsumo was about to head for the practice tee when the bearded man appeared carrying a small calabash.

"I've been looking for you," he said. "You must give up your play and join us--there is much to do!"

Mitsumo said nothing.

"Your occupation is frivolous," the bearded man charged. "While you play, we have been hard at work--look!" He held out the calabash, half-filled with water. A trickle had been found near Wailua Falls. Mitsumo stared at the container, then off toward the mountains, as he felt thirst beginning to claw at the back of his throat.

"Don't you understand?" the bearded man asked sharply. "The world you knew is gone--there is nothing left us but the bare bones of the earth. The time for play is over." His voice softened. "You will not survive alone."

"I believe you," Mitsumo answered. "But I will not come." And with that, he picked up his bag, slipping the strap over his shoulder, and trudged down toward the beach.

He could see everything was well organized at the hotel. The hotel itself was ransacked and already falling apart, but beside it a new building was taking shape. All

around, old things were being torn down and new things built from them. Now there were lots of leaders besides the bearded man. Everyone was busy.

Just beyond the thin shadows of the wilting ironwood trees, Mitsumo walked out onto the beach. The ocean was now a dark crusty brown. The bright red and pink hues had faded as the sun's hot rays baked the ocean floor. He remembered his thirst, and his throat made a scratching sound as he tried to swallow.

He frowned and readjusted the strap of his bag, then began to wander along the edge of the beach. There were others along this way, most of them busy digging wells and building shelters. A few sat motionless on the sand, staring silently at the brown plain stretching toward the flat horizon.

Soon Mitsumo grew tired of walking. He stopped and laid his bag down in front of a shelter a young girl was making of dead pandanus leaves. The girl had long raven hair that spread across her shoulders as she turned to look at Mitsumo.

"You look weary," she said. "Sit down and rest." When he sat beneath the shade of the pandanus leaves, she smiled and offered him water in a small hollow gourd. He shook his head. "Please," she said, and pushed the gourd into his hands.

He felt the dry scratchy sensation wash away as he drank. The water was sweet, and he lay back in the shade

of the shelter, feeling a cool release from the heat outside. "Is everything all right?" the girl asked. The fairways will never survive the sun, he wanted to say, but lying there in the cool shade he felt his body beginning to relax. It was peaceful here in the shadow of the pandanus leaves, and he did not feel like worrying. "Perhaps when you feel stronger you will help me finish the roof," he thought he heard the girl say, but her voice was growing indistinct. He lay quietly, watching the curving line of her raven hair fade into the darkening shadow of the shelter. After a while he closed his eyes and slept.

He dreamed of a single beautiful shot, the best he had ever struck--arching so high above everything that only the spinning white ball itself was visible.

He awoke feeling thirsty. He could see nothing at first; it was dark and his vision was blurred. Then slowly his eyes focused and a single bright figure stood before him--the bearded man.

"Come out into the light, Mitsumo," he said. Uncertainly, Mitsumo crawled out from the shade of the pandanus leaves onto the beach where the bearded man stood, his eyes blazing bright as the sun. "Behold!" the bearded man commanded, pointing beyond the beach.

Mitsumo squinted into the glare. The scene was the same--a vast ocean desert stretching all the way to the horizon. "You look upon the world as it exists," the bearded man said. "No night, no sleep, no dream can

replace this fact." Then the fire in his eyes dimmed momentarily and his voice was kind. "We must all labor to survive, but there is relief for those who earn it." He gestured back toward the shelter, where the raven-haired girl was busy once more. Mitsumo saw her smile as she laid another pandanus leaf on the roof.

"You'll be safe here," she promised.

"Join us," the bearded man urged.

Mitsumo said nothing, but felt the thirst scratch his throat as he turned away from the girl, past the anxious eyes of the bearded man, back toward the hollow expanse of the vanished sea, still darkening brown in the brilliant heat. Mitsumo said nothing, but reached down and removed his seven-iron from the bag still lying on the hard hot sand. He said nothing as he turned again and began the long walk up past the line of fallen ironwood trees to the practice tee. He did not look back.

The fairway grass was dead now and the yard markers had disappeared, but Mitsumo knew the place where he had struck so many shots. In the distance the central mountains of Kauai were crumbling into grey dust. This time Mitsumo had to search for the usual object of his gaze. The bold profile of his old friend had flattened out into a tiny wrinkle on the featureless plain. It's going to be difficult, Mitsumo thought, noting that soon there would be nothing left, no criteria to judge against.

He laid a ball on the bare earth. The heat was grow-

ing more oppressive by the minute, but Mitsumo paid no attention as he assumed his stance, addressed the ball with his seven-iron, and carefully, lovingly, took aim at the Giant's eye.

THE MAN WHO DRANK A THOUSAND BEERS

Joseph Kamahale, the strongest man in Waikiki, was sure he was being watched.

It was a feeling he had as he sat on the floor, playing poker in the living room of his tiny four-room house wedged in between the tall hotels on Liliuokalani Avenue. Joseph said nothing as he dealt the cards to his two opponents, sour old Burton and crafty Chun Lee. He knew both were watching him, measuring him, as they played--but it was not *their* eyes Joseph felt.

It was evening. Outside on the small porch beneath the mango tree, Joseph's three sons were playing. He could not see them through the dark window, but heard the voices of his two youngest boys, Stephen and Kapono, fighting over some object out of view. They weren't really fighting; Joseph could tell by the tone of their shouts and cries. He could not hear the voice of his oldest boy Danny.

Though he could neither see nor hear him, Danny was there; Joseph knew it. They were Danny's eyes he felt watching.

"Jacks and tens," Chun Lee said, laying his cards on the splintered coffee table. Old Burton frowned and shook his head and began to reshuffle the deck while

Chun Lee gathered in the money.

Joseph said nothing, just sat there on the floor trying to figure things out. It felt strange, a funny itchy feeling inside his head, as his son watched him from the darkness. He remembered what Alicia had said to Danny just before she died a year ago. "You must take care of your father," she had said. Since then he had felt Danny watching.

More laughter came from outside the window, and Joseph grunted, remembering how all three of his boys used to yell and clap their hands together whenever he grabbed a high limb and pulled the whole side of the mango tree down within their reach. Now Danny just watched, the same way Chun Lee and Burton watched him play cards.

Joseph felt himself growing angry. Chun Lee and Burton only watched for weakness, waiting for him to make a mistake. Why should Danny watch like that? For a moment Joseph wanted to go to the window and grab his son and shake him until he found out what the boy was thinking. Instead, he picked up a can of Primo and drank it down, letting a little amber stream of beer trickle down his bare chest. Slowly he felt the anger inside himself cool and harden into strength. He looked across the table at Chun Lee.

Chun Lee was winning. The little Chinese almost always won, even though he was rich and could afford to

lose. Joseph didn't think Chun Lee looked very rich in his faded *aloha* shirt and baggy pants, but Chun Lee owned property in Waikiki, including this very house. They said the *haoles* from California who built the new Hyatt-Regency Tower had to buy permission from Chun Lee first. Still, Joseph knew that Chun Lee played poker in this house because Joseph Kamahele was the strongest man in Waikiki and had more respect than any hotel builder.

A smile spread across Joseph's face as an idea came to him. "Look at you, Chun Lee!" he bellowed at the little Chinese in baggy pants. "Look how your money dried you up! Made you skinny and bad-tempered. Before-time you used to drink pretty good. Now look at you!"

Chun Lee set his cards down quietly. "I got ulcers."

"Yeah, now you too weak and skinny to drink. You give me some of your money and you see how a man drinks!"

Chun Lee regarded the big Hawaiian carefully before replying. "If maybe I did, what you show me then?"

Joseph felt the sour eyes of old Burton on him now. Joseph thought Burton was a pain in the butt most of the time, always frowning at everyone. At least he was good for a laugh. He was *retired*, Burton once explained. "That mean you got nothing left to *do*?" Joseph had laughed, and Burton's face turned red as he looked away.

What use was there in living, Joseph wondered, if all you did was sit and stare? Joseph regarded his opponents: Chun Lee--small and mean, Burton--old and

weak and sour.

"In ten days," Joseph said, "I can go drink one thousand beers."

Burton's mouth unhinged. "That's a helluva lot of beer, Joe."

"Lot you know," Joseph snapped, and Burton blushed. The old man could barely drink even one beer himself because of a weak heart and stomach.

"So you drink one thousand beers," Chun Lee said. "So what you win then?" Joseph shrugged. Chun Lee looked at the Hawaiian intently. "And if you don't, what I win then?"

"Then everybody in Waikiki say Chun Lee not just skinny rich card player--not after he win drinking bet with Joe Kamahela." Chun Lee said nothing, and Joseph just sat there, staring confidently. He knew Chun Lee's pride.

"I take the bet," Chun Lee said finally.

"You don't know what you're doing," Burton warned. "You don't know what you're in for." Joseph smiled and picked up his cards, carefully not looking in the direction of the dark living room window.

* * *

Easy Ed and Bigfoot were grinning as Joseph carried his board in from the water the following afternoon.

"No wave too big for Joe Kamahela," Easy Ed declared.

Joseph smiled. It had been a good day. The *kanaka* surf was up, and he had ridden the toughest waves goofy foot, balancing himself with his right foot forward like Long Lui Ramirez.

"No wave," Bigfoot echoed.

Joseph lifted his board over his head and watched the Japanese and *haole* tourists begin to wander timidly in his direction to take pictures. One by one, they stopped at least twenty feet away and held their cameras with both hands, afraid to ask. Shark bait, Joseph thought. He glared and they began to move away.

"You going to start the bet tonight?" Easy Ed asked as they walked across the beach to Kalakaua Avenue. Joseph nodded, then frowned, remembering he would not get to see his brother Tony's new show tonight like he promised. Tony was breaking in a new Polynesian revue at the Moana Hotel and everybody would be dancing and singing the songs Joseph liked.

"You tell Ortiz?" Easy Ed asked.

"Forget it," Joseph replied. "By and by Ortiz find somebody else for go park his cars a while." Joseph listened to Bigfoot laugh as they crossed the street. He'd wanted to quit for a couple of weeks anyway, ever since he had to smash the VW windshield with his fist to stop those two *haoles* from California from skipping out. The doctors at Kaiser Hospital had to pick the splinters out of his hand.

They stopped in front of the Coco Palms. "New dancer at the *Tiki Club*," Bigfoot said.

"Later," Joseph replied. As he headed on down Liliuokalani Avenue he heard Easy Ed call after him: "Nobody can beat Joe Kamahele!"

Only Chun Lee and old Burton were supposed to be at Joseph's house for the bet, but his best friend, Henry Okuda the puka shell seller, was there too. So was a *haole* tourist named Patterson. They were all sitting around arguing about the rules.

"You got to pay Joe for miss his job," Henry Okuda said to Chun Lee. "You got to pay three dollar an hour-- same like Ortiz." Chun Lee glanced at Joseph, but did not reply.

Joseph sat on the floor, watching his friend try to work out a deal. Joseph smiled, remembering the way Henry talked shark bait tourists into buying puka shells and cheap island jewelry at his stand at the International Market Place. They were afraid to look at his bad eye, shriveled by the sting of a jellyfish. Henry aimed his bad eye at Chun Lee now, but the little Chinese folded his arms and said nothing.

"You really think he can drink that much?" Patterson asked Burton. The old man just frowned, and Joseph chuckled. Patterson was shark bait and didn't know it, Joseph thought, glancing at the string of white shells around the tourist's neck.

"Now time to begin!" Joseph announced, and got up and headed into the kitchen to get some beer.

Rules, rules, rules, he thought. All he had to do was drink beer. No big thing what brand, as long as Chun Lee paid for it. And who cared if somebody had to stay around all the time to help take care of the boys and watch out for the check lady. Just hide the beer under the house; she never looked there.

"OK, everybody drink up!" he ordered, passing around cans of Schlitz.

Chun Lee stood up; the others followed. The Chinese looked at his watch. "Six o'clock. Begin ten days tonight, Thursday." Joseph raised the can to his lips. Every eye in the room was on him, but he hesitated, staring at the beads of condensation on the top of the can, until he felt the presence of a small shadow in the living room window.

"Shakka, brother!" Joseph bellowed, nodding to everyone in turn. Then he tilted the can and chugged it, opening his throat and letting the beer slide down easily, feeling the cool sensation inside his stomach. He drained the can in seconds, then started to set the empty on the coffee table, when he saw Chun Lee measuring him with small sharp eyes. Joseph crushed the can in his fist and grinned.

"One," Chun Lee said.

It was easy. As he tossed them down one by one that

first evening, Joseph kept thinking about how easy it was. His body was huge and twelve ounces of beer at a time was nothing. And he was no fool; he knew some tricks. He knew to drink each beer fast, and to space them out a few minutes apart, so the beer could drain through a little. And he knew to eat something every couple of beers or so, to help absorb the alcohol. A hundred beers a day for ten days. To have a chance he would have to average six to seven beers an hour, Burton announced.

Still, it was easy. Joseph watched their faces as the count mounted--ten, twenty--Henry Okuda counted them out as Joseph finished each can. He watched their faces as he drank and saw they were impressed, saw the strength he felt reflected in their eyes. He saw Henry Okuda's good eye wink and his green teeth flash as he cackled whenever Joseph downed another one. He saw the uncertain shark bait smile on Patterson the tourist's face and Chun Lee's small sharp eyes calculating the odds as the count changed. And sour old Burton's stony face cracking as he slowly sipped his own beer--the first one, the toast--trying to finish it without choking.

Joseph drank while the rest of them talked. "So I tell this *haole* woman," Henry Okuda was saying, "I tell her, I say, 'Lady, these shells here got stainless steel string--only big Joe Kamahale can break.' She say back, 'That guy, is he on *Hawaii Five-0*?'" Henry slapped both hands over his face while the rest of them laughed. "Hooo!"

Joseph laughed too, and kept on drinking. After ten beers his head became puffy and light. At twenty his skin became numb and he could feel waves like the ocean rolling through his body. At thirty Henry Okuda had to shout to get his attention. After forty there was no change.

When Henry Okuda announced fifty, Chun Lee said he had to go home. It was one-thirty in the morning; Joseph had been drinking six and one half hours. Patterson had left about ten o'clock and Burton was asleep on the sofa. Henry Okuda had put the boys to bed before midnight and was watching an old Japanese monster movie on Joseph's tiny black and white TV. "Hooo! Look at that!" Henry exclaimed as the soldiers dropped a net over the monster and the beast ripped through it and came bounding after them.

Joseph stood up, tall and steady, and laughed.

* * *

It was the far away sound of everything that Joseph noticed first the next morning. There were words, but they sounded vague and whispery, like the wind blowing down through Manoa Valley. The earth seemed to shake, and then everything looked fuzzy until Joseph saw Henry Okuda's good eye staring him in the face. Henry's lips were moving too, but the voice sounded like it was coming from another room.

"Ten o'clock. Time to get up," it was saying.

The pain and the pressure behind the eyes were what Joseph noticed next, as he sat up in bed. He took a deep breath and stood up. The pain flashed through his head, but the big Hawaiian stood his ground, swinging his arms above his head to get the blood flowing. Then he stopped, and the pain in his head faded slightly and began to throb. He smiled. There, that was the worst of it, and it was nothing. He could feel the blood pumping now, spreading energy and strength through his body.

"You stay here all night?" he asked Henry Okuda.

Henry nodded. "On the sofa. Chun Lee's got the next shift tonight."

Joseph nodded back, took another deep breath, and went out onto the front porch. It was a sunny day, and he cupped his hands and shouted at the tourists walking by: "Ey, beach closed today for sharks!" Three fat women in bikinis stopped for a moment and looked puzzled. The biggest one smiled timidly and took his picture with a tiny camera. Then her face turned bright red and the three of them began to hurry on toward the beach. Joseph stood up straight. "Boo!" he shouted after them, and they began to run, their flesh bouncing up and down in waves.

"Shark bait," Henry Okuda cackled as Joseph headed back into the kitchen for beer number fifty-one.

The count had reached seventy-eight that afternoon

when Stephen and Kapono came through the front door carrying a large cardboard box.

"What's that?" Joseph, sitting on the floor with a bottle of San Miguel in his hand, demanded. The boys just laughed and hurried on into the bathroom. Henry Okuda, watching *Gomer Pyle, USMC* on the black and white TV, stared after them and shrugged. The sound of running water came from the bathroom. As Joseph got up to see what was going on, Danny entered, carrying his skateboard.

The boy stopped in the middle of the room and faced his father. Joseph felt the funny itchy feeling inside his head again. It was the first time he remembered *seeing* Danny watch him since the bet was made, and the boy was eyeing him curiously. The whole neighborhood was talking about Joseph Kamahela. Yesterday he had heard Stephen and Kapono bragging about the bet to Hiromi. "My father's best drinker in Waikiki," Kapono had said. But Danny had said nothing.

"Well, what?" Joseph asked finally.

"Got better good grades this time," the boy replied, reaching into his pocket and pulling out a crumpled white card.

Joseph lifted his eyebrows and stared at the card. "More better you put this on the table for the check lady."

The bathroom door banged open and Stephen and Kapono came running out, laughing. Joseph started to make a lunge for them, but they were out the door before he

could move. He looked into the bathroom. "What you put inside the water?" he yelled, staring into the tub.

"Baby alligator Woolworth's got from mainland," Danny answer for them. "It's for Hiromi; he just made eleven years old today. One big party down his house tonight."

Outside, Stephen and Kapono were giggling beneath the window. Danny did not smile, but Joseph could see the amusement in his eyes, which shone as he opened them slightly wider than usual as he described the party. Joseph remembered how Alicia's eyes looked the same way the day they met at Kuhio Beach Park--calm, but letting the excitement inside show through. Sometimes that was the only way he could tell how she felt--by watching her eyes.

"We got to eat first?"

Joseph looked at Danny, whose eyes were serious again. Joseph felt the funny itchy feeling inside his head once more, and for a moment wanted to reach out and touch his son and make the serious look go away. But that would look weak, he realized, and stood his ground. The boy continued to stare, and Joseph wondered how he could ask Danny what he was thinking. Then his head began to throb again and he felt the anger boiling up inside him.

"You go over Zippy's and bring back dinner before you go down Hiromi's house." He frowned as he pulled the bills out of his pocket and handed them to Danny. The boy turned

and left without comment. "And bring back all the change!" Joseph called after him.

"Maybe we go make Danny one big party too," Henry Okuda said when the boy had gone. "When's his birthday at?" Joseph frowned and went into the kitchen for another beer. Alicia used to keep all that stuff written down. As he pinched the cap off another bottle of San Miguel, he remembered that Mrs. Nakamura must know; she had all the records. Joseph took a big gulp and shook his head. Hell no. Can't ask her that--cut down the check again.

"Seventy-nine," Henry Okuda said, aiming his good eye at the new bottle in Joseph's hand when he walked back into the living room. Joseph sat down on the floor and said nothing.

"Ey, drink up. Chun Lee coming by tonight to check up on you, man." The big Hawaiian's brows wrinkled downward as he thought of Chun Lee off somewhere counting up his money and building more hotels. He thought of Burton's scowl and Patterson's stupid shark bait smile. He thought of the funny look in Danny's eyes. He began to get hot. He would show them; he would show them all. He raised the bottle of San Miguel and drank it down quickly while Henry Okuda grinned.

The count was one hundred two when Chun Lee came by just after six o'clock with four cases of Olympia. "End of one day; Joe two beers ahead," Henry Okuda announced

proudly, then raised his cup. "To big Joe Kamahale-- the best drinker in Waikiki!" Chun Lee folded his arms and said nothing.

Joseph kept on drinking. All afternoon he had worked to keep his strength, and he intended to get farther ahead now. As he downed the first Olympia, he stared directly into Chun Lee's eyes. Sitting there drinking, Joseph could feel the tiny Oriental's strength resisting him, tugging against his arm as he reached for each new can. It only made him work harder, and the pain that throbbed now in his arms and head aroused him.

Late into the night Joseph drank.

* * *

"You're drunk; you can't go to a show," Burton complained in a voice that sounded sharp and far away.

"Besides, you're getting behind."

"Two eighty-nine," Henry Okuda announced. It was Sunday evening, the end of the third day, but Chun Lee had not yet come by to check on the big Hawaiian's progress.

"I promised Tony," Joseph snapped, then watched Burton stare at him. The old man was jealous because he couldn't drink; Joseph could see it in his eyes. At first Joseph had enjoyed the jealous look; it made him feel stronger. But now the old man's constant stare was beginning to bother him.

Joseph picked up a can of Olympia. He hadn't been able to taste the beer for a couple of days, but now with one eye on Burton, he rolled out his tongue and began to slowly lick around the rim of the can, making soft gurgling sounds. Burton's face turned red and he looked away.

Joseph smiled and drained the can very slowly, then went into his bedroom for a shirt. He hadn't felt as strong today; the pain in his head never faded this time, and it was a struggle to keep up. He was also having trouble hearing. But he always felt better after watching Tony's show at the Moana. Burton was grumbling again when Joseph returned wearing an *Alii Mufflers* T-shirt.

"I still don't like it. What if you get sick or pass out? What if the welfare woman comes by?"

"Say I been look for her down at the zoo."

Henry Okuda's cackle sounded a long way off.

The Beachcomber's Lanai at the Moana Hotel was crowded as usual. The torches were lit and the flashbulbs popped; everything was the same, except the music seemed softer tonight, the coconut beat sounding like pencils tapping on boxes across the room. But agile young girls in grass skirts and flower leis still danced among the tables. When the beat slowed, Tony Kamahale stepped out on stage and began to sing.

At his table in the back, Joseph leaned back, sipping a Budweiser and listening to his brother sing. Tony was much smaller, only six feet, but had a fine

bass voice, almost as deep as Joseph's and much more melodious:

*I'm just a local boy
I didn't spend much time in school
I live beneath the guava tree
The river is my swimming pool*

*And you could never be more lucky
When your back is young and strong
And you could never be more happy
When you sing the whole night long*

Joseph watched his brother extend his arms toward the audience, inviting them to sing along as the dancers moved among the tables. Joseph felt the singing feeling coming on inside him now. He smiled and nodded his head to the beat. He smiled and nodded as he got down on the floor and began to crawl slowly toward the stage. He smiled and nodded as he felt Henry Okuda tugging hard on his belt from behind. He smiled and nodded as he crawled past the dancers to the edge of the stage and looked up into his brother's startled eyes.

And the music went on. Tony Kamahale stepped gracefully to the other side of the stage and sang to the tables in the back.

Joseph crawled up on the stage and looked out at the audience. "My woman is a local girl!" he sang on his hands and knees. And the music stopped.

"Aha! *Wahines* and *kanakas*!" Tony Kamahale announced. "I see not everybody too shy to sing along!"

"She come from Kaimuki!" Joseph Kamahale sang on his knees and pointed offstage. The audience laughed. Tony

Kamahele laughed too, and leaned down gracefully and grabbed his brother by the ear, pulling him up as the dancers surrounded them and went quickly into "Rapid Transit Hula."

"You ruin it, man," Tony whispered.

"And you could never be more happy!" Joseph Kamahele sang. And smiled and nodded as they led him away.

* * *

By Monday evening, the end of the fourth day, Joseph was far behind. The count was only three fourteen, and once again Chun Lee had not come by. Only old Burton and shark bait Patterson were there in the living room, and they seemed far away as Joseph sat on the floor with an unopened bottle of San Miguel in his hand, feeling numb, trying to forget what had happened last night at the Moana Hotel. He had never been led away before. Removed by force, yes, but never led away.

The last time he was removed as the time the fight started at the *Tiki Club* and Ichino the bartender ran out into the parking lot to get Joseph to help out. The *Tiki Club* had a regular bouncer, a big Samoan named Bashful. Six sailors had gone crazy inside, and Bashful couldn't handle it; they broke his nose with a beer bottle. Joseph hated to fight; he usually just squeezed drunks until they lost their breath and the urge to fight.

There were too many sailors for that, however, and things were pretty rough when the police showed up. They arrested everybody, but it took six of them to haul Joseph away. Alamazon, the Filipino lawyer for the ALOHA Foundation, came by and offered to get Joseph out on bail. But the big Hawaiian hated Alamazon, who defended pimps and whores and punks who stole cameras from tourists, and Joseph spent the night in jail instead.

The screen door swung open and Danny entered, carrying his skateboard. For a moment Joseph stared at the tiny board, remembering how he had taught his son to balance himself effortlessly, using only the slightest pressure to control the board beneath him. Now Danny was the best skateboarder in Waikiki; everybody said so. Joseph smiled for a moment, then thought he saw a funny look in Danny's eyes again. Then he remembered last night at the Moana.

"You too tired for play today?" Joseph growled. Danny shook his head. "Well, try go outside, will you?" Joseph watched the boy retreat back out the screen door, then stared back down at the beer in his hand, thinking about last night. For several minutes the room was quiet. Then Joseph felt someone watching. He looked up and saw old Burton's sour glare fixed on him. Joseph felt the anger boiling up inside him again, when he spotted a cockroach crawling along the floor beneath Burton. "Ey, step that bug, man!"

Burton lifted his foot and stomped, but the insect raced out from under his heel and escaped through a crack in the floorboards. The big Hawaiian rocked back and laughed. "Nobody kills off old man cockroach. Not even Burton!" Joseph laughed again and twisted the cap off the bottle of San Miguel as the old man's face reddened once more.

"Hell with you," Burton said, and got up to leave.

As the screen door closed behind the old man, Joseph looked over at shark bait Patterson, who smiled timidly, uncertain whether or not to laugh. Joseph rocked back again and laughed, a deep rumbling laugh that filled the house as he lifted the bottle of San Miguel.

* * *

It was Thursday, the afternoon of the seventh day, when Mrs. Nakamura the social worker finally showed up.

Henry Okuda was keeping track, for the days were beginning to blur together for Joseph now. He felt the pain less and less and it was getting more difficult to move, like he was underwater. The sounds he heard were faint and distant, and sometimes it seemed like he was only half awake. But he concentrated and kept on drinking. "You really think he can do it?" he remembered Patterson remarking open-mouthed to Henry Okuda. Joseph didn't know the exact count anymore, but figured he was still close, because Chun Lee had gone ahead and had

the last of the beer delivered--fourteen cases of Olympia. Joseph was stacking them under the house when the check lady tapped him on the shoulder.

"Mind telling me what all that is, Mr. Kamahela?" she asked, peering through the boards of the house's elevating crossframe.

"Got to prop up the house. Termites," he replied.

How long had this been going on? she wanted to know. And where were his boys? Her voice sounded small and far away, but shrill like a whistle, and made his head hurt. He wondered what her voice would sound like if he pinched it off at the throat. He reached out.

"*Mr. Kamahela!*" He heard her screaming now. How disgusting he looked! Where were his boys? Why wasn't he at work? She would put a stop to this. Where were his financial records and the boys' report cards?

"My papers been lost," he said, grabbing the hem of her skirt. She began hitting him now, tiny little taps on the chest that he seemed to hear in the distance rather than feel. He pinned her against the side of the house until she stuck him in the belly with something sharp.

"Ey! Ey!" Henry Okuda was there now, grabbing at his arms, and he lost his grip. When she was out of his reach she screamed again; she threatened. She would see to it he was fixed. She would take away his boys.

"From where you got the right to do that?"

"You'll see, Mr. Kamahele."

"You smart, you be too scared for come back here no more!" He lunged for her, but Henry Okuda was holding him around the leg, and he watched her escape, retreating down Liliuokalani Avenue into the shadows of the big hotels.

* * *

It was different after that.

Joseph hid the boys over at Henry Okuda's house and kept on drinking. But no one stayed with him now; Chun Lee had called off the bet, they said. Joseph knew better than that. A bet was a bet, and he kept on drinking. Only there was no one keeping count now. He drank alone, feeling no pain at all now, only a kind of fuzzy numbness. The sounds he noticed grew always fainter, as if everything around him were moving farther and farther away. He concentrated and tried to keep up his strength and the pace, but began to worry that he was falling behind.

He drank and worried about what to do about his boys. They were safe over at Henry Okuda's house for now, but what about later? Joseph vowed to use all his strength to stop the check lady. He remembered the way he had used his strength in the parking lot and the bars. He remembered his best day riding the *kanaka* surf. He remembered the way he pulled the branches of the mango tree down to hand the fruit to Stephen and Kaponu, and the way he taught Danny to carry his own strength gently

on the skateboard.

Joseph remembered these things and tried to feel the power inside him now. But instead he felt only numbness and the weight of the air that resisted him like water. And when he tried to think, tried to make plans, his mind seemed to drift from one thought to another, until he remembered at last to get another beer.

One afternoon, he wasn't sure which, he heard someone reading a summons ordering him to appear in District Court for a hearing to determine custody of his boys. They left the paper in his hands, but he tore it up.

Soon after that, visitors started coming by again, Waikiki people Joseph had known all his life. His brother Tony was first. "Don't worry, Joe; I'll testify for you. All you got to do is sober up." Madam Fong, the palm-reader at the Longhouse, was next. She wore a long grey gown with a black scarf, and spoke in a low voice. "The spirits assure me you shall win," she said, grasping his hand. Ichino, the bartender at the *Tiki Club*, told Joseph to give 'em hell, and Bashful, his nose freshly bandaged, added some encouraging words in Samoan. Then Easy Ed and Bigfoot came by, carrying their boards. "Waves no good without Joe Kamahela," Easy Ed complained.

And there were others--beach boys, clerks, flower sellers, and guys who hung around the parking lot. Joseph listened to them all and tried to smile. But after a time their voices all began to sound alike, and he had trouble

making out what they said, even though some of them appeared to be shouting.

It must have been evening when Alamazon, the pimp lawyer from the ALOHA Foundation, showed up. "We're going to defend you, Joe," Alamazon said in a low voice that sounded like it came from across the sea. "We won't let them take away your boys."

On the floor Joseph tried to get up. He still hated the pimp lawyer and wanted to throw him out of the house. But when he tried to move, he found his legs were pinned beneath him. He sank back down again, thinking it was good that Alicia could not see him now.

Where were his boys? Alamazon wanted to know. But Joseph just sat there, trying to frown. It was all right, Alamazon said. He would find them. Joseph didn't have to worry about a thing, just sober up. The pimp lawyer said other things Joseph couldn't hear, then left.

Joseph tried to stay angry for a long time after that, but his mind kept wandering. He remembered the night he spent in jail after refusing Alamazon's offer. He remembered the way he had stopped the two *haoles* in the VW and made them pay up, and Henry Okuda's one-eyed grin and Patterson's uncertain stare when they heard about it. He remembered the way Alicia used to look at him on the beach, and the night at the Moana when they led him away. He drank and remembered.

He began to worry about what all his friends thought

of him now, sprawled on the floor like this for so long. They were all watching; he knew it. He tried to get up, tried to crawl back to the bedroom to avoid their eyes. He strained, but could not move. Joseph sank down on the floor and lay there, breathing heavily.

Then he remembered Danny. Danny must be watching too; he would help. Joseph looked toward the dark living room window, but could see nothing. He tried to crawl closer, but felt dizzy and sank back down. He felt a cold sweat covering his skin. With his mouth he carefully formed the name: Daa-nee. He tried to make his voice shout, and the name seemed to echo through the house: "Daa-nee! Daa-nee!"

There was no answer. For a long time Joseph sat quietly. Then after a while he began to wonder if he had really called out. He strained to remember, but could not.

It was black outside when Joseph saw the screen door swing open again. Someone entered, and after a time he could see it was Burton. Joseph tried to frown and say something to make the old man blush and go away, but Burton paid no attention. He stood there, staring at the cases of Olympia by Joseph's feet. Then he reached down and picked up a can, hesitating a moment before tearing off the ring tab. As he lifted the can, Joseph saw the hollow place in the old man's wrinkled throat begin to pulse.

Joseph tried to get up, tried to say something, but

could not move. He closed his eyes.

* * *

He felt himself shaking before he heard the voice. "Got to get dressed man. Can't be late." Henry Okuda's good eye was aimed at Joseph's right hand, which the puka shell seller was trying to stuff through a shirtsleeve. On the floor, Joseph sat up slowly. He felt dizzy, but there was no pain.

"Ey, you too." Lying on the sofa across the room was Burton. The old man looked so stiff as Henry Okuda tried to wake him that Joseph's stomach tightened for an instant.

"What the hell," Burton complained.

"You got to get up too," Henry Okuda explained, then turned back to Joseph. "Old lady's got the boys there already. Hooo! Fix your shirt, man." Joseph tottered for a moment as he stood up, then fumbled with the buttons on his shirt as he walked very slowly into the kitchen to get a beer. When he opened the refrigerator it was empty.

"Come on, man; no more left. Got to go."

"What day is today?" Joseph demanded.

Henry Okuda's voice fell so that Joseph could barely hear him. "Wednesday. Two days late, Joe." Then his face brightened. "But you finished, man! You drank a thousand beers!"

Joseph made no reply as he closed the refrigerator door. In the living room he no longer tried to shake off the dizziness. He looked around the room. There were beer cans scattered everywhere, especially around where Joseph had lain for so long. But there was another pile of cans Joseph could not remember, over by the sofa where Burton was still trying to wake up. Sitting on the worn sofa, the old man looked sick and ready to vomit. His eyes were red and puffy, and he took short panting breaths. Joseph looked at him uncertainly.

"Come on!" Henry Okuda urged, and pulled the old man up.

"What the hell," Burton complained again.

Joseph did not remember walking to the courthouse. He must have done it while he was thinking, trying to figure out what had happened since the bet was made. He couldn't remember much of it; he only knew that he had lost.

The courthouse was crowded with faces he knew. His brother Tony was there, and Chun Lee, sitting with his arms folded. And Madam Fong the palm reader and Patterson and Ichino and Bashful the bouncer and Easy Ed and Bigfoot. They were all quiet as Joseph walked in. His boys were there too, sitting right next to him on the bench. But Joseph did not look at them. He was too ashamed. Henry Okuda had led him in by the hand.

When the judge came in everyone stood up for a while.

Almazon the pimp lawyer stood next to Joseph, and the Hawaiian could hear him talking to the judge.

He heard the check lady's voice next--distant, but sharp and piercing like a whistle. The voice made his head hurt again, but this time he did not reach out toward her. She gestured in his direction, though; he could see her arms sweeping through the air and felt the whole room looking at him as she spoke. When she finished, Almazon said some things to her, and her voice got lower.

Then Tony Kamahele was in front of the room. Joseph could feel everyone's eyes moving back and forth between them. His brother did not sing this time, and Joseph could not make out the words he said. But as he spoke, Joseph remembered the night at Moana Hotel, the night they led him away.

Joseph knew it was all over. He stood up. He stood, feeling the eyes and hearing the voices directed toward him. He stood, listening to the sound of the voices swell around him, waiting for them to lead him away.

Almazon's voice rose above the rest. Joseph could pick out some of the words, but they made no sense: *guarantee, father-figure, heritage*. He listened to Almazon's voice as the others grew quiet. He nodded when Almazon told him to nod, and looked silently at the judge. Joseph did what he was told and waited.

Then everyone was around him, yelling, clapping, pounding him on the back. He heard laughter and felt

Stephen and Kapono hugging him around the leg. He reeled. The rush of hands and faces swept him outside, and he stumbled against the wall in the hallway. They were still around him there, crushing him against the wall. He pushed back, straining to move them away. He struggled, shoving and shouldering the faces away, until there was only one face left--Almazon.

"We did it, Joe; we beat them! You keep custody--you get another chance!"

Joseph felt the anger boiling up inside him as he stared at Almazon, seeing the pimp lawyer's face clearly now. It would only take a moment to squeeze . . . as he reached out Joseph felt his weight shift and he staggered. "No need to thank me, Joe," he heard, and felt the pimp lawyer patting his shoulder.

Then he was alone. He leaned back against the wall, breathing heavily until a policeman came by and told him to get moving. Unsteadily, Joseph made his way down the long hallway of the courthouse.

There were more faces waiting for him on the steps outside: Henry Okuda, Burton, Chun Lee, Patterson, Tony, Madam Fong, Ichino, Bashful. And Alexander Uemoto, the day clerk at the Waikiki Surf, and Lily Tanaka, who sold plumeria and orchid leis in front of the Moana Hotel. And Easy Ed and Bigfoot and more guys from the parking lot and the beach--they were all there. His three boys looked frightened as they huddled by Henry Okuda's wife,

but the other faces were smiling.

"Ey, big Joe Kamahela--the man who drank a thousand beers!" Henry Okuda cried, and everyone cheered. There was more laughter now, and more slapping on the back. Tony Kamahela embraced Joseph and then the boys one by one. All around Joseph they laughed and said that he had won, and they called upon Chun Lee to admit it.

Joseph could feel the eyes turn away from him to the little Chinese. Chun Lee stood silently for several moments, looking around with small sharp eyes at each of the faces turned toward him. Joseph could see a pack of cards bulging from the pocket of his baggy pants. Chun Lee said nothing, but looked at Joseph and bowed.

"Nobody can beat Joe Kamahela," Easy Ed declared in an even voice.

"Strongest man in Waikiki!" Ichino the bartender echoed.

It was like a holiday then. They yelled, they laughed, they slapped Joseph on the back. Patterson had a straw hat and started to wave it in the air, but Bigfoot grabbed it and ran through the crowd. Then Bashful shouted something in Samoan and there were more cheers.

But Joseph did not feel right, not right at all. Around him they still laughed and said that he had won. Joseph could feel their arms supporting him, helping him to stand up straight.

Then he saw Burton. The old man no longer looked sick, standing there with his arms folded. In fact, Burton appeared to be smiling, the crooked lines of his teeth catching the sunlight. No one else seemed to notice the old man standing there at the edge of the crowd, staring back at Joseph. This time Burton did not flush or look away; he met Joseph's gaze directly.

"Hooray for the man who drank a thousand beers!" one of the surfers yelled, and Joseph thought he saw Burton's smile curl into a sneer.

Joseph felt himself shudder. Around him small groups were forming. "I'm blind! I'm blind!" Henry Okuda protested as Kaponu cupped a hand over Henry's good eye, while Stephen laughed and tried to climb up on the puka shell seller's back. Next to them Madam Fong smiled and adjusted her scarf as she took a long purple fingernail and traced a wrinkle up Bashful's palm. Joseph stood there, trying to balance himself, and watched.

Someone had a guitar and Tony Kamahele began to sing. Ichino tapped his foot to the beat, and Patterson looked amazed as the surfers and parking lot guys joined in the singing. They beckoned Joseph to join in too, but the singing feeling did not come and he shook his head.

"Big Joe too happy to sing," Henry Okuda laughed and everyone grinned at Joseph. Patterson slapped him on the back: "We're your friends--right, Joe?" Joseph looked around and listened to Henry and all the others brag about

how he had won. Then Tony Kamahale began to sing again, and one by one the eyes turned away from Joseph as the voices were raising in singing. Joseph stood, trying to balance himself, and listened and watched.

Then he felt something else and turned around and looked directly into the eyes of Danny. The laughter and singing echoed all around them, but this time there was no amusement in his son's eyes. The boy stood there, watching his father.

There were two guitars now, and a bottle of wine was being passed around. Joseph felt dizzy as the noise swirled around him, and for an instant he swayed uncertainly. Danny was there a moment later, catching his arm and supporting it. He steadied himself, but did not look at his son. Around the two of them the laughter and singing grew louder, and some of the surfers began to dance.

"Ey, Joe--shark bait!" Henry Okuda shouted above the rest, and pointed past the dancers and singers. There on the edge of the crowd Joseph saw a family of tourists, half a dozen sunburned figures in shorts and flowered shirts. The children stared wide-eyed at the celebration, while a man in a planter's hat pointed a camera directly at Joseph. The man with the camera was fat, round pink knee bulging above his white sweat socks. His face was shaded by the wide brim of the planter's hat, but Joseph could see the uncertain smile as he tried frantically to

work on the focus.

Joseph looked at the camera and felt Danny's shoulder beneath his arm, helping him to stand. He felt too, the eyes of smiling Burton, and Henry Okuda and Chun Lee and Patterson and Easy Ed and Stephen and Kaponu and all the others watching him expectantly.

He felt his face redden. He pushed his son away, then spun around and began to shoulder his way back through the crowd, parting the line of startled faces. As he broke through, he heard the voices behind him shouting angry things at the tourists.

"Ey, shark bait gone!" he heard Henry Okuda call after him, but Joseph did not stop.

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