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### SALMON: A NOVELLA

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SALMON: A NOVELLA

By John Ryan Gregory

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12/10/12

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Fine Arts of the City College of the City University of New York.*

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SALMON

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Salmon was a boy who was born with a broken heart. It tore in the womb, I am sure, on the day his father was lost at sea. My thundering heart was a drum of worry and guilt as I waited for a sign that my husband would return, and the boy's tender muscle could not match the beat. His heart never healed quite right after his father was gone but he followed it, ragged as it was, throughout his entire youth. I do not know if he ever understood that he was different in this way, because he always was the way that he would always be, wandering to find something he lost, a thing that he never knew. I should tell you before I go any further that I am your grandmother, the mother of your father, your kuku wahine—the mother of the boy who grew into the man called Salmon. I'm sitting down to write you now because I have stories that only I can tell, and you are the only ones I care to tell them to. I hope I can get them down before too long.

Kamanu, Salmon, your father, was born in the green adobe house, green like a drying leaf, up on the side of the hill where I still live, facing up toward the sky and sea. Our family is from Hawaii, from the island of Maui, but I hope you know that much already. You have Hawaii in your blood after all. We were still young but a couple years past newlywed when my husband Makani was taken by the sea. He left me with the house, a growing bump in my belly, and a name to call it by: Kamanu, the amber ocean fish, the salmon. Makani's name means a strong wind and his father was Aukai, a sea traveler—all the men from his family fished and sailed out on the sea. We named the boy in bed one night, just after making love (I hope you don't mind if I say) and Makani looked at me with his hands on my body where I grew and still breathing heavy he said, 'He kicks like a

fish. He is strong!’ And I asked, ‘You think it's a boy?’

‘You bet,’ he said. ‘You will see, he will come out swimming!’ He flopped down in bed next to me. ‘We will call him Kamanu. How does that sound?’

Makani did not live to see the baby born but he was right; the boy was a pink squirming thing and I gave him the name his father had chosen. If I were to do it again I would not have named him Kamanu, but Kamani instead—a nice big flowery tree—and he would have planted his roots at home instead of drifting off like his father into the sea. But already I'm getting ahead of myself.

The house had belonged to Makani's parents and Makani fished from the sailing canoe that had belonged to his father. It was pretty patched up by the time Makani got it and the outrigger bounced with a terrible snap. It was too rickety and frightening to be any fun for me the couple of times I went out in it—but Makani made it work for him well enough. He practically grew up in that thing after all. I guess I could say it was his cradle and his grave though I'd never really thought of it like that until just now. Anyway, he got the house and the boat when his mother then his father were taken too early in a wave of terrible fevers. As young folks, possibly too young, we got married and inherited their lives, moved into the spaces they left, tried to fill them up as best we could, and came to call them our own.

So the way that poor little Kamanu got his broken heart goes like this: I was 19, Makani 20, when he was swept away in a storm. It is a day I will never forget. Storms do not often pass through here, you see; our islands are protected.

In the morning, when I saw the far-off darkening clouds on the line of the horizon, I thought only that Makani might return home early if the rain became heavy. I thought about what kind of fish he might have caught and reminded myself to close the shutters before the afternoon. The day rolled on and I kept an eye on the water. I could see the sea over the tops of the trees.

The air grew dense. The rising wind had a weight to it, warm and full of sand and grit. I could see the storm gathering mass and then it began to move, driving across the ocean straight for us it seemed. One by one and then a couple at a time, I watched the little sheets of sails on fishers' boats slip back into the bay. I went down to my mother's.

I brought her a fish grilled in a banana leaf from the night before, helped her close up the house and tie the stalks of the plants in her garden together in bunches. I left my mother's and went down into the center of town to pick up a few things before it would be too late. The winds were shifting there, blowing across then up then down. The weathervane on the church, spiked like a pineapple, spun round and round. The people that were out pushed against the wind as they scurried about, trying to keep everything from flying away. I watch the water for a few minutes, it whipped into the strangest little peaks like a plucked chicken's flesh, and I fell into a sort of trance watching it stir up like that, but then I came to and ran down and counted the boats pulled up and tied down along the beach. One fisher still off in the distance had his sail pulled down and was rowing fast, but I could tell it was not Makani. I went home where worry came closing in.

I shuffled around outside our little house, shutting the shutters on the four windows, green paint chipping off into my hands. I kept an eye on the water and an eye on the sky as the two grayed together. Back inside, the room was murky. I sat in a chair. I tried to be patient waiting for Makani, tried to convince myself I wasn't waiting at all. The wind hummed through the gaps in shutter's slats, a vibrating moan, the strangest unsettling sound that rattled the insides of my head and could not be ignored. I held my breath and said a prayer, but I don't remember who I was praying to. I kissed the carved bone hook that hung between my breasts, it is called Maui's hook, a talisman for safe passage over water.

Soon the wind rose more and turned from a moan to an anxious cry as it pushed between the glass and the wood of the window panes. I took an old newspaper from the stack of wood next to the stove and twisted its pages like ropes to stuff around the edges, but the wind could not be quieted. The screeching wales stirred something wild inside of me and I thought to go hide my head under a pillow in bed, but instead I went back outside where the wind became a body pushing against me from the front then ducking beneath my skirt, climbing up my legs and billowing that faded purple dress out like a balloon, then catching in my cheek and filling my mouth with air, a kiss blown too hard. I thought of Makani and briefly wondered if his lips had followed his name and taken to the wind, but quickly reminded myself that he was still coming home, so that could not be true.

Looking again to the water I could see the dark of the storm lay down in a wall outside the bay, just up against the first foothills, and still no sign of Makani's boat. I decided I could not sit in that dark house alone so I ran around

again, throwing the shutters open and latching them down before I went back in, rattled the windows open and just let the wind join me then. I sat down again in the chair in the center of the main room with the wind whipping around me, touching our things, rattling the dishes, picking up a cloth, flinging scraps of paper about almost like a child having a fit. And still I thought of my husband. Inside of me I felt Kamanu flip.

I tried not to think about the center of that storm, how big it might be, how dark, or where my husband was. The more you think on the things that should not be, the more real they become and with enough imagination you know, the realm of the never-should can turn into reality.

I have always been a strong believer in the power of things we cannot see, and I believe that something is out there listening for our prayers. I developed small habits as a girl, routines that I thought would help me communicate with God or spirits or whatever they might be. I would always press a certain small red flower, a kind of wild ginger, between my lips and hum an old song as I walked up the hill from the village at night as protection from the dark. I never cooked a fish with the eyes still in so that it could not go back and tell his friends how it met its final end. I dug a small cross into my mosquito bites with a sharp fingernail so that the blood suckers would not return. From my cousin Halue, I learned other more complex tricks—using stones and bones and seashells and bits of glass and mud and whatever other things we thought may help, and there had been times when we practiced in a grove of trees back away from my uncle's house. In whispers she would tell me stories about how her mother, the wife of



my mother's brother, was a witch.

After taking to his father's boat, Makani had been fortunate bringing fish in every day—unlike some of the fishers who went days and weeks without—he said that he just listened to the wind and when it said stop he stopped and set his hooks. Maybe it is true that he was blessed. It became routine for me to cook our supper just when Makani returned with some fresh catch. Although I often baked and made some small food things during the day, well you might already think I'm superstitious, but I came to believe that to begin to cook before Makani came smiling in bearing a slab of bright scaly flesh and kissed my face—his chin rough and warm with the sun, lips tasting of sea salt, the smell of rope and fish and sweat and work that clung to him, these things I will never forget—to do so would be something of a curse. So I waited through the dark of the storm. I sat and waited with the heavy wind licking around me. I grew very hungry and I could feel Kamanu stir restless inside me.

Makani would return each day while the sun sat just above the green of the hill that forms one arm of the bay in the west, but the sun did not set that night. The world just tilted from grey to black around me. I could do nothing but sit and wait, my hands over my only comfort and companion. I think I barely breathed, as if in a trance. I thought on my husband's face, holding it in my mind like a prayer. I ran my fingers along the ridges and points of the bone hook. I knew no greater tricks then to bring a man back from the sea.

As I sat I began to believe that there must have been something that I had left undone, some task waiting for me to complete so that order could fall back to

place, time could resume from whatever suspended state we had reached, and Makani could come home. I relived the past day over in my mind, worrying at it for a clue. I remembered: pulling the sheets tight as soon as we rose from bed, grinding the coffee, heating water, brewing it just the way he liked. I ran a comb through my hair—black, straight, nearly to my waist—then tied it back with a scrap of ribbon, bright red. I slipped into a dress, kissed him on the peak of his head, the lobes of his ears, the bow of his lips, just outside the door. I traced lines in the flour before I rolled out bread, ate the spiced bananas leftover from the night before. I straightened the lines of the table and chairs with the wall and I smiled to the morning when I went out. I said hello or good morning to everyone that I met, including the goat that would try to nip at me. I thought I did everything right.

When I went to Mother's, together we said a prayer, and I kissed her three times when I left. Then in the town I sang a little song to ease my nerves and I did not have to argue with the vegetable seller who was closing up his stand. While I went back up again I met a friend on the road and we chatted briefly in the stir of the wind. We stood close bracing one-another and a few strands of her hair got caught in my mouth. I followed a low bird shaped cloud up the hill and stubbed my toe on a rock in the road. It made the nail immediately bloom red beneath. I swore and sat in the road, surrounded by the wind, feeling less and less certain that Makani would return.

I dug deeper into the spaces of my mind. Again: the bed, my hair, a kiss, the bread, mama, the market, the road, a bird, a rock, my toe... and other things,

faded dream memories: a beetle in the flour, the hairy stem of a weed in the garden, my nipples leaking, the a whining hinge in mother's cupboard, a look in Makani's eye. I stuck out my tongue when a truck blew by in the road. I picked my nose a bit. I sniffed my own sweat.

I hiked to the top of the hill where there was a bald dirt patch to burry the bones of a fish the length of my arm. I stood there for a time mumbling over the turned up earth but don't remember what I said. My hair caught up in the wind and twisted into a knot behind my head, pulling my scalp tight. I felt as if I might tip over and fall off that hill and then my dress became a purple sail and I soared up and up until I saw the whole town from above and then quicker than you'd think the village was just a brown patch in the green of the island which became a green patch in the blue of the sea, and then it vanished under as I was swept away in the clouds, just a little drop of water, a wet shining pearl hovering suspended in fluffy white space, eternally calm, infinitely connected. It sure was quite a dream I fell into. I still think on these visions all the time like they were memories.

But wait, it went on. I saw Makani's face—the clouds and his face they were the same—and he just smiled and blinked at me and as he blinked he showed me many different things. When we were young he dove off the dock at the bay into the low fiery sun. I watched from the beach laughing to my friends like I wasn't watching, like I wasn't impressed. He pulled himself out with the crusted shell of a conch in one hand then later we sat and smiling warm by the fire with the grilling spit dripping fat from a pig into the spitting fire and our families were around singing, drinking and we kissed under the white buds just emerging

from their green shells and he pulled at my lip in the creeping grass under the tree, smell of leaves and breath sharp and sweet as he entered me and whispered, 'Wahine,' in a way that I knew he meant I was *his* girl, would be his bride. That's how it came to me then anyway. I sure hope that I'm not telling you too much.

Moving into the little house we cleaned, painted walls, scrubbed the floors and cleared away the spirits of his parents' fevered deaths. Patching up the cracks like roots growing up the stucco walls with sandy cement, he pulled a little limpet shell out from the mix and stuck it on his nose, made a funny sound like a donkey and I laughed and then he laughed the first laughs we shared in that little house and everything seemed alright. We began to feel like we were real.

I lived each day of our marriage in that dream and it patterned an impression on my mind that stayed with me long after I woke. Kamanu was born and he was beautiful like his father. He grew his hair long and Makani taught him to fish like Makani's father had done him, then we grew old and Kamanu married a lovely heavy girl and lived in a house just down the hill. We aged but enjoyed it, retold the stories that made us a family, and as I came near death there was no fear, just a pull as irresistible as gravity and soon I was falling and falling into the endlessness.

The end.

That's what it said behind my eyelids. I read it as clear as on this page and then I woke, wondering if I was dead.

When I woke the next morning, still sitting in that old chair, I felt I had traveled a great distance and could not figure where I had landed. The wind had

died, the air was still and bright, and through the gauze of my dreaming life, I thought I saw Makani there, in the door surrounded by light—one foot behind the other on the ground, a wide hand holding back the door.

My heart literally moved in my chest. It jabbed into some other fleshy part and I flew up out of the chair and as he stepped inside I quickly realized it was not Makani at all. Not one bit. I dropped to my knees and put my hands on the floor. The world seemed to turn around me, tightening some strings into my heart, and it wrenched as if to tear. I was healthy and strong then, my heart had been conditioned and the ripping that it went through did not fully break it, I think. But I believe this was the moment when, clobbered by the bullying beat of mine, his soft thin tissue tore into pieces and Kamanu's little heart broke inside of him, inside of me.

Somehow a sliver of that little broken heart found its way out of him and lodged in me. I imagine a loose scrap struck out looking for its other parts, beating like the tail of a fish until it swam out of my little boy and into the sea of me. If I listened carefully, it used to be, I could feel it ticking there, just a little piece of heart, somewhere below my lungs. I do not know how little Kamanu survived the trauma but I suppose that my heart was still strong enough to keep beating for the both of us until his patched itself up.

As I already said, the man who appeared in the door was not Makani. It was Ipo; everyone called Hipa, a word about a sheep, or an idiot—a mean joke about his fuzzy beard and quiet way. He was Makani's friend, a bit older and a fisherman too. Tall thick dark and strong. They would drink together some nights

and Ipo was Makani's audience for rants and stories, even long after they stopped making sense. 'Hipa! Hipa! Hurray!' Makani would say after a swig of beer, 'Did you ever hear about the time that my daddy caught an 800 pound a'u on a tin can and a coconut husk?' Ipo would shake his head. 'Well then Hipa friend, don't you move a muscle clam or cockle shell because I'm gonna tell you how, right after I smash the Jesus out of this goddamn centipede.' And so he would, on like that through the night. Makani would talk to Ipo but I sat there listening too, out in the yard or in the glow of the kitchen lamp. Ipo and I never had much to say with Makani around, but later, when I became accustomed to him, he insisted in his mild way that I call him by given his name. It means lover, beloved. And so I did.

So Ipo came barefoot and softly to where I lay on the floor that morning that Makani did not return. He walked so slow as I lay there, as I watched his big brown feet it began to feel as if I were waiting for him to arrive. Then I was in his shadow and he crouched and sat. I did not begin to cry until he reached out and just touched me, like he walked, so softly, and then it was as if the storm swept through me once again. I shook and he took hold of me in his firm hands and pulled me until I lay half in his lap, sobbing, but he did not speak or cry. Thinking of it now reminds me of some kind of sculpture, with the man across the woman's lap.

Do you know what loss is? I do not mean to lose a thing or even a memory—these you can easily move on without—but to lose a part of yourself? A part that is tied so close to who you are that you may as well carve out your name from where it is planted so deep inside? I do not know what it is to lose a

limb but I imagine to lose a love like this is something worse. It is a magic and it is a drug; Makani was an extension of myself and my body, my spirit could not fathom that he was not there. But I do not need to ask if you know what this means. You come from me and grew up without your father and so I think you have always understood. I think this is one reason why I write to you now. Maybe you can understand me best of all.

I do not remember how long I cried or when I stopped or anything else from that day, other than him feeding me cornmeal soaked in warm milk and thin slices of salted fish. At some point Ipo whispered, over and over, 'He will be back, Male, you will see,' until I slipped again into the world of dreams and looked again for Makani there. Male, like ma-lay, that is my name, that is me.

Time passed. I slept. In my sleep I grieved. I woke several times and saw Ipo sitting there near the bed. I would raise my head and, knowing my question, he just shook his downturned face. Other times I woke and found my mother hovering over me with a cup of juice or milk and slippery seaweed slices, small chunks of coconut that she pushed between my lips. 'You must eat now, girl, if not for you then for the baby. There. Now chew chew chew. You see?' and I would roll over and go back to sleep.

Eventually I had slept so much that I could sleep no more and the land of dreams would not have me back. So when I woke one afternoon to find that Ipo was gone, mother too, and closing my eyes only made rainbow patterns on the inside of my head, I sat up, feeling sticky hot and stifled, then stood to get some air. The house was empty but clean. When I stood I felt Kamanu stir and kick. I

smiled, not quite with my face, but inside of me, if that makes any sense at all, knowing that a piece of Makani remained.

I walked to the door to catch the breeze and stood there looking out at the sea and I remember a specific feeling of being large, full, and alive. I ran my hands over my body and cupped my big breasts perched up on top of my belly with a certain satisfaction I had never before felt before with just existing in the world and taking up space. As I stood there Ipo ducked through the bushes with a big ehu in his arms, a beautiful fish, and he stopped as he saw me as if caught at something naughty, then half turned away with his eyes still on me. My hands stayed on my breasts and he did not go. The look on his wide face was so embarrassed, so clearly at a loss for what to do, that I actually threw out my arms and began to laugh. I laughed at Ipo and I laughed at myself, so ridiculous and crazy I must have looked feeling myself; I laughed at grief and I laughed in relief, for the first time realizing that even if Makani had gone, I was still alive.

That laugh showered through my body, waking me truly to the world around. My arms were still thin and graceful and I twisted one through the air like a brown vine in a way my grandmother had taught me, and I began to sway from my belly down through my hips. I thought of standing in the grass of my grandmother's yard and she sat on her chair in the shade of the porch, humming a raspy tune and clapping out a rhythm firm and slow as I practiced for the village celebration when Hawaii first became a state. As I shuffled my feet and wagged my hair in the air just as I had done as a little girl, I thought of Grandma's smile, all gums from chewing too much cane she had said, and could still feel her



smiling on me there although she had passed before I wed. My hands became waves tossing in the sea and my hips were thick and firm as they turned like the earth beneath my feet, and so I danced. I danced for poor Ipo, who stood there with that big bright fish, so completely confused, but also for my mother, who had outlived her husband, and my grandmother who had also outlived hers. I danced for Makani and hummed a long low goodbye and I danced for myself, unsure of my future but happily alive. My hands waved to the sky and the birds and the flies and I waved at the world, signaling that I had survived, I would live, and I would love my boy. Him, I would not lose.

I waved and shook and danced my way back inside that little house. Ipo stood out in the yard until I came back to the door and called for him to come in.

I imagine that you have imagined me before just as I have imagined you. I wonder if telling you these stories makes myself true to you—or do these just seem like an old woman's fantasies? Maybe I should just let myself be imaginary to you. But then again that kind of trying to imagine a person who you've never known is too much like trying to forget. So, you do not have to forget that you never knew me. You do not have to imagine who I was. I don't imagine there's glory in learning your father was born into a broken home, but at least I am here to tell you that he was loved.

Kamanu was born physically whole, without even a mark to suggest the pain he had felt while still in the womb. He was a beautiful golden brown baby with his head already covered by soft whorls of curls like his father's, and he had

his father's dark eyes—wide when serious and arresting when he smiled, though he did not smile much at first. He had my round cheeks and low forehead with a certain curl to his lips that was hard to place. And of course I was immediately in love. He was something fresh and new and mine, a second chance to do things right. Kamanu cried very hard and all the time at first, but I always held him tight, whispering stories of the animals in the sea that his father had told to me, and he would grow quiet and watchful, although I am sure he still suffered from losing his father, and his broken heart.

My mother watched me close and tried to keep me in bed for weeks, wrapping my belly with leaves, a traditional to help my womb heal up right she said. Any aunt or old one who visited would nod solemnly at the wisdom of following this advice. The only time she let me up at first was to plant the afterbirth out in the back yard in the roots of a eucalyptus tree while she sang an old song. Ipo was there to watch and help. In our village, you see, the old traditions were still maintained although it was the 1960s then and many men were called to war, and other towns had changed to keep up with the Americans. Our house did not have electricity then, gardens were more common than grocery stores, and nearly every yard was populated by a rooster and a couple hens.

Ipo gradually moved from his parents' house and into mine, his big body filling up the space in a way that I came to miss when he was gone, although his personality did not make the rooms ring in the way my husband's had. With Makani gone the house grew too quiet and I often had to look over my shoulder to see if Ipo was still there or not. Don't get me wrong, I liked Ipo well enough; he

was kind and gentle and sweet. He even cooked at times and we often found laughter together as Salmon grew into a toddler, stumbling about the house, but I did not love him in the way I loved Makani. And Ipo did not want to replace his friend; Makani had been so alive, such a gravitational force, Ipo and I had been like planets spinning around him in different orbits. We couldn't very easily switch to begin spinning around each other in the same way and so with Makani gone I think we both felt a bit like spare parts. We would retell his stories to each other at times as if they could bring a part of Makani back, but also they were what we had in common at first, and they helped us form a family. But as Kamanu grew and learned to speak and listen, I told the stories less and less. I did not want to make a martyr of his father, nobly taken by the sea.

Ipo helped me raise the boy and promised he always would be around. He woke and fished in the morning. He brought in money and food. I cooked and kept the house, did the things most mothers do. I trusted Ipo and it seemed he trusted me. Ipo was peaceful and loving, patient and supportive to Kamanu; we never pretended that Ipo was his father. He was not after me as an animal. We would sleep together and he would wrap his body around me, but his touch was like a brother not a lover. He did not seem interested in making love. Ipo was loyal to his friend in death, even to a fault. I would later find there were secrets that he kept from me.

As he grew, Kamanu was not an unhappy child, though you wouldn't often call him glad. his primary state was curiosity—always grabbing at things, looking under a downturned cup or pulling open my mouth to see inside. And when he

began to crawl, then walk, it was as if a small tumbling motor was tucked away between his hipbones. He wandered—first around the three dun rooms of the little house then the edges of the yard. Even while he slept he squirmed in his little bed, which Ipo made and we placed in a corner of the main living space, though he never slept too much even then. Around the time he started first grade in the village church's school, he began waking with the roosters to leave the house and walk the roads, just as the sky began to light, then end up in the little playground as the teacher rang the bell to come inside. At first I forbid this wandering about but he would just cry and do as he liked anyway. No harm seemed to come of it so I decided to let him have his way. I could not fight the instincts of his broken wandering heart.

Salmon did not enjoy school, but he learned to tolerate it. He played with other children fine, and he made a few friends his age at different points in school, but Mackenzie stuck with him most. She was the daughter of an old air force pilot—people called him Captain Frank. He had married a Hawaiian girl while in the military, and then defected to make a life. It was all very romantic and everything.

Mackenzie was a nice girl, as sweet and polite as you would want, but I think sometimes she was a little bit confused, and Kamanu did not help. She was not dumb, not in the way of reading words and doing sums, but Kamanu had found that she could be talked into doing nearly anything, if he would suggest it in an excited sort of way. There was a certain chemistry in their relationship, I must say; no other child brought Kamanu out in that same way, and Mackenzie would

be commanded by no other. He definitely had fun with her in dull times: 'Walk out of the classroom without asking!' or 'Take off your shoes and put your feet in the paint!' Sometimes Kamanu would command and participate like when, 'Let's use paste to make our hair stand on end!' and 'Let's go down to the beach after lunch!'

I suppose that most the other students were too predictable for him. They would shush him in classes. He would grab another student's bag to look in and they would call the teacher. They would glare at him when he walked around the room.

Salmon was not a trouble maker, not on purpose anyway, though I know every teacher thought he was. I grew tired of hearing from them really, in their notes home or sing-song cries to come in for a talk when I went see him after school, and I told them the best they could do would be to ignoring him and let him do his thing. One time a teacher swung at him with a thin bamboo stick. That night he had proudly said that he did not cry like some other boys but he turned and stared at her and stared at her all the rest of the day. Apparently she did not try to beat him any more and you may think it odd but I felt proud of him. The teachers would ask if there wasn't something I could do, some consequence to keep over his head, but he did not have much that I could take away, and I did not want to lock him in. He was just a willful child—naturally kind but difficult to control—with his own instincts, his own drive, and though I was at times afraid for him, he was hard for me to punish. I was never big on that kind of discipline. Though, 'If only I would have had been stricter...' I have thought many times since

then. This is not to say I let him get away with things. If he had done bad, I made sure he knew.

As Kamanu grew from child to boy, the town also grew. New people came, the market changed with a bigger tourist trade, and the sounds of the town changed as well. Old men taught their boys how to play the uke' but the boys would listen to the big rock bands on the radio. Car engines replaced feet, and it even seemed like you heard laughter less as people did not always stop and chat. A white hotel called the Colonial Arms was built down near the water. It is not what today we would call fancy—compared to resorts they got today with captured dolphins and imported beaches and Real Hawaiian Luaus—but the Arms was three floors and bigger than the church. It had a clean whitewash, arched porches, a garden courtyard, and was grander to us than anything else in the town.

Some people hated that it brought in more haole—that's what we Hawaiians call the white folk though it's not always a nice word you know—but it sure was a thing to see mothers and daughters, these Californian socialites, sipping pretty drinks in the shade and leaving little piles of money laying around on the tables. The tourists bought wreaths of flowers for their hair and carved dolls and tshirts and plenty other gifts to take back to the continent. Of course there had been haole who always lived in the town, but they were different, were Hawai'ian, compared to the new ones that arrived taking pictures with their sunburns and flower leis. At the bar, the men fanned their business with windy compliments over sweet rum. Little Kamanu would watch them from under a palm tree at the edge of the shady stone terrace, those feathered white ladies, so

bright but so lazy, so unlike me, his barefoot mom.

Kamanu grew up and grew bolder quickly, right around when he turned ten and had been surprised to find he could finally reach and work the hand pump at the kitchen sink. One day, down at the hotel after school, he went onto the terrace and crept across, ducking from table to table. Nobody noticed as he examined the remains of a meal. Three ladies had left a thick piece of white fish, a sliced mango, and a big chunk of a chocolate cake. What he went for, though, was a square of white lace, a handkerchief left behind. It was smooth and delicate with designs curving over its face.

Later that night, he trailed the pattern across his eyes while he lay on his little bed.

'Where did you get this?' I asked as I washed dishes, not really needing an answer. He turned on his side and me just what he had done with such a sense of pure innocence that I could not want to crush it. 'Look. You know Boy. You're not to take things that aren't yours.' I held out my hand. 'Give it to me.'

'No!' he said, crumpling it away. 'It will go in my collection.' He liked to keep things away in a cigar box, his little treasure chest. I was surprised by his refusal, he was not often obstinate, but still I said, 'This is not a thing for you to keep'. I thrust my hand at him and he threw the scrap across the floor instead of placing it in my hand and rolled out of his bed, brushing by me. I don't think he thought he was stealing, and I didn't really think it was stealing either; he was only following his impulses. But I could not have him acting in such a rude way to me. 'You are not to go down to the that hotel again, little boy. You better hear

me,' I told him then. Already I had told him not to go to the ocean to play by himself in those days and my little boy turned and glared at me. It was a bit of a shock, such a hard look. But I gave it back with raised eyebrows.

'I will if I want,' he said quietly.

'Is that so? Well then you are not to go down to the harbor at all.' His eyes grew wide. 'You can walk to school and on back home.'

'That's not faaair!' he began with a grunt and ended with a scream and ran into the yard and looked up at the stars and yelled, 'Nothing even matters!' Where does such a young boy get these ideas other than from his always aching broken heart? It was not easy for me to see the child that I loved so much to be in pain, but what else was I to do? He needed to have limits, or would end up like his father, sailing off into the blue.

'Would you like me to say something to him?' Ipo had asked, after he hugged me and I calmed down a bit. I told him no, we would see how the punishment took.

There are things that I know, things that Salmon told me eventually, and things that I have since found out. As I as I'm writing to you, I will admit, not everything is always match up in the ways I think about it. You know they say there are two sides to every story, but I believe that the words I have written here are about as close as we will get to what we call the truth.

Except one thing, and this is kind of embarrassing. I wrote at first, several days ago, that I am still living in that little green house. I'm sorry, that's not true. I



didn't mean to be but I guess I was untrue because I wanted you to have a certain picture of me, a sweet grandma in a sweet little old house. But no, that is not the truth. I now live in a much newer condo building out past the edge of town. There is an elevator and I take a local bus when I need to go in and buy things. across the road there is a beach and then the sea. There are some other older people here. We can sit and talk by the pool if we want and sometimes cook or go out for walks along the beach. So that is me.

Anyway the day after the handkerchief Kamanu was up and out early the next morning, before the sun again. We heard him leave just as Ipo and I began to stir. I suppose I could have stopped him but I didn't feel like another fight. The air was warm and close already, like a breath that had been held all night. As he padded from the house, Kamanu wore leather thong slippers that slapped against his feet and no shirt. He moved slowly through the still morning air, up and down the torn patchy paving of roads and paths that criss crossed between the houses on the hill, climbing at times with his hands on his knees on parts so steep you wouldn't think a car could climb them, although they did. That's when he found the old man pacing along.

He followed the old man for a bit at a distance, past the waking households, through the little bamboo grove, past the flowers opening on the side of the road. Kamanu hopped along as if just following his own bliss, sometimes picking up a stone to examine before tossing it, whistling a tuneless song. 'Fffzzuuuee,' he intoned as a rock skipped down the road—beyond the old man who just kept on marching as they wended through the switch backs on down the

hill. Kamanu had known the old man would head toward the water when he began to follow: the man carried the poles of an eleven foot mast for his boat, wrapped tight with a canvas sail the color of dried bone. He had seen the old man out early on the street before, and sitting down by the bay sorting his lines, but never had any reason to follow. His resentment of my forbidding and a certain growing adolescent desire to rebel gave him cause to trail the man down to the boats in the bay, and as he did, something clicked into place for him. He liked the feeling of direction and purpose that following the old man gave him, and he started to walk straighter and more erect, as if Kamanu was going to work himself.

Toward the foot of the hill where the houses grew closer together, the old man stopped and gently placed down the mast. He knocked on the door of a grey cement house with a pointed roof that was stuck right between two identical others. Kamanu had always thought it was a funny looking thing, squeezed in between the walls of two other houses, without room or a garden around the side. The top half of the front door opened and a girl in a white slip poked her head out and smiled, 'Good morning.'

Kamanu recognized her, too. She did not go to the school, but he had seen her out walking before. She would carry a large white woven basket, a little too big for her age and her body, but always humming as she went along. He guessed that she was near to his age, though her face seemed it could older—soft but somehow knowing. He had also seen her with a woman, a woman about my own age, he thought. It was her mother, he guessed, when he saw them arm-in-arm walking back from the center of town. He remembered that she had smiled at him

once when she caught him watching, but had just kept walking on.

While the old man waited the girls went back inside and soon emerged with a little cup. The old man took it in his hand that curled like a claw, then drank the coffee in a swig. When he handed the cup back the man patted her hand and said, 'Thank you my little flower.' Kamanu was normally shy or withdrawn when it came to meeting people, but something about the exchange he saw between the father and his daughter called to the boy's heart and made him feel at ease.

'Good morning,' Kamanu said, too soft at first then again, 'Good morning!' and got their attention. The pair looked at him—the girl's smile shifted to one of mirrored curiosity as the old man pulled away and became remote. Kamanu glanced between them, looking for a way in, and after a moment the girl unfastened the latch on the lower half of the door and came out to stand in the road with them both. All three looked at each other. The boy stepped in closer and, as Ipo had taught him to do, offered his hand and introduced himself to the man and then the girl, feeling a bit proud of himself. She gave him a sideways look. Her black hair with gentle curls was tied back toward the base of her neck. The old man's eyes were dark creases that looked straight through the boy. Without a word the man stooped to lift the mast from off the side of the road when Kamanu tripped forward towards him saying, 'Let me carry that for you—!'

The old man grunted, part laugh, his long gray hair like thick yarn falling over his ears. 'I like the exercise,' he replied as he hefted the load against his shoulder.

'Oh have Kamanu hold one part of it for you at least, Papa,' the girl tease him.

The old man looked back and forth between them, shrugged his shoulders and said, 'You can hold the back end,' as he tilted it up and turned around. Kamanu clasped onto it, wrapping both arms where the weight swung close to the ground. The man called, 'Mahalo!' and gave a blind wave to his daughter behind them and continued on down the road. Kamanu looked back at the girl wondering how she had known his name before he had learned hers, but she'd slipped inside with the white of her slip flitting behind. The pair then continued down the uneven street toward the sun that then hovered just above the cove where some boats bobbed and scrapped in the morning tide.

'You carry this down every day?'

'Yes.'

Kamanu had already known that he did. All the men who sailed the old canoes carried their rigging. No one really worried about theft from a neighbor, but a mast left by the shore was easily lost to a rogue high tide. The simple sails, in the shape of a V above the pontoon canoes, went up in the morning then were taken back down at night: it was the tradition of how things had been done since fishing had begun in our little town. A little shack up off the beach was shared by the fishers to hold buckets of tar, old spliced fraying lines, broken hooks, bobs, buckets, newspapers, and torn pages from girlie magazines. The men who ran boats with motors for sea tours, snorkel, leisure fishing, or their own private use were not welcome in.

'You carry it by yourself?' Kamanu asked.

'Just the days that I want to make money and eat.' The man was stooped but still he was strong and the wood was not so heavy; the canvas added most of the weight. He did not falter as they trotted faster down the steepest part of the hill at the bottom, nor did Kamanu wrestle under his share of the load. Rather, it bumped light against his shoulder but still he felt good about helping the man down the road. He watched the man's short strides—the bald coffee calves bunching to tight knots under thick thighs—that caught with the hint of a limp. The man wore long fraying shorts, a loose-fitting shirt, and a large canvas hat bleached white like the sail on his back. There was something about the old man that the boy completely liked: maybe it was a loneliness that matched his own, maybe he saw in him the love of a father, and was made further curious the strangeness one can grow into when he spends too much time on his own.

Kamanu noticed that it was not like the hats that the other men wore, the woven ones with a smug smile of a tightly curled brim. He asked, 'Why is your hat different?' but the man did not answer for a pace.

The boy fell out of step as they walked past the hotel, pulling down on the beams as they lifted. The old man twitched his head in annoyance and sighed. But then he asked, 'Hey, so do you like baseball?'

'Yes, sure, I guess,' Kamanu answered quickly, eager to gain approval.

'You guess?'

'Yes, I guess.'

'Well what team do you guess that you like then?'

Kamanu thought to lie, but then did not. 'I don't know,' he admitted.

The old man grunted and then they neared the dock and shore, where all roads in town ended up. He stopped a bit abruptly and said, 'Okay,' his back still to the boy.

'Okay?'

'Yes, okay, you can let go now,' the old man said as he turned in place, one foot slipping on a wet boulder where they stood just above the beach, pulling the mast from the boy's embrace. 'I can take it from here,' the man said, a bit ironic over his shoulder. As he stepped across the rocks and onto the sand, his body made it clear that he was done with the Kamanu for the day.

'Okay,' said Kamanu, but still persisted to follow. Hearing the snap of the small slippers on stone, the old man turned again.

'What is it?' he asked, talking up toward a curving palm tree. Then before the boy could speak, 'Hey don't you have school?'

'Yes,' Kamanu answered. 'Well, actually no.'

'Yes, well actually no? You can't make up your mind on much, can you boy?'

Kamanu stopped where he stood on the sand and looked down at his feet.

The man sighed then said more gently, 'What was it you were going to say?'

'You never told me,' Kamanu squinted up and pointed, 'about your floppy hat.'

First quiet then shrugging, 'It was my wife's hat,' he said. 'She would wore

it working in the garden.'

'You wear your wife's hat!' Kamanu laughed. 'Oh that's funny.'

'It keeps the sun off my back,' the man said plainly as he turned away. He continued walking off down the beach to the row of boats at the end where the sand turned into fallen rock and cliff.

'Hey, wait,' Kamanu followed. 'What happened to her?'

The man stopped and turned again 'What happened to who?'

'To your wife. You said the hat *was* hers.'

'Oh, well the hat was hers, then I started wearing it so now it is mine.'

'I'm sorry—I thought you meant—' Kamanu did not want to trouble the man further. 'See, my dad died before I was born. He was lost at sea.'

The man looked at Kamanu. 'I know he was,' he said quietly. 'I have been fishing for a long time.' Kamanu looked at the man, this old stranger who seemed to have known his father, but did not know what to say next. His mind swam and he felt light. 'Anyway, my wife is still alive. She is still alive. But—'

Kamanu waited, then, 'But, what?'

'We live apart.' The old man turned away again.

'Well I like the hat!' he called after the man. The man did not respond as he walked away but raised his hand to wave behind. Kamanu watched as the old man walked down to the end of the beach and secured the mast in the boat. And then the old man began to wave. It took a moment before Kamanu realized the old man was waving to for him to come. He kicked off his slippers and ran down through the sand down the beach. 'What?' he said breathless when he skidded to a

stop.

'Would you like to, could you help? Let's push this thing into the water.'

Kamanu beamed. 'Sure I could.'

The old man tossed the rope from the beach into the boat. 'Okay, good.

But then you should probably go to school.' Kamanu nodded.

He showed Kamanu where they would push on the arm between the hull and the outrigger, and together they dug their feet into the sand and launched the boat into the surf. And that is how the old man began to teach my boy to fish.

Thinking back, I suppose I always knew that Kamanu would follow his father and Ipo to find a living in the sea—it was in his name it was in his blood and these things cannot be denied. But still when he was young I would not let Ipo take him out in his boat, even for a day of fun, even though Ipo felt it would do the boy some good, and he must have been right, but I could not bear the thought of having him gone.

So, that next Saturday when he slipped out in the early morning and set sail with the old man, I felt a strangeness nested inside as if a part of me was becoming distant. There is always a motherly instinct but I think also it was the pull of the boy leaving, tugging on my own little piece of Kamanu's heart, and it gave me a moment of panic as if somehow I was unraveling but not really knowing what was wrong. When he found me worrying, tying palm fronts into little men out in the yard, Ipo assured me Kamanu would be fine, that he was probably just out running around. As he left, Ipo said he would be back early, he



would just take the morning to fish. When he was gone I was listening so closely to my body, and that little piece of Kamanu inside me told me that although he was not near nothing was wrong. Believe it or not, I took comfort in this.

As the old man and Kamanu set sail that morning, the man worked the boat as an extension of his body. The man and the boat had worn, weathered and aged together, sharing many stories about the sea.

Under way, the old man seemed irritable with the boy underfoot, who touched everything with his questions. When he tried to move about he had to tell Kamanu, 'Go there,' or 'here.' Kamanu watched and tried to predict what was needed but finally the man told the boy, 'Just sit on the damn ihu,' in the bow, 'stay out of my way, and try not to throw the balance.' He must have thought he sounded harsh because when he sat back down the old man said, 'It's for your own good. Don't want you to fall in. You can slip when the boat dips or get broadsided by a wave.'

The light of the rising sun ripened from pink to gold behind the hill and brushed away the navy night. A deep calm green was over the hills as the island receded and Kamanu watched the land fan out along the shore still lit with the electric lights. Kamanu looked back and watch the old man who would paddle paddle then stop as the boat ran and paddle paddle again. His mouth was twisted and the boy could hear him gasp, but still Kamanu was impressed how he maneuvered the waves. They would ride straight at a wave then over the top of the crest and slip down the other side. Gusts caught in the sail and Kamanu clung to the boat as it took them back up the side of another standing wave. It felt like

his guts were pushing up into his chest and he laughed then sputtered as a wash of spray flew across the bow of the ship.

'It's not usually quite choppy like this so early!' the old man called when Kamanu locked eyes with him. 'Hold on.'

'I am!' The man had made Kamanu put on a musty old life vest, but the boy sensed that he was being tested as the boat pulled further away from the land. For a while there were other boats pulling along in the distance but as they went the others seemed to vanish into a low haze just over the water. Soon enough they really were alone.

They were farther out from land than Salmon ever had imagined a man would want to go. The island was a humped spine on the horizon. Kamanu's eyes widened, his heart beat blood like a hammer through his temples. The rush of the ocean and the rushing in his ears were the same. He thought what would happen if they just kept going and never went back. 'What will my mother think?' he mumbled as the thought occurred to him for the first time. But then said, 'Nothing!' when the old man had snapped, 'What was that?'

Still, my boy worried about what I would say and do to him when he returned and for a moment he felt trapped, neither wanting to go further or turn back. He imagined himself on a rope tied up in the yard, as I had threatened him once. He thought of eating only rice and spinach and chard, which is something else we tried for a few days with him until he refused to eat at all. He thought of me and how I might feel if he never came back; he may have disobeyed but he loved me.

He stared back at the old man, eyes wide, and the old man flashed a big smile at him, the first of the morn as if realizing just then that Salmon was only a little boy. He pointed the other way off to where a field of fiery clouds blazed. ‘It makes me think of the heart of a bird!’ the old man called.

Salmon looked again. ‘What do you mean?’

‘Well, look there,’ the man pointed again. He had stopped in his paddle. ‘There is the beak and that is the tail. Up there are the wings, those kind of feathery clouds. And maybe that little tuft is a piece of fruit it will eat.’

‘Okay, I see. But where is the heart?’

‘The heart is the sun! See how it shines from within?’ He raised the paddle closed one eye as if aiming a gun. ‘The clouds are the bird and the sun is the heart. Pchoo!’ He lurched with a recoil then spat and he laughed. ‘If the clouds were food we would all be fat!’

Kamanu thought of shooting the sun then brought up his pointer finger and thumb and ‘Bang!’ shot at it too through the clouds. He snickered thinking of it falling from the sky to float there down in the water.

‘Does this spot look good?’ the old man asked.

‘I guess.’

‘Well alright then let’s fish!’ and the man began moving about the boat. He baited and dropped the hooks and they both began to relax and enjoy the day.

Kamanu had noticed an array of looped lines hooked just under the gunnels in a seeming tangle, though he watched as the old man intuited just the right length and strength of chords for his purposes.

'This is for the *big one*,' the man offered with a wink. He tossed a baited hook knotted to a tight thick braid over the side. 'There is some give in the line so a big boy can pull it without making it snap.' He yanked on the loose end hanging limp from the eyehook where the line was tied to show Kamanu. Kamanu nodded and then turned to watch over the side until the turning weight sank past the bright green and melted into the deep deep blue.

Kamanu looked up again as the old man settled back into the seat in the bow with his feet up against the mast. 'And now, as the Spanish say, *esperamos*.' He pulled his hat down to his eyes. 'We wait. We hope.'

As they sat atop the water the quiet thunk of the boom bouncing and the persistent tapping chatter of the sea against the hull lulled Kamanu into a state of unfamiliar quietude. He felt no urges, no pulling, no drive for directionless wandering, no jangling curiosity. He closed his eyes for a moment, just a moment he thought, and swayed in a trance with the swells.

When he opened his eyes it seemed that the world had been swallowed up by the hot glare of the sun. The old man had been watching him twisting his fingers through his beard and asked 'It's nice, eh? Are you relaxing?'

Kamanu cupped his hands around the ridges of his brow and grunted. 'It's okay,' but really the word he felt was lovely. Kamanu began turning around in his seat, looking down into the water, trying to watch the lines through the deep aquamarine.

'It's deep here,' the old man offered.

'How deep?'

'Deep deep.' The man turned his gaze to the horizon. 'Tie four lines like this,' and nudged a line piled in a coil next to the mast with a foot that looked like a bald tire, then shrugged. 'Still doesn't go to the bottom.' Kamanu tried to imagine what that could mean—no floor, no base, just endless down, endless ocean, endless deep, and he shivered.

'So these don't go to the bottom?' Kamanu looked back over the edge of the boat again.

'Nope. One hundred fathoms, 50 fathoms, 25, 25, 10,' he said pointing to the lines tied to the hooks on the edge of the boat. 'These shorter ones,' a couple thin lines dragged off the back, 'these ones may just catch little fish that we can use for bate.'

Kamanu watched for a minute, then, 'If it's so deep why would a fish come 10 fathoms?'

'To eat the food.'

'Oh.'

'And different fish like it at different depths. Hey keep your eye on these ones. Make sure the lines don't cross and stay straight.'

Kamanu smudged his face at the water then closed and rubbed his eyes. Patchwork colors flashed inside his lids. The sun would not be escaped. He thought about how his teacher had shown the class a diagram with one Earth, a blue sticker, fitting into the tip of just one of the many yellow flames that ringed the Sun and he then thought he felt the boat lurch. He opened his eyes again and the old man was reclining again, leaning into the bent elbow of the bulkhead with

the floppy hat over his face.

'What do we do now?'

'You keep an eye peeled.'

Kamanu pivoted around again, his hands in circles around his eyes like binoculars. The ocean and sky weren't so bright and big when he did that—it was more like the ocean he knew. He thought he could see back to Maui, but could not be sure which was Lana'i or Molokai; he had not seen them from that place before and they were just humps along the horizon. He thought maybe he should be afraid to be so far from home for the first time, and for a moment he thought of me again, but then decided that he was not afraid—not of the distance, nor of me, nor the sea, nor the deep—and the lack of fear excited him. He hopped down from his seat and landed with a clump that set the boat to slipping underneath him; he stumbled then caught his balance, and even that had not startled him. A whoop of exhilaration inflated in his stomach and squeezed out of his throat, dissolving in the ocean air.

'Would you just—just sit still,' the man grumbled from beneath his hat. He picked it up off his face to peer at Salmon. 'Take a seat. The fish will not jump into a boat that squirms like an eel.'

Salmon perched on the closest bench, facing the old man, but his excitement could not be so easily quelled. 'Will the fish really jump into the boat?'

'Erm—well, that is not quite what I meant, but it has been known to happen, you know. Flying fish.'

'Yum! I've had those. Fried with butter. But they don't really fly, right?'

'Right.'

'Their fins are like wings when they jump?'

'Ae...'

'Oh. So...'

'Yes? The question?'

'Sooo how do you know the fish will be here?'

'I don't. Like I said, we hope.' The old man snuffed. 'You picked the spot anyway.'

'No I didn't.'

'You did too.' The old man smiled. 'You want to go farther?'

'No, that's okay.'

'See what did I say? You said it was the spot yourself.'

Salmon glowered for a moment until it occurred that the old man was playing but not really making fun of him. 'So what if they don't come here?'

'Then they don't. So we move.'

'And where do you move to?'

'I know some other spots.'

'Okay. Hey. My eyes hurt.'

The old man slowly rose to his haunches turned around to the chest on which he sat. He rummaged and soon pulled out a cap, shook it and slapped it against his thigh, then tossed it to Kamanu. 'Here: wear that.'

Kamanu picked it up from where it fell to the bottom of the boat and inspected it. It was a navy blue canvas, faded and frayed. It had sucked in the air

of the sea and smelled like the old man, something like seaweed drying on the beach, but Kamanu liked it. 'I've seen this,' Kamanu said, rubbing the grayed stitching on the crown. 'New York?'

'The Yankees. The best!' the man said, moving then from line to line, checking the bobs and sighing.

'The best,' Kamanu murmured. 'The New York Yankees... The best.' The hat whispered crisp protests as the salt crusted creases curved over my boy's wiry hair. It didn't quite fit but it did the trick and he pulled the brim low over his eyes.

'Better?' the man asked.

'Much,' Kamanu said and smiled. He looked again out to the horizon. There were other islands out there, he thought. Over the horizon there were other boys, other men. There must be another boat a lot like theirs in which another man waited for a bite in the sun on the curved bubble of the ocean's surface. The realization that he was doing something that other boys and men did made Kamanu suddenly feel as if he might burst with happiness.

'You should get some of those dark glasses,' Kamanu said, turning to the man with a smile, tracing his fingers under his eyes and behind his ears. The men who lounged outside the hotel seemed especially fond of them, as did the women who sunned themselves on the white sandy beach that curved around the eastern rim of the bay.

'Hmm, I think no,' he said, sitting back down. 'You have to read the water, read the sky, see where the birds are circling. I would not want something covering my eyes.' Kamanu looked out at the horizon, away from home, away the



bay, away from Hawai'i, out toward the sea and the world beyond. He screwed up his face, checked the sky up, grazed the water down.

'I don't see anything.'

'Here.' The old man stood and his unbuttoned shirt flapped in the breeze. As he brought his arm to the sky Kamanu could see the sagging skin of his dark chest. The man reached out toward the clouds that clustered in ridges over the ocean. His fingers traced their neat rows. 'See those clouds?'

'Hum.'

'You see them?' The old man stepped over a coil of rope and pulled the brim to the top of Kamanu's forehead.

'Yes. Like the little rows we make in my mom's garden.'

'Okay—so—those are good clouds. Those clouds won't rain on us, won't bring a storm.'

'So you want to move over there?' Kamanu was eager.

'Oh, hush. You will learn.'

Kamanu sighed.

'But mostly you must wait. Maybe days,' the old man said. 'See? I suppose it seems quite dull to you now?' The old man turned and spoke quietly, as if to himself.

The boy was quiet then asked, 'Is there nothing we can *do*?'

'Well, if there is, it's nothing that I've ever found. The only thing we can really do is keep our hooks in the water, and eventually they will come.' And then, 'Just what did you have in mind to do?'

'I don't know. Like a fish call. Or a special prayer?'

The man gave a genuine laugh. 'Some men pray to St. Peter, others to Kanaloa, depending on what they believe. But I don't think either is taking my prayers.'

'Can I try?'

'Well, sure if you'd like. Go ahead then. Be my guest.'

Salmon scurried up into the bow and knelt on the bowl at the very front. The boat rose and fell beneath him and he steadied his balance. He pressed his palms together in front of him and closed his eyes. He imagined the desolate sea suddenly teeming with long beautiful fish cresting iridescent on the surface. He tried to picture what the boat would look like full of fish, and then called out, 'Poopy fish! Dumby fish! Pretty fish! Fishy fish! Hungry fish! Big big fish!' The old man began to laugh. 'Are you listening? Jump! Jump into the boat!' Kamanu stopped. 'Thank you, Peter. Amen. Mahalo Kanaloa.'

The man kept laughing and clapped a bit. 'This was a good prayer.'

Kamanu kept his eyes closed with the boat still rising and falling beneath him, and for a moment, he saw himself outside himself, from right above the boat, and then he saw the sea, still teeming, like a city, bigger than he could fathom, and he kept rising, pulling up into the atmosphere, and pulling up against the sea with invisible strands attached to him that tried to pull on him back down. And then there was a snap that he heard clearly which wasn't from the saunter of the boat. Salmon's eyes flipped open, he whipped around in the seat and stared at the man who was pointing at a cord behind him. It was pulling taught over the side,

pulling against the hook where it was fastened.

'You got a bite,' the old man murmured, but did not move from where he sat on the box.

'What!? I did?' Kamanu hollered. 'What did I do? What do I do!?'

'Well I guess you'd better catch him.'

Kamanu hopped up from his seat and scrambled to the bottom of the boat. He closed his hands around the rope as if he were sneaking up on a snake. It wobbled back and forth in his grip and he let it go again.

'Like this?' he asked. Then, in a moment, the line went slack. He gave it a little tug. 'Did we lose it?'

The man's body told him nothing. He tugged on the rope a little harder, and it sprang to life again, tugging back.

'It's here, it's here!'

The old man moved the hat to the back of his head and peered over the side of the canoe. 'Well well well, it is it is it is.' He looked down at the boy who looked back at him. 'Take a look for yourself.'

The boy clasped the gunnels, pulled himself up and peered over the side. The fish had risen and was a silver shadow nested in the blue. It was not so large, judging at that distance, but it was big enough, and it fought at the line, looking strong. Kamanu sank to the bottom of the boat, eyes wide.

'You do not have to be scared of the fish. You are bigger than it.' The man paused. 'But it may be meaner than you. Still you cannot let it frighten you.' He watched the fish go down deep again. 'I have been doing this so long I cannot

remember my first catch. Reaching that far back would require too much unfolding of other things, but I survived, and so will you!

'I'm not *scared*. Not for me.'

The old man edged forward. 'Well then what on Earth is the matter? Pull that sucker in!'

'It's just that,' Kamanu wasn't even sure until he realized, 'I don't think—I don't think that I really want to catch him.'

The old man got up. 'Ai, okay, here, get out of the way.' He pulled his hat down tight against the wind that had begun to rise and climbed toward where Kamanu crouched. 'Get out of the way!'

Kamanu jumped up but stood near, his little hands outstretched in front of him. 'Wait, wait! What—what are you going to do?'

'What the hell do you think I'm going to do? I am a fisher. I catch fish.' The man eased the extra loop of line that would give him the slack he needed from a short wooden peg. 'But the fish can fight,' he crouched down in the boat and kept the rope levered over the gunnel, skittering in a curved groove that wore there, 'and sometimes he will go.' He pressed his feet against the bulkhead then steadily and slowly pulled the rope in.

'You just wrap it around your arm?' Kamanu still felt for the fish but the tightening rope strung between the old man's elbow and fist looked painful as it wore at the skin.

'Yes... it... is... how... we... fish...' he grunted as he kept pulling the line in.

'Jesus.'

Soon the fish was whipping up the water just outside the boat.

'Now—Just...' the old man dropped the hand that was wrapped in rope to a cleat in the bottom of the boat. He pried one end of the loop around it, '...watch,' then scraped the rope off his elbow and secured that end of the loop to another cleat. The line gave a little lurch as the fish fought for some slack, but it stayed terminally hooked. 'Stand back now.'

Kamanu moved beyond the wooden bench and crouched down, keeping his gaze on the old man. The man leaned out over the water and strained up on the thrashing line. Kamanu couldn't see but he heard the fish slap against the boat and he cringed, then quick as anything, the fish rattled and gasped against the bottom of the boat, the end of the hook sticking right through the side of its head. 'No, don't!' he yelled when he saw the old man swing a wooden club.

When the fish was stunned but still barely gasping, the man sat down, and dropped the club to roll in the hull. His pulled at his hands and fingers: his back was hunched. 'Don't what?' he growled.

Kamanu didn't answer. He stayed where he huddled. 'Is it dead?'

'Just nearly. Not too bad for your first catch little man!' The old man was still happy. 'You know boy,' the old man laughed, 'I think you made this fish jump into the boat after all!'

Kamanu became even more distraught. 'No! I didn't!'

'You didn't? I don't know. Such a nice fish. Yes, it is a good sign for sure. A good story in the least—you can tell your kids how you called to the fish.'

'I said, I didn't. I didn't,' Kamanu said. 'I think—I think I...' as he began to

cry, 'Can we go home now?'

At home I could hear Kamanu cry, and I became distraught with worry again. But I should clarify; I did not quite hear him cry, not in the way you hear a truck rumble up the road. I ran outside where Ipo was digging in the yard, already back from his morning fish, and I said, 'I can feel him crying. My God, so strange—like I felt when he was a baby.' It was like a pulsing presence, crowding against my lungs, pulling at my heart. And that was when I knew for sure that Kamanu and I would never truly be apart.

I sat and was quiet and could feel the shape of sadness that had brought his tears. It was not the jagged lonely sob he had wailed when still newborn, but something soft and gentle, a rounder kind of sadness. I was so focused upon it, I soon realized there was a tear upon my cheek. And then, something a bit unexpected, my own heart swelled with pride. I felt his lovely tenderness and wrapped my love around that little part of him that I felt crying deep inside. The crying soon ceased, and I was able to resume my daily chores with my mind quieter and more at ease. I felt sure my boy would be home soon for the food and comfort here. I was right, although I admit it took much longer than I had expected—I did not know until later how far they had gone to sea. And when he arrived it was a surprise to see the old man with him.

'Mama,' I heard Salmon call as he tripped down the path to the house. 'Mama!' I rushed out to the patch of swept dirt right in front of the house, prepared to catch and hold my son. I was briefly dazzled by the glaring sun and, as when

Ipo first arrived, through outstretched and parted fingers I saw my son in blackened outline, transformed to an aged man. I gasped and grasped at my chest. Silly you might say, thinking some evil had been done, turning my little boy to an old man. The old man I saw twisted, and shouted, 'Hey!' and a load shifted then clunked from his shoulder to the ground. My vision began to adjust to the vivid colors around, and I saw Salmon there. I had not lost him to the sea or a spell, oh what relief! He had returned and was running toward me from behind the old bearded man. I knelt down and wrapped around him and kissed his warm round cheeks, then quietly said, 'You know you're in trouble don't you?'

'Yes,' was his cheery response. What could I do? I held him there against me a moment more. I could feel his heart near mine and they beat in time. I squeezed him tight then let him go and stood straight and big and turned to address some choice to the old man. But before I could spit a vowel I saw a look in his face that was so soft and sorry.

'Mama!' Kamanu pulled on my wrist.

'Yes boy,' I said. I looked back down at him. His eyes were bright though still rimmed in a crust of tears. More important to me, I could see a certain focus where there shifting restlessness usually lay in his eye. His face was more like a boy's, calmer and more joyful. The transformation was a small wonder. I wrapped a hand under his chin and he smiled once again.

'Mama,' he said, 'I have something to tell you, but promise not to yell.'

'You know I cannot promise such a thing, but tell me anyway.' I looked again at the ancient fisher. I knew him from the town. He had already been old

when I was young and our paths had crossed before. He stood there still, his eyes then hidden by the brim of his hat, but I could tell his body listened. 'Go on, what is it then?'

'We went out to the ocean, Mama,' Kamanu confessed, 'and I caught a fish!'

Rarely was he so near joyful that I was not sure how to react. 'Oh did you now?' I had figured nearly as much, and looked at the man again.

'Yes,' the old man finally spoke. 'We did.'

I placed a hand on my son's head, slid off the blue cap that still sat there, and then pulled him close once more. Had he grown? He began to wriggle like a lizard then and I knew I would not much longer be able to keep him near, though he was just past 10.

The old man bent to the wrap of the sail and wrested with a knot a bit before Kamanu went and stuck his fingers into the old man's grasp. The old man silently withdrew but stayed crouching, watching, and soon Salmon held a soggy bundle up toward me. 'See?'

'Okay, yes, I see, I see. Now take it inside. I will clean it for dinner.'

Kamanu began to peel off the wet paper and said, 'Wait, look.'

'Inside. Please,' my patience began to leave.

Kamanu ducked his head and took his first catch into the little house, and I had a serious talk with the old man who had taken my little boy out to the sea.

When I dismissed the old man and went back inside, I found Ipo and Kamanu bent over the fish inside the sink with the layers of newspaper peeled



back. Ipo was saying softly, '...it is strange for you? You have eaten salmon many times before.'

I listened to the rustle of the paper then, 'What is?' I had to ask.

'The fish,' Kamanu said, 'it's a me.'

'It's a you? What on Earth...!' The awful image of a long lean silver fish with the blue bug-eyed face of a boy laying in the kitchen sink flashed through my mind.

'See, come look,' Ipo murmured with a smile.

I walked over to the sink and there it lay, 'It's a salmon,' I stated and I realized what he meant.

'It's a salmon,' Kamanu repeated. 'Kamanu!' and he looked up at me and raised his arms and flexed his muscles and said his name again in a deep voice, 'Kamanu, the Mighty Salmon!' and then he smiled again.

'Yes, well it is a very pretty fish,' I admitted.

'I love you Mister Salmon,' Kamanu whispered in a funny sing-song voice to the fish that lay in the sink.

Ipo made a face over the head the boy with raised eyebrows and a half smile to say, 'Well what do you think of that?' It was a side of Kamanu we rarely ever saw before. I couldn't help but smile and laugh; our boy was growing and something new and confident and funny was emerging.

But, as nice as you might think that would be, to catch a glimpse of who your child might be as a man, I think most mothers could understand why my breath caught after I laughed and I held it for a moment, as if I might hold back

time, hold back change, hold on to my little boy. I sighed into the thick curling cowlicks of his dark dark hair, the same shade of dark as his daddy's, and I bent and kissed his head and could taste and smell the salt of the ocean there, just like his daddy's matted hair when he would bring a fish to me, beaming. I said, 'It is a great little salmon that you brought me.' He giggled then, so I repeated his words to him, 'And I love YOU little Salmon,' and I hugged him tight from behind and kissed his head again. Ipo gave a little laugh, placed one hand on Kamanu's shoulder, murmured as if to himself, 'Little Salmon,' as he leaned up against the sink looking first at our boy and then at me. We were content that day there in the kitchen. We took to calling him Salmon after that and he called himself the same.

It did not take long for the relief of his safety to drain away and for my anger take over. In fact it was only a few minutes later, while I was thinking how I might manage punishing the boy, and after Ipo had cleaned and gutted the fish, when Salmon lifted the rosy meat from the sink without a word and began to carry it toward the door that I stamped my foot down and barked, 'Where do you think you are going now?'

He turned with an officious glare and announced that he was 'going to give the fish a proper burial.'

'Ha!' It was a sarcastic laugh. 'Oh no you're not!' and I was behind him in a flash. I lifted him from the floor and plopped him down at the table, still clutching the meat of the fish in his hands. I took the fish and gave it to Ipo who was just standing there, and I gave him a look of his own. The fish's guts were in a paper

bag on the counter so I picked up the soggy sack and plopped it down on the table in front of Salmon and told him, 'The purpose of the fish is for us to eat. Here, go on and burry these,' and so he did, out under the tree near the spot where his placenta had been, although I don't think he ever knew that.

We ate dinner. Salmon was hungry and he ate the fish. But as he did so he held his nose as if the fresh meat somehow smelled. It was his small protest. Although he loved me, it was always hard for him to let me to be right. I ignored this gesture of dissent and instead I spoke with Ipo of the harder days in my family when I was a girl, when fish would not bite and we had little bread and we went weeks eating taro and greens at sunup to sundown until I thought of my little round belly like a brown balloon, bloating on starches with no protein to consume. Of course even then there were always fruits to gather, which Salmon well knew, so I didn't think to mention.

After dinner Salmon went out to the yard to pout a bit while Ipo and I had a quiet talk. Salmon would not stay a boy much longer, Ipo said, echoing my thoughts; said he would keep wandering out of our reaches; said the safest thing would be to take him out fishing with him, he could help on Ipo's boat—and take him far but keep him close. I refused. Ipo did not argue, although he understood more than I gave him credit for—both that I could not, would not, give my over to the sea then and that it would happen whether I liked it or not.

The following morning I was sure to be up before Salmon. I went and sat on his little bed and lay my hand softly on his head. He opened his eyes half way

and wrapped one arm around my leg, pulling his body close. 'Did you sleep alright, little Salmon?'

'Mhmm,' he said, and closed his eyes again. We could be friends again.

'Did you dream?' I asked.

'Yes, I did. I had a very nice dream.' As he fell asleep or slept, he said, he thought of many things. He thought of the snap of the wind in the sails, the way the spray of a wave rose over the boat. He thought of the deep deep sea, deeper than a secret, deeper than the sky, full of every color, like his moods, he said. He thought of the fish, how they live how they swim, where up and down and side to side and all around is the world, where nothing is flat but an always open weightless universe to explore. Then he thought what it might be like to never know the land to never know the stars to never know the life that was his, and that part made him sad. He thought of the air that floats above the ocean, how it would kill him if he left the water for too long. And then he said he tried to hold his breath. Flashing lights flew into the dark and then there was the rocking quiet. The stillness, the peace, they were nice, but then he remembered he was holding his breath and exhaled with a gasp like this: Choohaaa... He dreamed of the old man with his big knuckles over the knob of the paddle, breathing heavy, rowing them back to shore when the wind died down. Then he was the oar and he was helping the man. His head was smooth in the old man's calloused hand, his feet were wide and flat. He dipped and rose, bobbed and dove, a prying lever pushing against the water, easing the boat along, helping the old man home. He said dreamed of the old man's smell and dreamed some words that he had said. They

seemed special and rare like gifts he said, but he could not remember them then. He dreamed of the old man's daughter and how special she must feel, and he wondered if there was something special about her, too, and then his dream went to the sea again. He slid down the hillside with the wind and into the bay at night. He slipped into the warm water and he was a fish again. He knifed through the darkness, he said, moving his hands back and forth like a fish. He rose and curved around the invisible turns in the water as if all that open space had a shape. He swam just to swim and to feel the water rushing over him, making the quick turns of an S. He felt certain he was moving toward something, faster and faster, faster than a bird, faster than a snap, faster than fast, heading into the open black. And then I woke him, he said, opening his eyes again with a little smile. 'And I was me, and you were here,' he said. And then, 'I'm hungry. Can I have a big huge pancake to eat?'

Children can have such short memories. I gave him a banana mashed in milk and glass of guava juice and told him he would stay home to spend the day doing chores for running off to sea. This news did not make him happy.

At mid-morning Salmon was outside cleaning up the yard when I began to hear him yell: 'One fifty-two!... one fifty-three!... one... fifty... FOUR!' Small cones, hard like nuts, gathered in the grass below short feathery pine trees around the house. I had told him to throw the cones down the hill. He had asked how many; I told him ten thousand, or all of them, whichever he got to first. I suppose I knew even when I said it that either amount would be unreasonable, but some day you will see, I think, that parenting is often beyond reason. These are the

things we do to keep a child close, to keep him safe, to raise him right.

He kept on counting, sometimes loud sometimes quieter. I watched him from a while, bending down then standing up with a sweep of his arm back and over all the way with his body, not just a casual toss. At times he would point at the ocean between the gap in the trees and I could tell he was thinking of flinging those little cones like stones into the water.

At 'Nine hundred ninety THREE!' his punishment had become my own so I came up with an errand and called him back inside. He came in a few minutes, reluctant and smeared with dirt. He would not look at me; it was clear his feelings were still hurt. I sent him to the market in town for some dinner foods, and giving him two dollars I tried to show I was not in a bad mood. Before he left I wiped his face, kissed his head and said I love you.

Salmon sighed and 'I'll see you soon,' was all that he said. He wiped a hand across his face as if to remove the touch of mine and he turned and walked then ran back into the day.

As he sprinted from the yard Salmon's heart spun like a compass searching for a pole. He was upset, though no longer angry, frustrated by being kept at home. Had what he done been wrong? He had gone out with a nice man who needed help, a man who he had liked, and he had brought home a fish. He did not think it had been so wrong though he knew he had disobeyed and he did not like to feel in trouble, did not like to disappoint. He felt both lost and trapped, unable to trust the direction of his wandering heart.

And so he went on down the hill into the center of town. The market is set

in a central square just back from the bay. One corner of the square is anchored by the Arms hotel which faces toward the water. In the opposite corner is a banyan tree with a dozen trunks and tendrils of roots reaching down toward the ground. Old men like to sit in the shade and smoke cigars while they watch the people thread through the stalls and catch the gossip on the wind as it blows through the town. Many of the stands catered to the tourists' tastes: bright shirts, woven hats, necklaces made of flowers they could pick from the side of the road if they cared to wander a bit farther out of town. But it was not just for the tourists as it was central still to how the people of the town met and bought and sold and kept themselves fed.

The square is clearly defined by the dark volcanic stone paving with contained within a sunken rectangle like a shallow pool that must be stepped down into. If you stand on the edge outside of the market, you can easily see around stalls—about six or eight with fruits and roots and vegetables, several more sold the fish that the men brought in each day, with at least twice as many over selling all the other wares. Salmon stood there on the ledge of the market surveying the Sunday crowd: a group of little girls dancing together in white skirts, their long-hair mothers standing huddled beside a stall selling curving gourds; the unsmiling man with a parrot on his head and a little sign 'pitchers' around his neck; a haole woman screeched in delight at the tank where girls with nimble fingers planted little milky pearls inside of oysters' craws. And then in an instant of recognition, as if the whole scene, the whole day, the direction of his wandering momentum suddenly came into clear focus, he saw her, the old man's

daughter. He saw her differently than he had before because she did not see him as he watched. Her face was uncomposed, unaware, she seemed herself to be just wandering through the market crowd. She was without her mother, holding her own hands' fingers woven below her waist, loose curls hanging into her face. Something about her, the way she looked, so independent yet curious and innocent mad his heart beat with an extra strength that was strong and new. It was as if some crease had unfolded there was a steady growing in his chest. Salmon let out a happy sigh.

He watched her as she walked then paused, exchanging small greetings with some vendors, then ambling on. As she turned away from one stall, just ten feet or so off, she glanced up and caught Salmon with a full-on look across the face. It was just a moment but it was enough and Salmon flushed but he did not look away as her lips twitched open the smallest half smile and the fingers of one hand rose away from the others as if it might rise to wave, but did not. She looked away then walked on along the row without another pause before reaching the table selling splintered stalks of sugarcane where a small group of boys bartered with the old toothless man who stood solemn there. It was the quickest pause, just a flick of of the bouncing waves in her hair, a fragile little smile to the man, but Salmon saw what really happened there as she walked on, her hands tucked close in front of her, and Salmon's face and heart grinned.

She walked on again lost in the crowd, away from Salmon and up the step out of the market place. Salmon stayed where he stood as she walked around the edge, her head still low. She stopped at Salmon's side and still did not look at him,



though he murmured 'loha' and gave a little wave.

She said, 'Come,' and so Salmon followed her into the far corner of the square under the banyan tree. There she stopped and looked at him then, and gave another little smile. Then with a nod of her head she moved deeper into the shade. She stopped under a thick gnarled branch which long ago had reached down for the earth. A solid column of wood stood there, joining the ground and the tree. It curved gently back toward the thick main trunk, close enough for the two tangles of roots to join like the girl's brown folded fingers.

'Here, sit,' she said, kneeling down where two seats were worn smooth in the wood by years kids crouching against the columns of the tree. She crawled into one of the seats and crouched there, wrapping her skirt around her knees. Salmon knelt and scooted in, crossing his legs the same. She brushed her hair behind her ears and pulled the sticky stick from her lap. She giggled then, and Salmon laughed, for no reason that he understood, but he felt good! Sitting across from her like that crouching down in the little nest they were shut off from the bigger people who shuffled around under the tree while he still had two dollars in his pocket.

'Here,' she said sticking the cane toward Salmon, 'break it up.'

Salmon took it, it was split part way down the soft center. He dug his fingers in where it was cracked and pulled it with a twist and it cracked some more. He worked his fingers in a little more and tugged it again and had two a halves.

'Hey, pretty good,' she said. He smiled, and stuck one end of the sugarcane

in his mouth and sucked and gnawed it for a second, sucking the sweetness from the pulp.

'You...' was all he could say.

She stared at him. 'My father said this morning that you caught a fish.'

'I did not.' Salmon said.

'Alright,' she said.

'What's your name?'

'Kali,' she said. 'You are Kamanu.'

He stared at her some more. 'Yes. So you remembered me.'

'Of course. My father does not take boys out to the ocean, ever.'

'Oh.'

'He must like you.'

Salmon flushed and looked away.

'Well so you caught a fish.'

'Okay, yes I sort of caught a fish. But I am not sure if it was right.'

'Hmm. Right?'

'I did not mean to catch it. I called to it but when it came I realized I did not want it.'

'Ha! You're crazy boy. Calling the fish? And you know that catching a fish is not like catching a cold, right? It's a good thing. You eat fish, right?'

It was hard for him to answer but, 'It was so pretty in the ocean. I don't know. You should have seen it.'

'I see,' she said looking straight into him in a way that made him think that

maybe she really did see. 'But, I have caught and killed many many fish.'

Salmon did not respond then, 'Ew,' and, 'how many?'

'I don't know. Fifty. More. I like to fish. But he does not take me much now. Mama doesn't want me to.' She sucked on the cane. 'You?'

'Huh?'

'How many have you caught?'

'Oh. Just one.'

'Just the runner yesterday?'

'Actually it was a salmon.'

She laughed and then, 'Mmm yum! I love salmon.'

'Yes,' he said suddenly proud, 'it is my name,' then as if to verify, 'It's what my mother calls me.'

She laughed and he still smiled, 'Yes, the kamanu is a salmon, Salmon... Salmon salmonella.'

'What?'

'Oh, never mind.'

'Okay.'

'Okay, well I have to go home my mother will be mad.'

'Okay.'

'K. 'Loha!' and she ducked out from underneath the tree and ran out to the street on that side, and Salmon was left there chewing on the stick of cane even after the sweet gave out. He was hooked.

What is the heart after all? It is an organ. It pumps blood. Every animal has one. Some animals have more than one. But still, it must be that there is some magic in the heart because our heart knows so many things our brains cannot. The heart will know when we feel hurt, though our brain will know every reason why we should not. The heart will know if something is real, will know if someone has been untrue. The blood that goes through us, that touches every bit of what makes us, goes in cycles through the heart. That must count for something. The heart pushes the blood through our bodies and the heart pulls us through our lives. We must follow it.

So what about a broken heart? That too we follow. A broken heart will try fix itself in the way that it best sees fit, whether it's ever the right decision or not.

Salmon brought me the things I had asked for from the market and again he appeared to me changed. He sat down and helped me prepare for dinner, and after that he said, 'Mom, I think I would really like to learn to fish.'

'I see,' I told him. 'You went off already without asking me.'

'Yes, I know.' He said, 'I should not have done that. I know that it was wrong.'

'You don't go away without telling me.'

'I know Mom.'

'Okay.'

'So then...'

'What?'

'I have to learn to fish.'

Do you know how frustrating a child can be? How difficult to control? I bet your mothers do. Children always have to do what they want to do. If you are your father's sons, I know you are this way. I bet every single one.

So anyway I told him no, he could not. But he surprised me, and said, 'Okay. For now,' then went off and secretly pouted.

That week Salmon was on time for school every single day. He brushed his teeth before bed, even after we ran out of tooth paste. He did not torture his teacher that week or conduct silly capers with Mackenzie. Instead he taught her how to play a game. They played Go Fish—not with the cards but a different sort that he made up—she could tell him to get her anything she needed and he would fetch it for her, as long as she said, 'Go fish!' It was his way of being nice. He brought her crayons, a ruler, scraps of paper, and a bunch of flowers; one day he even brought her sliced pineapple for lunch. It was his way of making up for past deeds, and he kept at it surprising enough.

Of course he knew the way his father went, that much he understood. But I guess once he saw his path it felt inevitable, and in order for me to let him follow it, he would show he could be good.

He asked me several times that week if he could go with the old man again. Of course I told him no. But still he kept it up. After another week of his good behavior and his nice asking, he started to wear me out. One week more, and I'd had enough. The niceness was harder to put up with than any of his messing around. One Friday over dinner Salmon asked again, 'What if I went out with the man again this weekend? I'm sure if I asked he wouldn't mind.'

I told him, 'NO. No no NO. And that is final final FINAL.' Ipo looked away as he often did when I spoke to Salmon rough.

Later on while we were in bed, Ipo took up Salmon's case. He was not as patient as he usual was when he said, 'I think it's time you give it up.'

'I hope you don't mean what I think you mean,' I told him.

'Salmon,' he said.

'Oh God, you too. Again?'

'I think it's time.'

'What the hell is the matter with you?' I tried to whisper. 'Do you know nothing of fate? Or how about the hunger of the sea?'

'I know that you think the ocean has... desire. I know you think you can save him if you never let him leave.'

'That is not what I asked.'

'Do you think your boy does not also hunger? It seems clear that this is not something that he just wants. It is something that he feels.'

'Oh please. Don't try to use my own beliefs on me. It won't work. I also feel and need.'

'Well don't you think this is a need for Salmon? I have never seen him so focused. Or eager to please.'

'Maybe he thinks it is a need for him.' I considered it. 'But why must he go to the sea?'

'I am not sure. Maybe he saw something there. Maybe the old man... Maybe his father... Maybe me...'

'Maybe what?'

'I think he wants to do something. He may still seem young but he is growing. He needs a way for him to feel proud,' and then he thought, 'this is just the way he sees how.'

'He could play football,' there were older kids who played in a field on the edge of the town.

'He is too small.' His frame was thin his movements light, not rough like some other boys.

'He could... He could be a runner.' It was lame, I knew. The truth is I never thought much on what Salmon would be, only on what he would not.

'Ha. Yes. A runner. But that is pretty useless don't you think?' Ipo propped up on one elbow to better look at me. 'But a fisher, that is someone with know-how.'

I could see in his eyes that he was not just talking about Salmon, somehow there was also a question of Ipo's trade. I understood how boys and men can be—a need to move, to be outside, to feel useful, always to be appreciated, to struggle, to persevere, to survive, and to provide. That seed is in all men, and in you, it is just a matter of when it spouts and grows. I also knew that competition is also closely tied to pride. 'Just what do you have in mind?'

'Nothing crazy. Just take him out, like the old man did. Show him the ropes. Maybe have a little fun.'

'Fun? I would not want him having fun. I want him safe.'

'Well call it what you want, but I think that he thinks it will be fun. I mean,

he thinks that it is.' And then, 'I think he had fun with the old man, I guess, is what I mean to say.'

'Ah. I see,' and I gently touched Ipo's face that hovered so close to mine. I had never thought Ipo would be jealous. That the old man had taken our boy out, that Salmon had seemed to enjoy it when he returned, meant that the old man was ahead in some manly competition. 'But no, he is not going to go out fishing.'

'Okay,' is all that Ipo said and rolled over. He lay away from me most of the night. Somehow I could feel it was a turning point. I could not let fate take its course so fate turned against me. Early two mornings later, Ipo took Salmon with him out to sea.

I was still asleep in bed when Salmon woke to someone's heavy breathing realizing it was Ipo. He had risen even earlier than usual and he sat on the edge of the boy's bed with a polished wooden box in his hands. Salmon sat up and said, 'What?'

'Meet me outside,' Ipo whispered, then quietly rose, went the door, looked back at Salmon, and then walked outside. Salmon lay there for a few moments—this was not normal behavior of course—then slowly rose to dress and follow. Ipo had already walking out the yard and into the road where he stood waiting for Salmon. 'Do you think you can kill a fish?' he asked the boy when he approached.

Salmon stopped and looked away and then, 'Yes I think I can.'

'You think. I know.'

'If you say so.'



Ipo laughed. 'Well it will not always be so easy as your first time anyway.'

'Okay.' Salmon smiled and Ipo hefted the mast and his gear again when Salmon told him, 'Wait!' and ran back into the house to get the faded blue baseball cap and then ran back out. When Ipo saw the old man's hat on Salmon's head, something in him hardened just a bit and he turned in the waking road to walk on down to the bay. Salmon following behind watching Ipo balance the load on one thick shoulder.

Down on the beach where the boats were kept, morning came up around them. Salmon sprinted on ahead of Ipo down the line of boats, passed them all and then ran out and splashed into the water. Ipo smiled, to him this was good, this was natural. 'Hey!' Ipo called when he got to this boat, 'Here!' Salmon turned and sprinted back up the beach.

He stopped a little way down the line of boats and called, 'Hey! This one's the old man's!'

'Yes,' Ipo spoke. 'I know all of these boats little one.'

'Sure, I know,' Salmon said.

Ipo rigged the boat. Salmon noticed it was a little bigger and seemed less worn away. There was a fresh coat of a light royal blue with a thin line of yellow around the bottom of the hull and buoy of the outrigger. 'I like the paint,' Salmon said.

'This is the buoy. It keeps the boat from tipping over.'

'I know.'

'Okay. This is the arm. You push on the arm but when the water is to your

waist you pull yourself up and in.'

'Right.'

They pushed the boat out into the water just as it caught the glint of sun peaking over the hills.

'It is for the fish,' Ipo said. 'The paint.'

Salmon pulled himself up from the water and flopped down into the bottom of boat calling, 'Ow!'

Ipo gave the boat another shove then hoisted himself in too. Salmon had a scratch along the side of his calve with blood starting to swell along it. 'How did you do that?'

'I don't know,' Salmon was annoyed. 'Scatched it on something.'

'Be more careful.'

'It hurts.'

'Well sure. Here.' Ipo swooped down and scooped his hand in a cup down into the water and up to splash on Salmon's leg.

'Oh. OUCH!'

'It is not deep. You will be just fine. Hold your hand on it like this.' Ipo took Salmon's hand in his and pressed it against the scratch with his own on top of it. The boat bobbed in the easy morning waves.

'Ow.'

'Hush now. Sit down. I must row out.' Salmon scrambled up to his feet and toward the bow, setting the boat to rocking.

'No!' Ipo called, firm in a way that he rarely used. Salmon turned back

toward Ipo who was pulling the paddle hard. 'Back here!' he kicked one foot against the seat that was directly across from him. Salmon thought to resist then did as he was told. As they moved out to the chop in the middle of the bay where the wind was higher, Salmon turned and pointed, 'That is where I sat when I went out before. It made my belly go like this,' he rose one hand into the air and turned it over.

'That was another boat.' The wind had caught the sail and still Ipo paddled hard. Salmon could feel the surge of the strokes and Ipo's huffing breath, sitting near enough to count the beads of sweat that gathered above his lip as they cleared the mouth of the bay. Salmon watched the arms of the man as they pumped twice on one side then swung the paddle over with a dripping arc so fast that it was hard to say that it ever left the water.

Ipo's body was like a block of wood and when he bent at his waist and drove the paddle through the water it shook the boat and they went as if the boat were trying to run away from under him. He was good at that boat. If he got caught up in a race, as sometimes happened between two men when they paddled out into the sea, almost always he'd outlast and pull away from the other before reaching the mouth of the bay. Salmon tried not to stare at the muscles jumping and bulging out of Ipo's arms and neck and thighs. As the waves came up against the boat Ipo batted them back with the flat side of the oar or if the wave came cresting over it would just roll roll off down his back. He wore a thick shirt like the cloth of a sail and nylon swimming trunks. Salmon stayed where he sat and pulled the hat from the back pocket of his cut-off pants and pulled it down tight

over his head. He began to realize that not only was the man very strong, but he was also very good at what he did.

Once they coasted out a ways with the island's coast still well in sight, Ipo set to baiting hooks. He handed one to Salmon, already tied to a line, and then stuck his hand into a bucket where he sat and pulled out a thin silver fish squirming an inch on either end in his thick fist.

'Woah! Where the hell did that come from?'

'Hey.' Ipo slapped the tips of his fingers down on Salmon's knee. 'You don't say that.'

Salmon rolled his eyes.

'It came from the bucket.'

'Gross,' but then he stuck out his hand.

'Here,' Ipo said, 'Take it by the head,' and when Salmon hesitated, 'Go on. Hold it hard. Harder. Now don't let go. Hey, good. Stick it on the hook.'

'Ugh.' Salmon could feel it moving less and then it just twitched a bit.

'Stick it through the eyes. Go ahead. Push it through. Like this.' Ipo took Salmon's two hands in his with the barbed metal hook in one and the little fish in the other and he brought the hands together and held them firm as he threaded the sharp hook through the eye of fish and Salmon felt it in his fingers the popping through oozing flesh, thin bone, and then out again. A dribble of dark blood came through the other side and he thought he would be sick. 'Now just drop it in the water. The weight will take it down,' and Salmon did as he was told. 'There you go. That wasn't so bad,' Ipo smiled then patted Salmon as he stood up from a

crouch and Salmon shook his head and knew that he couldn't cry, not like the time before. They set the baits and then sat quiet on the water until Salmon grew restless.

'What did mother say about us fishing?'

Ipo was quiet, then, 'No.'

'You mean she said no?'

'Yes.'

'Oh. No, Mama doesn't know?'

'Your mama doesn't know. And I didn't tell her.' Salmon laughed at thinking of getting something over on me. 'She's probably figured something out by now, though.' They both thought to themselves what that might mean.

The two spent most of the rest of the day on the water. They talked a bit but something about Ipo out there made Salmon quiet. Ipo had packed a lunch. They didn't catch any fish. Strangely, It never occurred to Salmon to pray to fish as he had done on the first day. Something about Ipo's confidence and capability seemed to make it feel unnecessary. Salmon grew restless and in the early afternoon Ipo said, 'We will head back soon. But first,' he reached into the sack he had brought and pulled out the box Salmon had at first seen when Ipo woke him that morning. 'It was your father's,' Ipo said. Salmon grew very quiet inside. Ipo handed him the box.

It was a squarish thing—about half the size of a cigar box—made out of something like corkwood varnished dark and smooth on all its sides. Salmon

pulled the top from the bottom and looked in. 'Hooks.' He said. 'Oh pretty!' Caught in the loops of a tufted strap of leather were half-a-dozen different fishhooks, a couple ornately carved, others worn and scarred. One had a large serrated shark's tooth lashed to it. Salmon looked up. 'These were my father's?'

'Yes, and his father's. And a couple were your great-granddad's, I think.'

'Wow—' Is all that Salmon could say. Then, 'Why?'

'These are the great hooks. These hooks have stories. These are their great catches. Or they made them specially. I'm sorry to say I do not remember quite which stories go with which hooks. But a couple of them, like this one,' Ipo pulled one that did not seem like a hook at all at first, carved into interweaving loops like waves meeting at the bottom in the shape of a sea turtle, which did have sharp barbed feet, 'he said had special powers. Although I do not know quite what they do. Mostly protection from the sea.' Salmon felt a wildness and wonder contained in the box in his hands. The lives that he held, the stories there, impossible to retrieve, and he felt a burning curiosity.

'And these—they are for me?'

'They are yours now, always were. You are the next in the line of fishers. But I will hold them for you for now.'

'Why?' Salmon quickly put the lid back on the box. 'I want them for my collection!'

'I will tell you something else. You see I am trusting you today because these hooks are kind of secret. Your mama does not know about—'

Salmon did not understand but he liked the thought of keeping secrets with

Ipo from me. 'Okay. It's a secret. And you will keep them hidden for me?'

'Yes.'

'And if I want to see them you will get them for me?'

'If the time is right.'

'I did not know you could keep secrets from mama!' Salmon said with a laugh, meaning it for Ipo, himself, and anyone in general.

'I do not like to. But there are things she does not know. These were Makani's. She kept many things and I kept these. But they are yours.' The sailboat turned slowly on the water. 'Your father hid them as well. I do not even know if she knows that they're...' Ipo scooped up a paddle and stirred the water. 'She probably thinks they went down with him.'

When they got home that day, it was difficult not to be furious, to not scratch at Ipo and slap my boy and tell them both they're selfish idiots. But Ipo was working to be Salmon's father and I could not stop him from doing what a father is meant to do with his boy. Much better than hanging around the home with me or running around the streets, I kept on telling myself. I'm not sure anyone could rightfully say if I was right either way, or if I wasn't. Maybe you can judge.

Salmon went out with Ipo for the next eleven weekends but each time they did not catch a fish. However Ipo ended up teaching Salmon many things about the work of being a fisher: how to pull with his back so his spine moved like a shovel prying the dirt, to maneuver the boat by sail and to row on the open water. Ipo also had some talks with him. He told him stories, stories that he was

supposed to pass on, stories that he never would tell me and I never could find out. He also told him about the things that happen between a man and a woman, what we like to call the birds and the bees. And Salmon told him about what had happened with Kali, and how he wanted to impress her by catching a big fish. Ipo said that he was sure they would, and though he did fine during the week while he was on his own, Salmon was not lucky for Ipo's boat. Ipo told him they should take a break until the fish started biting again

My boys, I am having this strange sort of experience. Been having it all day, a few days maybe. I am in the same place but it is as if I have never been there before. It's almost a feeling. Everything is familiar and predictable but I am still seeing it as a stranger would. I put a lotion in the fridge at some point and didn't even realize it until I went to get the milk. Do you ever do that? But all day like that. I don't know how else to describe it. I think it may have to do with so much thinking about these things. Things are in a new light? But I don't know that's not it either. Anyway my memory's still intact. I'm going to lay down for a bit.

*The young man looked up from the written page for a moment, gazing out to the sea before folding the pages into thirds and sliding them back into their envelope. He pulled the sheaf from the second envelope and again began to read.*

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My Dear Boys,

It has taken me much longer than I thought it would to sit back down and keep writing to you. I have had these pages, I keep them in the little table right next to my night stand. I can write here while I'm sitting in bed if I want. But I just haven't been feeling much up to it lately.

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Maybe I should tell you more about who I am today, where I live now. I mentioned before that I no longer live in that little house up on the hill. I moved out of there oh, some years ago, after Ipo left—he was taken by the sea, too. You see, there was some time after Salmon took off that we were both quite out of sorts. The unusual part of our lives was laid fully exposed and that kind of thing, there is just no way to ignore. We were left behind, Ipo and I. Of course I cannot rightfully say that anything was Ipo's fault, he was just caught in the winds that were set spinning many years before, but then again I cannot help but think what would have happened had he not interfered. Ignorance is bliss, they say. I know he only ever meant to do what was right, but I could not let go of knowing that he kept things from me, and then when he revealed them they chased Salmon away. None of this will make much sense to you at this point, and soon I will explain, but first about Ipo and his end.

Friends of his had been talking about fishing in the north—this was well after Salmon had left—pulling in a thousand dollars a day in pink Salmon along the coast of Alaska. It seemed much more money than either of us could dream and so he saved for a ticket and we were both excited the day that he left. I went with him to the airport in Kahului. It was the first time either of us had been. He

went Kahului to Honolulu to San Francisco to Anchorage then got himself to Kodiak—another island pretty much straight north of here if you were to take a boat. At Kodiak he joined a boat crewed by a captain and three other hands, all white, and seemed to make particular friends with one named Jack Stripe. Though Ipo knew the fish and sea this was a very different place; he had never fished with the trolling nets that caught everything floating behind, but he did learn quick enough. After two weeks, he told me, the captain waved his mangled hand at him with two fingers no more than stubs and said, ‘You've got the hang. You'll be okay.’

He became harder that summer, seeing so many animals caught-up and left for dead, but richer too, and we both got some space. Coming back to me in September with his pockets full of cash it felt like the first days of knowing each, almost like a real romance. We had a good time for a bit, tried to forget all that had passed. He did not have to work for some time and I did not mind playing the part of a woman with money, taking drinks down with the ladies who sat out at the hotel. Although it had lost a bit of its new charm by then, it was still the nicest place a person could sit around in town. So, when next summer came around I did not mind one bit that he returned to Alaska. It did not occur to me that Ipo would not return. He had always been more rock than water.

The story goes like this. I don't know how much you know about that kind of fishing but they have these gigantic nets, much more than any one man could handle, and they are pulled in by a motorized crank that reels in a couple hundred meters of net in a few minutes flat. As the nets are pulling in, the crew feeds them

onto gigantic spools and while doing this Ipo got his attention caught on something he saw falling from the net. He thought it was a turtle, he said, like we have in the ocean here, and because of that his glove got caught between the net and the spool and a finger pulled right off with it. Oh boy I still cringe to think of how that felt, but the boys on the boat weren't too concerned. The old grey captain said he was a true fisher now, while Ipo tried not to scream and scream with his blood dripping all over the bow. The captain took him under deck and soldered his finger, his left ring, at the first knuckle then wrapped it in gauze and left Ipo to lick his own wound so to speak. These boats you know, they're not a place for whimps or feelings. They were two days out from port at that point and so Ipo worked the next day. He guided the nets in and out with his phantom finger throbbing all the time. He felt so relieved when that peaked green island came into sight and first called me on the phone (we had one in the house by then) saying he was okay but felt so alone. Jack Stripe wasn't with him that time.

He visited the doctor in town who patched him up the best he could. Said he saw a missing finger every day—that he was just lucky it wasn't a limb. They had two days in port and Ipo rested, but went again back aboard for the rest of the time once the boat was emptied and ready to fish again. One of us should have seen the sign, rather than ignore and try test it. Maybe we were too distracted by newness of the dollars, or maybe with my Salmon gone I just did not think enough to care.

Two days later while the nets flooded out of their holds, Ipo's foot got somehow caught up, they said, in a passing loop. The weight of the nets picked

him up and slammed him against the deck and pulled him down into that deep deep wet. He wasn't under too long, they said, before they could reverse and pull in the nets. But being unconscious and breathing water—well there wasn't much they could do after he was already dead. Fortunately or unfortunately, if anything good can ever come from this, part of the papers they had made Ipo sign were waving the boat's responsibility but also gave him life insurance. I don't know maybe it doesn't sound right just explained straight forward like that, but it's what happened, God rest his soul.

I had his body returned, a giant hulk of hard flesh in a bag—nothing of the man I had known—and the insurance claim cleared. I had the body burned and then let his ashes blow away while standing in the garden at our home.

Two months later I closed on the condo where I live now. It makes much more sense than that little house on the hill. But I never sold it either. I'm not sure it's even mine to sell, although I don't know who else's it would be either. I think it's still just sitting there, only visited by the open air. Anyway, from where I'm sitting now, I can look out over the bay. It's quite nice I must say.

But enough about me. What I meant to write was about Salmon and Kali, and how she drove him away.

Salmon did not protest when Ipo brought up taking a break from fishing. He knew the fish weren't biting, but then again he wasn't really trying very hard to catch them, and that made all the difference.

Rejected by the sea, Salmon slowly became more rebellious. He began to

go for walks during school days, simply leaving the school yard to wander around the town. The school called once or twice when it first started happening I guess but maybe I missed the calls after that. It wasn't for the police to stop a little local kid walking through town, besides he already knew all of them well enough. They wouldn't bother him. Some times he would play on the metal bars outside the school. Most times the teacher wouldn't even go out and get him!

One time he walked up and sat right across from Kali's house, the one tucked up tight between two other houses. He perched on a boulder on the side of the road, could see her inside through the open front window. She was reading at a little table, her face just a crescent of forehead hidden behind her thick wavy hair. She must have felt Salmon looking and when she met his eye he smiled and waved at her. 'How's the book?'

She pushed one side of her hair over a shoulder and turned in her chair to face him. Salmon sprung up off of the rock like a tree frog. He looked both ways. He waved to her again, his cupped hand pulling in toward him. She twisted beneath her curls. He waved again. She shook again. The road at her house was just terraced into the side of the hill and Salmon began to climb up the bare slope. He scrambled up a ways until he reached another boulder that stuck out of the hill like an elbow and jumped off it into the air landing and running the rest of the ways to the road. Kali was watching him. He waved to her again and she rose from her seat like a nervous cat, padded to the door and slipped outside. Salmon grinned. She wore a sideways smile and her hair surrounded her face like a nest holding a brown egg. Salmon turned and ran on back up the hill and Kali

followed. The dirt slid beneath their feet and they pawed through the low grass and shrubs that grew there. She watched as Salmon climbed up again on the rock. He waved again to her. She pulled herself up to the rock and when she reached the top she stood next to Salmon, sticking off above the hill looking way over the top of her house and off into the blue ocean until it met with the greying blue of the lightly clouded sky. The wind tugged on both of them and she looked at him and saw that he didn't look quite as little as she had thought before, maybe wasn't much younger than she was. Although he was never big, his face could not hide his age. The two of them looked at each other and then she surprised them both when she put her arm around his shoulder. Neither of them quite knew what to do and Salmon said, 'Hey can we get up on your roof?' As they looked down on the house the top half of the front door swung open but no one came out.

'How did she not see us?' Salmon whispered.

'She's just letting air in. Baking. I got to go or she will really wonder.' She pulled her arm away from Salmon and rocked back on her heels then sprang from the rock. She skidded as she landed but stayed on her feet just the behind of her cutoff shorts scraping a bit. When she got to the bottom of the hill she turned back up toward Salmon and yelled, 'Hey, you catch any fish yet!? Ha!' and without waiting for any kind of reply ran back into her house while slapping the dirt off of her bottom.

A few days later, instead of going to school he got up early and waited for the old man down by his boat. The man didn't argue about having a little help especially after Salmon had some training behind him. They pushed his old boat

out into the rollers together as if they did it every day. The old man teased Salmon after they set adrift, asking him if he wasn't going to say another prayer calling to the fish. Salmon said okay, he would. They pulled in a large sea bass and several smaller pan fish. The man gave Salmon a nice percent.

The shape of his life began to become more clear to Salmon. That was when he was 14. He went to school a while more, but not too long after that. He was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when he went less and less. By the start of his 9<sup>th</sup> year, he just never showed up for school and I stopped fighting it. What more could I possibly say to such a strong willed boy? I could not change the course of his path, even if it took him out to sea. And he brought money into the house, splitting his earnings between me and himself—I didn't even have to ask for that. So, some days he would go out with the old man, some days he would go out with Ipo but never on the weekends.

Salmon would of course see Kali all the time when he met the old man in the morning or by some other happy accident that he planned. But they never talked for long. He would start a conversation and she would turn away shortly or just laugh and smile dreamily. It became a bit painful for the boy, really. But if she would have paid him full attention, he may never have felt enough pain, enough insecurity, to fall fully and totally in love. Which he did. That broken heart of his was drawn to her and he did not try to resist.

He also seemed to understand that she was testing him, that he had something to prove both to himself and to her. He had to catch some fish. He kept track. After he pulled in his fiftieth fish, he casually mentioned it to Kali the next

morning. 'Good for you little Salmon,' is what she said with that sideways smile that always meant something different. 'I hope you're not counting the baby ones as well?' When he caught one hundred fifty fish he arranged rocks on the hill across her house into a large 1 5 0. When he walked by the next day with the old man, the rocks told him 3 0 0. Salmon pulled in so many fish. He became a real fisher. He had of course stopped crying for the fish, but he never stopped feeling for them, and I think that is what made him such a success. He did not see them just as meat with tails; he thought of them, dreamt of them, saw himself as one of them. After under two years as a fisher in earnest, Salmon had his 300 respectable catches. His hands were rough like a pineapple skin and thick like Ipo's, like Makani's. The ocean treated us good for these years. Of course I had seen that before, the sea's favor, and would have been happier if the sea had continued to reject my boy, but he had already taken to it and would easily become a success. Sometimes I got down on my knees to pray to God. I did.

I do not know if my prayers saved them but I know that they only did them good. As they fished sometimes the old man would drop nuggets of information about his daughter. Like, 'Her mother has her trying painting now. I don't really think she's much good,' glancing at Salmon. Salmon had seen pictures by Picasso when he looked through the P encyclopedia at school once. He imagined that was how Kali painted.

It was about this time when Salmon began becoming beautiful. I mean, it just became clear that he was going to grow into a very attractive man. His body took on the ropiness of his father's, his thick hair. But he had my eyes, my sharp



nose. I saw the way girls and women looked at him. I am sure he was a hard thing to resist, although Kali really did try.

They lay on the sand in the sun. Salmon's hand rested just touching the nylon runner's shorts that slipped down to the hinges of her hips, her curves were still present beneath the loose t-shirt. She had told her mom that she was going for a jog.

'Tell me a story why don't you?' Salmon asked, rolling onto his side.

'Oh?' She looked at him through the slats of her fingers, one hand over her eyes. 'What kind of story would you like?'

'I don't know. One about you? Your family?'

'Hmm.'

'I feel I know you, you know? As if I already must. But when I think about it, I realize—I don't know—I don't know much at all.'

'Well what is to know? I have lived a life so far. So have you. And now here we are.' She pulled her hand away from her eyes and brushed his hair aside, grazed the ridge of his nose.

'Alright. Be mysterious if you'd like,' and he flopped back onto the sand.

'Now don't be like that.' She jabbed him in the bare flesh that stretched in a curve between his hips and rising ribs.

'Ay!' he yelled. 'Don't do that!'

'Well...'

'So? Now you owe me. A story.'

‘Ugh. You can’t just say tell me a story. I am not like that.’

‘Okay then. Well why don’t you tell me about why your dad does not live with you?’

She sat up, brushed her hands along her thighs and sighed. ‘I cannot.’

He gently brushed the sand off of her back. ‘Oh? Why is that?’

‘I am a little embarrassed.’ She turned to him. ‘The story is that I do not really know.’

‘You don’t know? You live with your mother, see your father every day, but you do not know why they are not together?’

‘Well they are still married.’ She pushed her foot beneath a mound of sand to touch up against his. ‘Do you know where your father is?’

‘No.’ And then he was quiet.

‘Okay, I will tell you a story. It is not so much about me or my family. It is a story about love.’

‘Okay. So go ahead.’

‘Okay. So. The story goes, there was a girl named Mino’aka. As her name suggests she had the most beautiful smile in all of the islands. Men took steamers from Honolulu, rowed from Ni’ihau, swam from Lana’i just to catch a glimpse of her perfect mouth, and if they were lucky maybe they would even see her dance. Very few men thought they were worthy to possess such a beautiful face and keep it for their own. It was like a waterfall, a thing of natural beauty. A look could wash you clean. She could be worshiped but never be owned. Still, three men desired her so deeply that they would not leave her be.

‘The first was a rich man. He owned a sailing ship with three huge sails woven through with strands of gold that shimmered in the sun. He brought her a pet bird with a beak covered in fine jewels. He said he would buy her anything her heart desired. Money was no object. Her second suitor was a beauty in his own right. Wherever he went women threw themselves at him, pulling at his clothes, following him out, rolling in the waves breasts up, like this, when he went to surf in the water. His voice was like the wind and his eyes seemed to shine with their own light. He broke many hearts but only wanted hers to call his own. The third man was not wealthy, nor was he so much to look at. He had dark hair on his knuckles and a nose flat and wide like a clam shell. But he was gentle and kind and he could sing a lovely song. He sang,

He `ala nei e mapu mai nei

Na ka makani lau aheahe

I lawe mai i ku`u nui kino

Ho`opumehana i ku`u poli

‘I know that song,’ Salmon interrupted. ‘We learned it in school. I always thought it was weird, hearing the other kids singing about my father. You know—my father—his name was Makani. Mama would not let me sing it. Not at home.’

‘Ah, that’s funny. You know my mother would sing it to me. She would tell me this story to me at night before bed and sing to me. That’s where I got it from.’ They were both quiet. ‘Well, so? We are not at your house now. You can sing it then.’ And together they sang the chorus.

‘E ke hoa o ke

ahe lau makani

Halihali`ala o

ku`u `aina.’

Kali and Kamanu murmured to a stop and sat and listened to the gentle breeze drifting through the leaves of the palm trees. You see, it is a song about the wind—the winds of Hawaii that can touch your whole being. Kali crossed her legs and sang again, another verse, but not just singing this time, singing to Salmon. He felt a chill and felt even more fully as he listened that he wanted to be hers, wanted to be her wind, wanted always to touch her, though he couldn't tell her that.

‘And so the third suitor sang to her this song. He did not even have such a nice voice, but he sang it without fear because it was all that he had. And so he gave it to her.’ Kali stopped. She stirred the sand with her hand then she hopped up to stand. ‘Okay. I have to go. Mother knows I am not such a runner to be gone so long. She is probably already mad.’

‘What? Now!? Why should you be so afraid of your mother all of the time?’ But Kali had already begun to trot away.

‘You just do not understand!’ she called as she moved away down the beach.

‘Well at least tell me who Miss Sexy Smile chooses!’

‘You tell me!’ and then she was at a full run. Salmon sat and thought.

The next day Salmon walked down the hill with the old man early in the morning. Salmon told the old man the story.

‘I don’t know that story,’ the old man told him, although he seemed hesitant to comment. ‘Which one does the girl choose?’

‘I don’t know!’ Kali wouldn’t say.

‘I see.’

When they reached the house the old man knocked softly. Salmon carried the mast. Kali appeared at the open door, holding two small white mugs of coffee. ‘Here,’ she said, holding one toward Salmon. This was new. He lowered the long bundle to the ground and leaned it against his shoulder.

They stood there in silence in the early blue morning. Salmon sipped the hot bitter drink and it burnt the inside of his lips but he did not complain. ‘Have you guessed yet which man Mino’aka chose?’ Kali asked, propping herself up in the door jam.

‘Well, I’m not sure but I am going to guess it was the man with the song?’

Kali laughed. ‘The ugly one!? Why would the most beautiful girl in Hawaii marry an ugly man? That would be pretty dumb. He had absolutely nothing going for him, other than being ballsy.’ She spun away and quickly closed the door behind her.

‘She’s right you know. That would be dumb,’ the old man said with a smile and then lowered his eyes and finished off his coffee when Salmon gave him a hard look.

‘You know what’s dumb is all her stupid little games.’ Salmon placed the cup in the gutter, shifted the weight of the mast and continued on down the road.

‘Mmm, welcome to the wooing of women little man,’ the old man

murmured and moved on as well.

When Salmon saw Kali two days later he told her that it must be the handsome man that she chose.

‘Wrong again!’ Kali said.

‘The rich one?’ Salmon scoffed. ‘How predictable.’ She laughed.

‘And you’re still wrong.’ She told Salmon what her own mother had explained to her many times after telling her the same story before she fell asleep at night into dreams of cutting across the dark water in a ship with golden sails. A man must not be just one thing. He should have many things, everything to offer. There is something called the-total-package and it means that a man is there for you with all of his parts. Although he might not be filthy rich, he should be able to provide nicely for his love and show that he can support a family. He should be bold and fearless in his gifts, offering everything that he has. And he should be beautiful, but willing to break every other woman’s heart, otherwise he would never really commit and temptations would pull them apart. If a man is willing to prove to all of these things to his love then she will be sealed to him for life by not just a promise, more like an unbreakable bond. An invisible magical thread that ties them together and if he does all this then there is nothing to resist. But if he cannot do this, pfff—let him float away.

Personally I find this story quite interesting although I had not heard it until Salmon told it to me later—much later, but my grandmother would tell me something similar when she put me down to bed. It followed much of the same idea, though it ended badly for the men who tried to take the prize girl without

offering all their heart.

While Kali explained this all to Salmon the two sat on a bench on the edge of the market square watching the men and women walk by, some hand in hand, others walking apart, one couple arguing. ‘So the most beautiful woman in Hawaii dies an old ugly hag. Wow that’s some lesson for you to learn. Don’t follow your heart, test the man who thinks you’re special. See if he can play the part.’

She looked up at him. ‘Who says she dies alone? Look, you’ve already accomplished the first part.’

At first he was confused then he realized: ‘Three hundred twenty-two fish little lady,’ he said leaning in slowly toward her, when suddenly she began to laugh.

‘Wait wait wait,’ she said through gasps and her shoulders shook. ‘Those cannot be the last words you say right before you kiss me.’

Salmon leaned away wide eyed. ‘Why would you think I was going to kiss you? That is not at all what I was doing.’ She grabbed his forearm and pulled him forward and he could smell her sweet warm breath and then her lips, her mouth felt round and smaller under his and then once again they were apart. He took a breath then grabbed her thin little wrists and tugged her back toward him. One more kiss and she was on her feet again. She stood at the edge of the bench. ‘We can’t do this here,’ and started to back away. ‘If my mother found out...’

‘Oh shit not your mother again, you’re always running off because of your mother. Who cares what she thinks. You’re old enough. I can give you a kiss in

public if I want.’ He definitely felt entitled to something after realizing that he was being put through some kind of test.

‘I just said—I just said we can’t do this here. Now don’t lose your goddamn head.’

‘Where do we go?’ She started walking and Salmon followed a few steps behind. She walked through to the other side of the square and down a alley that caught the cool in narrow space between the walls of heavy stone.

‘No, not here either,’ and they briskly continued on out onto the road that ran along the edge of the bay. Their feet slapped in their sandals as they jogged across the road and down the other side, a narrow sand path through the low brush that was there onto the dirty sand then the whiter. The beach was wide here. But she kept on walking.

‘Little Beach?’

She looked back over her shoulder and winked at Salmon. And soon they were at the outcropping of rock that brings an end to the main section of the town’s central beach. You can’t tell there’s a path there from far away, and it looks basically like a cliff, but once you’re there it’s just sort of cracks right through there, almost like stairs, worn through there since God only knows when. That’s to Little Beach. The tourists and haoles like to get naked over there and the locals go over if they want to have a bonfire. You have to use your hands to get over the rocks but for Salmon and Kali it was quick work. The beach was quiet, a few people scattered around on towels and in little chairs. They plopped down in the sand. Without a word they kissed again. They kissed for some time. To kiss



came easily and naturally for both of them. Once they started there was no reason to stop. They kissed until Salmon's mouth started to feel a bit over-wet. She pulled him up, took off her shirt with the bikini underneath and ran into the water in her shorts. Salmon followed just in his.

The waves crashed close into the shore with a wallop. The pair pushed through the incoming surge to stand with the water up to their chins, kicked off the sandy floor, rising rising to the cap of the waves just as they broke to foam but holding back from tumbling down the blue face of the wave, holding back and laughing at the thrill of the pull. Then they swam out to float out on the calmer water. The rocky outcrop that separates the two parts of the beach reaches out near to where they floated and crumbles at an angle into the water, fallen apart in chunks. Her hand reached out and her fingers spun into his. They lay on the water the way that only two island babies could. Salmon could see the sun through his eyelids.

He thought about her story, and realized there was nothing hidden in what she said. He brought his legs back under him and stirred the water with his arms. 'So if 300 fish was the first test, then what is the next?' he said to the top of her head. She lay there as if she had not heard, her hair clumped in tendrils, curling tentacles around her head. She started to sing the song again, the song of wind that the suitor had sung.

'I have to sing you a song?' He kicked his legs out again, toes breaching, ears sinking back into the echo beneath the surface. 'This will be easy.' And he burst into song, 'The tide is high but I'm hooolding on, I'm gonna be your number

one. Nuuumber one. Nuuuuumber one.’ And then his face was covered and his nose and throat were full of water. He came up sputtering and mad but she was swimming away backward and smiling, quite pleased with herself. ‘What the hell?’ he yelled. ‘I was just trying to give you my song!’ And then she outright laughed and quickly he was laughing too. She kicked like a dolphin diving deeper through the water and he watched her shape shimmer as it moved away back toward the waves and again he followed. He held his breath, caught a hold in the water and he swam. My boy he was fast and he had some breath but Kali was no joke either and managed to stay out ahead of him until they neared the part where the water began to churn. They both popped up amongst the surge exchanged a glance and then a wave caught them up and carried them the rest of the way in. It laid them down coated in sand. Salmon scrambled up but she lay there and the water rose to cover her feet again, lapped up around her thighs. He came back and squatted near to her. ‘If not a song, then what?’

She opened her eyes and looked up at him and said straight faced,  
‘Everything you've got.’

Salmon laughed then although he had never known the girl to make a joke.

Two days later he brought Kali her first gift. He had dove and found a couple dozen clams. He sold them to a market vendor at a discount with the understanding that any pearls she found were his. She pried them carefully open for him right there and plucked three milky stones from their mouths. He wrapped the pearls in that old scrap of lace, now grey, he had found back in the day, quickly stolen back from me after I had claimed it from him. He tied it up with a

piece of purple string he had once worn around his neck for a summer and then into the following spring. He took the long way home after a day of fishing with Ipo and hissed in through the open window at Kali where she sat. She looked around with a furtive glance and then came to him where he silently placed the little frilly packet in her hand. She looked at him as if surprised and even blushed through the dark brown of her skin. Maybe she had not understood how my little Salmon's broken heart beat for her, did not need tests to find that it was true. So she blushed and pocketed the gift and gave him a peck on the lips through the open window of her mother's house. Salmon knew he could not stay, that her mother did not approve of having him around, but he reached out and stroked her cheek with his thumb—such a little man he had already become.

But there were more gifts to come. He always kept all of these little things, things of little use that accumulate meaning when they float to the surface of the eddying whirlpools of life. There were many things that made up his collection, and many places that he had found through his continual wandering. One day he told the old man he would fish with Ipo, and Ipo that he would be with the old man, and instead hitched a ride in the back of a truck all the winding way along that terrible dirt road to Hana. They scurried down a near cliff face, pebbles chasing beside them all the way down to the hidden red sand beach where he handed her a box of teeth—several sharks' teeth, a bird's severed beak, his own baby teeth, the jawbone of a moray eel. She was not shocked or made to gag, although plenty other girls would have taken to their feet and run. She and him were of a common cloth and few things needed explaining; she knew the things

that were important to him without having to ask. She rattled the teeth around in the box in her hand where they sat, the red of the sand seeping into their skins, and fished a tiny-sharp K-9 tooth from among the mix, then pressed it against her lips. It was one of the most intimate feelings Salmon had ever felt, to see her kiss the tooth that had once been a part of him. She put it back and took another out, a molar, and then stuck it way back inside her mouth. With her thumb and forefinger submerged she tried to place it there, to make it stay in the little space behind her furthest tooth, then closed her mouth gently around it. It wiggled there but stayed. She spit it out again into her hand and said, 'It fits there, right along with mine.' It was about the sweetest thing Salmon had ever heard and he took the box from her hands and closed it and they kissed there for some time and that is when she began to let him explore her body with his hands.

Another day Salmon took Kali on a hike, although she did not much want to go, up up up to the top of our hill. It is hard to say, you see, when the hill stops and the mountain begins. All of Hawaii is islands, you see, but these islands are really just gigantic mountains in the sea. But there is a place that we call the top of the hill, although it really is just a piece of flat before the incline continues on. You can see out over all the cove and the curve of the coast as it continues on. You can see all the town, even into the market square. I imagine it is what it feels like to look down from one of the mainland's big skyscrapers, peering out, feeling above. There is a square of stones there, an old foundation of a house it seems, and in it Salmon and Kali stood. He took out a rusted pin that said Class of 1979 over some kind of crest, most likely lost by some young tourist. He stuck one

hand in through the armhole of her t-shirt and with the other pinned it to her chest. She smiled and he said, 'Oop, wait, that's not all,' and took out a string knotted with feathers from inside his shirt, feathers big and small, bright and dull from all kinds of birds. He tied the string around her neck and then stood back to see how they encircled her face. They looked pretty ridiculous he realized then, especially while she looked down at it and buried her chin. But when she looked up at him she wore a crazy grin and said, 'I love it! I feel like the queen of the birds!' and flicked the feathers at her neck out and then began to strut about, bobbing her head like a chicken pecking at seed. Salmon began to laugh. She kept on marching about, making noises like bock-bock! And Salmon's laugh grew and grew until it was almost a shout and he lay down on the ground to try and catch his breath. It was funny, yes, but the laugh also came from a place of surprise. He had not before seen this silly part of her; the more he gave of him the more she showed of herself.

There were other gifts, other little trips as Salmon dug deeper and gave her each little piece away. There were beach rocks, hill rocks, lava rocks, crystal rocks that she decided they would throw away together, skipping them off a dock and into the bay. There were shards and chunks of colored glass, worn smooth and opaque like some strange water monster's teeth; he gave them to Kali in a eucalyptus grove that perched over the other side of the hill. He had found it after following a faintly worn animal trail, a place where all the senses were at ease: the green filtered light, the crisp clean smell of the trees, the soft ticking patter of dry leaves falling on dry leaves. He poured the fragments from a paper bag into her

waiting hands where they glowed like dull gems. On a soft bed of these leaves Kali sighed in Salmon's ear as he sucked softly at her breasts.

There were other things in his collection that he figured she did not really want, though he showed them all to her one day. In an old cigar box he had: the stub of a pencil, a guitar pick, broken crayons, scraps of paper—notes with meanings long forgotten, folded drawings, a birthday card to someone else, a tin compass with a needle that stuck, a half-finished needle point I thought that I had lost. Although they did not appear to be treasures like the rest, she took the box happily one day while they sat under the banyan tree in the marketplace.

He had found a thick old coin with a hole in the middle when he gutted a giant fish. The blurred outline of imprinted men still curved around the central hole. He was sure that she would be fully taken by this; it would be the coup de grace of his collection, and the last of the bits and pieces that he had to give. He did not wrap it, did not put in on a string, did not ornament. It had a weight to it that was unique enough in its own. It was not particularly shiny, the surface was mottled to dull, but it sure had seemed particularly special when Salmon pulled it out, an unusual mass inside the membrane of its stomach. He did not tell anyone, not even the old man or the market vendor who had bought the fish and stood there as he cut it open, butchering it as a favor and standing there having a talk. He slid it casually into the pocket of his shorts, rubbing the blood of the fish on his backside and if anyone noticed it didn't seem strange.

If it was worth anything in trade or historical value, he didn't bother to find out. He hadn't planned on giving the coin away. Several times he took it out and

spun it through the gouged wood of the kitchen table and it clattered like bags full of pennies falling to the ground. Of course it had been a good luck sign. He would not give that away.

But for Kali he would. He thought about it for a while really, wondering if this thing, if any of those things, were important to him—and if it was even right for her to take them, but ultimately decided that it somehow made sense; if she was to give him her greatest gift, which she could only give once, he should be willing to give his own gifts away. He asked her once if she really believed in this story that her mother would tell and she looked him in the eye and said absolutely and that is all she would say about that. So when her gave her the great coin, it felt like a final release for him. Besides the clothes he wore he had given her all of the things that he counted as his own. They were hers, he was hers. His heart did not question her as its missing piece. When Kali was near him, his attention was caught completely. He would force himself to look away from her but still he could sense her moving, feel her presence near him. When they were not together, when he was out bobbing over the water, his mind turned on thoughts, images, fantasies—replaying her words, imagining conversations, imagining touching her and what it will feel like making love. Of course he was a young man, as you are, I'm sure you can guess what thoughts he dwelled on when she was not there. Of course he would give her the coin if it meant she would bare herself and give her flesh to him.

He gave it to her late at night just sitting outside on the hill outside her mother's house. Her mother had yelled at her several times for being gone too

long, or for going out on her own, but Kali did not care and did as she wished regardless, although her meetings with Salmon were just between her and him. Kali's mother had said outright that she did not like my boy Salmon and would hate to hear again that the of them were seen hanging around. The night was not yet dark, traces of blue and orange and violet and the two sat on the big rock still glowing warm although colder winds had begun blowing up from over the water. They were quiet and listened to the insects in the underbrush, the low murmur of people from the houses down below. Her hand lay on the rock and he dropped his hand in hers holding the coin in his fingers. The metal pressed between their palms and then he pulled his hand away. She examined the coin and then asked him about it, where it came from and what he knew about it. She thought it was an early colonial coin, something that the first Europeans, maybe the Dutch, would have brought with them. How it got into a fish could be anyone's wild guess. Salmon told her what he thought, that it could be a sign from God, and she immediately laughed, but in a bit of a mean way, and then she was quiet.

Salmon told her, 'So this is the last of my things, this is the last I have to give you.'

'Oh is it now? What comes then?' Salmon thought for a moment but instead of responding he leaned over and kissed her hard and she kissed him back. He held her hair and ran a hand down her firm side and let felt the heat rise. When they pulled back she held him with her even gaze but he couldn't help but look away. 'I see, I see. Well first things first my little man. Maybe you'll think I'm greedy—but I don't think this is not the last of your things.'



'But it is,' Salmon said, a little hurt. 'What else do you want? My hat?' He took off that old Yankees hat and held it toward Kali.

'Ew, no. I don't want that old thing. No. Didn't you tell me about some fishhooks that Ipo gave you?' Salmon had told her. They had been having one of those conversations that young lovers often have—sharing secrets, building trust and all that—and he had not thought twice to bring up the hooks that had once been his father's.

'Yes. Well that is not mine to give. Ipo has them. And they were my father's. You know, my dead father who I never met?'

'Look, I did not write the rules.'

'No, your mother did. You break her rules all of the time, but you're buying into this one for some reason?'

'Well that's just not true. Besides, you've seen how my mother and father are. Who would want a marriage like that? Always separated. Hardly talking. All because my mother did not protect herself, did not make sure of the man she was marrying. No, I think if there are any rules to be careful about they are the rules you follow to protect yourself. Everyone should be careful about who they give themselves to.' Kali stood. 'Maybe you should be more careful yourself. Thanks again for the coin. It really is lovely.' She kissed Salmon on the top of the head and then leapt from the boulder and ran on down to her house.

'What the hell does she mean? Why the hell is she always running away like that? So annoying,' Salmon muttered alone on the giant stone. It was the first time it had occurred to him to be critical of the girl his heart had chosen. He sat

there on the rock for a while, rehashing the conversations he had with himself while debating whether or not to give Kali the coin. However, now there were the added concerns of losing the last bit of Makani as well as the statement that he should be more careful with who he gives himself to. The first was sentiment, a thing from history that was long beyond his control, though that did not make it easier to give away. The second, well he did not even know what to do about her mysterious statement, make some sort of test for her? He could, but what if she did not match up? Where would that put him then? He pushed that concern aside and decided to do what must be done. Although he resented the control that he had only just realized he was under, he was powerless against the pounding of his heart when he thought of days, weeks, months, years without Kali there just because of a stupid fishhook. He came home late at night resolved to get one of the hooks for Kali, and if that was not enough then it would mean that she was just a bit too crazy, following rules that she got from stories she was told in such a way.

Salmon could not ask Ipo for a hook—although Ipo never said a bad word against her it was clear through his dark looks whenever Salmon mentioned Kali that he did not approve—and if Salmon asked to see the box, just to look or something, Ipo would notice one was missing. He decided that he needed a plan. The first plan was to play sick like a boy still in school to stay home from fishing and find the box when I went out. I kind of figured something fishy was up and didn't leave him alone in his sickbed for a second. By the end of the day he miraculously cured and begging to go out. I let him go of course. Another time

when they were out fishing, Salmon asked Ipo if he could hold onto the hooks but Ipo said that it was not safe for Salmon to keep the hooks, that I would certainly find them and want to keep them. Why he was so secretive about these hooks I still do not quite understand; Ipo gave me one such hook before we married. I wore it every day around my neck until the cord broke a couple years after he died and I decided it was better to put it to rest. But then again maybe I would have wanted to keep them, who knows, but I doubt it. Anyway, Salmon knew better than to try and argue with one of Ipo's decisions. Ultimately he decided that trying to give away one of these precious hooks would make more trouble than it was worth at home and so bought a fancy carved fishhook at a market tourist stand. He cut the string necklace from it and rubbed it around in gravel on the side of the road a bit to make it into an antique.

When Salmon gave the hook to Kali there was no ceremony or special moment involved. He stopped by her house with the old man as they did many mornings on their way down to fish and he simply handed it to her. She smiled of course and said, 'Thank you! It's lovely,' with a girlish kind of excitement that seemed more of a display for her father than anything. I'd be willing to bet that she would be able to tell at a glance if it was a real fishhook, or if it wasn't.

As they continued on down to the boats the old man told Salmon, 'What are you going and giving her a gift for? She's going to start expecting things from you now,' and laughed to himself. Salmon said, 'It's just a little thing I had laying around,' but thought to himself that maybe he was beginning to see why the old man's marriage hadn't really worked out.

He decided to wait for her.

'How do you know you want me?' She asked when he found her waiting in the bushes when he came home after three days.

'I know because I know. Alright?' He dropped his things.

'That's not enough.'

'Okay. I know because there is a feeling here. Like it is tight, like my insides are too small. My heart is excited and nervous at once. There is something about you, I can feel my heart jump. You are beautiful. You can throw pretty far. And you are kind.'

'Oh well now Romeo, don't get too caught up. If that's what you think of me I guess you don't know me well enough yet then.'

'What do you mean?'

'You think I am kind?'

'You are.'

'Can you say that you love me?'

'I do. I really do.'

'Well then,' Kali turned and faced him with her side. 'You must prove it.'

Salmon rolled his eyes.

'Are you serious? More tests?'

'Well you see little Salmon,' she became less confrontational, 'you have not completed the challenge of the third lover.' She puckered her lips and batted her lashes

'Ha! Okay, you're playing with me.'

'You can think of it as a game if you like. But either way you have to prove your love to me.'

'Haven't I already done that, 300 fish, given you all of my things?' She walked up to him and some part of her facade dropped away. Her face softened and she looked almost sad.

'I'm sorry but it won't be easy,' she said.

'This is messed up.'

'Maybe it is.'

'Maybe.' She did not respond, just pressed her soft look on him and pushed her hair back over her shoulders. 'So? What is it?'

'You remember the other lover? He was beautiful. And you are. But he did not want any other girl.'

'But I don't want any other girl. When have you ever seen me with another girl? I hardly even have other friends. How could I want another girl?'

'Still. You need to prove it. Then I will be sealed to you.'

'Stop being so mysterious. What the hell do you want me to do?'

'You have to break another girl's heart.'

Of course, grandsons, this is ridiculous. If a girl ever tests you in this way just run, run away. They tie up the situation; love does not require stipulations. Everybody deserves to be loved by someone and if she's unwilling to love you outright for who you are then you move right along. These tests, they're too messy. But what could your father do? He could go along with Kali's test, try and

break some other girl's heart, or tell her to buzz off and break his own? You have to think, once a heart is broken does it heal up stronger or is it more tender and scared to be broken once again?

He left Kali standing on the side of the road and came inside. Heavy with weary he flopped down onto his bed. The small wood frame gave a pop beneath him. He turned to the cool of the wall covered his face and closed his eyes. These games were not what he signed up for, not what he had expected. He felt as if he was losing control then realized that was exactly what was happening and decided he would resist. He would forget about Kali altogether. Pretend that she did not exist. That would show her eh?

How long do you think that lasted? These things are a test of will you see—pushing a girl out of your mind. Can you dismiss her from your thoughts as soon as she pops up? Or will you linger thinking on her face or other parts? Will you let yourself wonder if she's thinking about you and how could she forget you so easily? Think if you just wait a little longer she'll come back to you? In the long run it's always better to be the one who's better at waiting. Of course Salmon never was too good at that. He did manage to let a few days go by. He did not fish with the old man, only Ipo, and at first he could hardly get Kali out of his head, although thinking about her only made him made. He did not speak to Ipo about it, already knew what he would say. But then he started to think about the other girls in town, which ones might try to make fall for him. After a couple more days it seemed clear that it was about time to catch up with Mackenzie, his easily persuaded friend from school. He had not seen her since he had stopped going and

did not exactly have reason for their lives to cross otherwise. The worst that could happen was that she would be mad at him for all of the tricks he played on her but figured he would remind her of all the good times they'd had as well.

Salmon asked around in the market a bit. Her father, Captain Frank, was well enough known around town. The romance he sparked with a local girl, his waitress at the restaurant in the Arms, was highly visible. It was not often at that time that a girl from the town would latch onto a haole, although a local guy and a visiting white girl, that is a different story. One of the fish sellers said Mackenzie and her mother often came through on Friday afternoons; they were Catholic. That Friday, Salmon made sure that he and Ipo were in by the early afternoon. They had caught a few aku, little tunas, after catching a school boil to the surface. Salmon took care of the selling of the fish and told Ipo to go on home.

He carried the bucket of fish along the road that skirts the bay behind the old cannery that used to be all run down. Now they made it into a shopping mall. So he walks into the market square and there's what could be considered to be a crowd of people there. Some men were dressed in flowered shirts and big straw hats, plucking guitars and ukeleles, singing songs. Most of the onlookers were tourists of course but Salmon recognized Mackenzie immediately standing on the other side of the crowd. Her face was more or less the same, tanned cheeks, high narrow cheekbones, straight brown hair, but he noticed her because she stood several inches over all the other women of the crowd, and Hawaiian women are not necessarily small. She got her father's height; her mother stood at her shoulder next to her. It was almost too easy, as if it were meant to happen, Salmon coming

across her like that.

Avoiding the cluster around the entertainers, Salmon walked to the other side of the square. When the crowd broke up he saw Mackenzie and her ma splitting off into the market. It was not long until they moved toward him, toward the stalls of the fish sellers. He made his way down the steps into the market space and to the seller he had talked to before; he stood there when Mackenzie and her mother made their way over. When he finished with the seller, giving her a good price, Mackenzie was nearly at his side. She looked down at him, he was never so big anyway and her eyes were over his head. He had not seen so much before but she had grown out everywhere, filling up her dress in front and behind, though still was not too chunky like some daddy's girls sometimes get. He noticed that and then looked up into her eyes. Her hair was pushed behind strong ears and her face lit up in surprise as they looked at each other, and then quickly grabbed Salmon in a tight squeeze. Surprised by her reaction Salmon gasped and dropped the money that was still in his hand. She released him and dropped to her knees still smiling, saying, 'Sorry sorry sorry!' She picked it all up and put it back in Salmon's hand. 'Where have you been?' she asked. 'We miss you at school!' Salmon laughed; her excitement was contagious and he had no idea that she would be happy to see him. Her mother was surprised too.

'Mackenzie!' she yelled slapping her daughter's arm.

'This is Kamanu, Mama,' with one arm on each of their shoulders.

'Salmon.'

'Oh yes of course of course, I know. You got in trouble all the time.' Her



mother turned to talk with the fish seller.

'So,' Mackenzie asks, 'You're a full-on fisher now huh?'

'It seems that's what happened.'

'Well, school is good. 10<sup>th</sup> grade you know. It's pretty major.'

'I bet.'

'Was more fun while you were there.' Was she flirting? It was then that Salmon realized he did not even have his shirt on. His shoulders and arms stood out from carrying those fish around. He wasn't big with all the muscles but always in very good shape. His forearms looked like tightly wound balls of yarn. He looked very good okay? What else can I say?

The fish seller was gutting the little tuna and Mackenzie's ma said how nice they looked. She had bought and paid for one when Salmon confessed to his old friend that he had personally just caught them, and leaned toward her mother saying the fish had been very strong and were brought in very fresh. Mackenzie's mama was a bit taken aback, it sounded aggressive to her somehow, and made her uncomfortable, to hear this young man talking to her in this way about fish. She pulled her daughter away. 'Let me know how you like it,' Salmon told her. 'I will bring you some more.'

Mackenzie and her mother left then but Salmon knew that if he were going to go ahead with this, then the seed was planted and the game was his to lose. If anything he could pick up an old friendship and dust it off a bit. He did mention running into Mackenzie at first and I didn't think too much of it, but soon enough people started mentioning seeing Salmon and Mackenzie together around

town: throwing fish heads to the turtles bathing out around the pier, sitting around the dusty ball field watching the high school's little football team run around, eating shaved ice in the market square. One night he took her into the local fisher's bar, Joe Joe's Watery Bottom, and without so much as blinking an eye ordered them up two beers. That one got back to me pretty quick and you know I gave him a talking to, but in the end what all could I really say, knowing I had done near the same with Makani when I was his age? Salmon didn't have much of a taste for liquor but that wasn't quite the point and Mackenzie was still quite happy to indulge his little whims.

Salmon did not so much woo her as bring Mackenzie into the world that he had grown up around. Her family had a house tucked away off the side of the road along the coast outside of town. It's not what you would call a mansion or anything but it was a little fisher's hut; it was like a mainland house with a garage for their car, a big deck in the back, and a barbecue pit. Captain Frank had it built when he left the army and settled down. Mackenzie was not what you would call a princess in any right, not spoiled in the way some kids are today. But she never wanted for a thing; she was her daddy's girl, his only offspring, and maybe unintentionally he had kept her a bit apart. There was some kind of tension between Frank and his wife's family—I never knew quite what happened but I guess he had a way of making them feel inferior. After leaving the army he opened up Captain Frank's Dive Shop on the little main street going through town, selling flip flops, snorkels, and t-shirts to tourists, telling them the best spots where they can go look at fish while they float around.

Mackenzie didn't have to keep Salmon a secret like Kali did and it turns out that Frank was quite happy to have his daughter going out with a local fisher kid. Salmon was good to her. They kissed, but beyond that he didn't try a thing. And she was good for him, too. She was always upbeat, smiling, and ready to go along with him on any little jaunt. They were seeing each other for a couple months and we had talked a couple times when she came by one day after school before Salmon had returned from the sea. She had just decided she would walk up the hill and stop in, say hi, and maybe wait around for him. I had just been sitting out in the yard with my feet resting on this old dog that used to come around. She walked in on the path leading down from the road calling, 'Hi! Hello!' as nice and friendly as you could want. She was tall alright, I remember her standing there over me pretty near blocking out the sun. But then she sat right down next to me and before I knew it we were talking and my hands were going through her hair. It was nice, I braided it the same way I used to braid my mama's in the morning, before she cut it short.

We were just sitting there talking when Ipo and Salmon came back. Ipo called, 'Uh oh boy, you're in trouble. Looks like the women have been here making friends.' Salmon laughed of course and then came over, bent and kissed Mackenzie on the cheek. That surprised me a bit I'd say—was about the first and last time I'd actually seen him show much affection toward anyone outside our little family.

They kept on like this—happy friends with the possibility of something more—for some few months, and although I never felt the flutter of the bit of his

heart in my chest like when he had been seeing Kali, I know that he was happy, he had a companion and he was never lonely. I can't much speak to Mackenzie's emotional state but it's safe to say that she became attached to Salmon pretty quick. There is a way some people have, maybe it's the way they're brought up or maybe Salmon is not the only one who was missing some inner part, but they give themselves over easily to someone with a sense of direction, even if that direction is not heading anywhere in particular. Mackenzie did not give Salmon that same feeling of two pieces coming together the way that the grooves of one tooth fit into the other, but he liked her and she was good to him in all the ways that Kali wasn't. Instead of asking him for things, Mackenzie easily gave him gifts, although she did not make a show of it. She wrote a poem for him in English class. She baked him cookies. She gave him her little radio so he could listen to music at night. After he told her about the gigantic spiders we would get crawling into the house at night, spiders on long skeleton legs and thick bodies that have some meat to them, she had shrieked and said that what we needed was a cat. I had never much cared for the things but Mackenzie had three and outright gave him one of hers, a little one, dark brown with spots of golden fur. I'll never forget him walking into the house carrying that kitty, limp and calm hanging from Salmon's bent arm. He dropped it to the ground and it immediately began to prowl around, sniffing out the cracks in the walls. It pounced on some little bug and, 'See, it's a hunter!' he said when I began to protest. 'I think I'll call her Shark.' It ended up being a pretty good cat and would come cuddle up with me some days when I sat inside.

Salmon started stopping by and taking fish in to Captain Frank. They developed a bit of a bond. This whole time, while Salmon was ignoring Kali, he also kept a distance from the old man. I dared to hope that his phase had passed, that Salmon was leaving his infatuation with that troubled family behind, but then I did not know the inner workings of Kali's little game.

She of course ignored Salmon for all this time that Mackenzie and he were reconnecting with each other, and he did his best to try and think that she did not exist. But when he lay awake at night it was still Kali he thought on and not Mackenzie. Mackenzie slowly began to reveal that she was a bit crazy too, but not in the same way as Kali. She became possessive and a little too attentive, at times bordering on obsessive. The same girl who had come and wait for Salmon to return with me would sit on the jetty, a pile of boulders that sticks out into the bay watching the line of the sky for Ipo's sail to come back in. Although this kind of attention can seem nice to the person receiving it at first, there is something about it that is just not healthy. If you're waiting, always waiting for another person then you're not paying enough attention to yourself and there also becomes something of a burden for the one who is waited on, knowing that someone else's life is in limbo as long as they are gone. No, there is always just something unattractive to a man, in a girl who is too eager to wait on him. You guys like a challenge, some form of resistance to the ways the boy. But there was nothing he could do about it.

'I really like you Salmon,' Mackenzie told him one day a bit out of the blue while they were sitting on the stoop outside a little grocery shop in the town, passing a Coca Cola back and forth.

'Well dang I like you too Mackenzie.'

'I have fun with you.'

'I have fun with you too Mackenzie.'

'But you know what I mean Salmon?' She moved a hand to rest below the line of his shorts on his knee. 'Like I really like you.'

'Yeah well wow I guess you know that I really like you too.'

'Really!?' She seemed genuinely surprised to hear these words.

'Yeah.' Salmon said, thinking about the different layers of possible liking that can exist in the world. He knew the kind of liking that she meant, the kind that is just a little too scared to say the word love, and hearing her say that he knew that his heart did not feel the same as hers. But still he kissed her then; what else could he do? More words would only bring him trouble. And he liked kissing her too. Her lips were strong and responded firmly to the touch of his. It was exciting for him to kiss Mackenzie in public like that, the idea of Kali wandering by at just the right moment playing over in some deep part of his mind. Of course Kali never did but God knows what she would have done. Probably nothing, would have just kept walking on. She was just that kind of girl.

So Mackenzie had admitted that she really liked Salmon and he had realized that his feelings weren't the same. He began to wonder more and more if he was serious about going along with Kali's game, tried to remember what he had been thinking when he started seeing Mackenzie. Had he known he would break her heart then? She had found him hadn't she, more or less? And she was the one who maintained it, waited for him, brought him things, sought his smile

with a look while they were together, had professed her level of liking without any prompting. He convinced himself sometimes while he thought about it at night that where he found himself with Mackenzie had just happened, sent into motion by the powers around him. He realized though that if anyone was going to break her heart then that would be up to him to do. She wouldn't do it to herself. He spun on this idea for several weeks, unsure yet of what he would do.

He couldn't quite figure out how he had gotten to that place, doubting himself, caught up between the wills and desires of these two girls. It had seemed strange enough to be under the thumb of just one, but then to be responsible for the emotional wellbeing of another became a stress that he could not ignore. It had been so recent that he felt content just out floating along with the old man, but then even that little pleasure was gone. Life had been much simpler then and he had not even known it. What good were these girls anyway?

Mackenzie was pretty, thoughtful, outgoing and sincere. She thought Salmon was funny, which was a terribly attractive trait to him. She asked about his thoughts and feelings, anxieties and fears. She was the kind of companion that he had never missed because he had never before had. She was a best friend. While Kali was beautiful, independent and whip smart. She could have nearly any boy she wants and she seemed to have wanted him. She was aloof and mysterious, difficult like a queen. But nothing could compare to the calm in Salmon's heart when Kali was near. It was not so much that the ground was firmer beneath his feet as the ground did not even matter, everything was air. Slowly though, it seemed, the grip she held on him was loosening. Mackenzie occupied so much of

his time and the space occupied by Kali's face in Salmon's mind became unmoored and seemed to float away. In quiet moments, though, he would call it back just to test if it was still there. Could his mind's eye still capture her sideways glance, did the still reflect off her bouncing waves of hair? He could still taste her kiss like the memory of warm milk when he dwelled on it enough. But to think on her kiss would only be a start and he would keep falling down deeper into thoughts of her, his mouth would water, his fingers shake, and then he would have to push her out again. He tried to think on Mackenzie in her place but it just was not the same.

He did not know how he would keep on like this, seeing one, stuck on another, nearly all of his thoughts occupied by women. It did not help his fishing either, all of this love stuff. His mind did not focus on his work enough, had let several fish slip off the line, and Ipo asked him what was up.

'It's these girls,' he told Ipo. 'They're messing with my head.'

'Messing with your head? Mackenzie seems nice.'

'She is. She is. I like her lots too. But you know she's just always... there.'

'Yes. She waits for you.'

'That and it's like it's hard for her to be apart. I feel bad when I leave her now. Not because it's so hard for me, it's this look she gets, like she's sad, like I'm doing something to her just going home.'

'She doesn't like to be apart.'

'I guess that's it.'



‘You cannot hold that against her. I would guess you understand feeling too.’

Salmon was quiet for a bit. ‘I know the feeling.’ The water clunked against the boat as it swayed over small humped waves.

‘So is she your girlfriend now?’

‘We have not talked about that. I guess so. Is there a certain point when boyfriend and girlfriend start?’

‘Not that I know of. But you may be asking the wrong laho.’ Salmon laughed; it is a word meaning guy, but also about his dangling body parts. ‘I never really had a girlfriend to speak of. Knew girls, had a couple friends, but not both at a time.’

‘And now there is my mom.’

‘Yes.’ A gust caught in a flap of the rolled up sail and made it go *pat pat pat*. ‘Who I love.’

‘So let me ask you something.’

‘Okay.’

‘I take you don’t like Kali.’

‘I do not know her well enough to not like her.’

‘Well, you know what I mean.’ It was clear that Ipo did not want to say what he was holding in his mind. ‘You do not think she’s right.’

‘I cannot pretend I understand,’ Ipo made often pauses as he talked, ‘all the wheels that turn, how one thing causes another, but I do know that she is not good for you.’

'Why not?'

'Oh, I don't know. Some people would call it fate. It is not in the cards buddy.'

'You don't know.' Salmon's shoulders grew tight. 'At least you got that part right.'

'Sorry. You asked.' Salmon was quiet after that.

Of course I know that feeling, the cause for choosing as he did. Hopeless desperation is just the other side of falling in love. In love you have to drop down your guard to let the other in, and once they're there it is only instinct to keep them close. When your lover is far away, it is easy to question if their love still exists. We become all insecurities and preoccupations and grinding down every little thing we might have done different, to keep close the one to which we are vulnerable. But if we try to keep them too close, they may feel trapped and want to escape. It is such a delicate balancing act.

I have been thinking, little ones, while I write this thing, this letter, how much I would like to touch my audience. I want to hug you close and make sure you feel the love that I know you all deserve. Part of me wonders if I should send this letter at all. I have imagined what I will do some day when I finally finish. I will take all these pages down to the post office, photocopying them, and send them off in the mail, in seven different packages. But if I do that then these stories of my son's life will be the whole of our relationship. I want there to be more for us. Maybe if you read you will see how I really tried to lead a good life, to keep my son on a path that was right. But he was very hard to keep track of with that

broken heart making him a wanderer from the start. I could never quite find the middle ground between over-controlling and do-as-you-please. But I did try to protect him, and protect our family.

Then again if I do send these letters, maybe you will come to visit me some time. I would like to meet you, look you in the face and have you look in mine.

Well as I already hinted at, things with Mackenzie did not stay happy for too long. Salmon kept on indulging thoughts of Mackenzie, would touch his tongue to his lips imagining he could remember her taste. It became difficult for him to stay in the present moment with Mackenzie—her eager-to-please attitude became a burden. Where was her backbone, he wondered. He did not feel he could accurately steer himself in any direction, especially while always dragging someone along behind. Her willingness did not entertain him anymore. There was no joke to it. It became a sudden responsibility, like a passerby who is asked to lead someone who is blind. Of course she was easy to get along with and pretty, so that was enough to sustain it a while. But his heart was just not drawn to her; there was no piece of himself in her that could complete him. The effort and attention that she took made him begin to feel restless in her company, but as his instincts told him to withdraw she tried to hold him tighter.

I found her sitting in the yard one day when I returned from work. I had taken work waitressing in those days, not so much for the money but because I was often bored alone at home. Mackenzie held Shark, the cat, purring quietly in her lap. The way she smiled at me and said hello, I got an inkling of Salmon's

growing frustration. There was something about her like a child before its birthday, an eager expectation.

'Salmon's not here,' I told her.

'I know,' she said in a high-pitched sing-song—that kind of voice meant to suggest that all is okay when something is terribly wrong. She removed a length of ribbon from inside her bag.

'Alright,' I said, 'You just gonna wait? I don't know if he will be long.' Kids at that age can be so annoying, always sniffing around.

'No, I don't have to. I just thought maybe you would want to sit and talk.' She looped the ribbon around little Shark's striped neck and tied it into a bow. Surprisingly enough he didn't flinch at all.

'You want to talk with me?' I asked, a little flattered and ashamed. But really more annoyed that I couldn't go lay down on the bed.

Turns out she wanted me to talk to Salmon. When he came home he walked through the door carrying Sharky, the ribbon a ragged knot tied tight against his neck and covered in dust.

'What is this?' Salmon asked, 'He could have choked to death while going through the bushes.'

'Mackenzie was here,' I told him. 'She tied it there.'

'She was here? And she's gone?' He swung his head around.

I told him what she had wanted, although not in the way Mackenzie would have liked. I was more curious than anything, trying to figure out exactly what he had going on, and I tried to ask him about her. He was embarrassed of course and

kept saying, 'I can't believe she came here again, I can't believe she would come ask you to do that.'

I tried to reassure him that it wasn't a big deal, didn't mean anything in particular to me, didn't have to mean anything to him, other than that she's interested. But when I tried to talk to him he became even more embarrassed; he clearly did not want me talking about girls to him. I'm sure that was part of what set him off, the embarrassment of having a girl he's seeing come and talk to his mom, knowing that she was conferring behind his back, making plans against him.

He felt suddenly trapped and that's when he got mad. He realized he didn't want her anymore, and wasn't certain that he ever had. He couldn't handle her needy behavior, her whole face reaching out like an open hand. And so he decided to do something about it. I think this is around when things started to turn pretty wrong, which is not to say that they hadn't already long before.

Salmon stewed around the house for a while, throwing rocks out in the yard and then after it got dark out he left the house again. By that point I had stopped asking where he was going; if he brought money into the house and did not bring in trouble I figured I may as well treat him as a man—even if he still slept on that same little wooden bed. He cut across the side of the hill along an old walking trail that wended past some old stone foundations and piles of rocks here and there. It cut pretty easy through the brush under the monkey trees. The night was clear and the moon was out, not yet quite full. He could see his way along just fine. There is a bend in the hill on that side where it bulges out all the way

down to one arm of the bay and Salmon tramped around that elbow. After a ways it was pretty much straight down to Mckenzie's house and that's pretty much what he did. Plenty parts weren't too thick, mostly grass and dry hill weeds and for a bit he followed the trickle of a little stream before it ducked back into the ground. There were plenty parts though that he felt sure that no human foot had ever touched. Walls of dense leaves huddled together, one plant locked into the other and on into the next. He pushed and tore through them, ripping at branches and vines. He had a pocket knife with him, still smelling of the insides of fish, that he swung and slashed in front of him going through heavy growth. As he tramped through the woods and brush all the way to Mackenzie's house, that he was blazing a trail that no other man had ever seen or known. In the easier bits of tramping he thought about how he was more or less sealing his fate.

The night was alive around him. The air hissed with tiny insect wings and night birds were all talking about his approach. A little flock of finches cried and flew up as he startled them from their thicket. He's lucky they didn't go straight and peck his eyes out, or get a nasty centipede bite. As it was the forest fought back and scratched his arms and legs all to hell. But he didn't feel it much, driven as he was, driven in the wrong way we can become when we know we're making a bad decision and so cannot think too much about it because we know there is no turning back. Which is not to say that he had a plan.

He neared and neared the road that runs along the coast line here. His anger had softened to disappointment, mostly in himself more than anyone else. He felt like maybe he had been on the brink of something, of breaking free from

Kali and finding something new and unexpected. A large part of him really did not want her to win, did not want to give in to her game. But then the other part was just tired of Mackenzie, old friend or not, he couldn't have her following him or trying to track him down. He was always way too independent for that type of thing. He needed quiet time and breathing space. Knowing that he was going to do what he was about to do swung a weight down into his stomach. Maybe he didn't try hard to make it work, maybe he could give her a few more days and it would get better. Her lips would stop always begging for a kiss and her eyes would lose that always watching gaze. But she was so good to him, he should be more patient, he shouldn't let her annoy him. If he would just laugh the stale jokes her dad had told her, that he had already heard back in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, maybe they would become funny. But her hips were so big. And she seemed to tower over him all of the time; that wouldn't change and all the same none of it was what he really needed. Kali had broken him, it seemed, before he had even learned how to fight. You couldn't really say it was her fault, Salmon had come after her, but in the end she got the better result. He was totally committed to her. He had mortgaged away his collection. He had learned to fish and make a living for her. How could he not follow through with the last bit of it?

I wonder what's the most disappointing feeling you've ever felt. I wonder if it has anything to do with your dad. How much does it anger you, how much does it hurt? Did your mamas find a different daddy to take his place, the way I did? I wonder if you ever knelt down and prayed at the foot of your bed, saying Lord won't you please please please bring my daddy back. I wonder if you resent

him. I wonder if when you think of Salmon you see a fish always swimming away from you.

Salmon stumbled out of the brush and into the ditch that runs along the road. No cars were coming and there were very few people sounds—just outside the town, a couple bends down in the road. A few hundred feet further down was the cut-off for Captain Frank's. Through the bushes he could see the light of the porch and the inside of the glowing house. Not too far beyond, the ocean crawled up over the black rocks. Salmon had been over a couple times and it sure did seem a nice place. Captain Frank, Mackenzie's father, had talked with him about getting a pool in. It seemed a waste to Salmon with having the ocean right there, but that's not what he told Frank, he was so surprised, to have this older haole man trying to impress him.

He ended up liking Captain Frank quite a bit. His jokes sounded less corny coming out of his mouth with his staccato gruffness. He had this old electric guitar, something shiny from the 60's. It was clean and cool and powerful to the touch, and Captain Frank had said he's show Salmon a thing or two, next time. Not too hard to guess at the captain's motives—Salmon was a capable young man and Mackenzie would always be a girl. It seemed like he respected Salmon a bit, who had quickly mastered the skills of fishing and sailing in a way that he had never begun to do, not in the Hawaiian way. He had a motorboat, not too big, but it could get around as well or better than the sailing outriggers ever did. Some of the fishers had taken to using boats like that, too, but many stuck with the way they always did it. He fished with a rod and lures as well, way they do on the



mainland. But none of this really made Salmon like Captain Frank any more than he would have if they hadn't gotten along in the way that they already did. Frank had this tough exterior, hardened in army life, but really was a friendly, curious kind of guy; a smile always twitched on the edges of his lips, but was rarely willing to come all of the way out.

Frank came to mind as Salmon stood outside their house, but it didn't dismiss the confusion, disappointment, or anger he felt at Mackenzie's ongoing intrusion into his life. Yes, he had welcomed it at first but it had to come to an end. If bushwhacking his way through the woods hadn't made him turn back, go home, and sleep on it for a night, then nothing really ever would. The time to end it had come, though Salmon hadn't been sure until then that the inevitability of its end was fated from before it had begun.

At first he thought, as he stood in the creaking night, that he would just go up and knock on her door, stand there are scratched, dripping, bloody, and ask if he could see Mackenzie. Her mother would probably scream out in fright, he thought. Mackenzie might think it funny, though, somehow, the way she often laughed at serious things. He skulked away from the road through the bushes and into their yard, cool flat grass trimmed neat. Several hibiscus bushes dotted the lawn. Could he just go up to the door, ring the bell, say he fell and allow himself to be invited in?

No, he could not. He had to end it with Kali, had to make sure she knew it was over. Could he just tell her? Sit her down and say: Look, it's over! Leave me alone! No, she wouldn't take him seriously, would probably laugh and shake her

head. It couldn't just drag out, him trying to ignore her for as long as he could. It had to be clear closure. He had to break her heart.

He thought of several things he could do: Write her a letter, leave a note; break into her room and smash her shell collection; throw a rock through the window and scream through it, Leave me alone! He could leave old stinking fish heads on the ground around their house, could put poison in the fish heads so the cats would get sick when they ate them, puke all over their fancy rug, maybe even die. No, he did not want to really have to kill anything, though the cats, that might be an idea. A plan began to form in his mind. He crept around the backside of the house.

The ground of the yard sloped down toward the sea, with a basement that opened to the outside in the back. Above the yard was the big wooden deck, raised on legs to be at the same level as the main part of the house. The yard was cut curving through a patch of low field grass and beyond that the moonlit brush. He stole onto the steps going up to the deck and crouched down just before the top. He could see into the kitchen, there was light and shadows moving around. He could faintly hear the rise and fall of their voices, Mackenzie's laugh. They were inside doing normal family things.

Laying on the deck, right next to the house, was one of Mackenzie's chubby house cats and Salmon knew what he would do. He would hurt the thing that was close to her; there is more than one way to break a person's heart. He crawled over the deck to where the cat lay, framed by the soft light from the window. Salmon crouched outside of that square of light and listened; the voices

inside had become quiet. He reached for the cat and petted it for a second, turning a tuft of fur between his fingers. The fur was soft and the cat's body was soft, padded around the middle from too much easy food. 'You are gross, Mahu,' a name meaning steam, to match it's light grey. He crawled his fingers between the wood of the deck and the cat's belly and cursed it, 'Gross Mahu, manu, kuamuamu.' The cat squirmed for a moment and then lay there. He quietly lifted the cat from the ground and hurried away from house bent low. He sat on the top step going back down to the yard.

From the pocket of his shorts he pulled to frayed dirty knotted ribbon he had cut away from the throat of his cat Shark. Salmon stroked Mahu a few times where he lay in his lap and then tied the ribbon in a knot around the cat's neck, not quite so tight as to choke him but tight enough that it wouldn't slip under his jaw or over his head. He put the cat back up on the deck but held onto the ribbon like a leash. When he pulled at Mahu with the ribbon the cat began to squirm in the funniest way, rolling onto its back flailing its paws at nothing in a very uncoordinated way. This made Salmon chuckle a bit. He tugged the ribbon again and the cat jiggled about with more enthusiasm. Salmon laughed a bit more then pulled on the ribbon leash, which was not too long, toward the railing of the deck. The cat slid heavy across the wood and made that 'Rairr!' cat sound but Salmon tugged on it again, pulling the ribbon to the top of the railing around the deck and the cat to lay kicking against the post that stood there supporting it. The cat made a sort of growling scream but Salmon pulled the ribbon more, lifting the cat first to his feet and up off its front paws so they swung as he dangled and yowled,

calling out, 'Mwaowr, mwaowr!' as loud as a baby crying. As soon as he tied a quick tight knot in the noose over the railing, he ran down the steps of the deck, slapslapslapslapslapslap, and then out to the edge of the yard. He heard someone open the door of the house and come out onto the deck and then Mackenzie called, 'Hush Mahu, hush! Mahu, come here! Come here for tuna!' and then he could see her from where he was hidden in the shadows as she walked out further onto the deck. 'Oh my God!' she yelled and ran to kneel where the cat was swinging, suspended. 'What the hell? What the hell?' she cried. 'How the hell did you do this? I didn't put any ribbon on you.' The cat spun and tore away from her as Mackenzie's hands fumbled at his neck. He kept crying and crying as she tried to get ahold of him and Salmon again had to stifle a laugh. She stood then and dug into the knot at the railing, and soon enough the cat's front feet dropped down to the deck and he ripped away, down the steps and into the yard. Mackenzie ran after him and Salmon ran then, too, ran out of the yard and into the brush that surrounded it. He tried to be quiet as he went but there's nothing to say that Mackenzie didn't hear him, didn't see him as he ran away and down toward the sea. The coast is rocky right there and hopped from rock to rock away from Mackenzie's house and back toward the glow of the town.

Salmon wanted to splash out into the water and wash the dried blood, his own blood, from his legs and arms, but that would be a stupid thing to do right during the feeding time of the sharks. He hit a sandy patch of beach interrupted by a high outcropping of rock, just on the other side was little beach. He scrambled up the grassy embankment and onto the road. In back of one of the buildings on

the edge of town he found a hose and washed himself off. Salmon held the hose over his head and the water flowed into his eyes and covered him. He did not feel bad about what he had done. He only hoped that it would be enough.

Salmon did not see or hear from Mackenzie for a couple days then one gray morning, low loose clouds and no sunrise, Salmon found the same blue ribbon tied like a little tail dangling at the back of Ipo's boat. Salmon did not think too hard about what it might mean when he saw it, it seemed clear enough—she knew it had been him who had strung up her cat, she knew but she did not wish to speak to him. The ribbon was a quiet surrender, giving up what she had pursued. He did not consider that it could mean anything more—a mark, a sign, or a curse. Ipo was about to remove it before they pushed out when Salmon asked him to let it stay. Ipo said he did not mind one way or the other, but why keep some random fraying scrap tied on by some girl in the night? Salmon told him where it had come from, and what he thought it meant, although he did not mention the last part of the story, the part in which Salmon used it to half hang the cat.

It dipped into the water as they pushed out into waves, but they caught no fish all morning. Ipo suggested maybe they should take it off. Salmon understood and in a sudden angry flourish cut the band away. 'Let's just hope it does not stick, whatever was on that ribbon,' Ipo said as the blue strips floated on the water.

Although he could not be sure what caused it, Salmon was gripped by a mild panic for most the rest of the day. There was nothing to blame on

Mackenzie, and no reason to regret his actions. He had not killed the cat, no one was hurt, at least not really, and he had managed to simplify his life. But still, he wondered if Mackenzie was hurt, if he had caused some serious wound to make her come back and curse him; could she even cast a proper curse if she is half haole, he wondered. Whether she could or she couldn't, what was done could not be undone, he told himself, and tried to settle his mind on catching some fish.

Salmon decided meet the old man the next morning. He stood at the side of the road and when the old man came along the two exchanged a simple happy nod, and the one-sided cold war came to an end. Salmon fell into pace as if they had just fished together yesterday, although it had been months. They walked down toward the rising light, as they had often done, and then stopped outside that little house, pressed in between two others, where the old man's wife and daughter lived.

Kali brought out coffee, and when she saw Salmon she just turned and brought another cup. Salmon had begun to feel a bit hurt by both her and the old man's lack of surprise at seeing him, but when she returned with his coffee she said, 'Let's talk later, huh?' and everything seemed right again.

Ipo and the old man were in good spirits as they pushed out into the day. They paddled out of the bay casually, the fish would be there, just enjoying the air. Neither minding to admit it was good to see the other, not much of a need to. They just had that kind of bond. Salmon set a few hooks while the man lay back in the bow and Salmon thought about their first day on the water together. How he had been excited but then afraid of the fish after he had it on the hood. He did not

remember himself as ridiculous, however, in the way that we can regret the way that we once were. He missed that sensitive boy, the boy that didn't want to hurt a fish, didn't have to slice one down the belly and let the guts slide out in clean packets of slippery organs. Although he knew he had been a handful in school and a bit at home, he was willing to admit, he had generally been a pretty nice kid, and I can attest to that. I already told you little ways he got into trouble, but up until he started messing with the girls, he felt he had never done anything he would call really bad.

Seeing the old man, however, Salmon started to get a sense of guilt over what he had done to Mackenzie and her cat, although he couldn't quite think why guilt would come to him then. He wanted to tell the old man all about it, what he had done, why he had done it, but he didn't want to expose all of his feelings and history with his daughter. As they rested in the rock of the boat, Salmon decided to start an honest conversation and see what would come out.

'So, do you know, I have been seeing this girl I was in school with, back in the day.'

'Is that so? She pretty?'

'She is. Yes, big but pretty.'

'Oh, haha, I know the type.'

'You've seen her, I'd bet. She would wait for me after school. You must a seen her hanging around on the beach.'

'Well now maybe I have.' Salmon did not know what to say next. 'So you liking her?' the old man offered.

'Oh, hehe,' Salmon hadn't much practice talking about girls then. He never said much as a scrap to me about it when I asked. Guess he was embarrassed somehow. 'Ya, well no, actually she got to be too much, following me, hanging around.'

'Oh so you gave he the heave-how eh?'

'Haha, in a way I guess.' He thought if he should admit the story or not. 'I don't think she'll be coming back.'

The old man sat up. 'Oh sounds fiery. Hey are you trying to get around to a way to tell me what you told her.'

In a moment Salmon felt himself tip to telling the old man what he did, the whole thing—running through the bushes, sneaking in the yard, hanging up the cat. The old man didn't have much to say really after that for a while. Just that, 'You aughtnt do that to a cat. Cats are smart in the eyes and they can have it in for you.'

'Aright but the cat is fine. I'm not going to worry about it. I have Sharky to protect me anyway.' Salmon didn't care to hear the criticism on it.

They turned over small wind rolls and sat quiet for some time. Salmon pulled in a bright little parrot fish, still growing and as swift as he had him in his hands plucked the hook out and slid him back into the water. 'You're getting good at that,' the old man told him, an olive branch.

'Thanks,' Salmon grunted.

They sat for a while longer not too concerned with the fish just taking sips of water from their bottles. 'She's not my daughter,' the old man muttered.



'Huh?' Salmon heard what he said and had an idea what he meant but what else could he say.

'She's not my daughter, I don't know how to tell you other than flat out like that but I don't think that Kali is my daughter.'

'Huh,' Salmon said again.

'I thought you should know because I know what you're feeling, I've been there before. I see it in your face, your mood, everything you do. I don't know if it makes any difference to you but, there it is.'

'Well then,' Salmon was blindsided, although not terribly disappointed or surprised. If she wasn't the old man's daughter he'd be less likely to stand in Salmon's way between them. 'Whose is she.'

'Well she's her mother's for one, but I don't know the other.' The old man grimaced as he sat up and leaned in toward Salmon. It seemed he had his own confessions to make. 'Okay so I'll tell you. Yes I have to.'

Salmon felt a little queasy but leaned in from where he sat on the opposite bench. Their faces were just a foot apart. Salmon could smell age and coffee on the old man's breath. 'Okay so Kali's mama, Ailana, is my second wife.' This already was news to Salmon and his head hurt a little. 'She's younger you know.' Salmon nodded. 'So making it short, Ailana and I started fighting after a bit, a couple of years and then always arguing. It was silly but at that point was when she also became pregnant. With our fighting and all we were never close enough to make a baby happen so I really don't know where that baby came from.' Salmon stayed stunned. 'But I couldn't live with her mama after that. I love Kali

no matter where she's from, and I support her, but no way I can live with that cheating devil lady.' The old man's face was serious in a way Salmon had never seen, lips pulled down in a cowl and eyes squinting. Salmon knew the old man had been hurt and reached out to pat the man's thick wrinkled knee. 'It's alright you know,' the man said, but then was quiet again after that and Salmon still couldn't think what to say.

'So why did you tell me that?' Salmon worked up to asking just before he knew they would turn to catch the wind back to the bay.

'Don't you think it's something you should know?' the old man stated more than asked.

'Well who's to say now, I guess.' Salmon couldn't decide if it ended up making a difference to him or not.

But but alking back up the hill that day, nearing Kali's house, the butterflies jumped his stomach and he knew he was going to keep going after her whether or not Ipo liked her, whether she was the old man's daughter, the post man's daughter, or the daughter of a bird her mother met out on the dock. Some of the blocks in Kali's history started falling into place in Salmon's head and he felt a little proud, knowing something about Kali that he doubted she even knew. But of course he could keep the secret.

He walked slowly along the other side of the street when he walked past Kali's house, having left the old man back talking to another fisher pulling his boat in for the night. The shutters were closed and he could see no signs of life around the house. Maybe they had gone out, he thought when a stone whizzed by

him and clattered into the street. He twisted around twice and heard Kali's deep laugh, her real laugh. Salmon shielded his eyes from the light falling behind the hill and saw her outline perched up on their rock. Their rock, that was the thought that went through Salmon's head and he felt proud again to have a rock with Kali. They really did share so much between them. 'Hey!' Salmon called. He saw her hand rise and then whip forward so he ducked off to the side. 'What the hell?' he yelled. This was not the reception he had expected. She stopped throwing rocks but stayed quiet. Salmon looked up but could not see the expression on her face. He began to trot up through the dust of the hill. Halfway to the rock he stopped and looked up at her again. She was sitting there cross-legged, her face still hard to read. She was looking at him, watching him, as if curious what he would do. Salmon walked up the rest of the way to the rock.

'You're back,' she told him.

'Yes I am.'

'Took you long enough,' but then she smiled and he knew that she was glad to see him, too. He climbed up onto the rock and squatted next to her. He wanted to touch her but he didn't, knew she was still being mad.

'I thought you were avoiding me.'

'I was.'

'Well okay then.' She shot a look at him.

'Well okay then nothing.' This was not a disagreement going anywhere.

'So did you miss me?' but she did not respond. 'Look, I did the third task alright.' He did not want to go into detail then, wished more than anything to leave

poor Mackenzie and his horrible behavior as a fading memory. 'It was awful, but I did it,' was all that he added.

Kali smiled at him and patted the slab next to her, and Salmon sat. 'Are you sure you didn't enjoy it? Not at all?'

Salmon's mind skipped over images of the weeks past, Mackenzie smiling with a cat in her arms, her thick thighs, sitting in the shade with a sweaty coke pressed to her chest, her face scrunched in laughter; Mackenzie standing on the shore, waiting and growing as he paddled in, sitting behind the wheel of her father's truck, begging him to go for a ride. Salmon hung and swung his head. 'No. No it was not fun.'

'Well,' Kali said brightly, matter-of-factly, as if to ward off a mood she could see settling in, 'I thought maybe that's what you were doing. Which is why I missed you with the rocks.' Salmon jerked out a loud laugh.

'So you admit you *did* miss me then?'

'Oh brother.' She rolled her eyes at him, holding back a grin, and with that they were back, just like that. The weeks that had passed, the torn emotions, troubled sleep, thoughts of hate, plans of deep revenge, all swept away by the small begrudging gesture of Kali's delight.

'It's okay,' he breathed into her shoulder, 'I know you did.' He gently pushed her chin up to look at him, and she smiled again, but would not lock his gaze. He could see enough to know that she really had missed him, or at least had been hurt by what has passed, and he felt bad, although he wasn't at all sure that their separation had been his fault. But being together again, sitting on that rock

looking out over the tops of the trees at the line where the ocean turns to sky, it felt good, it felt right. Mackenzie took a hard candy from the pocket of her old cut-off shorts and slipped it into Salmon's hand, laying where he had dropped it to the rock. He fingered the plastic wrapper and popped the sweet between his teeth, tasting sour apple.

Salmon didn't mention Mackenzie, her heart, or anyone's heart at all. It was a relief to be there without thinking about what he had to do or what had been done. There had been quite enough talk and thought of hearts, broken or whole, as far as he was concerned. At dusk Salmon kissed her on the cheek as he left, and she let him with that halfway smile of hers which Salmon took to mean that she was delighted. He walked on home, floating like a bubble.

It did not take long for Kali to decide that Salmon had proven his worth. The resistance she had held out quickly dropped away. Salmon and Kali were intimate. Then again and often.

I had not always believed in allowing Salmon to follow his own path, but there came a point at which I guess I became indifferent. I know that is a thing most mothers won't admit, and I wouldn't normally, but there it is nonetheless. I could not try and channel all his energy, his sidwinding determination—would be as easy as stopping the water from rolling down the hill to stop Salmon from running his natural course, for better or for worse. The change in Salmon's mood, Mackenzie's absence, the reappearance of Kali now and then did not go unnoticed by Ipo, and it was all very deeply troubling to him. Ipo, such a strong man, a strong man with a strong core that bent at times to weather many heavy storms,

but never broke. But Ipo had his secrets, too, and these secrets were tied so close to his core, like vines wrapped around a tree, that it was hard for him to know where the secrets stopped and he began. He had sworn to himself to never tell, there would have been no use, nothing to be gained, although as Salmon kept following his troubled heart back to Kali, Ipo knew he must unravel the secrets that he kept so close.

One morning not too long after Salmon and Kali had begun to enjoy the pleasure of their bodies, Ipo and Salmon were setting their lines, sinking them baited and weighted into the deep deep blue where the big fish fed. Salmon asked, 'What is the story of your boat?'

'Her story? Ha, you have never asked me this before.'

'I know, but I am curious now.'

'Yes, I was just thinking how we can spend so much time and never know where the things that we most depend on come from.' Salmon stayed quiet. 'She is beginning to become old now.' Ipo sat in the bow of the boat and smacked his palm against the joint where the arm of the outrigger was lashed to the hull. The wood thwacked and hummed. 'Or maybe middle aged. Boats can have a long life if treated well.'

'So did you buy it?'

'Buy it? No, it was my father's. Strange, how did you not know this? But no matter. Yes he had it built just as the boat he had received from his father slipped into a state where repairs did not stick.'

Wiping his hair away from his eyes and turning back to the lines, Salmon

asked, 'Who is the builder? I don't think I know him.' Salmon knew the answer, knew most of what could be found in town.

'There is no builder now, not in this town. I believe there is still one in Lahaina, makes boats for sport, for recreation. Fishers want boats now, they buy a metal thing made in a factory and a motor. But you know this.'

'Yes, I have seen. But I do not want a metal thing. I want a boat like this one, a boat like my father's and like the old man's.'

'I see. So that is what this is about. You want a boat now, eh?'

'Well, I don't think I can buy a new one, but I have a little saved,' Salmon told him. 'Could I buy one from another fisher? I don't care if it is used.'

Although it was difficult for Ipo to say, he asked, 'Why do you need a boat at all?'

'Well it seems I am a fisher, doesn't it? It seems it is what I have become.' Ipo could not deny this as it had come true under his own watch, and by the hand of the old man. 'And my father's boat is lost, isn't it?' Again, it was the truth. 'And I am growing,' Salmon said. 'There are things I want to do. Have a family of my own. And we will not both fit in here much longer.' Salmon threw his weight away from the balancing buoyancy of the outrigger and the boat turned beneath them with a shudder. Both men immediately leaned again to right it with the outrigger bouncing back to the water with the sound of a drum, and Ipo glared but Salmon laughed. 'I will need a boat.'

'It is something you will have to work toward, Kamanu. And I do not know anyone who wishes to sell their boat. But it is good to know what you want

to achieve someday.'

'I don't mean so much someday,' Salmon said, low.

'Well what do you expect, boy? Boats do not appear from nothing. Especially not boats like these.'

'Do you think the old man will sell me his boat?'

Ipo thought on this for some time, did not want to respond in an angry way, did not know why he felt upset by this at all, but he did. 'You will have to ask him that yourself. But I doubt it. It is his livelihood as much as this boat is mine, is yours.'

'Yes, but what if I gave him part of the profits. He will need to retire at some point, right? I mean, he is old. And he will be family, after all.'

'I am not sure that I know what we are talking about any more. Be plain with me boy,' although sure he knew plenty well just what Salmon meant.

'Like I said,' this kind of personal talk did not come easy for either of them, 'I will start a family.'

'You said the old man would be family, so you mean with Kali.'

'That is what I meant.'

'You are not yet so old.'

'Seventeen, Ipo. Maybe not children yet, but it is not impossible. How old was my mother when she had me?'

'Seventeen? Okay, seventeen. Not yet so grown.' He was quiet. 'You know this was never your mother's plan for you. Fishing or this girl.'

'Yes, but it is what has happened. And I enjoy it.'



'Fishing does suit you boy,' Ipo smiled, rose to tack the sail as the wind rose. Salmon let him to the job and as Ipo synched the chord that shifted the bowl of the sail he said, 'But I do not think you need to be in such a rush to settle down, start a family. I was single until I was much older than you.'

'That's just because you could not meet a girl!' Salmon laughed.

'Laugh boy, but it is not so. It is not so hard for a man who is strong and capable to attract the attention of women. But it was not of my interest.'

'Yes, I remember when girls were of no interest to me. Before I had hair in my underarms.'

'You are full of jokes today boy, but I am serious. Give yourself time to grow before you tie yourself to the fate of another.'

'I know you are serious, Ipo, and I take your words to heart, but it cannot be helped. Kali and I are already tied together at the heart.'

'I see. You love each other?'

Salmon looked off, squinting. 'Yes.' He thought of his trials he had been through, the tests to prove his heart. 'And we are bonded.'

'You mean you have been together?'

'That is not what I meant, but yes, that's true, too.'

This was the point Ipo had worried over, had lost sleep, had known would come but could not know how to stop, how to pursue without bringing the stilts on which our little family balanced on crashing down. In his mind, so much was at stake in Salmon's winding twists of fate, most everything that had come to be important to him. He feared for the happiness of the boy who had come to love a

girl he could not have, he feared for the future of the girl who already would have trouble finding another mate as it was. He feared for the memory of his dear lost friend, and he feared the wrath of God for breaking a promise to hold a secret that he could no longer keep. He feared for my happiness, my sanity, in learning the true nature of my Makani who had been swallowed by the sea. But he could not guess that I already understood the truth which he feared I would find, and that I harbored it in a deep wet place of regret. I had secrets of my own.

They fished in silence for some time, Salmon checking the lines and changing bates while Ipo fished for the right words to tell the boy what he must, what would leave us all undone.

After the sun had turned to the other half of the sky, their boat still empty of fish, Salmon sighed and said, 'Well, what do you think? The fish are not coming to call today.'

'Our heads are elsewhere. It would be only luck if we caught something now,' Ipo responded.

'Oh? Where is your head then?' Salmon could not guess at the worrying loops that Ipo's mind ran in, imagining first what might happen if he were to say nothing, tried to think of what Kali's mother thought of their children's affair. She must have known of it, considering how close she had kept her daughter, how could she let it go on. Did she really not know who Salmon was? He would have to have a talk with her before he whispered any of it to the boy. There was no time to loose, he would go to her that afternoon.

'I suppose it is stuck on your talk of boats?'

Salmon perked up. 'Oh, any ideas then? You come up with something?'

'No, that is not quite what I meant.' Ipo was quiet as he rigged the sail. Ipo went to the front of the boat and picked up his paddle. Salmon stayed where he sat in the back and picked up his. 'Home then,' Ipo spoke over his shoulder.

When the boat was tied down and tucked away on the beach, Ipo turned toward the hill and spoke, arching his back with his hands on his hips. 'I would like to see Kali's mother.'

Salmon felt panic for a moment, wondering what Ipo could have to say to the mother of the girl he was in love with, the mother of the girl of whom Ipo did not approve. 'Why?' he asked, then quickly, 'Of course, you may, you should.'

'I know I should, which is why I said it,' Ipo responded with a hard glance.

'To tell the truth,' Salmon said, 'I have never talked to her myself,' and he let out a nervous giggle, although neither saw humor in this shortcoming.

'You wish to marry this girl, to share your lot with her, and you do not even know her mother?' Ipo scoffed. His nerves and resolve had turned to steel, and maybe there was some meanness there, too. Salmon felt it and balked.

'So what?' he asked. 'Did you ask permission to take my mother?' Ipo's thick paw fell on Salmon's shoulder and his fingers wrapped hard into his tender fleshy underarm.

'I spent weeks caring for your mother, side by side with her own mother. After that, there was no question.' Ipo became taller and his already thick chest expanded, 'There was no question because I was the answer. Are you the answer to the prayers of this mean little girl? Or to the mother who would rather pretend

that you do not exist?' Salmon was shocked to silent. How could he respond to this? He did not even know this man who's grip on him was so angry and final. Salmon felt guilty and foolish, although he did not fully know why, although it was not foreign either, replacing the proud glowing feeling he had feeling as if he had gotten away with something, although he had a better idea of what he had gotten away with than what could have lit Ipo's anger. He had gone against his mother's wishes to become a fisher. He had gone against Ipo's counsel to pursue the girl that his heart beat for. He had been cruel to a friend, broken her heart to prove the loyalty of his own bloody organ. He had done all of these things and gotten away with them, although in each turn it had not felt like getting away, but only getting closer to the girl who made him feel whole. But as his arm began to tingle under Ipo's hard grip and Ipo's face coiled tight as if he might spit. Slamon began again to recognize his own selfishness and doubt the trust he had put in the righteousness of following his heart. And then it occurred to him, a thought so clear that it might have been spoken in words from the truest core of his soul, from that part of us that never changes no matter how deeply we burry it or will it to go away: The heart is wrong.

In that brief moment, standing in the sand that slid under his feet as Ipo pulled him close into his grip, Salmon went to another place, sought the echoing hollow inside himself that had spoken out and given voice to every one of his doubts.

'Hello?' he said, hoping as much to hear feel, think, or hear nothing at all in return.

'I am here,' the voice said, with a power that was so much more real, so much more sure than the panting, slobbering hunger of his ragged heart. What occurred from there is difficult to describe as a conversation for it was more of an opening of understanding than a volley of words, and through it Salmon saw plainly what this core of himself, completely separate from the heart, a core that I and each of you carry with you if you care to seek it out, had first said: The heart had been wrong. It was damaged and it was wrong. Salmon sank to the sand and Ipo let his grip go, so there the boy knelt—yet nearly a man—the same sand that covered his knees clung to the toes of the man who had raised him, loved him, taught him everything he knew about how to support himself and how to catch a fish. Ipo did not know quite what the boy was going through but still he placed the firm weight of his hand atop the head that bowed before him and let it stay there until Salmon grew restless and rose again.

'Okay,' Kamanu said. 'We will go.' He understood then that the reality of his situation, the place at which he had arrived after so much following of his heart, could not be skirted or ignored. He must meet Kali's mother. If this thing that they had been calling love that had grown between Kali and him were to go beyond the realm of childish fantasy, then she too must be a part of it. This is all that Ipo felt while he stood before Ipo, but if Ipo could have heard his thoughts, he would have shaken his head, knowing that none of this would come true. Two left footprints side-by-side in the sand, up onto the road, and slowly along to part way up the hill to that little house stuck in-between two others.

Ipo knocked on the door and nearly immediately Kali answered, holding a

book in one hand with her thumb stuck between the pages. She looked confused.

'Hello, I'm Ipo. But you know,' and he smiled, extending his hand.

'Yes, I'm Kali.' She cast her eyes down and placed the book on a table inside the door and folded her slender fingers were enveloped in his. 'Come in,' she said to Ipo, and Salmon followed behind. Salmon had never been inside of Kali's house. It was as small as it seemed from the outside—if Ipo were to lay on the floor his toes and fingertips could easily touch the opposite walls of the little living space—but it was clean and well lived in. Pencil drawings made by a practiced hand and torn from a notebook hung like windowpanes above a small but well-stuffed couch. A vase of blooming hibiscus stood on a rough wooden stool. The air smelled of talc and something sweet. Ipo pulled the cap from Salmon's head and stuffed it into his hand.

'Nice,' Salmon said as he looked around, but Kali gave him a dark look from beneath her loose tangle of curls.

'Would you like some coffee? Some tea?' She led Ipo and Salmon further into the house where there was a little kitchen lined with shelves, a black iron stove, steep wooden steps leading to the rooms above, and a window and door going out to the back.

'No thank you,' Ipo said. 'Maybe some water please.' Kali poured one glass from a sweaty jug and handed it to Ipo. Salmon felt his throat tighten in. Ipo downed the glass.

'Mother is in back. Shall I get her?' Kali moved toward the door.

'No, we can go outside,' Ipo said, panting slightly, one arm propped

against the sink.

Kali flicked her head. 'Come along then.' The three of them walked outside. In back, the hill was terraced into garden plots, the dark soil turned over and planted with rows of leafy greens and budding flowers. Further down, past the underbrush were the backs of other houses and then on down to the town and sea.

'Very nice,' Ipo said.

'Mother spends much of her time out here.' And there she was, her back to them, squatting in the flowers. The flowers printed on her loose dress and the flowers of the plants waved together in the breeze. As the three stood watching she pulled a handful of little weeds from amongst the woody roots and tossing them onto a pile. 'Mama!' Kali called. The woman, the old man's wife, looked over one hunched shoulder and brought her hands to her eyes.

'He aha?' she asked, as if annoyed, and then rose to her feet. Kali put out her hand to display the men who had arrived to interrupt their day. The woman's shading hand cast a dark band across her face so Salmon could not see her eyes, but she stood there square and unimpressed by the appearance of the men. Her build was not unlike Ipo's, Salmon noticed, thick arms blunt jaw. Her hair was straight and woven into a tight rope that hung over one shoulder. Her lip briefly curled and Salmon could see the whites of her teeth from forty feet away. She tipped over at the waist, picked a rag from the ground and rubbed it between her hands before striding up the hardened path that lay between the rows.

'Quite an impressive garden!' Ipo called as she was halfway up the hill. He

raised one hand into the air where it twitched like a sail.

She neared and said, 'I'm sure you have eaten my fruit. I sell to Lellani in the market.' Her eyes were to the ground until she was close enough to touch Ipo's extended hand. She did not shake it so much as wipe her hand through Ipo's grip as her deep black eyes were locked squarely on his. Salmon stood to Ipo's right and Kali stood across from them where the four of them stood in a little group.

'You know me then?' Ipo asked. It had been many many years and only once since they last had conversation.

'Of course I do,' she responded. 'Us old women never forget.'

'You are not yet so old,' Ipo said. 'If you are then that makes me older still.'

She looked down across the curve of the hill. 'Maybe not, but nearly a widow anyhow.' Ipo had no way to respond to that and Salmon had no way of knowing what truth lay in that odd statement for although the man who was technically still her husband was old, at no point did he seem near to death.

'That is mama's sense of humor. Isn't she funny?' All three looked at Kali and then Ipo spoke.

'Do you know that Kamanu and Kali have been courting, and are quite far along it seems?'

'Ipo!' Salmon yelped and tugged on his wrist but Ipo did not budge.

'I knew something of it, yes.' The woman looked at Salmon for the first time, her eyes narrow and sharp; he was struck by how unlike her mother Kali looked. She had not kept herself well—her eyes were baggy, her skin lined and in folds under her chin—although he could see how there had once been some round



smoothness there that was probably attractive. Kali's features were more pronounced, a round chin, sharp nose, and a firm line across her brow. 'I cannot always control this girl,' she added turning back to Ipo, as if in apology.

'Well then of course you also know that this cannot continue.' Salmon stayed quiet still, stunned and patient enough to wait and see what this was all about. It was Kali who reacted.

'And what do you mean? Cannot continue? Who are you to say?' Kali did not hold back her attitude.

'You see what I mean, so hard to control. But she got it from me, so what can I say? I married that old man when I was her age—and then—and then I think you know some about the rest.'

'Yes, the rest. We are here because of the rest.'

'What the hell are you guys talking about? What does any of this have to with me?'

She shrugged her shoulders and stuck out her lips, 'What can I say? I have paid for my sins. And did my best for my daughter to protect.'

Ipo spoke plainly and soft. 'This is not my story to tell, but Kali, sweetie, you and Salmon cannot continue. It is not done. It really cannot be done.'

Kali allowed Ipo's hand to rest on her arm but firmly said, 'You have no idea what you're talking about. Salmon has proven himself to me. We will marry, and I will be leaving. Soon. Very soon.' This last part she said while facing her mother. Her mother would not look her in the eye.

'I'm afraid,' the Kali's mother said, 'the man is right. It cannot be done.'

Kali did not quite have a tantrum there and then, but her shoulders tensed, her fists wound tight, her face pulled back into a snarl.

'You disgust me,' Kali said. 'If you think for a second that you can take this away from me, you are wrong. Salmon did the tasks, just like you always said. We are bonded. And we have slept together.' These last words the mother did not hear with such a stoic face. He head snapped away to the side as if trying to dodge their sound.

'You are a silly girl. Always have been. And passionate, just like your father.' The mother said these words to the ground.

'Passionate? My father?' It is not a word you would have used to describe the quiet man who had first taken Salmon out to fish. And with this, that quiet emptiness within Salmon came alive again and turned and he knew somehow the words that were still left unsaid, and which maybe by now you have guessed. They burned in him, a burning sinking weight pushing deep into his bowels. It was not a broken heart, the heart is such a little thing; it was the breaking of his sense of future, his self, his soul. He became displaced, just a floating spec, a microbe, a molecule, an atom spinning by himself in the vast darkness of the universe. He knew before the words could be said that the girl to whom he had attached was not his lover, and never could be—the attraction that he had seen there, that was so indelible, so irresistible and pervasive to his life had not been one of sex, or at least not one of sex alone. It was an attraction to himself, to his past, and to the man that he had never known.

Salmon did not hear the words that were traded after that, or if he did they

were too tragic, too hard to hold in his already overflowing cup. When he came to and found himself still standing there, Kali's mother knelt next to the girl who lay in the ground, her brown skin covered and smeared in parts by clumps of the dark brown volcanic soil. But he was unsurprised to see that because everything around him seemed suddenly different. Of course the sky was still blue, and the ocean too, the birds sang, smoke rose grey from chimneys below, the wind blew light but present as always. His heart still beat, thump thump. Nothing had changed its essential qualities, but still everything was different: greyer, muted, dull, and utterly uninteresting. His nerves could only feel their own internal fire. It seemed obvious and clear to him that nothing out there mattered.

He blinked once and then again. It was as if his eyes were coated in a grey swirling film and while he watched the land it was as if a catch slipped and through the grey a grid slid over everything, marking off the land and the houses and the sea, just a grid of squares like a checker board into which everything fit so nice and neatly. He also saw that he and Ipo and Kali and everyone else were caught up in this grid, moving along just as they should be. The grid was order, the grid was life, it was movement, all planned, ordered, and organized, running so smoothly and seamlessly that it was impossible for most of us to see. But for a moment, just the briefest moment, Salmon saw how he had broken from that order, falling for his father's daughter, dedicating himself to her, and making love over and over, the way that young lovers do. Loved and slept with the daughter of his daughter, and how all along he had been following the wrong path by pursuing the pain of his broken heart, a pain that never really was relieved by the presence

of Kali. He saw that it had started innocently but been wrong for him from the very start.

And in that moment he knew, it was so obvious as he saw his path stretching out through the squares that lay before him that he was amazed that he had not seen it before—he could not stay in Hawaii. He must leave and follow his future into the unknown.

Then as quickly as it had come, in the space of a breath, the grid and his vision were undone. Still he was left with the knowledge of what he had seen. The pain, the disgust, the shame he felt for what he had done, he knew that he could leave all of it, leave all of us behind once he gets off this island. Ipo took his hand, for just a little longer Salmon would be his boy, and he led him out of that garden and through the little house, leaving the mother to tend to her daughter. The two of them walked hand in hand all the rest of the way up the hill and home, where they found me and I held Salmon close and together we wept, our shared heart beating and aching in time. The little sliver of his that lay buried in my chest squirmed and dug at my large and weathered heart because it had learned the secret that set most of this whole story into play. I can feel the little shard of heart dig in me now as I write, poking deeper in my chest and the pains come more often now, so I must tell someone, I must tell you this final last bit, otherwise I worry that holding this last secret might just be my death. And so I have written to you my boys. This is your family history and my final coming clean. I hope that it will absolve us all.

I realize now that I more or less already told you about what I'm trying to

get at, though when I wrote it first it was still rather buried. I described a dream I had right after Makani died: I hiked to the top of the hill and buried the bones of a fish. There was more to it than that as well, other parts that make up the spell. My blood was spilled on the dried bulbs of seaweed seeds before they burned in the boney remains of that fish. Makani was tied to the spell by little parts of him that burned as well—fingernails, stray hairs, flakes of skin, an old shirt—everything I could find that he would not really miss. And then the words that are old and Hawaiian, but I can tell you more or less the gist of what they mean. I think they will make the source of my guilt more than clear:

The bones of this fish once swam in the waters of the sea,  
But here in the stillness of the earth it will stay forever more.  
A fish locked in the earth was never meant to be,  
And once your love is tied it is never meant to leave.

Let the the fire of these leave takes this message on the wind  
Where it will live in the memory of the clouds:  
If my love is ever known to stray  
Let the wind bring me the message before the next day.

Once again: if the winds catch the sound  
Of my lover breaking his bounds,  
I expect a message from the winds and  
Let a lightning bolt strike the traitor down.

Maybe you are thinking, ‘Oh, this magic could not possibly mean a thing,’ and at times I have wondered if this was so, times I had prayed to God to show me that these spells could never control anything, were just words and random acts that amounted to nothing. I cannot tell you how I would like to loose the burden of this guilt that hangs on me, to know that coincidence is the only connection between my mumbled words, the fish's bones, whatever passed between my husband and the old man's young wife, and Makani's death in that storm at sea. But then there is the simple exist of Kali that tells me that the suspicions I first had that made me cast the spell were more real than I had even first imagined.

After Salmon left, oh my boys did my heart ache. We had grown apart as he grew older, not speaking much more than required through our basics of the day, but still he was my boy and I did not want to see him go. The sea did in fact end up taking him away, just as I had always feared—and I could not predict his eventual return. My heart became such a weight in my chest, always heavy with longing, that I sought surprising ways to ease and relief. I ended up going to her, Kali's mother, the old man's wife, my husband's lover. Although we had never had cause to talk before, she was closer to this thing than anyone else—closer than Ipo, closer than the old man. She was the other side. She was the other me: estranged, scorned, caught up in the storm of these men, caught up in our own traps, our own deceit.

I had not known before Ipo spilled the beans that she was the one who had

led Makani away. Strangely enough, after Salmon left, that did not matter one bit; we were both victim really of one man's inability to commit. If Makani would have stuck to me then this would be a very different story indeed, and then again maybe there would be no story at all and I would not have you, my audience, to write to.

So I pulled myself together well enough, combed out my hair, wove one thick braid— something I had not bothered to do much of after Salmon left—the hollow that was left in my breast was overwhelming. I was a mess and this time around Ipo did not do much to console me. There was nothing else at stake, no unborn child or fragile girl to restore. I had grown old, thick, and tough in those years; long gone was that girl who could be radiant, graceful and thin. But enough delay.

I went to see 'Ilima. The day was bright and hot. I had not been outside much and the sun felt like a mean truth that would not be denied. I stood outside the door to their house waiting for something to tell me it was okay, that all I had to do was knock. As I stood there the door was flung open and a rush of knotted, curly hair over a hard set face flew into my chest, knocking me back a step. Her eyes swam in her head as we both caught our balance, and then we were suddenly confronting each other—the girl who is made half of my husband in her, and the girl who tangled with my boy's heart, flinging it wide before causing it to unravel. But something passed between us then, and it was nothing of anger or rancor. The way that the laces of a shoe pull and tighten together, it was as if the air between us shrank because suddenly I held her in my arms and she set to quiet sobbing,

shoulders shaking. I held her head to my chest and her arms went around my waist. Her mouth and nose were wetting the shoulder of my dress but of course I did not care. I do not know what made her emotional in that moment, maybe it was just something that needed to be released. As we stood there, her crying, me holding and consoling, a lump grew in my throat as well as I had a very strange thought—how we all manage to pave our own unique paths that lead us to the gates of hell. For me it was my magic, spells that may or may not have actually worked. Kali too overused a bit of magic, although it was a different kind than mine; it was a more human magic, the weaving of control and manipulation as we bond someone to our hearts.

Then as quickly as she ran into me, she pulled away, wiped her hands up and down her nose and face as if they were the pages of an open book. Wiped her face and then cupped her hands together before her chest and then she was away, hurrying on down the road. I watched her go then turned back to the house where the front door was left ajar and so I just walked on in. I could not help but wonder as my eyes adjusted to the dimmer light if that small couch had cared their weight, if the faded cushions had been bright when he bent her over there. Had they left smudged sweaty handprints on the wall when he pressed her there? But then I pushed these jealous thoughts from my mind because that was not why I was there. My reason for going was simple enough but difficult to describe. Let the old expression 'misery loves company' suffice.

I found her out in the back sitting on a wooden stool, back hunched, in the lengthening shade of the house. Her back was to me but I am sure she felt me



approach because I saw her flinch. Her hair was long and loose falling around her shoulders and down her back. I went to her and placed the back of my hand at the top of her back. I could feel her breathe. I slid my knuckles along her wide shoulders where the curve of her spine met her neck with a small hump, collecting the strands in the V of my hand. I pulled her hair back, gathered together like the tail of a horse and she straightened her back. I do not think she could have known who I was then because we had not looked each other in the eye, but there can be something so comforting in having someone work your hair, and she was so much in her own world that maybe she did not care. I do not think she mistook me for her daughter then, it seemed that they had just had a fight. She was not the mess that I had been, but then again why should she be? She had not lost her son to the sea, her husband was still alive, she had a daughter who was strong and would grow out of her meanness, or at least would leave home soon enough.

I measured cords of her hair between my thumb and forefinger. My fingers moved quickly through them, making several small plates woven tight like the scales of a fish. Most of her hair still hung loose and again I ran my fingers through it, feeling its weight. I lightly dragged my nails over her scalp and was a bit surprised to find that it was clean, almost scoured. I could feel her skin, a little rough and hard, raised at each of her thick hairs, and then I was scratching her head, raking it—not to draw blood, but still hard—and still she did not turn to me. My hands fell to her shoulders and rested there. Then they burrowed back into her hair and I folded one side over to make a clean part, a creased line through the shiny black of her hair, and I pulled the mass back tight again and still tighter,

holding it in a fist hard against the back of her head which wobbled loose a bit on the top of her neck. And then my fingers separated four thick cables and I twisted them in and out, over and under, keeping the small braids on the outside, just as I had done with my little cousin when we would sit and talk and play back in the trees.

When the rope of her hair was woven I held it at the end, cinched in a circle of thumb and finger. I shook it. The braid rolled like a wave hitting gently at the base of her neck. Then I let it go and her strong thick hair loosened and loosened and spread apart, but it did not all come undone. I stood there, looking over her head, down the hill, across the tops of the houses down below, down to the roofs of the shops and businesses where busy people went about their days, scraping out their own lives, lives that somehow seemed bigger than mine could ever be, out to the beach and our little bay and out and out into the sea where the rolling tops of waves faded into the deepening blue, and then out farther than the eye can see. I felt her looking out there too, our gazes finally meeting at that point where the ocean meets the sky, so she sat there looking while I stood because there was nothing we could say.

*The young man turned over the last page and rubbed the dimples and lines that pressed through the other side. The letters were unsigned but he had found them just where the woman, his grandmother's spirit it seemed, had said. He looked out at the sea and knew that he must find his brothers, the brothers he never knew he had, no matter where they might be.*

