Kuamoʻo ‘Ōlelo

The written and creative expressions of the Writers’ Guild at Leeward Community College.

Copyright © 2016 All Rights Reserved.
Printed in the U.S.A.

All copyrights remain with the respective authors and may not be copied or distributed without the written permission from the author.
Dedication

To Kay Caldwell

You believed in the Writers’ Guild since it was a bud of an idea. With your support, the idea blossomed into a weekly celebration of the power of words. Kay, you are and will forever be our champion, inspiration, and friend.
Acknowledgements

Writers’ Guild Officers:
Giovanni Canapino, Minister of the Quill
Aaron Kiilau, Minister of Propaganda

Writers’ Guild Co-Advisors:
Melanie Van der Tuin and Courtney Takabayashi

Editing and Design:
Meredith Lee

Cover Photo:
Natalie Wahl
Foreword

According to the members of the Writers’ Guild, Friday is the best day of the week. That’s when Leeward Community College students, faculty and staff come together for one hour to share stories, get inspired, and, of course, write. Every Friday, members of the Writers’ Guild, affectionately referred to as Guildians, gather in the Library’s Kapunawai Hawai‘i-Pacific Resource Room, a quiet, comfortable space conducive to their creative pursuits.

The Writers’ Guild was founded in 2013 to provide a constructive outlet for writers of all calibers and genres at Leeward Community College. The Guild also aims to foster the artistic and literary spirit of the school.

Kuamo‘o ‘Ōlelo, which translates into “continuous record,” is a celebration of the Guild’s original endeavors. It also serves as a way for Guildians to share their work with the world.
Table of Contents

GIOVANNI CANAPINO

In a Grove of Fireflies.........................11
Lil Lilting Leafy..............................13

TRACY DIXON

I Want to Paddle into Infinity.............16

CHEYANNE HOGAN

Growing Up......................................17

VAITAUSAGA IAMANU, JR.

Harrowed Winter..............................18

AARON KIILAU

Flight 1043....................................19
Press’d Record.................................20
Synonym.........................................22

LANCE MORITA

Headlights Falling on Failing Hope.......24

BRANDI REYES

AJ.....................................................29

AMANDA SILLIMAN

What Wasn’t Found............................35
COURTNEY TAKABAYASHI

Under the Ulu Tree..............................42

MELANIE VAN DER TUIN

Separated...........................................47

Airplane.............................................49

RAE WATANABE

Beginning from Mocha Stories.............52

AUTHOR BIOS......................................55
In a Grove of Fireflies
Giovanni Canapino

There she sits, under a beautiful tree in a grove a flittering fireflies. Leaves billow by, pushed on by a gentle breeze that caresses the fir’s fragile bark.

She watches as the fireflies flash with small images; people walking around, jovially talking gaily drifts by one moment, then another appears bearing a ring. She reaches out and her world explodes in blossoms of color.

The ring is in her hand with the inscription, “forever,” adorned around its elegant golden curve. She knows this ring, for she surely held it once before. Then she looks up and sees the scene unfurl before her.

There were people all around, happily looking her way. She turns and sees a beautiful man by the tree, dressed in a lavender cloak. He is beckoning her to the altar ahead, where a little girl with newly dyed pink hair holds a bouquet of poignantly white Casablanicas.

They were speaking, but their words become garbled as the world
around her starts to fizzle. She was able to make out his final words, “Always,” as he fades into the dazzling glimmer of melancholy light.

“Forever…” she murmured, as the ring became a skittering firefly orb which floated on.

She looked up, and the grove had become empty and plain. She couldn’t remember why she was there.
Lil Lilting Leafy
Giovanni Canapino

In the beginning, there was a seed surrounded by earth, with trickles of water seeping in and nourishing it. Eventually that seedling became a towering giant of a tree, with roots spread widely and its branches covering an incredible span.

But that’s not really the beginning of this tale. No, this story is about one of that tree’s beautiful little children. A sweet, green little guy we’ll call “Leafy.”

On a particularly breezy day, Leafy was basking on his perch, when he was lifted away from his home. Fear took him for a moment, until he saw that there was a wide world awaiting him beyond the covered realm he came from. Vast swaths of land previously unseen beckoned him forth, and he eagerly awaited the amazing places the wind would show him.
Leafy was buffeted by the gale, breezing over a great plain. Leafy saw gigantic animals everywhere he went, from tall, yellow giraffes whose necks weren’t swayed despite the breeze, to unusually striped zebras nearby, with a black and white pattern that Leafy would never have encountered in his home. Packs and herds of animals strode across this plain, and the current moved the leaf further away.

Then Leafy landed in a river, no longer airborne. Instead, the flow of the river towed him away. In this waterway, wide-eyed fish with vivid scales would peer up curiously at Leafy, while huge frogs with their expanding chests would occasionally swat him away. Butterflies would occasionally land on Leafy before quickly flittering away, and oftentimes he was boarded by determined ant-scouts or bee drones, who swiftly decided Leafy was of no use to their food quests.

At last, Leafy made landfall, at the crest of a behemoth of stone. It was decorated with snow, and
unique horned creatures pranced about. Dead trees towered over this cold realm, and smoke was slowly spewing from atop the tip of the stone monument.

Leafy had had quite the adventure, but he’d finally been put to rest, the cold and the smoke were his death knell. He died happy despite this, having seen everything the world could be outside of old home tree.
I Want to Paddle into Infinity
Tracy Dixon

I want to stand upon my board and paddle to the Great Laniakea.
If I’m buffeted by cosmic winds, I’ll lower my head and paddle harder.
If in the Laniakea I get swallowed up by a black hole?
Well that’s just fate, eh?
I want to stand upon my board and paddle up the flooding Nile
way back in the days before King Narmer.
If I get to see a giant Hippopotamus, I’ll smile.
Well that’s just fate, eh?
I want to stand upon my board and paddle into the giant red sunset.
If I get too close to the giant red sun and it burns me to a cosmic crisp?
Well that’s just fate, eh?
I want to stand upon and paddle my board into infinity.
If I paddle forever and never get there?
Well that’s just life, eh?
Growing Up
Cheyanne Hogan

With streets full of laughter 5 years ago
Slipped away in responsibilities it was no more
From running on the streets to driving a car
My childhood was gone and is no more
To old neighbors who share stories of life and love
I found my own way to stand up tall
Although my childhood slipped through my fingers
I stand here before you with a story to tell
Life isn’t a fairy tale
It’s so much more
I’ve lost a lot but learned from it all
Life goes on
And you just have to stay strong
Prepare for the worst
Hope for the best
Not all things end happily ever after
But it is your story to tell.
Harrowed Winter
Vaitausaga Iamanu, Jr.

The harrowing wind
the wretched screams and torture
into nothingness.
He lives there, soulless.
in complete void he sits there.
with a shiv in hand.
In all emptiness
he found a way to survive
making his ends meet.
Striving for the best
he made it with head held high,
nothing can stop him.
Drawn from the deep void
emerged from the harrowed wind
Vai, the valiant.
Flight 1043
Aaron Kiilau

Poetry is fighting words that sets
an ear ablaze, that shakes foundations set
in stone; and frights convictions thin as rakes
to flee for shady grounds of easy lies.

Poetry is soothing words that tempts
the soul to breathe, and lights the heavy load
of Life upon another back to share
the weight of rainy eyes and sagging doom.

Poetry, in other words, exists
beyond its point; the bad kind lives to shame
the art, the good kind lives to lengthen debts
we owe to smiling, pointed nothingness.
The rain, although a falling liquid dust, was drowning out my Brahms. The pianist smothered out the violin: he would not let it gain an inch; and I an undecided victim in between this war of wordless, nat’ral wonder.

A film noir was running in the living room and two detectives muttered over cigarettes the likely cause of needless violence in the battle waged in accomp’ned Sonata form: my head held low, beneath the smoke, the violin; beneath the monochrome, my Brahms, the liquid, and per chance a sluggish, heavy wind.

Ava Gardner tried to intervene and warbled, in vibrato swells, the moaning of a lullaby that flew to clear the smokey room of guilt and thick suspicion. I marked the measure when the Gardner came, despite the fight and flood, to clear the weeds among my thoughts that danced betwixt unfounded fear, of silly made-up fights between a violin, a set of keys and Brahms; detectives were not waiting to arrest me; for Ava

Press’d Record
Aaron Kiilau
came and sang them home; and overthrew the rain.

She double-crossed them *à la* femme fatale, and killed them both with looks and proud, heroic melodies. She mustered up the helpless violin and reconciled them both to Brahms. And when the room was lit with swelling strings, I fin’lly gathered up a hidden wrath and gumption in my gut. But not for long, ‘cause I failed to clutch the trail-end of that hopeful song. All was lost again between the rain, again began the fight against the violin. And in appeared that weight that I despise, and not a thing could keep it off, not even long defeated sighs.
Blessed means something diff’rent; yes, and more than just ‘prefered.’ And if you think you’re here for something short of blunt indifference, the cosmic punchline doesn’t care. It’s patient, and it always gets what’s due to it.

Blessed means something diff’rent when you have to think of the unbless’d. What mocking God would rob another just to keep you happy? Which Book protects all others, just to keep you smug, relaxed and comfy?

Blessed means something diff’rent when you’re free to pick and choose the limits of your á la carte Philosophy, custom-made for selfishness. Good luck
to those who count on the improbable.

Blessed must mean that I can do as awf’lly as I want,
it means that I’m impervious to over-reaching pride;
it means I’m free to just ignore some helpless, poor, unfort’nate being who suffers from being unprefer’d.

Blessed means something diff’rent when your head’s not
in your ass; when sacrifice and bending backwards only
lengthens your proud distance from the ones who really
need a blessing; yes, and more than just to up and say so.
Headlights Falling on Failing Hope
Lance Morita

I’ve always marveled at how a dog’s face can tell you exactly what it is thinking. An array of non-verbal messages, disseminated through very scant facial expressions, hit their mark upon their human owners or present company. They can’t smile. They can’t really frown. An adorable raising of eyebrows at just the right moment can provide great laughs, or simply be their response to some innocuous question or action. The explanation for their skilled communication is simple; it’s all in the eyes.

On a midnight drive up Ho’olaulea Street, my girlfriend and I ruthlessly criticized a movie we just saw. Suddenly, I saw that an old Labrador retriever was hobbling up the long street in front of my car. It never wavered from its path, straight up the middle of the road, though with an obviously troubled gait. My car was directly behind it, and it suddenly sat down with its back facing me. I stopped the car, of course, and my girlfriend and I looked at each other in disbelief.
The dog looked over its shoulder, staring me straight in the eyes. That stare was embedded with so much meaning—partly sad, and partly determined. The message was clear: “Do it. Hit me… please.” I hit the brakes in plenty of time – no drama there. But the Lab, not moving an inch, sitting there in the middle of the road, confirmed to me its intentions. It stared at me for a moment longer, and slowly turned its head 180 degrees away from me and my headlights, in a slow, cognizant manner.

Why did I immediately feel that it wanted to die? Why was that the message I was getting?

A human walking down the middle of a street on a dark evening would be begging to die, but I might assume drunk. For some reason, I read into the dog’s body language what I felt was conscious action; not a dumb dog wandering carelessly into a life-threatening situation.

“What’s he doing?” my girlfriend asked, still in disbelief of its defiance.

For some reason, I suddenly recalled a lecture from a college Religion class that I had taken a
couple of years back. The lecture was about elderly men in parts of India who go on “Death Journeys” in certain cultures; the custom of aging men who feel close to death’s door and do not wish to burden their families with the sadness and caretaking that accompanies one’s imminent passing, so they go on a journey—with the expectation of no return. It’s not suicide; it is perhaps their last chance for enlightenment and an act of selflessness to replace the causing of sorrow and encumbrance.

Was the lab too sick to go far? Did it want a more dignified place to… rest… but lacked the mobility to get “there”? Was it asking for a kind of euthanasia?

All I knew was that I couldn’t be a part of that. I sat still for a few seconds, with my hands on the steering wheel, mesmerized by its posture – it sat up straight, resolute and proud. In my headlights, I could see that its hair was clean, but sparse. I wouldn’t be surprised if it was 15 or 16 years old. It didn’t move; no turning around, no looking to its sides. It just sat there, bathed in my headlights.
I couldn’t go forward – there was no room to go around it. I was sure that the Lab wouldn’t budge. I got out of the car and carefully approached the dog. At first, it looked angry. Then, it looked at my hands doing a “go away” motion, and then after a few seconds, it “regretfully” obliged. Again, there was something about its face – it revealed not a mere emotion, but a message. Its decision to move was preceded by a look of resignation, frustrated and defeated, like someone saying, “This isn’t going to happen… is it?”

It hobbled off to the side of the road, so labored from age, and sat near a mailbox. I got back in the car, and it stayed there, watching us leave. I drove slowly so that I could look back at the retriever in my rear view mirror. It sat there, still and postured, which gave it a look of dignity like when a businessman tightens his tie in the mirror. As my headlights pushed forward, abandoning the scene, I slowly lost sight of it. That strange encounter vanished into the night with the dog’s shadowy form,
and the last thing I could see, and what I will always remember were its eyes.
“Okay, you can go say goodbye to him now,” Dad bowed his head solemnly and backed out of the doorway, tilting his head towards the bedroom door. I glanced towards my mother, whose eyes quickly slanted towards mine.

“Um…” I muttered. I had no words. Dad slowly walked down the hall, trusting that we’d make our way in to see AJ. Mom wrung her hands and widened her eyes at me. Shrugging, I inched into the bedroom a second before her.

We stood there in the room, looking at AJ gasping for breath. He was thinner than he’d ever been. For the last few months dad had to coax him to eat anything at all, and now AJ’s eyes seemed unusually large in his head. Mom gestured towards him awkwardly, and after a silent squinting argument, I spoke first.

“So, AJ. Um.” I turned to Mom, who looked unimpressed.
“You were a good fish, AJ. Get some peace?” I looked back into the hallway to make sure Dad wasn’t watching, then backed away to allow Mom to talk. She stood there in front of the large tank, which sat on its wooden frame against the wall, adjacent to their bed.

This strategic positioning meant Dad was able to watch AJ from the bed, but also from down the hall. Sometimes AJ would be difficult, and wouldn’t eat if you were in the room watching, so Dad would drop the diced (high-quality) shrimp into the tank and rush around the corner of the hall, peaking around to see if AJ would take the bait. When Dad went to Vegas and I was in charge of feeding AJ, I refused to play those games, and he never managed to starve. I think he knew I meant business. A close look revealed the fishing line lashed across the top of the tank, held down by velcro and electrical tape to prevent AJ from knocking the top off and jumping out onto the floor back in his rambunctious youth. It had been traumatizing for all of us, the times when Dad would yell for help as he
was draining the tank for a cleaning, the hose trailing down the hall and out onto the lanai. He would be near tears trying to grab AJ with a towel as AJ flopped and bounced across the carpet and Mom and I could only watch the scene unfold in disbelief.

Mom mumbled to the poor fish who lay, barely alive, along the white sand at the bottom of the tank. It was an absurd but sad situation—we’d had AJ for nearly a decade, and he was clearly suffering. He was like a brother, sort of, and God knows Dad fed him expensive shrimp and talked to him perhaps more than he talked to Mom and me. He’d playfully call him names (“Come on, punk, eat!”), complain about his coworkers, and just generally narrate his day. I guess AJ just got old. Old and lonely, maybe.

Once or twice a year Dad would buy feeders, perhaps a dozen or so, and AJ would gleefully hunt them and munch on them until they were all gone. But not this last time. About a year before, AJ ate all but one. One feeder remained, getting fat off of extra pieces of shrimp, and lived in peace with AJ. All of AJ’s predatorial instincts had given way to make
room for companionship. Eventually even that feeder, twice the size from when he entered the tank, died, leaving AJ alone and refusing to eat.

My mom and I had spent the last week trying to convince Dad to put AJ out of his misery, and later that day he was going to turn off his pump. It would be laughable if Dad wasn’t so depressed.

I wasn’t wrong about him being depressed. Without the pump on, AJ gasped for an hour or so, then finally stopped moving. After AJ died, Dad tried to figure out what to do with him. We decided, as a family, that he should be buried at the beach. It seemed more sensitive to suggest that to Dad than a trash can. Dad was going to take him out to Nimitz Beach, but apparently he just wasn’t ready.

“Mom!” I hissed into the phone. “Mom, he’s going to put him in plastic wrap!”

“What?”

“He’s rolling him up like he does the won ton we make him for his birthday. He’s going to bag him and put him in the freezer!”

“Well, just let him do it.”
“That’s not sanitary!” I banged the handset against my head as I looked out through the lanai doors to watch as Dad shot the poor Jardini Arowana — now so thin, but still a foot and a half long — down with a hose, then lay him gently on plastic wrap. He rolled him over and over and over again, then put that mummified body into a bright yellow Daiei plastic bag. Dad brought the bag into the house, a bit teary eyed.

“He’ll stay with us a little bit longer,” he told me, smiling bravely.

“Yeah, Dad.” I grimaced back.

A week later, I opened the freezer to see that yellow bag still there.

“He’s gonna stay a while longer,” Dad said. I nodded back.

Weeks after that, I barely even noticed the yellow section of the freezer anymore. Dad liked having AJ with us, and I got used to not eating anything that came out of the freezer.

It took about a month and a half, all told, for my dad to come home, announcing that he had taken
AJ to the beach. He told us, earnestly, that he buried AJ in the sand, then sat beside him in a beach chair, watching the ocean for the afternoon. I patted his shoulder, then looked across the room at Mom.

Dad never had to know about the discussion she and I had that night, about how AJ would start to smell, and some dog would dig him up. We left him to his peace, and made plans to sanitize the freezer.
What Wasn’t Found
Amanda Silliman

“Sorry, we’re not interested in changing our religion,” the stern looking woman at the door said.


She opened the door a couple of inches, “Nitya Malik. There was no reason to keep his name.”

I reached into my pocket and whipped out my smartphone; a headshot of Nitya was set on the homescreen.

“I’m her son. I’m your grandson. Jude Roux-Malloy,” I hurried to explain as she weighed her options through her grip on the door.

“Malloy?” She asked, “Jamie couldn’t have remarried—Ah.. was that the kidnapper’s name?”

My frown pulled like a zipper trying to hold back the defense against her snipe.

“Can I come in?” I asked.
“It must have been a long walk up the driveway after hopping the fence,” she said as she opened the door, “Come in and sit down, I’ll get you some tea.” She turned her back to me and called up the stairs to her husband. He came down and gave me an amused, if puzzled look, probably asking himself what this lanky blond kid was doing in his home. I invited myself to a seat on the couch, and waited as tea was brought. When they were both seated, he finally asked the question that was on his mind.

“Who are you and how can we help you?” He asked in a gentle, if inquisitive tone.

“My name is Jude, I’m Nitya’s son. I just wanted to meet you both. Nitya—mom, she said, actually, nevermind that. I was just curious to meet you two—” before I could finish my rambling, Mrs. Malik spoke up.

“So what have you been doing with yourself? Do you have a job?”

I looked at the ornate Indian rug and shook my head, “I’m having family property rebuilt, but that’s more of a side-project.”
“I didn’t know your kidnapper was that rich,” she responded coolly.

I clenched my fist against the arm of the chair, “He’s not. He’s a construction worker. I got it myself.”

“Ah, he’s a criminal, Adiva,” Mr. Malik chuckled.

I stayed quiet. This wasn’t the reunion I had been hoping for. Now, in front of my maternal grandparents, I wasn’t sure anymore if reconnecting with the last living bit of my biological family would satisfy me.

Mrs. Malik gave a small hum, “Clearly a criminal; what a shame.”

“Well,” Mr. Malik said with amusement, “I think it’s a bit thrilling. He clearly isn’t stupid if he can get ahold of that much money.”

“If he was smart, he would have been a doctor like his mother,” Mrs. Malik said, punctuated with a sip of tea.
I turned my gaze from the floor back to her, “My dad—my biological dad, he was a doctor too you know.”

She quirked a brow, “He was an Augmented Reality Designer.”

I met her stare, “He was a Neural Engineer before that. He believed AR could help people.”

“And then he killed himself,” she concluded.

The room fell silent for a moment before Mr. Malik gently patted Mrs. Malik’s lap, “Come now, there’s no need to rub it in. Jamie might not have been the best choice for our daughter, but what’s done is done.”

It had been a decade since he’d died, but her words left me breathless. When I finally found my voice again, I could feel the heat my anger spilling out from my quick beating heart.

“I came here,” I said between grit teeth, “to get to know you two. I can see now why mom doesn’t keep in contact with you. Don’t fucking talk about my dad like that.” Digging my fingers into their
couch was the most I could do to keep from getting up and leaving.

“Our apologies— Jude was it?” Mr. Malik said with a gentle smile, “Adiva can be a bit blunt sometimes, but it seems that runs in the family, doesn’t it? After your father’s,” he paused to carefully select his choice of words, “...accident? Well, we expected that your mother would care for you, or at the very least leave you with us. We didn’t expect she would give you to your grandfather. We were of course very concerned when you disappeared. It was very important to us that our daughter have a good family life, and now that she’s spending an awful lot of time with that woman from work, well, we imagined a different path for her. Adiva spent quite a lot of time sifting through possible suitors. In any case, one of the last things we heard from Nitya was that you were most likely in the care of a boyhood friend of your father’s.”

“Yeah,” I mumbled, “His name is Isaac, and my Grandpa Greg is a drunk piece of shit.” I took a deep breath, gathering up the very last threads of
patience I had, “I don’t know if mom knew or not, but it’s pretty fucking funny that she would choose him over you guys.” I unclenched my hands and rubbed my face, “This is so stupid. Like, on the computer I feel like I know everything that’s going on, or most of it at least. I looked you guys up; I thought I’d get something more just being here and talking?”

Mrs. Malik set her teacup on the table, “You’re not going to find what you aren’t looking for.” She then began to collect the tea set she had brought out, packing all the little parts away.

Mr. Malik set his teacup down and gave a big stretch before standing up, “The boy knows that already, right?” An encouraging smile formed under his short, neatly trimmed, mustache.

“I guess,” I said half-heartedly, “I thought I would just maybe find out something I didn’t know? Or like, there would be big family hugs or something? Just, something?”

Mr. Malik seemed to consider what I had said for a moment before standing up. He nodded his head
towards the stairs, “Do you like drones? I’ve got a couple upstairs I’m working on. I suppose I could hug you, but I don’t think it would mean what you’re hoping for.”

“I guess it wouldn’t,” I said as I stood up, “But yeah, I like drones; I used them to find you.”
My first kiss was under an *ulu* tree at the Bishop Museum. It was field trip day for St. Ann’s second-grade class. Instead of the stiff white, short-sleeved dress shirts tucked into confining blue plaid skirts and high-water slacks, we frolicked around in our red PE uniforms. As we trekked to Hawaiian Hall, frazzled chaperones and tired teachers did their best to contain the chaos of 64 seven-year olds. I fell behind the group with my neighbor and youth ministry buddy Ali‘i Cruz, a Hawaiian-Chinese-Filipino boy who gave me Valentine’s Day cards year round.

“You like *ulu*?” Ali‘i asked, pointing at the bumpy, greenish-yellow fruit hanging from the tree above us.

“*Ulu*?” I asked. Whatever it was, it looked kind of gross.

“Yum! She can make it for me?” I didn’t trust my Japanese mom not to burn it.

Ali‘i shook his head and looked down. “Nah, she sick.”

I patted his shoulder, something I’d seen Mom do to Dad when Bachan died. “Let’s buy her a present,” I suggested, since I loved getting gifts. In fact, whenever I visited the Cruz house, Aunty Sharon gave me cool things my mom didn’t let me have like strawberry lip gloss and baggies of cereal mix without the yucky dark brown Chex.

Ali‘i shoved his hands into his red PE shorts pockets. “No money.”

I pulled my Jem backpack off my shoulder and rifled through it. “I have a quarter for icee after school.”

Ali‘i peered into my pack. “Eh! You get room.”

We looked at each other. “For u-LA!” I cried. He giggled and corrected me, “U-LU, Lolo.”

I always made dumb mistakes, but Ali‘i didn’t care. “Right. U-LU! Let’s get one!”
Making sure no one was watching, we tried our best to reach the weird-looking orbs. But they were too high up. I stood on Aliʻi’s shoulders, he balanced on a trash can, and we even tried throwing our shoes to knock the prized fruit to the ground.

“Ugh!” Aliʻi said, his chubby fingers struggling to tie his shoelaces. “She no cook now, anyways.”

I felt even more determined to get that *ulu*. I kind of wanted to taste the breadfruit but mostly I wanted to make Aliʻi’s mom happy. Our families always hung out since we lived in the same cul de sac and went to the same church. Mrs. Cruz smelled good, like the Thin Mint cookies I had to sell for Girl Scouts. “Well,” I said, “we’ll make it!”

Aliʻi’s round face lit up. “Can?”

I nodded. “Can! After school come over, and I guess my mom can help us. We won’t let her mess it up. Then we’ll surprise your mom.”

We high-fived with renewed energy, and I looked around for anything that could help us. Then I spied another breadfruit tree at the bottom of a
nearby hill. There was an *ulu* cheerfully dangling from a low-hanging branch. If we stood at the top of the hill, we could reach it!

“Come on,” I said, grabbing Aliʻi’s hand, leading him to the tree.

I gently pulled the *ulu* off the branch, wrapped it in my red knit sweater and tucked it safely into my backpack. I smiled proudly.

“Yeah!” Aliʻi said. He hugged me and gave me a peck on the lips.

I was shocked, but before I could say anything we heard someone scream our names. It was our teacher, Mrs. Gomez, holding the hem of her blue palaka muumuu as she stomped towards us. “Gunfunit! Wea you kids was?”

Aliʻi and I jumped away from each other. “We got lost,” Aliʻi said.

“You skea awe da parents an made da teechas look bad!” She shook her head, strands of white hair falling from her bun secured with a plastic plumeria clip. “And nevamine kissing unda da *ulu* tree. One pervert goin’ snatch you!”
I shrugged. “Sorry.”

“Sorry? No lunch fo’ eeda of you!” Mrs. Gomez grabbed our arms and roughly led us to the rest of the class.

“I goin’ call yo’ maddahs, an’ you goin’ get lickins,” Mrs. Gomez threatened.

I saw a panicked look in Ali‘i’s eyes.

“Aunty Sharon—I mean, his mom—Mrs. Cruz, is sick you know,” I said in my most adult voice.

“She loss all her hea,” Ali‘i said, wiping his eyes with his sleeve.

Mrs. Gomez’s face softened. “We’ll see. Get inside.”

I looked back at the *ulu* tree, and found myself yelling, “Thank you!” Its branches swayed in the wind, waving goodbye.
Separated
Melanie Van der Tuin

When my cat begins his dying, our family triad resurrects itself wordlessly, of its own accord, united for a few last days.

The man who used to be my husband becomes my husband again, and his room—once our office—is taken over. The cat

has decided this is where he wants to leave us; he huddles on the twin-sized bed, facing away, toward the wall.

In desperation, we take turns dipping our fingers into yogurt, baby food, gravy—everything he once loved but cannot love anymore.
When he moves to the closet, we know it is near the end. I bury my face in my cat’s fur and then my husband’s shirt.

I am alone when I wash out the cat’s abandoned metal bowl for what I know will be the last time.

Lined on the counter are ten jars of baby food bought even after the cat had stopped eating; my husband must have broken at the store the way I break now over the sink, knowing how many more times I will break and break again in my own empty room.
The fat are the first to go in the team-building exercise on day one of the workshop. In our assigned scenario, we are the crew of a jet that will crash if we do not throw out 1,100 pounds’ worth of passengers. Yes, all the cargo, luggage, and food have already been tossed, we are told—we are not getting out of this decision—so we scan the manifest and swear we will approach the task rationally and without prejudice.

My fellow flight attendants do not realize that we have just discriminated against large people. It is a simple equation: we can save an extra life this way, someone important like the scientist in 11C, who is on the brink of discovering how to make crops thrive in the desert, or the college student who still has a whole life ahead of him. But the childless, middle-aged woman with a chronic illness—she is already on her way out, anyway—as is the guy with HIV,
and his partner, too. But the marines in 14D and E—they’ve got to stay; they are serving their country. And the grandfather with 27 grandchildren, well, he has all those grandchildren to grandfather. But the spinster schoolteacher with all the cats, she can go; and that 300-pound guy (in 31F) the one who sells used cars—well, duh.

Above all, we must save the parents, we agree—all of them—no children will be orphaned in this mile-high transaction, least of all the one still growing inside the belly of the pregnant stripper in Row 27.

And though I know, statistically speaking, that one father here is surely a molester—one mother, the daily slasher of a daughter’s self-worth—I sit silently as we throw me out of the airplane over and over. Again and again, everything that I am or once was, or might have been, I see nudged respectfully but definitively, irrevocably, out the mildly curved hatch as the facilitators move on to the next activity and I sit, dumbfounded, at a hard student desk, looking out at the sky and its brilliant white clouds,
wondering—and then somehow knowing—how I would feel
if those clouds were suddenly silent, crystalline accessories,
drifting past indifferently as I plummeted to my death.
Beginning  
from *Mocha Stories*
Rae Watanabe

I didn’t want her when I saw her. Exhausted from a business trip to Kauai, I stepped into my front door to be greeted by my smiling mother; my hanai daughter, Jennifer; and her—a fat, fawn-colored puppy with a white patch on her chest and charming bright eyes. As if by instinct, she smiled at me. I didn’t think that was possible—a dog smiling!

Jennifer asked if we could keep her. I thought about how little money I had, how I had been employed full-time for two short years, how my proud mother often needed money, and I said, “I don’t think that’s a good idea.”

Jennifer’s shoulders dropped. She pulled the puppy towards her body; she was already in love with this puppy. Suddenly, I felt angry. Who had
done this to me? Who had made me a villain while I was working so damn hard? I took a breath, and surprising calm fell out of my mouth, “Where did you get her anyway?”

“Somebody gave her to the neighbor lady,” Mom explained, “but her husband said she no can keep her cause she already get two dogs.”

“So if we don’t keep her?” I asked gingerly.

“We take her Humane Society,” Mom said coldly while Jennifer’s posture worsened. I could tell Jennifer was about to cry.

“Well, I guess we should keep her then,” I said in exaggerated long syllables while I wondered where I was going to find the money to feed her.

Jennifer’s demeanor instantly transformed as she held the puppy and said, “Did you hear? You can stay!”
“You have to name her,” I told Jennifer.

“Her name’s Mocha.”

“Oh, you already named her?”

“Yup, yup, yup. I named her for the color of the coffee you drink,” Jennifer explained.

I took Mocha from Jennifer and held her fat puppy body in my arms. “Hi, Mocha,” I whispered. She happily peed all over me.

Mocha as a puppy.
Author Bios

**Giovanni Canapino** is a student at Leeward Community College. He enjoys saying, “Crap baskets” and collecting Pogs while drinking POG.

**Tracy Dixon** began his studies at Leeward Community College during the 2014 summer semester. He is interested in Anthropology and keeping his hair nice and fluffy. Tracy is a non-traditional, student taking advantage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, after a 28-year career in the US Navy.

**Cheyanne Hogan** graduated from Moanalua High School and started attending Leeward Community College in 2015. In her free time, Cheyanne practices applying extreme makeup and keeps her little sister out of trouble.

**Vaitausaga Iamanu, Jr.** is a student at Leeward Community College. When he’s not studying, Vai uses art and writing to express himself.

**Aaron Kiilau** is an English major at UH West Oahu, and a graduate of Leeward Community College. He is a founding member of the Writers’ Guild and this
publication. Aaron is also a classical pianist and violinist of 20 years, and of the Enlightened faction on Ingress.

*Lance Morita* teaches Composition and English as a Second Language classes at Leeward Community College. The story comes from a true event and was written for therapeutic reasons, with the hope that readers would agree that the narrator is NOT crazy in regards to his perception of the dog’s message. Lance would like to thank the Writers’ Guild for its support, expertise, and for being his inspiration to keep writing.

*Brandi Reyes* teaches Writing at Leeward Community College. She wrote “AJ” to document one of the stranger familial experiences of her life, as her imagination isn’t developed enough to have made this story up. In the almost decade since this occurrence, her father has never gotten another fish, but was touched by the outpouring of sympathies from his nieces and nephews on the Facebook obituary post Brandi made.
Amanda Silliman is new to the Writers’ Guild this year. She teaches a wide variety of classes at Leeward Community College, from Developmental Reading, Writing and Reasoning to 200-level English courses. When she’s not teaching or writing, she enjoys drinking Loki tea and playing Assassin’s Creed.

Courtney Takabayashi has been teaching composition at Leeward Community College since 2012. She would like to acknowledge her spite muse and thank him for giving her many, many reasons to write.

Melanie Van der Tuin teaches reading and writing at Leeward Community College and serves as co-advisor to the Writers’ Guild. Friday gatherings of the Writers’ Guild are the highlight of her week. She is continually inspired by her former creative writing students who keep the Guild spirit alive and thriving—and who are now some of her finest “Workshopmates” and editors.

Rae N. Watanabe has taught English at Leeward Community College for over 20 years. The Writers’
Guild continues to help her cling on to whatever sanity she has left. She has just begun writing about Mocha, Rae’s once-in-a-lifetime dog, who helped her through tremendous and traumatic changes in her life. The dog she didn’t want would prove to be dog she desperately needed.
For more information about the Writers’ Guild, please email co-advisors Melanie Van der Tuin (melaniev@hawaii.edu) and Courtney Takabayashi (cskunimu@hawaii.edu).
The Writers' Guild at Leeward Community College sponsors weekly gatherings for students to collaborate with other students, faculty, and staff in the reading, writing, sharing, and workshopping of poetry, short fiction, creative non-fiction and other genres of the written word. The organization also provides enrichment opportunities for all students on campus, mainly in the form of readings hosted by Guild members and invited established-writer guests.