

***ZEN***  
***AND THE ART OF***  
***SURFING***

***GREG GUTIERREZ***

***A COLLECTION OF***  
***SHORT STORIES***

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***Zen and the Art of Surfing***

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***The Surfer's Journal***

*This book is dedicated to my brother, Earl, who  
walks alone, humming an unknown song.*

*On July 23, 1988, my brother's boat, the Aita Pea Pea, was found adrift by the U.S. Navy. Earl Gutierrez was on his way home from a twelve-year, single-handed sail around the world. I visited with him just before he set sail from Honolulu to Los Angeles. It was with great emotion that he explained he was not ready to live in society's world. I wasn't sure what he meant then, and I'm not sure now.*

*Missing from his boat was his beloved bird, Pedro, and Pedro's large cage. Also missing were his passport and all his other personal belongings. There was no sign of foul play. The life raft was with the boat, but his handgun was missing. I believe he's out there somewhere, living under his own rules, as some men must do. The message I wish to send him is simple: I miss you.*

With the exception of *I Miss You, Earn It: February 2007*, *Surfing to Ground Zero* and parts of *Letters From Maui*, this is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents, and dialogues are all products of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

An earlier version of *Zen and the Art of Surfing* was originally my Master's Thesis at San Diego State University. Excerpts of the collection have been published in *The Surfer's Journal*, *SURFER magazine*, *Surfing magazine*, and *Wave Action magazine*. Though many people helped me with this work, all of the mistakes are mine.

-Greg Gutierrez 2008

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## *I Still Would*

When I was four or five years old, I got into a fight with a bigger boy named Brian who lived next door. He took a barracuda jig that my Dad had bought for me. My Dad would bring us home something special when we were sick, and the barracuda jig was one of those gifts. I told Brian to give it back, but he just started walking away with it. I jumped on his back, and we fell to the ground. He ended up on top of me, swinging wildly. I was so mad that my already swelling eyes didn't hurt. Then my big brother was there, yelling at me to punch him in the face. So I did. As hard as I could until, bleeding, he ran home crying. My brother was laughing and telling me what a great fight it was. I had Brian's blood on my hands and my brother told me to be careful not to get any on his new Dale Velzy t-shirt.

When we got into the house I felt terrible. The feeling inside me was so ugly, so dirty. I started crying and my brother grabbed my face and looked into my eyes.

He said, "Don't cry. You won. Don't cry if you want to be my brother." I stopped crying. Later I went over the wall at the end of our street and cried some more.

That day I learned three things: I could take a punch, I could inflict pain, and though I wasn't supposed to cry, I still would.

## *That Sweet Smell*

I broke into my first house when I was six years old. A kid at school was selling a new wax especially for surfboards. It smelled so good. It cost thirty cents a bar and my funds were nonexistent. So when Duke told us he knew where there was a jar full of dimes, we listened. By we, I mean me, and my then best friend, Oakey. He was lucky. His mom didn't make him bathe. Some guys had it made.

Duke was an unstable kid. He was a few years older but much tougher. He had to take some pill everyday to calm him down. Every once in awhile he'd forget his pill and beat the snot out of some unfortunate soul. On this particular day Duke seemed like he had taken his pill.

The house was across the street from Oakey's. We went into the backyard. Oakey knew the dog, so the dog stayed quiet. Duke lifted the sliding glass door and opened up the house. The jar of dimes was right out there on the counter for the world to see. Duke grabbed the jar, and then we hit the kitchen for some cookies.

We went to Oakey's house to divide the loot. Nobody was ever home at Oakey's. Naturally Duke got the lion's share. We made out pretty good, though. Oakey and I got five dollars and thirty cents each. In our world, that was some real money.

We spent some of our riches at Seaside Liquor. We bought candy, soda, chips, and other essentials. I saved some of my cash for the kid at school who was selling surfboard wax.

That night there was a knock on our door. Two tall policemen stood on our porch, and they wanted to talk to my Dad and me. One of the policemen just straight up asked me what happened. All three grownups were looking at me.

I told them, "Duke made us do it. He said he'd beat us up if we didn't go with him. That's the truth. Everyone knows that Duke's crazy. I'm afraid of him."

The same cop said to my dad, "Yeah, that's what the kid named Oakey said. Given what I've heard about Duke, I'm inclined to believe your son here. Sorry to have bothered you, have a good night."

When we got into the house my Dad quietly told me, "I never want to see the police on our front porch looking for you again. Do you understand?" I did, and I learned something that day - *don't get caught*.

I bought four bars of wax the next morning at school. If I try, I can still remember that sweet smell.

## *Earn It: February 2007*

I was surfing a far away place, being held under so long that my arms and legs were numb. I felt a ragged part of my board jabbing at my neck. I tried to shield myself but my arms felt as if they were tied down. Again and again my board stabbed at my Adam's apple. *"Christ, he's turning blue, intubation is a no-go; he's closed. I can't even get a pediatric size down. We're losing him, let's cut."*

And my Rusty pierced through my throat and darkness rushed in from all sides as I fell into the abyss.

Then I was body surfing Sandy Beach with one of my students, Kealoha-Pauole Lomu, a relative of Eddie Aikau. We laughed and glided through the aqua power, the warm water propelling us through section after section.

*I dreamt I was tied on a hospital bed, a contraption coming out of my throat, both arms streaming with numerous tubes, Robocop-like machines wrapped around*

*each leg, pulsating with a mechanical rhythm. I tried to control my dream as I have done so many times; willing filet knives into each hand so I might cut the binding cords, but the blades would not appear. Like an animal I fought the constraints and the voices of spirits slipped in.*

*A man asked "Is he on anti-depressants?"*

*My wife's lovely voice replied, "No, he's the mellowest person you'll ever meet."*

*A different man said, "Let's tighten him up, he's breaking free."*

*My wife whispered, "I can't see him like this."*

Late that night I reached for a pad of paper and wrote a note to the nurse, *"I want to hear my wife's voice, please call her."*

She put the phone to my ear and my best friend said, "I love you honey, I'll be there at first light. Try to sleep now Bemie, good night." I was then able to find some fitful rest.

I woke up with a start because I couldn't breathe. A kind, tiny Indian nurse rushed to me and pulled a tube out of my throat, saying, "Cough!" I did and I was able to fill my lungs. I lingered on the edge in intensive care. I heard the words, "critical, tracheotomy, epiglottitis, low platelet count, aggressive streptococcus and walled pneumonia." The morphine dripped and dripped.

In eight days I lost thirty-five pounds. The doctors told me I probably should have died but I never thought I would, I love my precious wife and kids too much for that. Besides, I had a Cub Scout campout at San Onofre with my son to go to. I needed to see my daughter who had the lead role in her school play. I had students to teach, the word of Christ to study, and waves to catch. The whole ordeal was a blessing; life tastes sweeter. I believe it all began while surfing filthy, stinky, Cardiff Reef. Afterwards I went to my doctor with flu-like symptoms and he sent me home. That night I took an ambulance to a hospital but they didn't

see anything serious. The next morning I went to a different hospital. I told the girl in emergency, "I can't breathe or swallow." She said, "You're standing there aren't you? So I guess you're breathing. You've got a drink in your hand, so I guess you're swallowing."

Luckily I was seen by an old doctor who looked like Mark Twain, he said, "There's a rare disease that you might have; let's X-ray your throat." They did so and afterwards the doctor rushed to me and said, "You've got it, let's go to the O.R." It's a miracle that this doctor recognized epiglottitis when other doctors didn't. My vocal chords are damaged and I talk like the Godfather. But the good Lord has given me another chance. Now I've got to earn it.

# *Maya*

*For Mark Foo*

Originally published in *The Surfer's Journal*

The young man went to the ocean's edge and was saddened by its flatness. This was a time that the man physically needed to ride waves, yet the sea was calm. The waves were all things to him. He sat down to eat his meal of sticky rice. An old, thin man wearing only a white wrap around his manhood, walked up to him.

The old man said that he was hungry and that he would like some rice.

The young one looked at the old man, and for reasons he did not understand, he said, "Please eat."

The old man ate the rice and said, "I would like to express my thanks for the rice by giving you some waves to ride."

The young man laughed and asked, "How?"

From a small, leather pouch he pulled out three wrinkled black and white photographs and said, "Choose one." One photo was of Tunnels, rights breaking, big and lined up forever. Another was of Windmills, Kona winds

blowing and perfect swell direction. The last picture was of Wiamea Bay, so big that it did not look real.

The young man was skeptical but figured he had nothing to lose. He asked, "When?"

The old man said, "Get your board and sit in this triangle." He drew a triangle in the sand. The young man grabbed his board and sat in the triangle. The old man asked which picture he liked and the young one answered, "Tunnels."

"I like that one myself," the old man replied. "Now hold on tight to your board, look at the picture and say 'Maya.'"

As soon as the young one said the word, he was under water, holding on to his board with all his strength. He popped out of the sea and before him broke Tunnels, in all her glory. There was one other person out. He was very dark and rode a wooden board, which he glided through the long round bowls with ease. They did not speak, but rode the tunnels in silence. After five hours, the young man paddled outside the lineup and said, "Maya."

He was back on the beach next to the old man. Though he was exhausted, he knew that no time had passed. The old one said, "Bring some rice tomorrow and you can take another trip."

The next day the young man returned to the sea, the old one appeared.

"Where to today?"

"Windmills," replied the young one from inside the triangle. The wind began to blow out of the east, and the smell of California sage filled his lungs.

The old man pulled out the photograph and held it in front of the young one, who said the word, "Maya." Again he was under water, straining to hold on to his board. He surfaced and quickly started paddling towards a gaping

lefthander. The wind howled straight offshore. There was no one in sight. The young one rode the waves for six hours, until his arms would no longer move. He paddled outside and said, "Maya."

Again he was next to the old one, and it seemed that no time had passed. The old one smiled and said, "See you tomorrow."

The next day the young one returned with his longest board.

He offered the bowl to the old man who said, "Today, you eat the rice."

The young one ate the rice, sat in the triangle and said, "Wiamea Bay."

The old man said, "Goodbye."

The young one, so full of life, whispered, "Maya." He did not return.

*To ride inside  
the eye  
is to hold the  
golden lotus.*

## *Fidel*

Originally published in *The Surfer's Journal*

As a child I liked the way my sinuses tingled after I had gone swimming in the surf. I liked the way the water felt as it flowed through my system. As I grew older I began to try and breathe water – just a little. Today, I like to inhale the ocean. I think most of the water comes back through my mouth. Some is absorbed by my lungs. It's just something I've come to enjoy.

The winter of 95-96 has delivered. There hasn't been the consistency and size of 94-95, but there has been solid surf. One of my goals this winter has been to catch big Todos Santos as much as possible. Constant obstacles to Todos trips are finding people who want to go and who have the money. A few weeks ago the conditions were perfect. Mid-morning low tide, and Sean Collins was predicting quadruple-over head for Todos. No fog and clear skies. I picked up the phone and started making calls. I finally found a fellow teacher who agreed to go with me.

We both teach at a year-round school so we have a lot of weekday winter surf time. That night I could not sleep. I never can when the surf is big. I toss and turn and watch the alarm clock. At 3:00 a.m. I was up and making coffee. My friend called and said he had changed his mind - he just wasn't ready for it. I tried to talk him into making the journey, but he would not go. I tried to convince myself that La Jolla would be on fire, but I couldn't curb my disappointment.

My wife came downstairs and asked who had called.

Before I knew what I was doing I said, "Oh, it was just Jim. He wanted to make sure I didn't oversleep." That was it. I was going solo. I loaded up my truck with my two favorite guns and headed for the border.

After I bought my insurance I crossed into Mexico. Since I had surfboards, it was a given that I would go to Mexico's secondary border search. Whenever I tell Mexican police that I am a teacher, they always extend their courtesy. This time was no exception. I made it to San Miguel in an hour and a half. As I pulled off the highway in the early morning darkness, I could see white water sweeping across the break and into the bay. I didn't want to watch it for too long. I knew that if I did, I'd change my mind about Todos. I headed for Ensenada Harbor.

The first yellow light of day showed itself as I turned right into the parking lot. As usual, many men approached with variations of the same theme - a fast boat with a good captain. I already knew the captain I was looking for. Fidel. I've known Fidel for twenty-five years. He was a friend of my father's and knows his boat well. I found him and we agreed on sixty dollars since I told him

we'd be back by noon. I loaded his rickety orange boat and we waited about fifteen minutes to see if any other surfers might show up. Being a weekday, that wasn't likely. Finally, we headed out as the sun warmed the morning air.

As soon as we got out of the harbor we were met with a ground swell that was thick and solid. The boat climbed the swells, in and out of the morning light. I could see huge whitewater on the mainland side of the island and Fidel must have sensed that I was nervous. He told me about a day he remembered when one wave broke three boards. He laughed and joked with me and told me about his family. I realized that this man (with brown, broken teeth) was living a life that was real and good. I was glad to be on his boat and to share my food with him.

The water at big Killers is a color I can barely comprehend. The light catches the wave where the lip throws and makes the blue-green waves light up brilliantly. As Fidel decided where to anchor, I watched the swells thunder into the bay from far out of the empty sea.

Thoughts flowed through my mind as I put on my wetsuit. "Earl, Earl, the black pearl, where are you, brother? You rode the ocean swells and I'm waiting for you. My wife, my life, do you know how you have made me complete? Baby girl, I simply love you. You are my heaven and joy. Where are you, father? Heaven or hell? Heaven, I pray...it's really good."

I kept repeating in my mind, "It's really good." I grabbed my 10'2" Surfer's Alliance and paddled for the outside. It was amazing how perfect the swells were: solid, consistent, clean, triple-over head waves, with a macking bigger wave every half hour, or so. I rode what felt good and avoided the mackers. The thing was, the mackers were perfect. I decided I needed to catch one.

Things felt perfect as I scratched over the edge of my biggest wave of the day. I started my turn early and

angled down the face. The drop was gloriously long. My board knew exactly what to do. The section in front of me started to pitch, and I felt that my line was strong and open. I pulled in and for just a moment the world was balanced. That's when I made my mistake. Instead of focusing on my escape, I looked back into the soul of the wave. I must have hit a bump or something because the next thing I knew I was bouncing across the wave as the lip landed on top of me.

I'm not sure how long I was under. Way longer than I ever want to be under again. I tried to calm myself but it's tough when you're getting the crap beat out of you. When I finally surfaced, all that remained of my board was about eighteen inches of the tail section. I pulled the quick-release on my leash and tried to get my bearings. I had been tossed the length of the break and was about thirty yards from "the rock," which is the size of a VW bus and sits just inside the pit. I started stroking for the channel, but the waves kept pouring through. I was in trouble.

I really wasn't thinking about anything – just swimming hard and trying to get air. The water around me was so turbulent that it was difficult to breathe. I had trouble keeping my head up. The power of the ocean was overwhelming me, and I knew then that I could not breathe water.

I didn't see him until he was nearly on top of me. Fidel had charged into the surf in his beautiful orange boat. He swung it around and threw out a yellow line in one smooth motion. I grabbed the rope and he gunned his boat towards the channel. We made it out of the lineup, and he helped me on board. Then he looked me in the eye and laughed like hell. I laughed too.

*Only the thing for which you  
have struggled will last.*

*-Yoruba proverb, Nigeria*

## *The Haole*

He was guilty of the gravest sin. It was unspoken, but his people had ruined the land. They took advantage of the innocence of an entire chain of islands. They tore down nature and built hotels. Hotels the natives would only enter to work in, never to enjoy.

An outsider, a drop of oil in a glass of water. A young man at the bottom of the food chain. One who walked with his head down at all times. He was not afraid; that's not why his head was down. He was just someplace else. He was mind surfing. A boy named Jordan who paid for the sins of the white man. A haole in Lahaina Luna High School.

He and his mother were new to the island. On his first night in Lahaina he saw something that shook him some place deep down inside. Lahaina was a town of

whalers and pirates. Late at night, after the bars close, the Lahaina of yesterday sometimes comes alive. Jordan was awakened by the sound of a man in turmoil. He looked out the window of their Banyan Tree apartment. A battered haole limped down the street dragging a huge metal chain. His face had a long open cut across his cheek. His legs were bleeding and his shirt was nearly torn off. The chain clinked against the pot-holed street.

The limping haole was crying hysterically and babbling, "I'm gonna fuck him up, I'm gonna fuck him up." At first Jordan thought the babbling man was coming to his apartment, but the man just continued down the street, and into the night.

"Welcome to Maui," Jordan whispered to himself. He got the biggest kitchen knife and kept a lookout. His mother found him sleeping in the morning, by the window, with the knife in his hand.

Jordan and his mom had moved from Sunset Cliffs and were initially deceived by the island's beauty. She had raised Jordan by herself, and by most standards she did a damn fine job. But she was a woman in a land of men. On Jordan's first day as a freshman, he had his head slammed down on the desk so hard it broke his nose. He gave back, but he was not built to overcome the island's assortment of Hawaiians (if you fight one, you'll fight many), Tongans (slow to get mad, but unstoppable when started), Samoans (sheer size and strength), Filipinos (pound for pound a vicious fighter), and other members of the polyglot.

By the tenth grade people gave him a little more space but not because he could give back well (though he'd fight until he couldn't get up). It was because there was something Jordan could do as well as any Lahaina Luna boy. He could surf. Word got out that Jordan was a charger. He could surf Honolua Bay like a man. Subs, Coconuts, the Cave, it didn't matter. He charged. Yet he

still was not allowed inside the circle of future watermen at Lahaina Luna. No, there was a line he could not cross. There was a difference that ran too deep. He would never date a beautiful island girl. He would never be asked into the warm and safe glow of an islander's friendship. No, Jordan's friend was the ocean. And it welcomed him like a lover.

One Christmas morning Honolua was huge and pristine. The boys of Lahaina Luna gathered at the boat launch well inside the bay. It was only there that one could safely paddle out on such a strong day. Jordan showed up and looked out upon the sea. "The Bay" was perfect, but there were no less than 100 people out. Then Jordan started looking at the left that came in south of the boat ramp. He had never seen or heard of anybody surfing the left. As the well overhead left broke, it raced across the rocky shoreline with speed and flirtatious danger. Jordan watched the wave and believed he could ride it.

Jordan knew all the Lahaina Luna boys would be watching him. He paddled out quickly before he changed his mind. He got in position and deftly took off left, not fifteen feet from the rocky shore. He pulled up as high as he could and screamed across the wave. The swell broke with speed and precision along the precarious shore. The wave threw itself out to the hungry rocks, and Jordan was dry reefed. Just like that, he went from wave to reef. Jordan took gas. He got rolled around the rocks and eventually came to a stop. As he limped back to the boat launch the Lahaina Luna boys were screaming with delight. God, how they enjoyed watching Jordan get pummeled.

As Jordan got closer, the boys could see a grin on his bloody face. The tone of the Lahaina boys seemed to soften. Then Jordan walked to the water's edge and paddled out for another go at the impossible left. The

Lahaina boys grew silent.

This time Jordan chose a different line. Instead of climbing high on the wave, he dropped halfway down the face. Jordan rode in the pit as the wave spun all around him. The wave broke faster, and Jordan made subtle adjustments that kept him in front of the churning foam ball. Then the wave spit out its energy, and Jordan emerged from the tube with a smile. He popped out the backside of the wave, and he heard the Lahaina boys scream his name.

Jordan got out of the water and thought maybe he was done for the day. Then one of the Lahaina boys said, "Dis place called Jordan's now. You like to go wit us to Rainbows, o wat?" And that's the day Jordan became a Lahaina Luna boy.

*Ask and it shall be given you;  
seek and ye shall find;  
knock and it shall be opened  
unto you.*

*-Matthew 7:7*

## *Sunset Cliffs*

Keone walked into his classroom on Monday morning toting his coffee and surfboard. The administration had gotten used to Keone always having his board around. His first period advisory class came in. There was Margarita, who was so poor she sometimes wore a pajama top to school. There was Trina, who was scared, because the man who molested her when she was very young just got out of jail and was hanging around where she lived. He wore a white baseball cap and white jacket. He just stared up into her second story apartment singing *Happy birthday to you*. Trina had lost her spunk and it stirred something in Keone's bones. Her mother had contacted the sheriff but

the man in the white cap and jacket would just slip away before they arrived. He had violated his parole but they couldn't catch him, just one more scumbag scrambling around on the loose, wreaking havoc, fear, and pain on his way to death, or back to prison.

There was little Marky, whose big brother just got his head blown off by his supposed best friend. Marky's brother had broken into his grandfather's house and stolen a handgun. They played Russian roulette and Marky's brother lost.

For a moment Keone asked himself the same old questions, "Am I making a difference in these seventh graders' lives? Does what I do matter? Is my life worthy?" Then he looked into the eyes of the children and knew that this was the best possible thing he could do with his time on this planet. Yeah, there were better neighborhoods where he could teach, but there was no place he'd rather be.

He picked up the newspaper for it was current events day. For just a moment he lost his breath. There on the cover was the news that one of his favorite writers had died. What is it about children that give them a sixth sense about an adult's emotions? They could see their teacher was hurting.

Keone spoke, "A friend is dead." Keone wondered if he should go on about him, then decided that, yes, he would tell his story.

"About a year ago I got into a big fight with my wife. I wanted to go tuna fishing and she didn't think we could afford it. She was right, but that wasn't the point. Of course, I forgot what the point was. The albacore were literally jumping into boats. I was so mad that I slept in our guest room. I woke up early and read the newspaper. There was a long article written by a master writer. He wrote about how scared he was because he had brain cancer. He wrote about how he really loved Sunset Cliffs.

He told his readers about his fear of death. His words spoke right to me. See, kids, he could write. He could put the whole universe into one sentence. He just crawled right into my heart and sat down next to me. His voice seemed to be as familiar as an old friend. He wrote about how he longed to have a wife and children. It seemed like he wrote just for me.

“I went to my wife and daughter. I woke them up and held them close for a very long time. He had really opened my eyes. I had an art exhibit on Coronado Island at the time. One of my favorite paintings in the show was one titled, ‘Sunset Cliffs.’ I called the newspaper and told them that if the writer wanted the painting, it would be my pleasure to give it to him. The newspaper sent someone over to pick up the painting. It felt good to give the painting to him. I’ve been reading his words for the last year, and I’m feeling pretty sad.”

Keone felt the tears welling up behind his eyes. This had happened before when a really bright young man had to leave the school. He just didn’t have anyone that could take proper care of him, so he was sent to foster care. His grandfather had been collecting cans to support the boy, but he could no longer make ends meet. Keone asked his wife if they could adopt him. With tears in her eyes she held him close.

She looked at Keone and said, “You can’t bring them home, honey, they’re too many. If you’re going to teach, you’ve got to realize that.”

Before the student left he gave a quiet, lovely girl a red rose, then walked out the door. It was one of the most beautiful things Keone had ever seen. As he watched him walk away, tears came but he told the students he had something in his eye; he fooled them.

Then Keone remembered a professor he had at San Diego State. Once, while Dr. Jackson Benson was reading

the end of Bernard Malamud's "The Magic Barrel," he started crying. Dr. Benson didn't even wipe his eyes, he just kept on reading, showing his students what great teaching looked like. Then Keone thought about the courage the writer had to share the experience of his own death. Keone let the tears come.

"I know you're only in seventh grade and it's hard to see your teacher cry, especially since I'm a man. But someone very good has died and it makes me very sad. It's okay to cry when you're sad." Tears fell from Keone's eyes. "You see, I don't quite understand why he's gone. I know there's a heaven, and I know he's there. Maybe he's watching us right now and smiling because he knows he made a difference. And it's a good thing, to make a difference."

That night Keone couldn't stop thinking about the courage it would take to write about one's own death. Then he started thinking about the molester who was stalking his student. He knew what he had to do to so that he could sleep at night.

He told his wife and daughter he was going for a night surf. This was not unusual. Night surfing was his escape. He liked to go later in the night when the moon was high. He wasn't going surfing though.

Around eleven o'clock that night he drove to the neighborhood of his student. Keone parked on a side street and grabbed his baseball bat from behind his seat. He quietly got out of the car and walked slowly to the corner of the apartment building. He peeked around.

There he was. The man was wearing a white baseball cap, a white jacket and singing his birthday song. Keone could see the molester's back.

His guess was that this creep was high as a cat's tail on something. He just peered up at Trina's window. Keone toyed with the thought of giving the twisted guy

some sort of chance and making it some sort of fair fight. Then he thought better of it and came up behind him and swung with all his might. He remembered how Coach Rory taught him to hit. Choke up. Watch the target. Level elbow. Step into the swing. Follow through. Keone connected crisply with the back of the dirt bag's left knee. The sound was nice.

“Oh, that's a single.”

The power of the swing swept *the man from glad* up and onto his back. He screamed pretty good and rolled into a ball trying to hold his knee.

His eyes were glassed over and he spit out, “You're dead! You're fucking dead.” Keone went for his other knee. The man stupidly tried to protect it with his arms but that was a mistake. This time there were two loud snaps.

“That, my friend is a double.”

Heightened primal screaming reminded Keone that he might want to hurry up. He swung on The Man from Glad's ankles. Two more solid whacks and Keone was done.

“Stand up triple and a homerun to boot. Bro, you really can't sing.” Keone hustled back to his car, started driving, and didn't turn on his lights for a few blocks. A ways down the road he stopped at a pay phone and called the Sheriff.

He told the young woman who answered the call, “Send a unit to Canal Drive and Mango Street. There's someone you're looking for.” Then he hung up.

The next day at school Trina had her old spunk back.

*Like the moon  
Come out from behind the  
clouds!  
Shine.*

*-The Buddha*

## ***The Animal***

Originally published in *Wave Action magazine*

“Gather round this old man and let me bend your ear. You ain’t seen nothing. Ain’t seen a damned thing. Have you ever thought about killing a man? Yeah, taking some son of a bitch’s life. I got over it. But there was a time when I thought the Animal would be better off dead. So much hatred inside the man. Yeah, I had it all planned out. It’s kinda sad to look at him now. The Animal. He doesn’t even surf anymore. He just looks through the trash

for cans and bottles. He's afraid of his own shadow. He's afraid of voices from the sky. He's living in Hell now. Paying for the sins of his life.

“When the Animal was in his twenties he was truly an animal. The scum was just huge and hairy. He surfed dead winter L.P. Point without a wetsuit. No leg rope. He couldn't surf for shit but he never lost his board. He just sort of muscled it across the easy part of the best inside waves. He never ventured outside. No, that son of a bitch sat right on the boil and took off on everyone. While he paddled after the waves he'd be yelling, 'Come on mother fucker, come on mother fucker.' He would yell obscenities at the wave as he rode it in his coarse and ugly style. He'd scream, 'Come on whore, come on, let me ride you, let me ride you!' To surf with him was to have your mother ocean spit on, time and time again.

“I learned just to stay the hell away from him. He only surfed on the smaller days, the chicken shit. The thing about the L.P. crew was, in those days, they were the bottom of the barrel. Those boys weren't a blue-collar crowd; they were a no-collar crowd. They'd sit on the rocks around the corner from the stairs. Right below these three million dollar homes they had set up a rock fort. Sometimes some of them lived in it. Some of the sons of bitches didn't even surf. They'd just shoot their heroin and then raise hell with anyone who happened to come along. I surfed there. I just stayed clear of the Animal, and didn't get close enough to shore to get pegged by a rock. I used to paddle in from the park.

“One day this guy paddled out on an Old Local Motion gun. The guy was a small Oriental man who looked about forty or so. There was something about the Oriental man, you know, just as happy as a hillbilly. You could see by his quiet paddle that he was a waterman. So, anyway, he took off way back round the outside, trimming

his gun up to speed, a joy to witness. I just had fun watching that little man fly.

“Sure enough, out paddles the Animal. His sidekicks weren’t on the rocks this particular day; I reckon they were out robbing a house or something. He paddled right up to the little Oriental ripper and starting growling like a wild dog. ‘Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrroowl!’ I didn’t know what the hell was gonna go down cause I knew the little man was not your everyday hodaddy. Well, the little man looked right at the Animal and starting laughing like a son of a bitch. He just laughed this deep kinda crazy laugh and paddled back to the outside.

“Before long the little man was humming nicely from way outside up to the boil. Well, Animal sure enough took off and all be damned if the little man didn’t shoot right by him! The Animal was so blown away that he fell right off his board and his shitty old stick got pummeled on the rocks. The little man just laughed and left the Animal screaming, ‘Take it to the beach, take it to the beach, you little Jap fucker. Come on you little Jap fucker!’ Well, the little man finished his wave and paddled out for another one. Meanwhile the Animal was swimming after his board screaming, ‘Vengeance is mine!’

“By the time the Animal was back out in the lineup, the little man was cruising across a beauty. The Animal was caught a bit inside and the little man shot towards him at mach speed. You could hear the Animal shouting, ‘I’m going to kill you.’ While flying by the Animal, the little man yelled, ‘Hey bra, more bettah you no get you panties all bunched up, eh?’

“We didn’t know what was gonna happen, nobody had ever stood up to the Animal before. When the little man paddled by me, he said, ‘Hey guy, dis big hoale come to me, I going pound him in kine sef defense, yeah? You witness fo me, or wat?’ I told him, ‘Oh yeah, I’ll be your

witness, but you better watch that guy.’ The little man laughed his joyous laugh and went out for another wave. Meanwhile, the Animal was frantically screaming, ‘Take it to the beach you little Jap fucker!’

“The little man smiled, and shouted back, ‘All right den.’ He paddled towards the rocky shore. Since I agreed to witness for the little man, I paddled in with him. The Animal’s mistake was that he thought he was just going to destroy the little man.

“They got out of the water at the same time, about thirty yards from one another. The Animal threw his board down and charged the little man. The little man laughed his joyous laugh. Just before the Animal reached him he threw his board aside and in his hand held a rock the size of a cantaloupe. The Animal hesitated for just a second and during that second the little man hurled the rock at the Animal’s stomach. It was a beautiful throw, just like a fast pitch softball player. The rock landed with a sickening crack, and the Animal fell straight to the ground. The little man then picked up the same rock and grabbed the Animal by the hair. The Animal looked bad, real bad; his eyes were crossing and he was foaming at the mouth. He pulled the Animal’s face close and said, ‘Next time dis rock go on you head, guy.’ The Animal was never the same after that. I guess in some twisted way it’s kind of sad. Naw.”

*It's an innocent trip  
to paddle out  
towards sensuous solitude*

*through the chaotic avalanches  
away from mediocrity  
further and further*

*my head now burns  
for the hair leaves  
yet the child lives*

*further still further  
into the abyss  
committed no less*

*torched arms  
until God whispers  
you are alive*

## *The Trap*

The storm's wind blew the leafless branches against the cracked window. Seven-year-old Chulo woke up to the smell of chorizo and eggs. He rose and bound his sleeping mat into a tight roll, as his mother liked it. His mother had left him four burritos for his breakfast. She had already left to clean the house of the others. He didn't know his father.

When he would ask about him, his pretty mother would reply, "The less said the better."

Being Saturday, Chulo did not have to go to school at Imperial Beach Elementary. He loved Saturdays above all other days. Sundays were okay, but he really didn't like having to stay awake during church. Chulo walked out of the two-room home into the cold, windy sunlight.

Chulo and his family lived in a house behind another house. Between the two small houses lived a man named Loveless. Loveless slept in a small wooden box that sat on four red bricks. He was a gringo with a long blond ponytail. He washed himself with the garden hose every morning. Loveless had been in prison and had many tattoos. The biggest said *Dago Bikers* across his chest. His body was hard and cut. Nobody fucked with Loveless. Today Loveless was making lobster traps out of wire.

“Loveless, why aren’t you out fishing today?” asked Chulo.

“Hey, buenos dias, Chulo. It’s too windy today. The lobster traps get blown all over the place in weather like this and it’s hell in the boat.”

“Yeah, too rough, huh? You want one of my burritos?”

“No. You eat them. Get some meat on your bones. I just had a big breakfast.” Chulo looked around and knew that Loveless had not eaten anything.

“Loveless, my mom made two for you.” It was true; his mother had begun to cook for Loveless and somehow that really pleased Chulo.

“Tell your mom thanks for me.”

“You tell her yourself.”

“I just might do that.”

“Okay.”

“Okay.”

Loveless bent the large fence-like wire to form a wire box.

“Hey Loveless, why do the lobsters go into the trap?”

“Because they’re hungry. They smell the fish I put into the trap and crawl through the small hole in the wire. When they’re caught in the trap, they can’t even eat the fish they smell because it’s locked up tight. When the other

lobsters see the trapped lobsters they think, 'Hey, there must be something good there, so I'm gonna go there too.' Before long, I got myself a trap full of lobsters that I can sell to the wholesalers for some pretty good bucks. I'm having a hell of a great season. I'm buying my own boat."

Chulo said, "Your own boat. Oh, Loveless, that's great! The lobsters remind me of my family. We came through a hole in the fence because it looked so good in this country, but it seems like the food is locked up pretty tight. We're as dumb as the lobsters."

"Naw, hungry like the lobsters, but smarter. Your mother brought you and your brother here because she knows there's a better chance for you on this side of the fence. You're very lucky to have such a mother; she's something else. I didn't know mine very well. Where's that brother of yours?"

"He didn't come home last night. But he must have been here this morning because his newspapers are gone. He's been away a lot. My mom says she's gonna send him to my tio's in Texas 'cause he ain't been too right."

Chulo's brother Ernesto was about to be jumped in to MBS - Mexican Boy Soldiers. Ernesto was not sure about being jumped in. He could either join them or fight them. There were just too many. He had told himself he'd join but continue to attend his classes. Ernesto had a paper route and the money he brought in made it just possible for the family to live in their two-room house.

Loveless said, "Well, some of his homies were here, stay away from them. Maybe later we'll go down to the ocean and you can try surfing my Skip Frye."

Chulo loved the ocean, the smells, sounds and waves. He would go whenever he could to watch the surfers from the pier. There were some crazies, druggies, thieves and bullies on the pier, sure, but he felt at home

there. Sometimes he'd clean up around the restaurant for a little money or lunch.

Ernesto walked in from the alley. "Chulo," he hissed, "anybody been around?"

"Yeah, your punk friends," Loveless answered. "What's going on?"

In a soft voice Ernesto answered, "They went too far. They shot some fool just because he painted over their tag. I think they killed him. I'm out. I thought I was a killer, but I'm not! They don't trust me for shit, think I'm gonna talk. I'm no rat, but I'm gone."

Loveless took charge. "You get in your house. I'm gonna be around for awhile. They won't bother you as long as I'm around. When your mom gets home, she'll decide what to do."

Chulo was glad that Loveless was there to make things right. No one would cross Loveless, but he would not always be around.

When Chulo's mother came home that afternoon and learned that Ernesto was in trouble, she didn't hesitate. She knew what she had to do.

"Put your things into a box, you're going to your tio's. We'll buy you a ticket. Loveless will walk you to the bus station. Come on, hijo, you must be gone before it is dark."

Ernesto replied angrily, "Mama, we don't have the money for a bus ticket. Use your head; you can't spend the rent money, it's due tomorrow!" His mother slapped him hard across the face.

"Don't be disrespectful. Chulo and I will be fine. We have always been fine. I've got some pay coming for my cleaning and I'll collect what I can. Chulo can handle your newspapers. Now move."

Ernesto took Chulo into the other room. "Chulo, tomorrow is collection day for my paper route. You know

the route. Here is the list of all the money that's due. After you deliver all of the Sunday papers, go back along the route and collect the money. Sunday papers are the heaviest but they must be at the homes early or else the people raise hell. You've got to collect all of the money or else you and mom will get thrown out. The landlord's not a good man. I can't explain it, but you've got to get all of the money and get it home to mom. Some people won't want to pay; you tell them that they must because you and mom have got to pay rent. You're the man now. I'll ask you to send money as soon as I get to Texas. I love you, Chulo. Stay close to Loveless. He's the best thing that's happened to this family in a long time."

Chulo's eyes clouded as he said, "I can take care of Mom." Ernesto left on the bus to Texas that afternoon.

The next morning at 4:00 A.M. Chulo was dressed and outside when the truck dropped off the bundle of newspapers. Chulo looked at the bundle as high as his waist. He cut the straps of nylon that held the papers and began to fold them in half and put them into the canvas bag. It was still dark when he finished folding the papers. He crawled under the canvas bag and tried to lift it. He could not even get it off the ground.

"Come in and eat something before you go, Chulo," his mother said. He went in and quickly ate his warm flour tortillas with beans and cheese; it was satisfying.

"Chulo, I know that you can deliver the papers by yourself, but I will help. Ernesto told me they must not be late. Today we shall not go to church, but I believe God will forgive us."

They walked outside, and his mother knelt down beside the canvas bag. "Chulo, help me put the straps over my shoulder." She crawled under the straps and at last the bag was in place.

“Stand, and I will help lift,” said Chulo. His mother slowly stood, she seemed to be all right. A few steps later, she stepped on a rock and her ankle went sideways. She dropped to one knee. For a moment she was still.

Then Chulo heard her say, “I am alright. I was just clumsy. Help your foolish mother to stand again.” Slowly she stood.

“Your knee is bleeding.” She had a deep cut visible through her worn pants. Already there was much blood.

“It is nothing. Now let’s go.” As the sun came up they delivered the papers. His mother slowly walked and in time the load grew lighter. They were done in two hours. By then her ankle was quite swollen, but she did not complain.

When they arrived home the landlord was sitting on their porch. He wore new Levis and a clean white shirt. Chulo could not help but admire his cowboy hat and shiny belt buckle. Then Chulo noticed the way the man looked at his mother and hated him.

“Good morning. Your knee, it is hurt, and why the limp?”

“It is nothing.”

“You have my rent?”

“I will have it later today.”

“You know baby, this could be so much easier, so very easy. I have been good to you. Why can’t you be good to me?”

Chulo’s mother spit on the ground, her cheeks burning red, her strong hands on her hips, “Don’t speak to me that way. You are filth. I will have your rent this afternoon.”

“Me, filth? Listen, you will have my money by five o’clock this afternoon or you and your wetback sons will be on the streets. Don’t play with me, woman.” He grabbed

her arm and looked into her eyes, “It could be very easy, so very easy.” Chulo’s mother pulled free.

The landlord grabbed her again, this time with both arms and tried to kiss her. Chulo grabbed at the landlord’s legs, but the landlord flicked him aside.

Then Chulo heard Loveless. “It’s way past time for you to be on your way.”

The landlord stepped back and laughed, “What do we have here, the homeless lobsterman? I only let you leave your coffin here because it’s an extra bit of cash. But listen, jailbird, I’ll throw you out on your ass. Now run along.”

Loveless stepped up onto the porch. In a flash the landlord had a knife out, and he was no longer smiling. He said, “You’re on my property. If I kill you, it’s my right. Now step the fuck off the porch and clear your shit off this property.”

Loveless smiled and said, “I hope you know how to use that thing.” Then the next thing Chulo knew, Loveless was claspng the landlord’s wrist holding the knife, and with his other hand he was squeezing the landlord’s balls. He must have been squeezing something fierce because the knife fell to the ground. The landlord was punching on Loveless with no effect. Loveless released his balls and snap-twisted the Landlord’s arm so it was straight. Then, Loveless put his knee through the landlord’s arm, breaking it like a thin branch. It was over.

Loveless grabbed the whimpering Landlord by the hair, lifting him slightly off the ground. The Landlord’s arm hung awkwardly down his side, his breathing harsh and strained. Chulo was reminded of a time he saw a dog playing with a rat before he killed it.

Loveless asked him, “What kind of man behaves so badly in front of a child? What kind of man pushes a child to the ground and tries to kiss his mother? If you ever, and

I mean ever, get near these people again I will make you suffer, and then I will kill you *slowly*.” Then he kned the Landlord in the gut. Grabbing the back of the landlord’s belt and hair, he threw him off the porch. The landlord landed in a cloud of dust and crawled to his truck. He spun his tires as he left.

Chulo’s mother looked at Loveless with heated brown eyes and said, “You didn’t need to do that.”

“Yes, I did.”

“Now you’ll have to leave here.”

“Not without you and your family. Will you go with me?”

“Yes.” She hesitated, then said, “We have to finish up here though.”

“We’re finished here. Let’s pack your things and load up my truck.” Loveless scooped up a laughing Chulo and told him, “Go get your stuff together.” Then he grabbed Chulo’s mom and kissed her long and hard.

When they broke from their first kiss, Chulo’s mother asked Loveless, “What took you so long?”

He replied, “Slow but sure, slow but sure.”

*To Struggle  
With other  
Creatures is the  
Mind's worst disease.*

## *Currents*

Originally published in *The Surfer's Journal*

I remember that this girl had the nicest blue eyes I had ever seen. I was six years old. We were on vacation in Mazatlan and we were on the beach. I never found out the girl's name, never even talked to her. Yet, I almost died for her. I heard her say she was afraid of the waves. I had just mastered swimming that very summer and wanted to show her I was not afraid.

I started swimming out into the surf. When I was over my head, I looked back to see if she was watching. Something was not right. I was being swept down the beach so fast I could hardly see my fading family. I started doing the "Australian Crawl" just like my swimming

teacher had taught me. The current carried me farther out to sea and down the coast. I was afraid and I was growing tired.

Then, seemingly out of nowhere, my father was by my side. I thought he was going to grab me and carry me to safety. He did not touch me. He just looked at me. Without saying a word, he swam towards shore. I was having trouble keeping my head out of the water. Every time a wave came, I struggled for air. I could tell that my father, who was not a strong swimmer, was tiring too. I wanted him to tell me it was going to be okay. He did not say a word. He just looked at me and continued his way towards shore.

Finally, I felt the beautiful sand beneath me. I crawled out of the ocean and vomited. My father, meanwhile, had gone back to where my family was waiting. Slowly, shamefully, I walked back to them, my head hanging low. When I looked up, I saw that the blue-eyed girl was looking at me. At least I had gotten her attention.

I was tired, scared, and confused as I approached my family. I walked up to my mother and father to apologize to them. My father slapped me so hard that I fell to the sand.

He pointed his finger at me and screamed, "Respect the ocean!" The girl with the beautiful blue eyes looked out to sea. To this day, I do not know whether to love or to hate him for that slap. *Now that I am a parent, I finally understand, that he was just afraid.*

*Religion is a way of walking,  
not a way of talking.*

# *God*

The minister was the holiest of men. He would not let you forget this. The small island was blessed by his visit. All of his entourage said so. He warned the islanders about the dangers of lust and greed. The minister told them that even thoughts of lust (oh yes, even thoughts) made them no better than dogs. He was the holiest of men. His gold watch, gold necklace and rings sparkled in the South Pacific sunlight. His styled hair held fast, even against the strong trade winds.

*Zen 45*

His wish was to see the island and to meet as many people as he could. He wished to save as many souls as he might from Satan, who lurked everywhere (yes, even in this room). Times were dangerous and people were disappearing because of Satan's followers. Nobody actually knew anyone who had disappeared but since the minister had said it, it certainly must be true.

The minister, along with his large support staff, toured the island and they were given nice meals and gifts wherever they went. The minister had heard stories of the hermit surfer who lived in a cave on the far side of the island. The surfer led a simple life. He fished using the ancient techniques and rode a long wooden board. Though the people tried to talk him out of it, the minister felt that he must bring this surfer into his fold.

The minister asked a fisherman in his flock to motor him to the far side of the island in his Skip Jack 28. They arrived at the bay where the hermit surfer lived in his cave. The minister rowed himself to the cave in the dinghy of the fishing boat. When the minister told the surfer that he was a man of God, the surfer welcomed him, for the surfer loved God with all his being and wished to live alone so that he could spend his days in quiet prayer and meditation. The minister asked how the surfer prayed. The surfer answered that he surfed waves cleanly and got as deep in the pit as he could. The minister grew quite concerned and told the hermit he must read the Bible or forever burn in Hell.

The surfer was frightened and quickly agreed to begin reading at once. The minister personally signed a shiny new bible and left it with him. The minister felt wonderful, for certainly he had saved another soul. Oh, how he loved to sign and give away shiny new Bibles.

The minister was tired, so he lay down for a nap while the surfer pored over the Bible. Shortly, the minister

awoke and smiled as he saw the surfer reading with rapt intent. The minister bid the surfer farewell and rowed himself back to the waiting fisherman. They loaded up the dinghy and began their trip back to the other side of the island. After they had motored at 20 knots for about a half an hour they heard a voice behind them, coming from the sea. Swimming as fast as a dolphin, the surfer was catching up with the fishing boat. They stopped the boat, cut the engine, and the surfer swam alongside. He then churned up the ocean with his paddling feet until it seemed he was walking on the water itself.

The surfer said, "I have questions about the dreams and visions of Amos. Can you help me understand?"

The minister answered, "Come into the boat and let's talk." The surfer came over the rail. The minister continued speaking, "There are endless mysteries in the Bible. You could spend one thousand lives trying to understand it. I think you already know a peace I'll never know. Go. Just read it and know it's not to be completely understood by mortals."

"Thanks." The surfer replied. "Now I'd like to do something for you. Please remove your rings and put them on the seat." The minister did as he was asked. Then the surfer leaned towards him and removed his necklace and gently took off the minister's watch. He picked up the rings and held all the jewelry up in his right hand.

He smiled and said, "This is illusion," and threw the jewelry into the sea. The minister's eyes opened wide, then he started laughing from deep inside his chest. The surfer laughed too. Then he dove over the side and started swimming back to his cave.

*Amongst the glitter,  
Remember  
You are of the ocean.*

## *A Promise Broken*

Once, not so long ago, there were two young men who were the best of friends. If you fought one of them, you fought both of them. They were named Micah and Kele. If one of them was hungry, both of them were hungry. Their home was on the west side of Maui. During their days they would ride their surfboards, play tennis, meet girls (as young men sometimes do), and read books. In the evenings they would go to their waiter jobs for the easy money. After work they would hit Spats at the Hyatt or Banana Moon at the Marriott. These were the euphoric,

smoky days of youth. As time went on, they decided to try their luck in the clothing business.

It was not easy. They had no experience, just the seemingly endless energy of youth. The friends worked with blinders on for many months. Every cent of their money went into the business. From the beginning, the business was an equal partnership. They promised never to let the business come between their fine friendship. No amount of money could ever be equal to the friendship they shared.

Kele kept his night job because the money was needed. Micah spent all of his time and energy working on the business. Orders for their clothing began to come in, and the young men realized that their dream of financial independence was coming true.

They ventured to Long Beach, California, to show their clothing in the International Action Sports Retailer Show. The clothing was a success; they were on their way. They had so many orders that they could not afford to meet them. With the help of Los Angeles lawyers, they incorporated, and raised well over \$500,000.00. Micah and Kele's friendship grew along with the business. It was an exciting time. Micah and Kele traveled all over America, Europe, and Japan to sell their clothing. The trips were always successful and it seemed as though they were blessed with good fortune. It didn't seem like work, it seemed like one endless, wild party.

Soon they leased offices in San Juan Capistrano. They opened their own stores and had a warehouse full of goods. They were at the top of their game and the good times were rolling. Then something changed.

Micah decided that he would hire his family. Kele adamantly disagreed, but Micah was determined. After weeks of turmoil and arguments, Micah's wife took over all the major accounts. Kele told Micah that this wasn't fair to

the reps, but Micah said, “Family first.”

Then Micah wanted to bring in his stepfather as the head of National Sales.

Kele said, “He’s got absolutely no experience in fashion or sales.”

Micah replied, “Family first.”

Clearly, the business had ceased to be a partnership. The friendship, too, had ceased. What had once been a beautiful and strong brotherhood was now over. Kele was disappointed at what success had done to his once great friend. With a heavy heart and sad eyes, Kele resigned from the company.

Micah then hired his mother.

Less than a year later, the company was bankrupt. Kele returned to college to pursue other avenues. He was quite content, but I’m told he still missed the friendship he and Micah once shared.

Imagine Kele’s surprise when, fifteen years later, Micah called him up to say he was sorry for not treating him like a friend those many years ago. It was a call that meant a lot to Kele.

*To quietly take  
in the  
elements  
is to remove  
the dust from  
your soul*

## *Talks with Trees*

I had never seen magic mushrooms before. I was living in Mammoth and we had guests all the time. A friend of a friend gave me a few caps and said that would be enough. I have always considered myself a bit of a wild man, so after he left our house I helped myself to a handful. I couldn't stand the taste of them so I swallowed them, like pills. One after another after another.

*Zen 53*

That morning I was supposed to meet my new girlfriend's brothers. I pulled up to her nice two-story house in my 1970 VW bus. She had some scam going where she embezzled around \$5,000 a week from her job. I didn't know it at the time; I just thought she was rich. She was a little older than I, and she seemed worldly.

The throttle cable of my bus was snapped so I drove with the back hatch open and used a long wire to accelerate. I was disappointed that the mushrooms were having no effect. We sat down to breakfast. Her brothers seemed like pretty nice guys. Suddenly, I couldn't even look at the eggs; they were melting and sliding off the plate.

The cat outside the window became a giant mouse. I told everyone that I was coming on to shrooms for the first time, and they asked me if I had anymore. I told them I didn't. I went to my girlfriend's room to lie down. She came in to say goodbye. She was wearing Ray Bans with yellow lenses. I told her she looked ridiculous and started laughing hysterically. She got pissed off and left to go make some turns.

I thought if I relaxed for a while that I'd be okay. The room was swaying and moving all around me. There were colored towels that looked like psychedelic waterfalls. Explosions of color seemed to come out of nowhere. The wood grained walls started closing in on me. I had to get out of there.

I somehow got my bus up to the warming hut. I remember a parking attendant telling me to find a place to park. Luckily, I knew him. He looked at me and said, "Dude, you are out there." I parked the bus and stared at the ceiling. The little dots in the headliner became Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. I pulled myself from the car and made it to my locker.

I guess I started to freak because my friend E.J.

came in and asked me what the hell was going on. I told him I had eaten too many mushrooms and that I was scared. He laughed and said, "Don't fight it, go with it. Go make some turns, go fast, get big air!"

I dressed, grabbed my board, and headed to chair eight. Once on the lift I felt pretty good. There was light snow falling and the sun was playing hide-and-seek games. I studied the snowflakes on my glove and felt sure that each contained a universe. The snowflakes fell in blends of brilliant colors. Morphing and gliding into shapes and drops, like livid, undulating, dancers, moving in harmony, throwing their bodies across time and space.

At the top of the chair I saw my good friend Carlitos. He was sitting under a tree looking pretty lost. I could tell he'd been crying.

I boarded over to him and sat my bottom down next to him.

"What's up?" I said.

"Steak and Eggs just told me. Sonar's gone. He killed himself. Hung himself behind his house."

"What? Where's Canoe?" Canoe was Sonar's German Shepherd and best friend.

"Canoe's gone, that's why he killed himself. He went to Bishop and left Canoe in the back of his truck, like he always does, right? He went into the Auto Part store and when he came out Canoe was gone. He went fucking nuts looking for him. Last night he was outside the Rafters looking at the sky yelling and crying, 'You sit, good dog. You stay right there. I'm coming. You're a good dog. You're the best dog in the world. Good dog. Good stay. I'm coming for you. Canoe, Canoe.' I took him inside and asked him what the fuck he was talking about. He said he knew Canoe must be dead, waiting for him in heaven, because there's no way anyone got him out of his truck-bed alive. Then, he said he wanted to go home so I walked with

him out to his truck. He said he was okay and that everything was going to be all right. We smoked a fatty then he split. They found him hanging behind his house.”

I sobered up pretty quickly. At least I thought I did. I asked Carlitos if he was okay. He said he was. I told him I needed to get higher into the mountains and asked him if he wanted to join me. He said no. I told him I'd check in with him in a day or two.

I headed to chair nine to find some fresh stuff on Dragon's Tail. The storm was a Nevada low, so the powder was uncommonly light. Time was doing funny things. I felt as if I had only made a few runs, boarding as hard as I had ever boarded before. Yet the clock at chair nine showed 3:00. I thought I would like to hike down the Tail on my last run. I hiked for a long time. Sometimes I stopped in order to cry.

Out loud I said, “Fucking Sonar. You son of a bitch. How could you do this to me? I love you, Sonar. I love you, Canoe.”

I was pretty sure I knew where I could find some big air with a nice steep landing. I kept thinking it was just over the next ridge. I was out of it. The snow started coming hard. It was getting dark. I was one lost motherfucker.

I didn't give a shit. Sonar. I looked around. I had never slept in the snow before. I thought I was just like Jeremiah Johnson. I went to the biggest tree I could find and started digging under the thick overhang of limbs. I dug out a nice little snow cave at the base of the tree. I built up three walls facing the tree and made a roof of branches. By the time I finished it was dark and dumping snow. The tree enjoyed my company. I had proper clothes and, being a smoker, I had not one lighter but two.

I had some papers of various sorts in my wallet and

I used them to carefully start a small fire in my snow cave. A fire would be nice but not essential. I knew that if I needed to I could stay awake the whole night and walk out in the morning. As it turned out, I was able to make and maintain a sweet little fire.

I fed the flame and talked with the tree.

“Tree, Sonar was kind of smelly. Yeah. He didn’t bathe too regular. You know? Huh? Do you? Once some really drunk frat guys started some shit at our party and Sonar jumped right in. He was skinny and wore thick black glasses, but he jumped in and hit some college kid across the head with a ski. Opened him right up. They left that party in a hurry and didn’t come back. You should have seen how proud Sonar was. He was glowing that night. He even got laid by some chubby basket check girl. Fucking Sonar. And Canoe. You’ll never see a dog as good as Canoe. The dog was smarter than Sonar. Tough son of a bitch too. You never saw Sonar without Canoe. They were a team. Sonar said that Canoe had been with him for many lives, ever since men lived with dogs. I guess that’s why he thought he’d go after him.”

I thought I would run out of tears, but I didn’t until the first light of morning showed itself. The storm had let up some. Off far in the distance I saw a ski lift. I walked towards it.

*If you love the sacred and  
despise the ordinary, you  
are still bobbing in the  
ocean of delusion.*

*-Lin Chi*

## *Woman*

Their hut rested just inside the dense jungle. The air was rich with fragrant mangos and flowers.

She held Rani close to her and whispered, “Do you know how much I love thee, my son, my heart, my Rani?” And Rani, who was five summers old, nuzzled his black hair into his mother’s breasts and laughed, a laugh that touched his mother’s insides in a way that only your own child can. When she looked at Rani she saw her husband, too. Her man. “We are a family,” she thought, “This is my son, this is my hut. We have food and a canoe and a wave-riding board.”

Her man had gone to ride the waves on the other side of the island. It was an all-day excursion. Whenever he returned from riding waves he would be his happiest. He said the ocean scrubbed away his grouchiness. Within her there grew a warmth that frightened her, for her life was so very good. Yes, when things were too good, she would sometimes be afraid; a woman’s premonition.

Then Rani said, “Look at the pretty snakes, Mom.” The woman climbed up on the high bed, holding Rani very close. The small, black, deadly mambas were half coiled in the doorway of the hut. The snakes were very young, and she knew there might be a nest of many nearby.

“Will they hurt us, Mommy? You said the black snakes were bad.”

“Yes, the black ones are bad. But I am with you and those silly snakes can’t get up here. You take a little nap, and I’ll watch those black worms.” She rocked Rani and watched the snakes. Rani wanted to study the snakes too. Finally, as the morning turned to afternoon, Rani fell asleep. Hours went by and the snakes watched them. The snakes seemed content to just sit there, mocking her. Then she began to frighten herself in ways that only a mother can. Her instinct to protect him was causing her to imagine what a mamba’s bite would do to her son, her world, her life. Her thoughts drifted, “What if I have a heart attack right now? Who will guard my son?” God, how she wished her man was here. But he would not be back until nightfall. “If he were here,” she thought, “he would laugh and smash the heads of the snakes.”

She looked at his spear. Perhaps she could reach it. But could she reach it without setting down Rani? No. Surely she knew that Rani would roll in his sleep, right off the bed. Without putting Rani down, she stretched her slender brown arm and, just barely, reached the spear.

She imagined how her man would kill the snakes. He would use the spear to smash the snake’s head. She set Rani down in the middle of the bed, never taking her eyes off the snakes. “Dear Lord, I’m scared,” she thought. But she was more afraid of harm coming to her son. Then, to give her strength, she imagined the snake biting her son. Over and over she pictured this. It made her stronger. From within her rose a woman who was sure, protecting, and unafraid.

In her mind she spoke with the snakes. “So, you want my son then? Come on take him. There is only me between us. Come on.”

Softly, she slid down from the bed. She held the

spear in front of her, her mind imagining that she had already been bitten. “You have bitten me; I’m not afraid then. You cannot kill me, devil. I am already dead. Sweet Jesus, let my spear fall sure.”

She slowly lifted the spear and brought it down on the closest snake, sure, and almost true. But even in a half coil the snake was indeed a snake. The black mamba shot towards her lifting itself completely off the ground. But alas the warrior in the woman was quite awake, for she sidestepped the darting mamba and again brought her spear down swiftly and slammed the snake. For a moment it was stunned. And during that moment the woman called upon God himself to guide her spear. Her next blow nearly took off the snake’s head and it was quite dead. Then she moved towards the other snake as it slithered out the door. She slapped down on it as it headed into the flora. It slowed and she beat on it over and over. Its purple and red insides were coming out from its ruptured reptile skin, and still she beat on it.

She was snapped out of her trance when she heard the laughter of Rani.

He poked his head out the door and said, “Mommy, you killed it enough.” And his laughter filled the island, making it lighter, until the woman thought the island itself might float away, right into heaven.

*From the withered tree,  
A flower blooms.*

# *The Eyes of Night*

Originally published in *Surfing magazine*

He stood poised at the edge of the cliff above the *Bay*. The moon was full and he was alone with his thoughts. Yes, a bit of thinking before the step.

“Yeah, this way will be the best, a moment of fear, then splat. High tide will move in and clean up. End the voices of discontent; end the thoughts of utter darkness. Madness, oh madness, you tireless bitch. You won’t leave me, you live in me, festering my being. Anyone who looks me in the eye knows that I’m no longer there, so no one will ever look into my emptiness again. No more dark thoughts, turn it off. TURN IT OFF!”

The young, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, 1980 surf star put his arms out as if he had wings. The island wind smelled of flowers. Waves swept in across the *Bay*. The moonlight lit up the night. The reflection looked like the sea floated a billion tiny fires. And for just a moment he knew silent peace.

But then he heard the softest cry. He was not sure if it was real, so he did not jump. He listened with his whole body. There it was again. Yes, he was sure now. He stepped back from the cliff and went towards the sound. Behind a tree he found a small piece of fur that contained the smallest breath of life. It was a kitten. It was filthy, and its eyes were scabbed over with blood and dried mucus.

He picked up the kitten and began to cry. The young man cried for all the world. He held the kitten and cradled it back and forth. The kitten responded by whimpering and purring. With a corner of his t-shirt he wiped the eyes of the kitten clean. In the moonlight, bright blue eyes stared back at him.

He took the kitten home and decided he needed to stick around and take care of it. The young man then focused on other goals. He told himself he'd go back to school and finish college. The kitten grew up to be healthy and strong. So did the man.

*Try as much as possible to be wholly alive,  
with all your might, and when you laugh,  
laugh like hell and when you get angry, get  
good and angry. Try to be alive. You will be  
dead soon enough.*

*-William Saroyan*

## *Ain't Nobody's Business*

When I was twelve years old and in ninth grade, we moved from the west side of Oahu to Imperial Beach, California. When we arrived in I.B., it was beyond my comprehension how we could have left paradise for such a cold, gray place. The truth was my father wanted to make some real money and he found opportunities in Hawaii limited. He was in the real estate game. Also, my oldest brother, Bull, went to military school in Long Beach. My folks just could not control him. He was (and is) one of my heroes.

I was shocked at how frigid the brown water was. I had scavenged a child-size beaver tail dive suit. Me and my beat-up Dewey Weber found our way to the ocean at every opportunity. After we had been in I.B. for a few weeks, three older boys started giving me a hard time. Maybe they were fifteen or sixteen. They didn't go to Mar Vista High; they must have been dropouts. They called me "Jungle Boy" or "Coconut Boy" with such hatred that I stung something fierce.

Before long they moved up to throwing rocks at me whenever they saw me. I figured if I stood up to them once they would leave me alone. Early one Saturday morning I headed out at Descanso St. Right when I got to the sand, rocks started coming from the boys. They were sitting

around a fire. There were empty beer bottles around them and it was clear they had been there all night. A rock hit me in the face, and I went ahead and charged them. I got in a few good licks, and I slammed one guy with my knee between his legs. Then they beat me silly.

Growing up on the west side of Oahu I had been beaten up plenty of times, but this was different. They didn't stop. It was the first time I had my nose broken. Something was very wrong.

They started pounding my head into some rocks, one of them shouting, "Kill the nigger!" Finally, an old Asian fisherman started banging on them with his fishing pole. They started to go after him, but he used his fishing pole like a staff and whacked them pretty damn good. It warmed my heart. They scattered, and I ran all the way home, leaving my shitty old Dewey Weber behind. I wouldn't see that board again.

My father wasn't home a lot. He was a man that was driven to succeed. I don't know what lit the fire under him, but he was one of the most ambitious men I've ever known. My mother pretty much handled everything at home. This particular weekend he was out of town looking at some investment property in Los Angeles. My mother kind of lost it when she saw how beat up I was. She put some ice on my face and cleaned up my cuts with peroxide. Two of my teeth were chipped. She told me I could cry if I wanted, but I didn't. Coming from Hawaii, we always believed that we could handle our own problems, without the interference of police. I knew where one of the boys lived so my mother went over to have a word with his mother. I'll never forget how his mother yelled at mine.

She screamed, "Get off my property, you nigger-lipped bitch."

My mother smiled at her (and, boy, could she smile) and replied, "Well, I see where your boy learned his

manners; the fruit never falls too far from the tree. Remember, I tried to talk this out.” Then my mom stopped smiling and gave the woman a look I had never seen before. I saw that even my mom could forget she was a Christian sometimes. Because she spit on the ground and hissed at her, “You’re an uneducated piece of fecal matter - look it up.” Then she stared at her, daring her to come out of her house. The woman slammed her door. We walked home with our heads held high.

When we got home my mother got on the phone and called Bull’s military academy. While she was waiting for my brother on the phone, she looked over at me and sang part of her favorite Billie Holiday song.

“If I should take a notion to jump into the ocean, ain’t nobody’s business if I do.” Hearing her sing took my pain away. Bull had been in military school for two years and he was pretty much reformed. His problem had been his tendency to fight. He would fight anybody at any time. I remember when he was in junior high school he hopped over the counter at a liquor store and tried to fight a grown man. The man had been rude to my father. My father went over the counter to retrieve Bull, and a three-way brawl took place. I reckon my childhood was not your average one, but it’s the only one I had. My mom got Bull on the phone and told him to pack his bags; he was coming home.

When my brother got home he didn’t waste any time. His philosophy was that when you fight someone, you should mark up their face so they would never forget. He went over to their houses. If they weren’t home, he told their parents to tell them Bull came by and that he had something for them. One by one he caught up with my tormentors. He was smaller than all of them, but they had hurt his little brother. He cleaned house with them. It was good to have him home. After making the streets and beaches safe for me, he never got into another fight. He

went on to college, then graduated at the top of his law class. He now runs a very successful law firm in L.A. To this day I feel safer just knowing he's not far away.

*Zen 69*

*Artists should be regular and  
ordinary in their lives,  
so they can be violent and  
original in their work.*

*-Flaubert*

## *The Jet Ski Incident*

Keone is only at home among the waves. He can function quite well on land; it's just that there is an unexplainable pull towards the sea. He wonders perhaps if in a past life he was a dolphin. He is a peaceful man. Keone is a loving husband and father, one who enjoys classical music and art. He strives to be a man of love.

But buried deep within the calm Keone lives an ancient warrior. A warrior who would rather not fight. A warrior who will go to great lengths to avoid conflict. A warrior who will only go into battle to kill.

Keone sat outside the pack. He always sat outside. Nobody ever took off on him more than once. It was something that just was not done. The surf was triple-overhead out of the northwest. The regular crew was out trading waves and hoots. Keone was compelled to take off as deep as possible and ride the life-giving swells until their energy was spent. As he rode the ocean's power, he thanked God for the day. He smiled as he thought of his wife and children. All was in balance.

It started as an irritating vibration in his inner ear. Then, from out of the north came the flying blue Jet Ski. Its rider was a muscular man. He wore a spring suit and his

exposed skin was heavily tattooed. His head was shaved clean, and he wore a bushy, blond goatee. Keone's experience told him this man had done more than his share of time in the *government hotel*. The Jet Ski rider rode fast and sure. He darted in and around the ten or so surfers, laughing and spinning his ski in one place. Keone had never seen one ride a ski so well. The surfers yelled at the Jet Skier to get out. They all called him names and splashed water towards him. All the while Keone sat well outside and tried to release the Jet Skier from his mind. The noise, the smell, the wake of the Jet Ski. It began to eat at Keone. He tried to will away the rage that began to build in him. Then the Jet Skier buzzed out Keone's way.

Keone looked at the rider and roared, "YOU'RE PISSING IN MY CHURCH. THIS IS MY CHURCH AND YOU'RE MAKING IT DIRTY!"

The Jet Skier yelled back, "Fuck you bitch, I can ride here just like you."

Keone pointed his big yellow 10'2" gun towards the skier and shouted over the noise of the engine, "You're breaking the law. You need to be 200 yards outside of the breaking waves." Keone tried to get the C.F. numbers off the ski, but it had none.

The Jet Skier yelled back, "I make my own fucking laws." Then he buzzed close to Keone and whipped his ski covering Keone with spray.

"That's it!" yelled Keone and he charged the skier.

At first it was like a bullfight and Keone was the bull. He'd chase the skier and the skier would turn and taunt Keone.

Keone screamed, "If I catch you, I have to stop you."

Then it was the Jet Skier's turn to roar, "Come on then, Geronimo!"

And he charged straight at Keone full-speed.

Keone jumped to the nose of his board and swung the tail out in front of him. Then he brought his big single-fin out of the water and sunk the nose. Using the buoyancy of the board as a counter weight, he hurled it at the oncoming Jet Skier's head. Keone dove deep as his board landed on the head and shoulders of the Jet Skier, the fin slashing the Jet Skier's scalp. The Jet Skier had not fallen. He put his hand on his scalp and looked at his own blood. Then he came back at Keone screaming his war cry.

Keone had reappeared next to his board and resumed his position of battle. Fin out of the water in front of him. Then Keone noticed that he was no longer alone. The other surfers had joined him, ready to finish off the Jet Skier. The Jet Skier whipped around his ski and high-tailed it out, flipping off the surfers as he sped away.

Keone got a lot of waves that day. The Jet Skier hasn't been seen, smelled, or heard since.

*The greatest sin is  
to be unconscious.  
-Carl Jung*

# *Going Home*

An earlier version of this story was originally published in *The Surfer's Journal*

Prison. Inside. The institution. Jimmy knew he would not be going back. There are two kinds that get out. Some just get out to see how long they can make the party last. Jimmy was of the variety that wasn't going back, back to hell.

He was driving home from northern to southern California. He thought he'd hit the pier for a few before dark. A chunky, head-high southwest was coming through. Jimmy always gave respect to surfers no matter where he was. Dark hair, dark eyes. He was old school. No such thing as localism. He grew up in a world where one judged another surfer by his surfing. No bullshit. NO trash talking.

The set came and Jimmy let the hometown crew get the first few waves. It was their home break and Jimmy knew how important it was that a man get his waves. Then Jimmy was in the spot, and he glided across the choppy swell. The air smelled salty and the ride was satisfying. A blond kid tried to drop in on him as the wave began to reform, but Jimmy shot his board up and blocked the guy out. The guy started cackling at Jimmy.

He shouted, "Duh, duh, duh, look at him just fucking stand there, duh, duh, duh..."

Jimmy finished his ride, enjoying the power of the wave and riding it until his fin almost hit the sand. It had

been seven very long years since he had ridden a wave. As he knee paddled back out, inside of him an anger began to build. He did not understand how this punk could talk to him like that. What was it that made the blond kid believe he could show such disrespect? The kid had a big TEAM laminate on his board. He looked to be about twenty years old.

Jimmy paddled up to him and quietly asked, “Why are you heckling me, kid?”

“You were just standing there like a fag, man.” Then the yellow-haired punk waved his arms into the air and said, “Look at me, I’m a fag longboarder. Duh!”

Jimmy said very softly. “You don’t know nothing about me, kid. You’re so far out of line that you don’t even know it.” Just then a goateed guy who was about twenty-eight or so paddled up to Jimmy. Jimmy looked at the goateed man and knew he was soft. Yeah, he had lots of tats but they weren’t done in prison. Neat and clean. Jimmy thought he could handle the goateed pretty boy without breaking a sweat.

The Goatee screamed, “What’s the fucking problem? You hassling my friend?”

Jimmy stayed calm and replied, “Your skinny little boyfriend here has a big mouth. He’s got to learn to keep it shut, not that it’s any of your fucking business, *pretty boy*.”

The Goatee said loud enough for all to hear, “Take it to the beach, you fucking kook. You’re not the pier. Man, you are NOT the fucking pier!”

God, how Jimmy wished he were man enough to paddle away from him. He closed his eyes for half a moment and tried to will away the rage, but when he opened them there was the Goatee.

Jimmy looked at the Goatee and said loud enough for only him to hear, “I’m going to really enjoy hurting you.” Jimmy felt alive.

Something changed in the Goatee when he saw the sharpness in Jimmy's eyes. The Goatee had expected Jimmy to back down like some schoolboy. Jimmy was no schoolboy.

"Ha!" yelled the Goatee and he quickly turned his board and sprinted for shore. He looked back at Jimmy and sort of stammered out, "You're going to fa-fa-fa-fight the whole fucking be-be-beach, you dumbshit!"

Jimmy breathed deeply. "So be it," he thought, "it's a fine evening." Jimmy slowed down his heart. He pictured the fin of his surfboard going into the Goatee's head. He visualized a handful of sand going into the eyes of the biggest guy whoever that might be. Yes, the biggest must go down and not get up. He thought about low, hard kicks, gouges, elbows, bites, and head butts. He also thought, "I don't fucking need this anymore." Then he snapped to and began a mantra over and over, "Keep them away. No groundwork. Keep them away."

Jimmy waited for a wave to come. The other surfers gave him space. He gracefully rode a wave in and as he approached the shore he grabbed a handful of sand. By keeping the sand in the hand that held his board, it was not noticeable. There were four guys waiting for Jimmy as he walked out of the water. Others seemed to be coming his way. For Jimmy, time seemed almost to stop. The biggest guy was easy to spot.

Jimmy knew him. He did not know him personally, but he knew his kind. The biggest one had tats from the inside. The largest tat surprised Jimmy. It said, "*Through Christ – End Racism.*" His large round head was shaved so that it reflected the dying light of day. The Shaved Man had spent years in the institution lifting. His arms and chest were huge, but in the prison yard tradition his legs were skinny. Jimmy didn't look at anybody but him. The Goatee stood off behind him.

Jimmy looked at the shaved man and said “What happens when you go surf outside of the pier? I came in peace, but pretty boy here wants to take a crack at me. Give me just FIVE SECONDS with pretty boy, then we’ll all dance.” Jimmy knew the Shaved Man wasn’t at all scared. But Jimmy picked up on a sense of fairness that sat behind the eyes of the Shaved Man.

The Shaved Man giggled like a crazy bastard and said, “Why not?”

The Goatee spit out, “That’s bullshit! What’s that? Five seconds? Fuck, lets just smash the kook.” But the chemistry had changed. All eyes were on the Goatee. No one was going after Jimmy before the Goatee.

The Shaved Man looked at the Goatee and spoke evenly, “Seems like you don’t jump into shit till it’s about through. Go ahead, step on up, little man.” It was clear that the Goatee wasn’t interested in Jimmy one on one, not even for five seconds.

He started backing up and said as loudly as he could, “I’m over it!” Then he walked away and Jimmy knew that the Goatee was all through at the pier.

But then Jimmy saw the Goatee had found some sort of courage deep down in his sac and was charging him.

“I’m proud of you, pretty boy,” Jimmy said as he threw his board and the sand in his hand aside. Pretty Boy came at Jimmy head down and swinging. Jimmy’s first thought was, “This guy fights like a sixth grader.” Then Jimmy jumped in the air and put his heel down hard on back of Pretty Boy’s head. His neck snapped pretty good and he hit the sand with a thump. Before Pretty Boy could get up Jimmy stepped around him and kicked him in his ribs with four quick snaps. All the while Jimmy kept his eyes on the Shaved Man. The Shaved Man was laughing. Jimmy laughed too.

Pretty Boy started to slowly try and get up. He had

sand in his nose and mouth.

Jimmy said, "I wish you'd just stay down, I really don't want to have to finish this." Pretty Boy remained on his ass, holding his side.

The Shaved Man nodded towards the ocean and said to Jimmy, "You seem all right, brother. Why don't you go out and get some more?"

Jimmy answered, "No man. Thanks for the offer, but I won't surf here again. If you ever get to Sunset Cliffs, I owe you. I just want to go home."

The Shaved man nodded his head and said, "Go home then, brother, peace be with you."

*We'll surf until we die.*

*-Windansea grommet*

## *H.B. Surf Theater*

Mystical things happened to me at H.B. Surf Theater. It seemed like every time I went there something out of the ordinary went down. Yeah, it was a given that our car would be broken into. The thing was, you had to hide your valuables where the thieves wouldn't find them. And the girls, they were older surfer girls that were completely out of our reach, making them all the more desirable. Yeah, mystical things happened to me at H.B. Surf Theater.

One Friday night I was heading out to see Five Summer Stories for the seventh time. My parents were out of town, and my sister's boyfriend was over. He was a surfer from Hermosa named Bob Cat, and he was completely out of control. I worshipped him. He insisted on making me one of his special smoothies before I left to go to the movie. He was laughing hysterically and the shake he made had a bitter taste. I drank it down just as my friends pulled into the driveway.

Boys will be boys. I had prescription glasses, and when I wore the "magic blazer" I could buy beer at Harbor Liquor. Yeah, there were bare asses thrown. Yeah, we were

irresponsible and I know we were lucky to survive the insanity of it all. But we were young, surfers, and immortal.

While we waited in line for tickets my stomach began to feel queasy. I remembered how my sister's boyfriend laughed as I drank the "special smoothie." When I sat down in the theater, the screen seemed to be melting before my eyes. Colors dripped and ran down the screen as the movie began. The most brilliant fireworks display I had ever seen was going off all around me. When I closed my eyes it was even worse.

My seat began to free-fall beneath me. Down, down, down I went, spinning and dropping down the inside of a psychedelic tornado. I landed pretty hard on the sand of a deserted beach. The ocean was multicolored and alive, but the land was in black and white. My vision seemed grainy as I headed away from the ocean. I saw some buildings, so I headed towards them.

The buildings remained black and white but the people were unlike anything I had ever seen before. Fantastic colorful mohawks, bodies pierced in all the wrong places and people carrying machetes. It was twisted. I went into a bar called George's, and there were people lying all over the floor, twisting around on the tile with their eyes closed; I recognized that they were *mind surfing*. All along the bar there were Chinese water pipes set up. The bartender approached me and wanted to know what I'd like.

"What do you have?" I asked.

He brought out a tray of what looked like herbs. They were neatly separated and organized.

He answered, "I got some real nice Jose Angel here, smell it." He put the flowery green under my nose, and I knew it was good.

He continued, "I've got some Greg Noll that's heavy, or some Gerry Lopez that is really smooth. Of

course, you can get funky with some Corky Carroll. It's all good. Personally, I go with the Duke, you know, Island fragrance. You're not from around here are you?"

"First time here."

"Really? All right, bra, I'm gonna give you something I've been saving for a special occasion." He pulled out a little wooden box and carefully opened it. He then put a small piece of the green into the bowl of a water pipe.

"Its Buttons, baby, take a rip."

I took one deep toke. Then another. I started coughing. Next thing I knew I was underwater holding my breath. I popped out from the warm sea and I was holding on to a bright yellow Local Motion stinger. I was at Kaisers. I felt different. I looked at the waves differently. I paddled into the lineup and took off deep behind the peak. As I entered the barrel I spun a 360, got pitted, spit out, did a layback, broke my fin out, got back in control, and flew out of the diminishing wave with a big smile. The other surfers were hooting something fierce! On the next wave I faded, made an insane rail-to-rail bottom turn, pulled under the curtain, got spit out from 15 yards deep, did a cutback reverse 360, picked up some speed and got air out the backdoor of the wave. On the next wave I took off way late, ate shit, got stuffed into one of the metal ribs that's under the water at Kaisers, panicked, and woke up in my seat at the H.B. Surf Theater. The theater was empty; the show had ended some time ago. I didn't know where my friends were. Mystical things happened to me at H.B. Surf Theater.

*To go  
to absorb  
to smell awakened memories  
are there Santa Anas?  
is there a southern hemi?  
I have arranged my life  
around surf reports*

*To go there  
to wait  
to consider  
but where did Red go?  
where will I go?  
I have measured my winters  
by boat rides to Todos Santos*

*To go now  
to struggle  
limbs aching  
why must I come here?  
why must I leave?  
I have measured my life  
by solo journeys*

*In the end  
it is an illusion  
only our families matter*

## *Aldo's Bus*

Some VW buses are more special than others. The first time Chucky saw Aldo's bus, it made him ache for one. It was a 1970, blue on the bottom and white on top. The curtains were made out of Mexican blankets. It was one cool ride.

*Somehow surfing brings friends together in a way that is solid. My closest friends are the friends I have surfed with all my life. Perhaps it's the fact that we know we may have to count on one another for our lives. Being air breathing creatures, the ocean is not our natural element. Every time a surfer enters the water he is automatically entered into the food chain, and if for some reason he is unable to keep his head above water, the outcome isn't pleasant.*

Chucky got up early to catch the Fullerton beach bus on Saturday morning; he hated being an inlander, but as a fourteen year old it was out of his hands. He made his way to the beach bus, which left Fullerton Park every Saturday at 9:00 a.m. and returned at 5:00 p.m. When Chucky started to get on the bus with his surfboard, the new driver said no. Chucky pleaded, telling the new driver that he had brought his board on numerous times before. The driver didn't even look at him, he just said no. Chucky

left the park quickly so no one would see that he was close to tears. He wanted to go surfing so badly, he couldn't stand it. The KMET surf report had said it was pumping.

*My parents weren't the type to let me go on unsupervised surf trips when I was fourteen. So I did what some kids do; I lied to my folks. I told them I was going with the Mule's parents. I even carried my gear to the Mule's house. That's where Aldo picked us up. Aldo knew every trick when it came to camping. San Onofre campground was always full in the summer, but that didn't stop us from camping there. Aldo would pull up his magic bus right to the campground entrance and tell the ranger his friends were expecting him. He'd give the ranger some random name, and when the ranger couldn't find it, Aldo would politely say, "It's a large group, perhaps they put it under another name. Could I please go in and look for their cars?"*

*Aldo's style would pay off and the ranger would reply, "Sure, just let me know where you end up."*

Chucky's head hung low as he walked home defeated. Then, lo and behold, who should pull up next to Chucky but Aldo. Aldo was a senior and Chucky was a freshman. Seniors weren't supposed to notice freshmen, but there was Aldo, smiling at Chucky.

"Need a ride to the beach?" asked Aldo.

Chucky's mind raced. Technically there was no way he should go. His parents thought he was going on the city beach bus, under the supervision of adults. But, hey, Aldo's got a bus, and he's almost an adult. Chucky knew his parents would disapprove.

"Sure man, thanks!" Chucky replied.

"How you set on cash?" Aldo asked.

"Gotta fiver."

"Let's go."

"Thanks man."

*Aldo had a nose for opportunity. He'd seek out older girls who were camping alone. Then he'd explain that the campground was full and he and his friends would greatly appreciate it if we could share their space. Naturally we would provide beer for their hospitality. Aldo's charm was fatal and the girls usually said yes. Then we'd head back to the ranger with our new friend's name.*

There's an unwritten rule in surfing that an older surfer will take a younger surfer under his wing and show him the ropes. It's a law as old as surfing. Aldo had chosen Chucky as his protégé. Aldo liked that Chucky had an absolute devotion to surfing. Chucky listened to every word Aldo said, and placed it in his permanent file. The two headed to 18<sup>th</sup> Street Newport. Aldo explained that the large south swell would be hitting there nicely. Chucky just smiled and hoped that someone he knew would see him riding shotgun in Aldo's bus. Aldo lit up a joint and handed it to Chucky. Chucky liked the smell.

*Aldo, the Mule, and I were tight. We looked after one another in and out of the water. If somebody called one of us out, they called all of us out. Friends are friends. While sitting around the campfire at San Onofre we sipped our Schlitz Malt Liquors, smoked Aldo's crooked joints and talked about the wonder of it all. We toasted to Buttons, Gerry Lopez, Rory Russell, and Buzzy Kerbox. We all made efforts to hook up with girls, but Aldo was the only one to get to crawl into a cutie's sleeping bag. We slept under the stars and thought about surfing and surfer girls. We crashed hard into sleep and when we woke up in the day's first light, the Mule was gone. Sleeping bag and all, the Mule was nowhere in sight. We started tripping.*

Aldo pulled right up to the curb in the no parking area of 18<sup>th</sup> Street. He got out of the V.W. bus, stretching

his back. The surf was going off. Some blond guy who looked about seventeen or so was standing there checking out the surf. The blond kid was skinny and had a crew cut. Chucky recognized him as one of Quiksilver's up and coming.

The Quik guy looked at Aldo and said, "Quack quack." To quack at someone was to infer that they were a duck and therefore a kook.

Aldo looked at the Quik guy and softly asked, "Are you quacking at me, sticker boy?"

*We searched all over the campground. We looked over the cliff and up and down the trails. The worst part was that the surf was cranking. Aldo thought he found some blood on the ground outside a locked bathroom. I told him it looked like ketchup, but he was sure it was blood. We banged on the bathroom door for five minutes. Then Aldo got an axe out of his van and broke the sturdy door down. There was no one in there. We walked away kind of quick and searched for another hour before alerting the rangers. They offered to call his parents but I told them I would do it. I was sort of choked up while I called the Mule's house. I didn't know what I was going to say to his folks. I sort of felt responsible.*

Chucky got out of the bus. He wasn't very big, but he figured he'd be honored to stand by Aldo's side. The Quik guy walked up to Aldo and said, "Go home, inlander." Aldo stepped back away from the guy and said, "Oh yeah, shredder, why aren't you out there?"

"Shut up and leave, now!"

"I don't want to square off with you, but you'd better back off," hissed Aldo, his face becoming red and a vein pulsating on his forehead.

The Quik guy stepped up to Aldo and Aldo rabbit punched him in the nose, quick as you please. The punch was clean and crisp. The Quik guy's ugly nose bled, and

Chucky thought that it was lovely, yes, quite lovely.

The Quik guy was spraying buckets of spit as he hissed, “Don’t piss me off. Just leave. I’m crazy, I tell you. I’ll kill you. Man, you don’t know me. You don’t even want to get me started, I’m fucking crazy - I should be locked up.”

*The phone rang forever when finally I heard a very familiar voice say hello.*

*I said, “Who’s this?” The answer I received made me both happy and mad.*

*“It’s the Mule.”*

*I screamed into the phone, “What the hell are you doing home? We’ve been looking all morning for you, we thought you were dead!”*

*The Mule replied, “My folks came and got me last night, I woke you up and told you. Don’t you even remember? You were so out of it you don’t even remember!”*

*I said, “You never woke me up, you son of a bitch. I’m glad you’re okay, now we can go surfing.”*

Then the Quik guy walked towards Aldo. Chucky was a little scared thinking that the Quik guy might go into some *Kung Fu* mode. Aldo stepped back as the Quik guy came towards him. Smack! Aldo cracked him with another beautiful punch to the side of the Quik guy’s head, and down he went.

From the ground the Quik guy repeated his credo in a quivering voice. “You’d better get the hell out of here. I’m trying to save your life. God knows I’m trying.” Then he got back to his feet. His nose was bleeding and he held the side of his head. He walked towards Aldo. By this time it seemed the Quik guy was sort of crying.

He babbled out, “Don’t make me fuck you up, man you don’t know who I am – you don’t! I don’t want to kill again.”

He was actually pretty fast. He came right in to Aldo and bear hugged him straight on. Aldo just head butted the shit out of the guy's nose, squishing it flat. The Quik guy hit the sand hard, bleeding like a faucet.

As Chucky and Aldo walked away they could hear the Quik guy choking out the words, "You don't want to get me started, you don't want what I got."

Aldo turned to Chucky and said, "This beach reeks, let's hit Trestles." And so they did, and Trestles was doing its thing.

*An autumn evening;  
It is no light thing,  
To be born a man.*

*-Issa*

## *The Glide*

The phone rang. Ryan's stomach turned. Of course his father would have to be home to pick it up.

Ryan started to leave the room, but his father said, "Hold on, Ryan."

After he got off the phone, he barked at Ryan to go get his surfboard. "That's it, I'm fucked," thought Ryan. "That's the end. Why did that bastard Peters have to call my house about a lousy F in math? Christ, get a life! The worst thing is, I fucking hate math. It gets so confusing that all I want to do is go for a surf to clear my aching head. Living on the sand of South Mission doesn't make it any easier." He grabbed his board from his room, a room like those of many other freshman boys at Mission Bay High School: the walls covered from top to bottom – every available inch - with pictures of his surfing heroes, like, Occy, Kong, Slater, Curren, Cheyne and others.

His mom sauntered into the living room as Ryan brought forth his board. She said, in a gin and tonic voice, "Honey, you can't take his board away."

“We’ve been too damn soft on him. For God’s sake, the kid is flunking freshman algebra! No, I should have done this long ago.” He took the board from Ryan and yelled, “Enough is enough!” as he leaned Ryan’s beloved ultra-light Rusty onto a chair. Before they realized what he was going to do, he broke the board in half by stepping through it. “When you get a B in Algebra, I’ll buy you a new board. Damn it! I’ve been where you’re at. You’ve got to be strong to survive in this world. I put myself through dental school, and I’m not going to let your surfing destroy your grades. Surfing is a curse!” He stormed out of the three-story house, slamming the door behind him.

Ryan’s mother just looked at Ryan and said, “I’m sorry. There’s nothing I can do when he gets this way. I know how much you loved that board, Ryan. I’m sorry.”

Ryan said, “He’s a monster. I don’t even think he’s my real dad. A real dad wouldn’t be such an absent asshole. Fuck. What? Now all of sudden he gives a shit about me? Too little too late.”

“You think I’m going to let you talk that way about your father? You’ve got another thing coming, mister. Go to your room and figure out your math.”

“Yeah, I’ll go to my room; you go watch your idiot box. You think you’re fooling anybody, *gossip queen*?” He punched a hole through the drywall as he tromped off.

The next morning Ryan didn’t come down to eat. When his father went to check on him, what he found startled him. Ryan was curled up in a ball, and all the color was gone from his handsome face. He was feverish and had dark circles under his eyes.

“What’s the matter son?”

“I’m just really tired, Dad.”

“Come on, son, you’re all right.”

“Yeah Dad, I’m all right. I’m just tired.”

“Get some sleep, you’ll feel better. You know I did

what I had to do.”

Ryan didn't feel up to going back to school. Day after day went by, and Ryan did not get better. His parents became concerned. Ryan was their only child. They told themselves that everything they did in their lives was for their son. There was, however, a broad, dark, ominous valley that lay between them, its depth hard to determine.

Ryan's parents had always given him *everything* he wanted except the thing he needed most. That was time with his dad and mom. More importantly, he needed at least some sort of guidance. Ryan's folks had let him grow up feral; they had not given him a sense of right and wrong. He could go where he wanted and when he wanted from the time he was three, night or day. The fact that he survived childhood was proof that God's angels keep very busy. When Ryan would lie, they thought it was cute. Values were for the poor. Who needed values when you were rich? His mother spent her days yakking with anyone who would listen to her poisonous words. Ryan never really knew if people liked him for himself, or because his family was rich. Indeed, deep down he wasn't at all sure what being a friend really meant, no one had taught him.

Ryan went days without eating. A doctor, who was close to the family, came to see him. Ryan did not care for this man, who smelled like a cold hospital.

“He's okay,” said the doctor. “Needs to eat and drink some. Seems more than a mite sad. If he's not up and around soon we'll bring him in and run some tests. But I don't think it's physical. I suggest some counseling.”

Weeks went by. When Ryan's father saw how skinny his son was becoming, he asked Ryan if maybe he wouldn't like to go out and buy a new Rusty or two. An F in math suddenly became something very unimportant, but Ryan's fire had gone out.

Ryan just said, “No thanks, Dad. I know you broke

my board because you love me. You do, don't you? For once, I think you do." The corners of Ryan's lips turned up a bit. "I'm just so tired. I'm not sure what I really saw in surfing anyway. It seems like it's been forever since I was a surfer. That seems so long ago, like that was somebody else. I just want to sleep."

Ryan's father grew desperate. The failing health of their son united Ryan's parents, and they called his friends to come and visit him. But Ryan didn't want to see anyone. He pleaded with his parents to keep his friends away, and they obeyed. They were losing him. They wanted to take him to the hospital, but he adamantly refused, as he had refused counseling.

When told that Ryan had completely lost his spark, a neighbor suggested they give his friend Skip Frye a call. Their neighbor knew that Ryan thought the world of Skip. Maybe Ryan would listen to him. Ryan's parents didn't hesitate. His dad called the shop on Felspar Street. When Ryan's father explained why he wanted to talk to Skip, Skip's wife, Donna, put him on the phone. After Skip heard what was going on he simply said, "Where do you live? I'm on my way."

When Skip arrived he spoke in hushed tones to Ryan's parents. Skip then asked if he might talk to Ryan alone. They said yes. Ryan's mother went into his room. The room had the sickly sweet smell that precedes death. The curtains were closed. Though it was mid-day, the room held very little light.

Through her whispery tears, she said, "Ryan, wake up. There's someone here to see you."

"Please don't make me see anyone," mumbled Ryan as he opened his tired eyes.

"It's Skip Frye."

“Skip Frye?”

“Yes, he’d like to visit with you. He’s taking time out of his busy day.”

After a long silence, Ryan said, “Okay.”

Skip walked into Ryan’s bedroom.

He wore faded blue jeans dusted with surfboard foam. He had on an old brown flannel shirt and his face was red and peeling, his blond hair close to his head. He looked a little like a homeless person to Ryan. Ryan liked that.

“There’s waves today,” said Skip, his voice soft and happy like a child’s.

“Why are you here, Skip?”

“Thought we’d just talk awhile.”

“Oh.”

“Heard your dad broke your board.”

“What? He told you? He’s an ass.”

“Yeah. Dads are a separate race. We try to do the best we can but God knows we screw up. I always wish I could go back in time and do things differently myself, but that’s not how it works. We just have to learn from our mistakes and move on.”

“Seems kind of useless, Skip. The whole fucking thing. Seems like it’s all just bullshit.”

“There’s some truth in your words. You know you and I share something. We share a father, Ryan.”

“Come again. What do you mean?”

“God the father. The father of Jesus. He’s our father too, you and I.”

“Not the Jesus stuff. I really don’t believe in that, Skip. You know, put your faith in things you can touch and all that.” Ryan sat up a little in bed.

“You’ll have to trust me on this one, Ryan. Christ is the real deal. God is our true father, and he teaches us to forgive. Can you forgive your father, Ryan?”

“I thought it was me who needed forgiving.”

“Maybe in some ways it’s both of you. Forgiveness can totally set you free. People who can’t forgive are buried in their own sadness, like I think you might be.”

“Who is Jesus? I mean, who is he really? No bullshit.”

“Ryan, when he was dying on the cross, he knew that someday I would be telling you about him. Even as he suffered unimaginable pain, he thought of us, of this conversation.”

“You think so? Come on Skip.”

“I’m betting my life on it. In my heart I feel his love. It helps me have a little balance. Balance, Ryan. It takes a long time, but you gotta find balance.”

They sat silently while the shadows moved across the room.

“Balance,” whispered Ryan.

“Balance,” repeated Skip.

“Balance, ying and yang, negative positive, heaven and hell,” said Ryan a little more loudly as he sat up taller.

“See, Ryan, if you can surf all day, everyday, it loses its magic. I grew up watching guys just surf. They keep waiting for that perfect day that will never come. They don’t realize that, with Christ, everyday is perfect, as long as you earn your surf.”

“I don’t surf anymore, Skip. That was someone else from one of those real old black-and-white movies. I just want to stay here in my room. It’s safe here.”

“What are you afraid of, Ryan?”

“I don’t know. Skip, I wish I did. I’m just afraid.” Ryan’s eyes grew moist and minutes grinded by.

“It’s all right to cry, Ryan. Let it out now. It’s okay to be afraid. Man, this planet can be a frightening place. You just gotta find a place to glide. Ponce de Leon went

searching all over for the Fountain of Youth, but it was under his feet the whole time. In the end, he bothered the Indians so much they finally killed him.” Skip’s laughter filled the room. “The ocean is the fountain of youth. Have you ever seen the old guys in the Tourmaline parking lot in the morning?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’ve seen them listening to Hawaiian music and drinking coffee.” Ryan’s eyes were brighter now, listening to Skip’s words, remembering the older men, their camper trucks and their grizzled laughter. The aged boys leaned their colorful boards against a wire fence.

“Those old geezers are just little kids in old men’s clothing. They found their glide, Ryan. They found the balance. But it takes a long time to find that. Some people never find it throughout their whole lives. Some people never get to smell the rocks at low tide when the sun is just coming up over Sunset Cliffs. Some people never get to hear the seagulls laugh as they drop into a PB Point bomb. You remember your *first wave*, Ryan?”

“Yeah. Clearly. When I was six, we went on vacation to Waikiki. My dad let me rent a longboard.”

“What was your first wave like, Ryan?”

“The board was an orange log. I went out pretty far and took off on some white water. I got to my knees, then I was standing. It’s kind of weird because I remember looking up at the hotels and the mountains while I rode the wave. Then I fell and had to swim after the board.”

“Then what happened?”

“The board went pretty far in. I remember being able to smell the coconut suntan oil coming from all the bodies on the beach. Then I got to the board and paddled it back out. I stayed out there all day long. Man, was I hungry when I got out. I had a plate lunch, then some shave ice. I ate and ate and ate.”

Skip opened the green curtains. The day was sort of

cloudy, but you knew the sun was going to win. They didn't talk for awhile, an easy quiet. Finally Ryan spoke.

"You know what, Skip? I'm starving, plus, I've been getting bored out of my mind."

"What sounds good to eat?"

"A plate lunch. Then some ice cream."

"I know a place, best plate lunch in town. My treat. Before you get dressed, you'd better take a shower. You smell a little ripe. See you in the living room." Skip smiled and started walking out. Just before he went through the door he said, "Ryan, just give Jesus a little thought now and then. I'm just planting a seed."

"Okay Skip."

Four months later Ryan woke up to the sound of surf thundering. The *Santa Anas* were blowing straight offshore. He knew the jetty would be all-time. He looked at his new Rusty, then thought about an algebra test he had later that day. Ryan had a cute math tutor now and he suspected he was going to kick ass on that test. He touched the small silver necklace she had given him, then turned his back on the waves and went to school.

He whispered to himself, "I hope it's still good after school." There was a bounce in his step.

Coming soon

***Mammoth Mountain***

A Novel

By Greg Gutierrez