



How 'Awa Travels the World

Kia Weaver

***I sit at the grave of my grandma.
Kalani Kekoanui Esther Patterson.
My own granddaughter is with me,
her red hair dancing with the sun,
causing the memories to come.***

***Sunlight softens hard lines, life
on my grandma's dark weathered skin.
I wish my freckles would blend.***

***Grandma Esther sings
"Meleana E."***

***We are planting corn.
The earth yields to my grandma,
just as the forest trusts her
with a limping raccoon,
a bluejay with a broken wing.***

***Once, she stood in the clean, swept kitchen,
reading a letter from Hawaii.***

***Her mom had died last winter.
It was Spring.***

Correspondence

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*She raised her apron to cover her face
and turned away.*

*That night in the garden I saw her
uprooting a strange, dense plant.*

*She cut the roots and
pounded them,
smashed them,
squeezed them till they bled.*

*She mixed the juice
with water,
with her tears.*

*Drinking the muddy liquid,
she saw the question in my eyes
and told me this story.*

*“In my village
there was one bruddah and one sistah.*

They born da same time and get da same soul.

But they no mo’ maddah or faddah.

*Bruddah only get sistah.
And sistah only get bruddah.*

*One day sistah make, she wen die.
Bruddah wen bury her.*

*He so sad. He no mo’ nobody.
He go her grave everyday and he stay cry.*

*Six full moons come and
all kine plants grow.*

*One day bruddah saw one rat.
Da rat ate da roots of one plant, one wit da leaves
like dis (grandma draws a heart in the air)
And da rat die, da boy tink.*

So da boy say

*“Dis plant grow from my sistah
and my sistah want me be wit her.”*

*So bruddah ate da roots and his mouth all tingle,
his muscles all relax.*

He tink he go'n die and be wit sistah.

But he no die, not even da rat.

*So he go away and come back next day
and eat some mo' roots.*

*His mouth come numb again
And dis time his heart no hurt no mo'.*

*His mine come clear and he remembah.
He remembah his sistah and he stay all happy.*

He den go back to da loi

and work again, and live again.

*And he see dat dis plant grow from his sistah,
not so he can die, but so dat his heart no soa no mo'
at least for small time.*

*Scattered on my grandma's grave are
bracken fern, white trillium, purple foxglove,
a lone 'awa plant.*

*This tropical plant shouldn't grow here unaided
in the cold Pacific Northwest.*

But this plant grows from my grandma.

*It holds her stories, told and untold,
of a hard life, an island left
for a strange, cold place.*

*I dig some of the roots and chew.
and tell my granddaughter a story.*