

## La'ie Mud Rhymes

*Neil Longo*

I write for my friend Michael,  
who alone on our island  
had grace I could dive into.  
Boyhood buddy of beach-night bonfires,  
creosote, sage, and sand,  
mud on face and feet and hands,  
all-American Adonis, baptist,  
lean with a smile of simplicity  
and the face of a genius.

“God is in the earth” he told me  
mirthfully from atop the mountain we conquered.  
I ran the way down to the sea  
through frangipani, fern, and banyan tree,  
feet bare, with freedom,  
Michael ran behind me.  
Plop of feet in the mud of God  
humidity drip from the lilikoi leaves  
tangy iron gnarled sod  
til we reached the sandy beach  
aglow in the twilight.  
Mud rhymes,  
chimes, twinkling off the mountainside  
off the waves in our island paradise.  
Innocent seaside savagery,  
    (hair bleached by saltwater and sun  
    blown by crisp hibiscus winds  
    drenched in the gold-blue waters of day,

soaked in obsidian seas of night,  
drowned in depths beyond my reach,  
lost in jungles beyond my sight.)  
Sand between toes, blistered feet,  
laughter of many colors,  
we swam in oceans of light.

Fever-broke, sunstroke,  
carnivorous cannabis kava-tea dreamscape;  
God spoke from the jungle where the taro grows,  
knock of hallow koa, booming off the sea  
tribal on the ridgelines,  
ferocity by torchlight;  
my eyes were made of fire.  
I ran primal, chest bare, careless but for hunger  
back up the mountain  
to far-flung wayfaring stars,  
    (arranged in trapezoidal constellations  
    mystic tropical emanations  
    geometric god-shapes twinkling in the night)  
to the luminescent pool atop the mountain  
incandescent beneath the crescent moon,  
calm water, and cool.  
Rhythmic vibrational surface  
aglow in green and orange and blue,  
universe phosphorescent in the depths,  
primordial intricacies of grace  
suspended in the inky infinite.  
    I shed myself, stood graceless  
        and naked, submerged myself in it.

Awake before atomic sunrise,  
we swam in oceans of silence  
I glared grief-stricken at the sea  
    for stealing god-sand away from the beaches  
    pulling our island away from beneath us  
    spec by granular spec.  
I grabbed the silty God-sod mud  
clumped with salt and sand and weeds  
    (you sat there, smiling, but not for me)  
wind in the palms, fire in sky  
    I have hunted in my dreams  
    I have spread you into my eyes.