

# Hawaii

by Francesca Gonnella

In the heart lust space of tropical embrace,  
a vacation from grief too raw to settle with palm tree grace  
I discover again, not for the first or the last time,  
that the next pina colada don't settle the stumble-scream dreaming  
it only makes it fruitier.

Outside a window, a banyan tree unfolds up  
and claws back down  
at soggy ground  
where it is safe and dark and familiar  
away from the open space  
of ransacked savage memory  
where god may or may not be.  
branches that know to cower in  
and away from  
clouded mystery.

The next sip flattens the unsteady ache  
to a pineapple melancholy, where  
I see Jesus in an ice cube - I think, but the bartender  
grabs the glass away too quickly to confirm  
for a refill  
which appears much more holy  
beside the muffled hymn of a Jimmy Buffett jukebox.

Fiery skyline is replaced by the familiar  
emptiness of blurry hula-night moonscape  
where my stumble-strut uneasiness  
lends hand again to the next not-so-free ride home.

I say my goodbyes in the usual way,  
a dizzy wave punctuated by a politely empty promise  
and even as I turn away, wasted, wanted, tropically misplaced,  
I know again I haven't escaped  
The suffering  
The madness  
The unholy ache of self  
that place where God seems almost  
as distant as tomorrow's  
Happy Hour.

