

Maui's Mission

By Robert Sullivan

In the warmth of night I put feet to my plan: waited
for my brothers to sleep. They'd spent the day
sharpening their hooks, repairing the great net,
filling gourds with fresh water. They'd bundled
taro wrapped in leaves sitting below the cross seats.
The bundles and the net would cover me,
especially if I said the chant to slow my movement
and my breathing. The moon became brighter
like a big fish eye as the chant hooked me.

I was holding my grandmother's hook so tightly
a little cut welled red between my closed knuckles.
"Goodmorning, brothers," I called and they cussed
and moaned until the next chant took us a further hundred
miles and then another until my chanting made them gasp
as we settled on a patch of ocean black with fish.
They forgave me, not that it matters. I took the bloody hook
and said my business to the ocean. It worked.
The fish rose and our descent was secured.

Source: *Poetry* (February 2018)