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)