THE VAGINA WORKSHOP
(*Pidgin English)

My vagina is like one shell. Like one manila clam shell, round, pink, tender open...close...den...close open. My vagina is like da puakenikeni flower, you know when you pick um stay white, da middle stay deep, and the bugga smell s-o-o-o sweet, da petals gentle but sturdy.

I neva know all this was. You know I had go to dis vagina workshop. Dis lady, she teach da vagina workshop, she believe in da vaginas fo real. She like show us fo see ours vaginas by looking at da atta wahine's vaginas. I stay thinking what..is she fo'real or what.

The first time us girls went to da workshop she said if we could draw one picture of our "unique, beautiful, fabulous vagina". I look at her and thought she was nuts or what? She wanted to know what our own unique beautiful fabulous vagina looked like to us, I no kid you. One hapa lady draw a big red mouth screaming with quarters spiting out. This uddah chick she was so skinny she had draw one big serving plate da kine like at Sam Choy's restaurant (showing the size with hands).

Me.....I had make one huge...black...dot with octopus leg all around. Da dot was da size of one giant musubi all covered with plantly nori, and da tako legs was like people flying in space that had get lost. You know...I was thinking my vagina is like one Dare Devil Dust Buster...sucking up all the dust in my houst.

I neva thought my vagina in practical or medical terms, cause I neva see um as one thing attached to me.

THE VAGINA WORKSHOP
(*English accent)

My vagina is a shell, a round pink tender shell opening and closing, closing and opening. My vagina is a flower, an eccentric tulip, the center acute and deep, the scent delicate, the petals gentle but sturdy.

I did not always know this. I learned this in the vagina workshop. I learned this from a woman who runs the vagina workshop, a woman who believes in vaginas, who really sees vaginas, who helps other women see their own vaginas by seeing other women's vaginas.

In the first session the woman who runs the vagina workshop asked us to draw a picture of our own "unique, beautiful, fabulous vagina." That's what she called it. She wanted to know what our own unique beautiful fabulous vagina looked like to us. One woman who was pregnant drew a big red mouth screaming with coins spilling out. Another very skinny woman drew a big serving plate with a kind of Devonshire pattern on it.

I drew a huge black dot with little squiggly lines around it. The black dot was equal to a black hole in space and the squiggly lines were meant to be people or things or just your basic atoms that got lost there. I had always thought of my vagina as an anatomical vacuum randomly sucking up particles and objects from the surrounding environment.

I did not think of my vagina in practical or biological terms. I did not, for example, see it as something attached to me.
In the workshop they said we was going fo' look at ours vaginas with hand mirrors. Then when we was pau looking, we was going fo' report to da group what we saw...I no could believe!

Everything I knew about my vagina was from my two Filipino casinsin's from Kauai. I neva like my friends know that I neva seen da stuff..you know. I figured why I gotta look? I know my vagina stay down there. So in da workshop on ours beach mats, with ours hand mirror. Had remind me when the Hawaiians had sail at night by looking at the stars (looking up) was.

Was uncomfortable da first time....my vagina. Like wen you buy one talipia at Tamashiro Market, and open om up stay bloody inside, and da kine right under the skin...raw, so red, so fresh. And you know what get plenty layers. Layers inside layers, opening into more layers.

My vagina had amazed me. Den came my turn in the workshop. I had freeze and da words no could come out of my mouth. Da haole lady in charge said me was in "vagina wonder"....you know she was right I was wondering and wondering about my vagina. If I neva like die right on my beach mat, my legs spread, examining my vagina forever AYSUS MARIAHOSEP!

Was betta than the Pali Lookout after raining for one week. Look innocence.....fresh like da botanical garden. Was funny...so funny. I had laugh. Da vagina could hid and seek, open and close.

In the workshop we were asked to look at our vaginas with hand mirrors. Then, after careful examination, we were to verbally report to the group what we saw.

I must tell you that up until this point everything I knew about my vagina was based on hearsay or invention.

I had never really seen the thing. It had never occurred to me to look at it. My vagina existed for me on some abstract plane. It seemed so reductive and awkward looking at it like we were in the workshop on our shiny blue mats, with our hand mirrors. It reminded me of how the early astronomers must have felt with their primitive telescopes.

I found it quite unsettling at first, my vagina. Like the first time you see a fish cut open and you discover this other bloody complex world inside, right under the skin. It was so raw, so red, so fresh. And the thing that surprised me most was all the layers. Layers inside layers, opening into more layers.

My vagina amazed me. I couldn't speak when it came my turn in the workshop. I was speechless. I had awakened to what the woman who ran the workshop called "vaginal wonder." I just wanted to lay there on my mat, my legs spread, examining my vagina forever.

It was better than the Grand Canyon, ancient and full of grace. It had the innocence and freshness of a proper English garden. It was funny, very funny. It made me laugh. It could hide and seek, open and close.
Then the woman at the workshop asked how many women in the workshop had had orgasms. Two brave chicks raise they hand only half way.

Had happened to me was. In my dreams, and I would wake up in lala land. At my apo's house plenty times in da banñ, and the first time wen I went swimming at Waikiki beach da giant waves hit the sea wall.

Qone nodda time at Kualoa Ranch on one horse back ride with the visayan club, on my ten speed bike, and the best one at Shirokiya on da chair machine that vibrates...I put the speed to number 9 [motion with hand].

Me neva like raise my hand cause even if I had one orgasms I nevah....really know how to make one! Figa was like magic. Eh why reinvent the wheel you know what I mean.

I wasn't going try fo' figurum out. If the lumpia is good no change the recipe. Like wen you eat pinakbet...the secret is in the sauce! But [pause] fo' sometime it just wasn't the same. Was like I [pause looking at audience] I needed more patis, in my pinakbet. I had lost my orgasm [looking sad]. As why I had join the vagina workshop.

So da time had come, all us was quiet, looking at the teacha waiting fo her fo talk.....lying on ours mats all suckin scared...den...da moment us was waiting fo' da hand.........mirrors...not the hand mirrors eh [looking funny]. She said to locate ours clitoris AYSUS MARIAHOSEP [make the sign of the cross]. All us chicks was on our backs each one searching hoping to find da spots. Den all of a sudden I could feel watta in my eyes I had break down and started crying. I think I was shame 'cause this was it the moment of truth no turning back.......no moe magic no moe my

Then, the woman who ran the workshop asked how many women in the workshop had had orgasms. Two women tentatively raised their hands.

I didn't raise my hand, but I had had orgasms. I didn't raise my hand because they were accidental orgasms. They happened to me. They happened in my dreams, and I would wake in splendor. They happened a lot in water, mostly in the bath. Once in Cape Cod.

They happened on horses, on bicycles, sometimes on the treadmill at the gym.

I did not raise my hand because although I had had orgasms, I did not know how to make one happen. I thought it was a mystical, magical thing. I didn't want to interfere.

It felt wrong getting involved — contrived, manipulative. It felt Hollywood. The surprise would be gone, and the mystery. The problem, of course, was that the surprise had been gone for two years. I hadn't had a magical accidental orgasm in a long time, and I was frantic. That's why I was in the vagina workshop.

And then the moment had arrived that I both dreaded and longed for. The woman who ran the workshop asked us to take out our hand mirrors again and to see if we could locate our clitoris. We were there, the group of us women, on our backs, on our mats, searching for our spots, our locus, our reason, and I don't know why but I started crying. Maybe it was sheer embarrassment. Maybe it was knowing that I had to give up the fantasy, the enormous life-consuming fantasy, that someone or something was going to do this for me — the fantasy that someone was coming to lead my life, to choose direction, to give me orgasms. I could feel the panic
innocence and longing, and I felt connection, calling connection as I lay there thrashing about on my little blue mat.

*My vagina is a shell, a tulip, and a destiny. I am arriving as I am beginning to leave. My vagina, my vagina, me.*