

Laie Nights

Hawaiian nights draw creatures forth
Along the north shore by moon or streetlight.
Huge toads hump across pavement to wet grass
Oblivious of unseeing feet or the whir of tires.
Roof rats glide from daytime darkness
Snaking from corner to corner.
Geckos dart across walls,
Spearing gnats and unwary mosquitoes,
Chortling their prizes to the world
Like insecure comedians.

But strangest are nightwalkers, some in groups
Like Samoan boys strutting the streets
Shouting and laughing at two A.M.
Or couples, leaning into each other like invalids,
Beachbound, itching for the grist of sand on their backs.

And the thief—slipping through late night
Solitary as a rainbow, sliding bush to tree
Down darkened streets, feeling for
An open door, loose jalousies.
Adventure chills his fingers on the glass
Amid snores from heavy sleepers.

Fixing all, the shriek from a passing ambulance
Freezes feet and faces while the red flash
Flicks flared warnings into blackness.

—Jim Walker