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Essay – 679 words

## Paradise

I've discovered paradise. Paradise is an Old Iranian term that refers to an existence that is positive, harmonious and time-less. Most of us think of paradise as if we are in a state of supreme happiness, bliss if you will. I call it Maui. There's no other way to describe Maui than simply paradise, and I am here (or was when you read this).

I came with my sister on a "Sherry and Wendi's Excellent Adventure" to visit my aunt who just turned 89 years young. I don't think Aunt Helen would mind me sharing her personal information with you. She's someone who has always been an authentic person, never trying to look a different age or boasting a different hair colour, but being just the way she is, which from my perspective was as close to perfection as one can get. If I had some authority I would acknowledge my aunt with a lifetime achievement award, because she has earned it, many times over.

My aunt has lived in Maui for more than twenty years and this is my first visit here. In true Canadian fashion, I feel compelled to apologize for my escape from the snow whilst the rest of you wrestle with Mother Nature and her perverted sense of humour called the winter snowstorm. Maui is a magical place, a quiet calm atmosphere and beautiful beaches. The colour of the water is unparalleled I think with its teal and turquoise and cerulean. And while I have been soaking in her sunshine I have forgotten the terror of driving in blizzards and the scraping of icy windshields. I suppose that is what is called "living in the moment", where my reality is the only reality; a bit self-absorbed I must admit.

Maui could very well be the windsurfing Mecca of the world. I watched in awe from the beach as the kite-surfers zipped and dipped and performed their magic at the ends of kites that hung on the air like butterflies of every colour, with Maui's mountains as a backdrop. The windsurfers skip along the tops of waves, the white of the breakers a sharp contrast to the blues of the water. I watched this display while I sat half in and half out of the sun, on the beach, the sand warm and soft between my toes. I wondered about those boarders out there on the ocean, competing with the wind and waves to see who would triumph and I imagined that it must be a particularly sweet experience, where it is just you in those moments, no one else, no voice, no instruction, no opinion, no assistance, just you, and it must be a spiritual experience, a finding of one's self perhaps or at the very least, knowing one's limits, one's strengths. I envied these kite-surfers and windsurfers their freedom, their stepping out of life for moments, leaving all the earthly things behind, the unpaid bills, the dentist appointments, the car repairs, left it all to slide

into another dimension of beauty and challenge, the roar of the wind and water drowning out all else.

Sherry and I were content to jump in the waves breaking powerfully on to the beach. We pretended we were children, transported back in time to my aunt's cottage on Reef Point. We watched the locals make their way through the waves effortlessly, emerging on the other side intact. I must confess I did wonder at one or two moments if I might be drowning, the seawater rushing up my nostrils and into my mouth. My sister and I laughed and coughed and choked and sputtered and looked at each other with that sensation that we were capturing the past, reliving those moments of fun from childhood for a second time. My Aunt Helen watched from the shade and I think she, too, was remembering the sounds that must have washed up to the cabin from the beach on Rainy Lake, the sound of children experiencing pure joy and maybe a bit like those windsurfers, stopping time in its tracks.

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