

# Moa

The rain forest all around me is damp and cool at 4000 ft. above sea level. Ferns and mosses thrive here. There is not much undergrowth, except in second growth forest, new forest that emerged after the land was clear cut. In ancient times this rain forest, called Ola'a, was where specialist bird catchers came to catch the tiny Hawaiian birds that gave some of their bright yellow and red feathers for the feather capes of high chiefs (no bird gave more than a few feathers, then it was released again). Now the little birds are gone, as are the bird catchers.

Very early in my explorations I came across a mysterious little plant that here grows usually in the bark of tree ferns, a plant Hawaiians call 'moa' (*Psilotum nudum*, or *P. complanatum* Sw.). Moa is also the Hawaiian word for chicken. Folklore has it that the stem of the little plant feels like a chicken leg, rough and with sections.

Here the little plant is almost invisible, it never grows very large. Many people cannot see it even from up close. Moa is not showy, it has no bright flowers to attract attention to itself. In fact moa has no flowers and it has no roots: as some other tropical plants it absorbs energy from the soil or the little spaces in the bark of trees with the help of a fungus (some orchids do that also). Moa has no leaves. It looks very much like grass (a bit darker and a grayer green perhaps). Moa propagates through spores, carried in tiny, bright yellow spore balls.

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I have always had special feelings for plants, but it took many years to admit to myself (and now to others) that I talk with plants. I do not mean that I talk baby talk, or that I give plants cutesy names. I respect them for who and what they are. And I do not mean talking with literally. Every plant species has a unique spirit, an essence that occasionally appears to me as a face, more often as a color, or a complex of ideas and feelings that together make up what I call the 'spirit' of a plant. In a very real sense I communicate with plants, and they with me. As an Hawaiian elder said to me once, 'the plants love you'. Yes, I know, I answered. And I love them.

Several times, when traveling in other parts of the world, a plant, unknown to me, suddenly 'spoke to me'. From many feet away I knew what it would feel like, smell like, and what its healing or other important qualities were.

In the past I tried hard to not see what I could not help seeing. But as I grew older it became too much trouble to deny my own perceptions.

I am convinced that knowing plants is not an unusual talent, I am sure other humans had and still have that also. In fact, I think that is how people learned

about the uses and values of plants. Anthropologists and other western scientists who are interested in medicinal plants hypothesize that people learned about plants through trial and error. That has always seemed to me very unlikely when considering that many medicinal plants are poisonous, sometimes extremely so. The preparation of medicinal plants is often quite elaborate, involving perhaps soaking, boiling, peeling, squeezing, or even all of the above. In fact, safe preparation is so elaborate that trial and error would have cost an unthinkable number of lives. Why would anyone continue to 'try' a plant if the first trials resulted in violent illness or death? No, it seems obvious to me that all through the ages at least some people have 'communicated' with plants, and so knew how to use them for healing or food.

And what is at least as important, I understand that through the ages those people who collected wild plants for healing, or grew plants for food, have treated the plants with respect. Many stories, from all over the world, tell of people 'wild crafting' (collecting wild plants) with prayer and thanks for the plants they collected. And ancient people never picked all the leaves off a plant, or all the plants from an area where they grew.

Modern man treats plants (as everything else) as objects. We rarely approach a plant with respect and even reverence, we rarely ask permission to pick leaves, or strip some of the bark of medicinal plants. When we see a stand of trees that are useful to us, we cut them all, without thought for the morrow. I cannot help it, but that seems stupid to me. Stupid, thoughtless, and irresponsible. Why is it we have so little concern for what our children will inherit? We are greedy. Some Hawaiian plants that have been considered medicinal for probably two thousand years, suddenly have become known to the western world. In a year's time collectors have, without thought, eradicated plants from large areas where they grew. Soon there will be no noni or 'awa (kava on other islands of Polynesia) left, except in 'plantations'.

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Moa is a modest plant. At our altitude it is small, at most 4-5 inches long; closer to the sea it grows taller. The flat, grey green stems branch in the simplest branching pattern: two from one, and a little further up again two from one, in the same plane.

Moa is a very ancient plant. My book of Hawaiian plants says, "(moa) is believed to be one of the few surviving species of ancient stock, that of the oldest known land plants, said to have thrived more than 350 million years ago and found today only as ancient fossils." (In Gardens of Hawai'i, by Marie Neal)

I like to think that moa is a plant from before there were plants.

Moa grows in the tropics; this is probably as high as it grows. Hawaiians consider it a (minor) medicinal plant (a purge, and it has other qualities as well). I could not find out much more about this little plant from books, or even from

people familiar with local flora. I was curious. What, who is this extremely self-effacing plant that grows in this garden?

When first I reached out in my mind I saw a face, the face of a very old man with a dark, wrinkled skin, sunken eyes. Blind eyes I thought at first. The eyes looked into a very far distance, he did not see me. He did not see humankind for that matter.

Sometimes it is not easy to make contact with a plant. It takes being very open but also, I believe, the plant must know that I mean it no harm. It is important that the plant knows I respect it. In my second attempt to reach out to moa I went into a meditative state first. I held an image of a moa plant in my mind while looking for its spirit, or essence, its uniqueness. This time I did not see the wrinkled face. Instead I saw a huge globe, featureless, almost abstract. I saw this sphere in deep space, not really connected to this earth. It seemed enormous although of course I had no way of knowing its size. It felt closed, impenetrable. The surface of the globe was a dull grey, or more accurately no color at all. It was as if the surface absorbed light without reflecting any back. Very forbidding! I felt rejected, not welcome. Still in a meditative state I observed the mysterious globe as something not material, not real. I stared at it for what seemed a long time.

When I felt I could not learn more from observing, I turned away, almost regretfully. At the very last moment a crack (?) formed in the surface of the globe and a tiny (the size of my little finger?) pseudopod reached out in my direction. The finger reaching out was pale ivory, more organic looking than the sphere. I hesitated a moment.

Should I reach out and touch it?

I withdrew. I had a sense that if I were to touch this finger, something like a strong electric current would go through me, either giving me a jolt of great insight, or killing me. I felt intimidated, scared and not quite ready to take that risk.

For some months that was as close as I came to making contact with the spirit of moa. I did not do the meditation again, although a few times I put a sprig of moa under my pillow, which gave me intense dreams, full of colors, very dense, not easy to understand or to work with. A few of the dreams were wonderfully clear, giving answers to questions I asked; once a new way to look at a problem a friend had asked me about.

I wondered whether I had missed my last chance to communicate with moa when I turned back at the last moment in the meditation? I was not sure. I touched moa growing in the tree ferns, trying to feel something. But for a long time moa remained a mystery, yet the attraction remained, in fact became stronger.

I knew one day I must try again.

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Eliot Cowan, in his book *Plant Medicine Spirit*, mentions that sometimes it is useful to ask the spirit of another plant, one that has become familiar to us, to intercede in one's behalf. I feel particularly close to the spirit of a very common weed here, a plant Hawaiians call *laukahi kuahiwi*. In English it is called roundleaf plantain. It has many other names, often colorful, and in many parts of the world it is known for its medicinal qualities. I discovered my affinity for this humble weed when I realized that every time I walked in a certain part of my garden I began to smile, I felt happy. When I looked down a little green leaf seemed to smile at me. *Laukahi* grows in very poor soil, or no soil. It grows by the side of the roads here, and the roads are nothing but barely flattened lava. I found that *laukahi* has important medicinal properties: it gives instant energy when chewed and it is a mild laxative (actually it normalizes internal functions).

It was the *laukahi* spirit that introduced me to the spirit of orchid. *Cymbidium* orchids grow almost wild here. These orchids usually bloom in the heart of winter, December through February, although now, here, they bloom many more months. I admire them greatly, but they had been impenetrable to me for a long time. I could not find a way to recognize and so communicate with the spirit of this plant. They seemed elegant, the leaves fountain, and in season these orchids have very large and very colorful sprays of orchids, sometimes a dozen or more blooms to a stalk. In other parts of the world they are much in demand, 'expensive'.

*Laukahi* introduced me. To my surprise, the orchid had a male feeling when I was able to contact it, although perhaps subconsciously I had imagined orchids as female, showy, beautiful, complex. But that was my western prejudice, seeing everything, including plants, as gendered. I was stuck in externals. When I thought of it later, I realized that the cliché that says males are soberly dressed and females are gaudy, colorful is a contemporary view. In other centuries human males were the ones who strutted around, showing off, while females were more colorless, fading into the background. Many animals are like that!

Needless to say, the spirit of this orchid has little to do with showing off or being beautiful; that is my human perception. The spirit of this orchid is modest to a fault. It is a simple plant, its spirit is strong, very strong. The plant has much 'mana' as Hawaiians say, much life force. Perhaps that is why the flowers last so long, even when cut (they last for months here).

Because I knew *laukahi* was my friend, I asked it to introduce me to the spirit of moa. *Laukahi* declined. It said, No. Other plant spirits also refused to introduce me to moa. With each refusal moa became more mysterious, and more unreachable.

Strangely, that made me feel more attracted, I could not stop looking for moa everywhere I went. And because I am tuned in to this little plant, I often see it where others do not. I felt a sort of gnawing need to approach it, get to know it, learn from it.

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With age comes aches and pains, but also a wider point of view. Because I have known the world as it was two and three quarters of a century ago, I cannot help but see the world of today as changed almost beyond recognition. Very different. And it is obvious that all of the difference is man-made. The earth has not changed, but the world we have created on top of our earth has changed. The most visible change, of course is the explosion of new machines. It seems sometimes that we now think of our mind, our smarts, our inventiveness as tools for creating ever more power, power to make over the earth to serve us, power to defend ourselves with the most evil weapon systems ever conceived, even power to make ourselves over. All this meddling with the earth and with ourselves has changed who we are. We have cut off our roots, we no longer feel connected to the earth, we no longer feel part of All That Is. We know that now we must rely totally on this world we ourselves created.

For a hundred thousand years humans relied on nature, the way things are on this earth. Now we must rely on ourselves, in the structures we have created, the so-called civilization we have made to live in. In some of us this has led to a drive for control. In others it has led to will-less reliance on authority in its many forms.

We can no longer even imagine a world not planned and policed by government and today big corporations. Many people who are younger than I believe, of course, that this is how it has always been. Not so.

Ten thousand years ago, when we were primitive nomads, we fitted into the world as we found it. Now we control even nature. It distresses me physically that we have such a casual and cruel attitude toward the living things around us. I sense the pain of trees as they are felled to clear land for yet another shopping mall. I feel the pain of plants as they are chemically eradicated (many of our most valuable herbal medicines are 'weeds'). I mourn animals we have eradicated; I mourn the disappearance of tigers.

And apparently cannot stop, even when it is clear that by harming the environment we harm ourselves more. The earth, I am sure, will re-establish a balance again, although it may take many of our generations. Meanwhile we humans rush headlong to extinction, blind and deaf to the signs that are all around us.

These were my thoughts these last years.

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Again I went to bed with a tiny sprig of moa under my pillow and a firm resolve to find, in my dream, a way to communicate. As I made myself ready to go to sleep, I put firmly in mind that huge globe that I associated with the spirit of moa. The sphere that soaks up energy without reflection is again clear and 'real' in my mind. It is as forbidding as before. Almost alien and certainly inhuman.

I feel very cold. My feet are so cold I cannot feel them. My arms are cold, and yet they are burning. I am very hot and very cold at the same time. The space around me feels empty, devoid of meaning. Not my kind of place; what am I doing here? In my awareness is nothing but that enormous sphere. I must lie dead still to deal with that freezing cold. I do not move a muscle. Time passes. Nothing happens. I am not moving, yet time flows. I am cold and hot at the same time.

Until I become aware that I must pee. Shivering, cold and hot, I get out from under the blankets and sit up. Putting on socks and going to the bathroom takes a few minutes. I am back in bed. The clock says it is well after midnight. The cold of space is still in me, as well as the heat of ... lava? Lava, the heat of earth, flowing as if from a wound. I shiver as I get under the blankets again, only my nose outside. Cold and at the same time hot.

I am in my work room, finishing some work, a roomy and spacious room in my home, familiar (my house in this dream only, I have never lived in such a house!) My work requires intense concentration, I am leaning over a work table, deep in thought.

A persistent noise is breaking into my concentration. I look up, look around my work room. I stretch. The noise comes from somewhere in the house. As if there are other people in the house?

Yes, definitely. Strange noises. People talking?

I open the door to the next room and find two men, dressed in formal-looking clothes, one wears a morning coat and one of those fluffy ties, the other wears a bowler hat!

I laugh uproariously. The men look so ridiculous! They must be hot, wearing such clothes in this warm climate, I think.

Laughing, I say, Hello! What is going on?

The men take no notice, they go on with whatever it is they are doing. Preparing food? They seem to be unpacking something.

A door at the other end of that room opens, and another man and two women walk into the room, carrying baskets; maybe picnic baskets? One of the women wears a large hat, something we used to call 'garden hats', with a very wide, floppy brim and artificial flowers around the crown. The other woman has dark hair with reddish highlights, swirled up into a high construction, with a large tortoise clasp in the back.

This is really ridiculous! I laugh louder. I cannot help but laugh at these strange creatures. Don't they know this is the tropics? We wear no clothes here, certainly not those ridiculous outfits!

I talk to them, but they do not hear me. They act as if they are not even aware I am in the room. They continue unpacking the boxes they brought in. They do not seem to hear my laughter either.

Something is very strange. Who are these people?

Now they are re-arranging the few pieces of furniture in this room. The far door opens again and more people come in, carrying long tables which they proceed to set up. There are some children who came in as well, and two cats, one very light yellow, the other a sort of mottled brown. They do not look very healthy, they act skittish.

*The cats notice me!* They look at me and shy away...

A very dark-skinned man walks in, his face full of laugh wrinkles, his hair sort of woolly, graying at the temples. He seems a very comfortable sort of person. He sees me, comes over and kisses me on the cheek ; both cheeks.

'Welcome,' he says.

Welcome? But this is *my* house!

It is I who should welcome them. But I did not invite them. Who are these people, and what are they doing in my house?

The dark man leaves, the others stay, arranging long tables and covering them with fancy cloths. I have never seen such cloths, they seem almost like water, they flow and shimmer.

I am beginning to feel uneasy, something is very wrong here!

I raise my voice. *Hey! People! Who are you, and what are you doing in my house?*

No reaction. They do not hear me. They do not see me.

I walk toward them. One man, the man with the bowler hat, turns in my direction and says something that I cannot hear. I do not know whether he sees me, or whether he was talking to someone behind me.

Or perhaps I cannot understand what he says.

Again I raise my voice, louder this time. *Hey, you, what is this?*

I say, *You are making too much noise, my family is upstairs.*

I grab the arm of the man with the funny hat ; he looks around, surprised. Now he is taking notice!

I tell him to move, get out, take your friends and your tables and move! Leave!

*Get out! NOW!*

Maybe he does not speak my language, because he certainly does not understand me. He and some of the other people go into another room.

I follow.

Now I am getting worried, I do not know how to get rid of these people. They have invaded my house in the middle of the night and what are they doing?

I follow them into the next room, a room with large windows all around ; or maybe not windows, maybe just open to the outside. I see my garden through the openings. On a table in the middle of the room is a beautiful large wooden bowl with two large, warm red fruit, lying on big green leaves.

The man with the hat picks up one of the fruit and loudly complains that they are 'wrong', they are not what they need.

I am furious, speechless. I know that fruit is juicy and very tasty. I know the tree it grew on, right there in the corner of the garden. I brought these in yesterday, to let them ripen further They should be almost ready to eat now. How can they be 'wrong'?

But I do not know what kind of fruit this is. I have no name for it, and in waking life I know these fruit do not grow in my garden. But in the dream they are from my garden, they are from my world, they are important to me.

More people come in and crowd around. The man takes the bowl of fruit and walks away.

I follow him. *PUT THAT BOWL DOWN, I yell!*

He looks at me, shrugs his shoulders, puts the bowl on a narrow shelf. The bowl is too big for that shelf, it might tip over any moment so I run over, take the bowl and move it back to the middle of the table.

Just then the sun...

(The sun? but this is the middle of the night -- perhaps a spotlight? No, the sun makes the fruit glow with a warm inner light. It looks very warm, richly glowing red. Lava. I think of lava flowing, thick lava that turns black when it is exposed to air, hot red only at the edges. Now and then a crack shows in the lava and you can see almost white-hot inside the flow. )

Somehow the fruit captures the warmth of the earth itself, lava. Briefly I am lost in contemplation of the bowl and the fruit.

It is now quite noisy in the house. I feel pushed and shoved around in my own house. I want these people to leave. *NOW!*

A strange white-haired dog of a breed I have never seen gets into a cupboard. I tell someone to reach in there and get the dog out.

Nobody hears me, they do not see me.

A bustling young woman comes near and smiles. I say, *There must be twenty of you here, who are you, what are you doing?* She throws back her head, laughing, *Twenty, she says? There must be more like fifty of us, or a hundred, and that is 'net', not counting children and cats and dogs.*

I am completely bewildered, overpowered by so many people, most of who do not see me, do not hear me.

In fact, I am beginning to feel frightened and lost.

I know I am dreaming, but the dream does not let me go. It seems such a simple dream, but it holds me fast. I am inside the dream and at the same time I am thinking about what the dream 'means'. What is this dream telling me? I remember that this is the night I planned to dream about moa, but this is not about moa. Or is it?

There are too many people, there is too much going on and I do not understand how this can happen in my own house. But, at the same time, this dream is very familiar; of course I do know what the dream means.

It is quite obvious that this dream is a personalized story of what has happened all over the world in this century. Civilized people (usually white) have invaded the lands of all First People, they have taken over, they invaded, they did not 'see' the natives.

My house is invaded, I'm invisible, ignored while the intruders take over my house, the fruit of my garden, my world, they steal my peace and quiet, my life itself.

Oh yes, I understand the dream well enough. I am caught in it as I am caught in this century, and trapped in the skin I so unwillingly inhabit. The dream is my life and my life is this dream.

The dream is this century. This is no dream, it is a nightmare, infinitely painful and confusing...

I wake up all at once. It is a few minutes before 5am. I feel as if I have had this dream for hours and hours. I must get out of bed, I cannot stay in this dream. I must wake up. I must... and I cannot.

Immobile in my bed, locked in this dream that is my life and the lives of so many in this century. I want to wake up but I cannot. This dream is not a dream, it is only too real, it is What Is.

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The sun is up. My life shrugs itself into a more normal form. Outside it is calm, very beautiful. Plants and trees all around radiate life, pulse with light. My eyes are open. I cautiously get out of bed, still shivering from the impact of a dream.

The outside temperature is 50° F. Cold.

Still only half awake and lingering in the dream space I think of the little sprig of gray-green under my pillow. This dream was certainly different and very powerful. Being inside such a powerful dream means to me that I had better pay attention; this dream is meant for me.

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Days later, I continue to taste the dream. The conviction grows in me that moa certainly gives powerful dreams! Moa makes me experience what is real.

I have known the statistics. I have written and talked about what was done to Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders, and the peoples of South and North America, people all over the world. I have read about and talked about the destruction of native cultures and native languages, I have deplored, I have felt ashamed and guilty. This dream made it burningly personal. They invaded my house, they took over, ignoring me, not even seeing me (only the cats and dogs saw me, and the dark man). I experienced a terrifying loss of identity. I felt in my bones the powerlessness when these unknown invaders, unseeing and unthinking, not only took over my house, but also what I value in the house, my privacy of course, and the fruit from my own world. I cannot forget how they casually moved furniture around, brought their own stuff in. I resent how they rejected the warm red fruit that grew in my garden. I still shiver when I think of the dream experience.

That dream brought back dark memories of The War, when for five years I survived occupation by a foreign power. But that was only five years! Suddenly, from one day to the next, these foreigners told us what to do, what to wear, how to behave. They too did not 'see' us.

But the dream was worse. In the dream I knew deep down that these invaders will never leave. Hawai'i will never again be what it was; not the people, not the plants, not the land.

When I thought about the red I kept seeing, I realized perhaps it was the red of blood, casually spilled when these strange people walked all over me; the red of my heart, squeezed dry.

The strangers did not even see me! They did not hear me, even when I yelled at them at the top of my voice. They were unaware and uncaring of all the many meanings my home has for me. The 'aina as the Hawaiians call the land is not

just land as real estate, but land as place, home, where one's roots are. In a very real sense Hawaiians thought of themselves and their 'aina as one. In my dream these invaders invaded my life, trampled my roots. "My family is asleep upstairs" and I could not protect them.

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It was moa that allowed me to experience what millions have experienced. Moa made me stand in someone else's shoes to see the world from a very different point of view. For one night I was given the reality of so many people in this and previous centuries. Such a dream never leaves...

I knew not to try to interpret, or re-interpret what the dream told me at first. I learned long ago to let go, let the dream float somewhere in the back of my awareness. If other meanings come up, that is good. If not then the memory will fade, eventually to be forgotten. But this dream will always be with me now.

I remember an old Samoan telling me how at first they thought Palangi (white people) funny. We turned out to be far from funny. Samoans too were invisible in their own house. Everything in their islands was taken or re-arranged. Westerners did not hear them, did not see them.

What we, the invaders, wanted from Hawaiians was real estate, the white beaches and tropical sunsets, and now and then a few colorful people to illustrate tourist brochures. Hawai'i today is a destination, a place to vacation. We trampled the sacred 'aina because we did not see it. We ignored what Hawaiians valued.

For a thousand years, before the white man came, these islands were home to many hundreds of thousands of people, gifted people, people who worshipped nature as they found it on these islands in the middle of nowhere. They were healthy, they had no communicable diseases, they probably knew no poverty or degradation.

Today Hawai'i has not many more inhabitants than lived here then, but it is a very different population. Today the Hawaiians are a minority in their own land.

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Once, during yet another of the many reflections of that dream, I again saw that ancient face. Still no smile, but this time the blind eyes looked at me. Perhaps we communicated. Not in words certainly, but I felt there was some understanding between us. Moa told me to be detached, to look at myself and all that is around me, from a distance.

As I was caught in the dream, all of us are caught in the world we ourselves made.

Be detached. Get some distance. How else can we experience 'what is'?  
Not an easy thing to learn.

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Many months later, when I felt I was ready for more dreams, again I put a sprig of moa under my pillow. Again I had a vivid dream. This time the dream gave me a clear answer to a problem one of my friends had asked help with. I woke up with a smile, feeling wonderful. Detachment made me see things from a clear perspective.

Another night I dreamt of warm-hearted people who made me remember the joys of friendship, frivolity and fun. I woke up laughing.

Ah! So that is what moa does! It gives clear dreams, 'real' dreams. And now I am learning to detach from the mess and confusion of daily life. Moa to me is no longer the awe-inspiring, alien, distant sphere of non-reflecting energy-absorbing stuff I had seen in deep space. Moa has become a comfortable and even supportive presence. Moa dreams, as I now think of them, are helping me experience from another point of view, and perhaps that is compassion? Moa helps me be real.

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One morning I woke up with the realization that what was happening in my relationship with moa is comparable to my relating with redwoods some years ago. When first I saw redwood trees they had seemed so enormous, so massive, that I could not comprehend them. Redwoods are not like the jungle trees that were familiar to me. Tropical trees are intimately part of the jungle, each tree tied to another with vines, home to myriads of other plants and animals, their roots intertwined with the roots of other plants and other trees. Redwoods, on the other hand, seemed each apart. In a redwood forest I did not see many other plants. Redwoods are like mountains. I felt a great distance, I could not see them as they are.

Until I had an opportunity to live in a large, old redwood forest for some months. My feelings changed. Redwoods became familiar, they became a warm, protective presence, absorbing human pain and suffering as they absorb moisture from the heavy fogs, yet without being touched by human concerns. Redwoods gave me calm support when I needed it, somehow giving me peace of heart. I felt the redwoods knew my pain and the pain of other humans, perhaps they even cared, but they had the detachment of great age. How else can a being survive that lives a thousand years?

Redwood trees and now moa put things in perspective, the perspective of centuries. I felt cleansed in the redwood forest. And I also felt very real. Moa does that also, it makes me feel clear and simple.

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I cannot say that I talk with the spirit of moa as I talk with other plants. How can I, with a spirit so ancient that it predates humans by hundreds of millions of years; predates even redwoods? But at times, in some way, moa communicates with me. Occasionally.

I no longer see that forbidding globe in space. The wrinkled face I see rarely, but when I do, I understand why it has blind eyes, I am invisible to it, even humankind is no more than a blip on a wrinkle of time. Moa has survived so long it will probably survive the next many million years. I marvel at the simplicity of this plant, totally without pretensions, without show. Maybe it has survived so long because it is so simple?

Moa reminds me to cherish my affinity for simple truths and simple people. In a way I cannot quite explain, moa reminds me of the aboriginal people I knew and loved. They too survived far longer than any of the empires that write our history, because they are simple and real, close to the earth, and after thousands of years still close to the most basic qualities that make us human.

Moa did not change much, if at all, in 350 million years. It did not have to. It was able to adapt to whatever changes the earth went through in that long time. The aboriginal people also did not seek progress, they never craved the things that are so important to civilization. They are The Meek who inherited the earth again and again while civilizations crash.

Moa makes me see the larger picture, and so reminds me to see the wonders of now. A tiny sprig of moa under my pillow gives me clear dreaming, makes me wake up with a smile!

"Dreams are real while they last. Can we say more of life?" Havelock Ellis.

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It is now a few years after I first reached out to moa. I still often sleep with a small piece of moa under my pillow. Occasionally these dreams are meaningful, always they are full of life and joy. I do not try to communicate with moa; what could I say? But moa communicates with me, sometimes. Rarely.

I have noticed that in this garden moa now grows in many more places than before. In fact, I have found it growing in very unlikely places: I found a little moa plant growing under the house, where there is no soil, no sunlight, no water, only dry, soft sand. Nothing grows under the house, not even centipede grass which is an unbelievably aggressive grass. But Moa grows.

Last year I carefully put a little moa plant in an empty sardine can with a bit of moss and some shreds of hapu'u. I kept that inside, next to my work table. After ten months inside it was doing well, but it had not grown. I carefully found another home for this little plant, outside. Now it is thriving.

I am a curious human, so as I walked around quietly one day, I asked the spirit of moa, why are you spreading?

Almost immediately this thought came into my mind: "we (moa) are adapting to higher altitudes; the waters are rising."