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Time-Rift by Elena Dorothy Bowman

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Dedication

And as always, for my husband James and my precious children, Christine, Karen, Mark, David and my Granddaughter Erin

For those whose imagination knows no bounds, and for those who will always wonder: What if? and search for answers

PROLOGUE

TIME IN A RIFT

Throughout history, scholars, anthropologists, historians and adventurers have written numerous stories about lost continents and ancient civilizations. Some from a historical point of view, others from speculation, and others from earlier scribes who painstakingly etched their history on tablets that were later transcribed and became the written works that were handed down from one generation to another. The historical references imbedded in this novel are not those of the author, but the words of these earlier scribes.

This novel is a work of fiction based on the premise of "What If?"

What if what they say is true that a little more than 12,000 years ago a large continent, with all its sacred temples, palaces, centers of Law, ceremonial altars and citizens, vanished in a vortex of fire and water and sank beneath the depths of the Pacific taking 64,000,000 souls with it? Or, that it is written on the Naacal Tablets, ancient Mayan books as well as legends and inscriptions of other countries that on this land lived a technologically superior civilization that preceded all other civilizations. But on that day, 12 millenniums ago, it plunged into the sea leaving behind remnants of what once was. Or that Easter Island, Tahiti, Samoas, Cook, Tongus, Marshall, Gilbert, Caroline, Mariannas, Marquesas, and the Hawaiian Islands all stand as pathetic fingers to a once proud continent?

If so, then what if now, in this present time, these islands are unknowingly keeping watch over a silent grave, where it has been resting for centuries undisturbed, so deep within the shadows of the Pacific, waiting?—until Trisha.

* * * *

Trisha Holden is an only child who lives with her father on his pineapple plantation on the Island of Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. During her school years, she resides on the big Island of Hawaii, with several other students who have rented a condo for their complete academic program, which would take them at least four years to complete.

Trisha never knew her mother because Elizabeth Holden left her daughter and husband when Trisha was a baby, because as she put it, she wasn't cut out to be a Navy wife. She never once contacted Trisha or her husband since the day she left. Still, Trisha appeared to be a happy child growing up in Hawaii under the watchful eyes of their family friend, Martin, a retired U.S. Navy deep sea diver.

Trisha's father was still attached to a Naval ship at the time she was growing up and since her Mother was nowhere to be found, Martin had been both Mother and Father to her. Joe Holden knew his daughter was safe with Martin while he was away on sea duty. His tour of duty was generally six months at a time so it was imperative that he leave his daughter with a friend he could trust with her life and keep her safe for him. Whenever he was on shore duty, he would spend as many days as he possibly could diving with his daughter and Martin. Over the years during these intermittent trips from sea to shore, Joe couldn't believe how quickly his daughter grew during his absence, or how much of a quick study she was. Diving seemed to be a passion with her, she loved the sport so. And after listening to the many stories Martin spun about his ancestors, she became intrigued with the history of the ancients. It was the main reason Trisha became a student of ancient Hawaiian myths and legends. She was particularly attracted to the stories of the legendary continent known as Lemuria or Mukulia that vanished beneath the waters of the Pacific many centuries ago.

When she graduated from High School, Trisha decided to major in Archeology in her college years.

During the summer months when her school was in recess, Trisha spent those months on Maui at her father's pineapple plantation and made several excursions to Ke'e in order to scuba dive in the waters off Ke'e beach, to put what she had learned in class to use. In effect she considered these dives sort of an 'internship' as a budding archeologist and learned more in these dives than she did from a book. She spent these dives with Martin, since her father didn't want to dive that much anymore, searching for artifacts or remnants of the ancients who once walked the surface of the planet. To date she has not had very much success in discovering anything of a significant importance. It was the one thing she was hoping to do this summer with Martin's help in order to bring to her classmates some worth while artifact to prove to them that delving into ancient mysteries was not so boring after all. And Martin was hoping her wish would be granted just because she wanted it so bad.

Our story begins when Trisha is on her way home from school on her latest summer vacation.

Chapter 1

Trisha looked out the window as the small plane moved down the auxiliary field and lifted off in spite of the seemingly tangled mess strewn on the right side of two major runways. From her vantage point inside the ship, Trisha Holden could see the entire airport. Planes were crookedly out of line only on one side of two of its major runways. It was almost as if they were playing follow the leader. She could see some of the damaged planes being moved to empty hangers, on the far end of the tarmac, in order to clear the field for the incoming planes. It was a strange sight to say the least, and Trisha couldn't help but wonder why the planes were so disarrayed, instead of being lined up, as they normally would be, and safely tucked within their assigned gates ready to take on passengers.

From what she overheard from the pilots milling about the concourse, as she waited to board her plane, even the pilots involved in the mishap weren't absolutely certain as to what caused them to skid off the runway. All they knew was that they did. She remembered them saying that it seemed as if the runway moved as they were landing their planes. *Really*, she thought. *They actually said that? They must have been seeing things.*

She heard one of the passengers saying that "The pilots could have sworn the runways moved sort of like a roller coaster just as they were touching down, and as they did so, the strange effect took complete control of the landing. Each pilot tried desperately to regain control, but they were unable to do so until the planes were actually off the runway. At first they all believed the shimmering effect on the runways was like that of massive heat waves, rising one after another off the concrete, as it does on hot, humid, sunny days. It wasn't until their wheels touched down, did they realize something else was going on beneath their plane, and said they actually felt the ground beneath them shifting. If what they say is true," she added, "it's no wonder that so many pilots missed the runway."

Trisha had wondered at the time, what the passenger was talking about, and what would cause anyone to make a comment like that. She thought the statements coming from the pilots were strange, and what was even stranger to her was the fact that their comments were made within earshot of worried passengers. *Passengers who felt that they had narrowly escaped being seriously hurt or that something even more catastrophic could have happened. Well, Trisha's thoughts continued, they could be right. All the planes could have crashed or exploded when they landed. But thankfully that didn't happen. The passengers were only shaken up ... nothing more.*

Even now, as she flew away from the airport she still couldn't get the real meaning of the pilots' comments out of her mind. *Did they know something that she didn't know and were keeping mum about it or were they just as in the dark about it as she was? Or, which was far more important, was there really a problem? A problem that could be far more devastating than it appeared to be at the time. If so, what are the "powers that be" going to do about it?*

Trisha looked up and away from the activities on the ground and beyond. In the distance the sporadic belching of Mauna Loa and Kilauea, against the mountain ranges and lush-green vegetation, captivated her. *As long as 'Pele's' anger is contained we have nothing to worry about.* But she couldn't help hoping that when Kilauea sputtered in an angry, reddish/orange eruption that she might be around to see its fiery red hot lava flow down along the side of the mountain—but from a safe, really safe, distance. She smiled inwardly thinking about that aspect, as the inter-island plane continued its flight over the various islands in the Hawaiian chain, bringing her closer to Maui and home.

She strained to catch a glimpse below as her plane closed in on Pearl Harbor and when the plane circled over Pearl, as it did on a regular basis, a pensive look crossed Trisha's face. She stared down on the

Memorial where over two thousand men were entombed. She watched, mesmerized, as drop by drop, oil seeped to the surface from the watery grave below, perpetuating the minor oil slick, which began its odyssey more than over fifty years before and she shivered slightly as goose-bumps crept over her. Brushing aside a tear, Trisha looked away.

* * * *

The small plane made its final approach to the landing field at Maui. Trisha saw her father waiting patiently for her arrival. She waved furiously at him even though he couldn't see her. When her plane's wheels touched down and taxied up to the hanger, an anxious Joe Holden rushed towards it.

"You're late," he said as he hugged, kissed his daughter, and then grabbed her bag.

"Just a little," she answered.

"More than three and a half hours," he admonished.

"Couldn't be helped," she answered smiling at her father's frowning face.

"Why, what happened?" he asked.

"Oh, some sort of fluke about the pilots missing the landing strip."

"What?" he asked, stopping in the middle of the field, and staring at her.

"Dad, we can't stay here. C'mon, I'll tell you as soon as we get to the Jeep."

With his arm tightly around his daughter's shoulders, Joe Holden guided her back toward his waiting Jeep. Having settled into the vehicle Joe waited for his daughter to explain her comment.

"Well," he said, "I'm waiting."

"I guess it had been happening periodically all day long. But the first incident apparently was the worse," she said, pausing to look at her father, his frown had deepened considerably. Catching her breath, she continued, "Several of the pilots claimed that the landing field shifted just as their wheels touched down and that was why they had skidded off the field, stopping just short of hitting the concourse where all the people were standing, transfixed as they stared out of the windows, frozen in their tracks, watching the planes heading toward them, unable to move away, unable to protect themselves, waiting for the crash that never happened."

"What! Were the pilots drunk?"

"No, Dad," Trisha laughed. "They weren't drunk. Since I don't know what really happened, all I could think of was that it could have been some sort of a virus, which affected their equilibrium. The strangest part is that not all of the pilots were affected. It appeared to be happening only during specific times of the day and only to those who had been eating lunch at the local pub the past several days. But what that had to do with any of it, I couldn't say. Needless to say that aspect has been investigated by the local authorities to see if there was a connection, and apparently their conclusions were that the pub had nothing to do with any of it. Still, the effect on the pilots was only intermittent even if it appeared to be a day long affair, so it couldn't have been a budding epidemic now, could it?"

"No, I don't think so," Joe said slowly, shaking his head, "but something must have caused them to miss the landing strips. What did the authorities do about it?"

"Since enough of the pilots were affected, not only the pilots, but an investigation of the planes involved

was undertaken and as far as I know is still going on. Guess it will take several days, weeks even, before they really know what the cause was, but in the meantime, the flights were canceled. The landing strips and planes were checked. The mechanics thought maybe the altimeters were off calibration, but that wasn't it. No one could find a reason for the mishaps, it wasn't the pilots, the planes, the airstrips or the pubs, so they decided to let the planes take off and here I am."

"Did the wheels collapse when the planes landed?" Joe asked.

"Don't know, Dad, I wasn't on any of those planes when they landed at that airport, just on the one that took off. Why" she asked, looking at him curiously.

Joe fell silent for a moment. She thought he didn't hear her. Then just before she raised the question again, he started the engine and said, "Somehow, I don't think I like what happened. It doesn't bode right. There is something else going on. Mark my words. This isn't the end of it, I am sure of it."

"Oh, Dad, don't be so silly. Everything is fine, see," she said as she held out her arms and turned around as best as she could in her seat for his inspection.

"Nothing happened," she giggled, "except for the pilots unable to land their planes on their moving landing strip, but it's not likely to happen again. I'm sure the authorities will see to that."

"Say what you want, Honey, but I don't like it," he said, as his frown deepened. "There is more to this than we know. Something is going on that we're not privy to and we are not about to be at least not for now," he added solemnly, as he drove away from the airport and headed towards home.

* * * *

Soon Trisha and her father were tooling their way along the lonely mountain road. The enchantment of the unobstructed, beautiful, scenery, as they headed toward their pineapple plantation in the foothills of the West Maui Mountains, washed away any thoughts of the moving landing fields, and what the underlying cause may have been.

Trisha quietly inhaled the majesty around them. "I don't know what it is, but every time I come home I feel as if the 'gods' have once again allowed me to return to Paradise."

"You haven't been gone that long."

"I know. That's what so incredible about it all."

Joe nodded. He understood. After twenty-five years in the Navy, Joe Holden decided to settle down in the 'Valley Island' to raise pineapples. It was a decision he never regretted. For like his daughter, Trisha, the Island of Maui, too, captivated him.

They rode in silence, absorbed in the splendor surrounding them. Every bend or curve revealed a different and more exotic view than the one before it. Joe pulled off the road and onto a lookout point where the entire 'garden valley' was spread beneath them.

After a few long moments of inhaling the island's panoramic charm, Joe's voice interrupted the sphere of tranquility embracing them.

"As much as I love having you all to myself, I hope this time you will get out more, dating, dancing, you know ... what other people your age normally do. And I don't mean scuba diving with Martin all of the time either," he paused, shot a look at his daughter before continuing, "or is there someone waiting for you back at school that you somehow managed to keep from me?"

Trisha smiled, *Dad's right*, she thought. *I do spend almost as much time under the water as I do out of it; and yes, it is normally, with Martin, our oldest and dearest friend. But whose fault is it? If I didn't have Martin, I wouldn't have anyone.*

She shook her head, amused at her father's comment, before answering him, "But, Dad, I enjoy being with you ... and with dear old Martin. There isn't anyone else I'd rather be with. Besides," she sighed, "sad to say, there is no one waiting for me back at school."

"Most of the men around here, on Oahu and on Hawaii aren't interested in dating intelligent women. I honestly don't know if my intellect scares them off, or makes them feel inferior. All I know is that it makes for many long lonely nights. If it wasn't for television and my passion for research ... I don't know what I'd do. Even so, Dad, I know I can always count on you to be there for me." She looked at her father and smiled.

Patting his daughter's shoulders, Joe nodded and said, "I know Honey, I know." Putting the Jeep in reverse, Joe pulled away from the lookout point and continued on along the mountain road.

"You know, Dad, my friends tell me to play dumb, act stupid, if I want to meet someone interesting. I hope that's not what I have to do, it's not worth it. If anyone wants me, they'll have to take me as I am. Besides, I would feel like a cheat if I acted that way."

"I wouldn't want you to do that either. Don't worry Honey, sooner or later the right one will come along, and he will be just as happy that you are as brilliant as you are beautiful."

"Oh! Dad! I love you! You always say the right words. You always know how to cheer me up," Trisha laughed as she hugged her father.

"Hey watch it! You want to run us off the road," Joe laughed, grinning at his daughter.

Without missing a beat, Trisha continued, "I spend the time I do with Martin, Dad, because I want to be the best scuba diver I can be," she said looking out at the rare and beautiful mountain flora they were driving through.

"Anyway, Dad, you know I'm a strong swimmer, and you know how much I do love spending as much time as I can in the water or under it, and dear old Martin? Well, Martin's a fantastic teacher. And who knows ... maybe Mr. Right will come along. At least scuba diving helps me with my research. I might even get into treasure hunting. Meet some exciting people. All sorts of opportunities may present themselves. Anyway," she smiled widely, "The possibilities are there."

"I suppose so," Joe said. He marveled at his daughter's comments, shook his head and grinned. "Maybe I shouldn't worry so much, but you're all I've got."

"Why did she leave us, Dad?"

Caught off guard, Joe stopped momentarily. Thinking back, and then almost as if he had not heard her, began again. "You were only three when she left. I guess I couldn't blame her too much. I was away most of the time. She just couldn't take Navy life."

"Dad," Trisha said softly, tearing herself away from the exotic birds soaring aloft to look at her father, "that was nineteen years ago. Do you still care? I mean ... does it still bother you?"

She could not mistake the sadness in her father's voice, or the slight mist in his eyes.

"Yes," he paused. Then added slowly, no, I guess not. But I do miss her sometimes. I really wish it could

have been different."

He looked over at Trisha and his face brightened. "Well, anyway Honey, I still have you."

Trisha fingered the pendant around her neck, and her face broke into a smile, "Don't worry, Dad. I'm not going to leave you. Not just yet anyway."

Joe looked at Trisha's diamonds. "Do you remember your sixteenth birthday?"

"Of course; that's when you gave me this," she smiled as she held out the object in question. "My Mother's diamond rings. You had them made into a pendant for me."

She stopped suddenly and stared at her father. "I can't ever remember saying that before."

"What?" Joe asked, puzzled.

"Those words ... Mother ... My Mother."

"You didn't have much reason to," Joe agreed, "but she did want you to have her diamonds. You have to give her that."

"I know, and I do appreciate her thoughtfulness, but that's about all I can say for her," Trisha nodded sadly.

* * * *

She remembered the day she turned sixteen. She kept hoping her mother would come. She had no reason to expect it. There were no phone calls, cards or communication of any kind from her mother. But still she hoped. As the day drew on it became disappointing clear that only Martin and her father would be present at her sixteenth birthday. She excused herself, as the tears bubbled over, and ran up to her room. Flinging herself across her bed she sobbed openly for awhile then straightened up. She brushed the hurt and tears aside, and thought ... *well if that's the way she wants it that's the way it will be ... forever. As far as I'm concerned she no longer exists.*

She put on a bright face and hurried downstairs. As she re-entered the living room she saw her father's worried look. Smiling, she rushed to him, threw her arms around him and whispered, "It's okay, Dad. I'm over it. If I'm not, I will be. Don't worry."

She gently smoothed the furrows in her father's forehead with her fingers, and then abruptly kissed him. With her arm around her father's shoulders, she threw a kiss to Martin. She smiled as his face, too, softened at her gesture.

The festivities began immediately. Martin was the first to give Trisha her present. Trisha ripped open the packages and stared at the contents, she could not believe her eyes. Martin's gift was more than she could have possibly imagined. His gift to her was her own state of the art scuba equipment and with it, a robin blue wetsuit.

"Oh Martin, thank you," she cried as she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. "Now I won't have to borrow second hand stuff anymore. Dad, look!" she cried as she ran to show him. "And I won't even have to wear that old black wetsuit anymore." She held her new wetsuit up against her as she paraded it around and around crying out for all to hear, "I love this color. Thank you again, Martin," she said as she ran to kiss him once again.

Joe waited patiently, with a huge grin on his face, before giving his daughter his gift. He let Trisha's happiness with Martin's surprise run its course. When Trisha's excitement had quieted down somewhat,

Joe then held out the diamond pendant and placed it around her neck.

Tears stung her eyes. "Oh Dad, how beautiful," she cried. "Thank you."

Beaming at her delight, Joe said, "Your mother wanted you to have them that was one of the last requests she made of me." Trisha could only nod as the tears flowed freely down her face.

* * * *

Trisha looked out the window again and sighed. Still fingering the pendant her Mother had left for her, her eyes now downcast, she asked, "Why did she leave, Dad? Was it because of me?"

Joe stopped the Jeep on the lonely mountain road and gathered Trisha in his arms. "No sweetheart. It was never you. It was only me. She couldn't take the constant disruptions. Always moving, never staying in one place long enough to put down roots. She was a homebody. She wanted a home. A place to grow old in..."

"But I've got roots here, why didn't she?" Trisha interrupted.

"I never did know. I guess her roots were firmly implanted somewhere else. I had hopes that she would return. That was why I left you here with Martin. I knew he would look after you while I was at sea, all the while hoping that she would come back. But she never did. And she never really explained why."

Joe held Trisha at arms length and smiled. "Anyway, she did the one thing that I will always be grateful for ... she didn't take you away from me ... and she could have very easily, since I was away at sea for months at a time, and not able to get home as much as I would have wanted, which resulted in my leaving you alone so much with Martin."

Trisha hugged her father, "Don't worry, Dad. I'll never, never leave you! Besides, I don't appear to be the worse for wear with Martin as my guardian, and I do so love the Islands, especially Kauai," she told him.

* * * *

They drove the rest of the way in silence stopping occasionally, to marvel at the breathtaking landscape, before moving on. And in less time than they thought, they reached the foothills of the West Maui Mountains and Joe Holden's Pineapple Plantation. Emerging from the Jeep, Joe and Trisha stood in silent reverence drinking in the beauty of the mountains and the surrounding scenery stretched before them.

Trisha sighed, "Dad," she said quietly so as not to disturb their reverie, "I'll be heading to Ke'e tomorrow ... to do some exploring."

"With Martin?"

"Naturally! Is there anyone else I could possibly go exploring with other than Martin? Then, of course, there *is* you. Want to come? The three of us can make a holiday of it. It will be fun. Dad ... please!"

"No, Honey, I don't think I'm up to it now, maybe sometime later when you and Martin go diving, I'll tag along, we'll see," he said, patting her hand.

Trisha's eyes began to fill as she fingered her pendant. Thoughts of her long lost mother, her father's loneliness, engulfed her and she bowed her head. Joe cleared his throat. He placed his arm around his daughter's shoulders and drew her to him. She looked up at him and smiled slightly before they both turned and entered the house.

Chapter 2

Over the Centuries rain, wind, and the pounding waves, turned Kauai's northwest coast into a series of steep, bold, precipices. These bluffs dropped off sharply to the ocean, and into the deep green valleys between them. Known as the 'Garden Island' this northern most island in the Hawaiian Chain, along with its lush green vegetation, fascinated Trisha.

Whenever Trisha wanted to get away and think, she would hop a flight to Kauai. There she would scuba dive off Ke'e Beach, located at the northern tip of the island, until the evening sky etched its waning light across the horizon. So it was natural then, whenever she arrived at Ke'e, for her to head straight for Martin's shack.

Martin, an Islander, at 47, was one of the first Hawaiian's to join up after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. 'Martin' was as close as anyone ever came to pronouncing his Hawaiian name, and it stuck. Even Joe Holden, who had grown up in the Islands, had trouble pronouncing 'Martin's' given name.

Severely wounded in the 'Battle of the Coral Sea', Martin was medically discharged from the Navy and subsequently returned to his beloved Islands. Whenever Joe Holden could spend his leave in the Islands, he stayed with Martin. Then on one such leave, Joe brought his bride to the Islands ... a mainlander. Martin had his misgivings. *A Mainlander wouldn't be happy here*, he thought. *Mainlanders like to come to visit, stay a few weeks, even a few months, but sooner or later, they seem to want to go back to where "home" is.* Still Martin was pleased to see her. He had high hopes. *Maybe this one will stay.* He could see they were deeply in love and hoped that would be enough. *Time will tell*, he thought. *Time will tell.* Several leaves later, Joe and Kathleen Holden made a determined visit to Hawaii to introduce their daughter Trisha to Martin. It was love at first sight.

For the next three years, the Navy moved Joe's little family from one base housing to another. But sea duty kept them apart for months at a time. When Kathleen Holden could no longer endure the loneliness she walked away. She only waited long enough for Joe's ship to return. He pleaded with her to stay, promising he would do everything he could to get shore duty. He thought he had convinced her. But the following morning he found a note along with her diamond rings on the table. She said she loved them both. But she was not cut out to be a Navy wife. She asked Joe to, "...give my rings to our daughter, Trisha, when she is old enough. Tell her that I will always love her..." She believed it was best to leave Trisha with him. "At least until I know what I am going to do," she had written.

Joe tried to find her. But it was as if Kathleen Holden had vanished from the face of the Earth. He requested an emergency leave to search for her. After exhausting all the avenues he could think of, people she knew, grew up with, worked with, relatives, family members, and her known haunts, he had to admit failure. He was told by the detective he hired, that if his wife wanted to be found, they would find her, if not, his search was futile. So before shipping his household goods to Hawaii, he placed an ad in the Personal Column in all the major newspapers both on the mainland and in the Islands. "Trisha," it said, "would be with Martin," and begged her to contact them. But he never saw or heard from Kathleen again. It was as if the Earth had swallowed her up and there was no way anyone on the planet could or would ever find her.

* * * *

Martin's shack on Kauai was backed up against a row of palm trees. It was a three-room shack, consisting of a small kitchen, bedroom, living room, and an undersized storage area where he stowed both Trisha's and his own diving equipment. The shack was clean, sparse, and neat. One could easily attribute the hut to a secluded bachelor's sanctuary. The front door opened to a clear, wide sandy

expanse to the ocean.

After her short hop from Maui, Trisha headed for Martin's shack. Upon arriving, shoes and bag in hand, Trisha hurried across the hot sand to Martin's door. She didn't see anyone when she peeked inside but entered the shack anyway. She called out in the ancient language of the Islanders whose loosely translated meaning, my love to you, described her feelings exactly.

"Koaha-E! Martin? Are you up?"

Martin saw her enter the shack and came up from the beach behind her. Whenever he knew Trisha would be spending the day with him he generally devoted the early morning hours in the water searching for places to take her. As he walked toward his shack he pushed the hood off his head displaying a full head of thick white hair. He smiled as he entered his home and greeted Trisha.

"Koaha-E! What kept you? I expected you here hours ago. I've already done my morning exploration."

Trisha smiled back and cried out, "Where are we going? What did you find?" and begged, "Give me a minute and I'll be right with you."

Trisha hurried into the bedroom and changed. As she zipped up the front of her robin-blue wetsuit, she checked to be sure her pendant was safely tucked inside. She rushed out of the shack and toward the water calling to Martin, as she passed him to,

"Hurry and catch up!"

* * * *

They swam for hours, searching crevices, caves and any unusual group of rocks that Martin pointed out to her, picking up objects that could prove exceptional, discarding those items which they considered insignificant, and placing potential finds in the net bags they carried with them for just this purpose.

Trisha turned her head to look at Martin swimming alongside, and smiled as her thoughts began to form in her mind. *I can still remember when I asked Martin to wait for me.* She had hope he would wait until she grew up that is, so they could spend their days together scuba diving. She hated being left behind, even on the boat, while her father and Martin were diving. *I thought I'd never grow up.*

Her mind was quiet for a time. She watched Martin swimming close at hand and her thoughts began again. *Wish I could get Dad to come along. But I can't get him out of his chair, let alone into the water anymore. Seems he's lost his interest in diving.*

She picked up an unusual looking rock, turned it over, and over in her hand before deciding to show it to Martin. He nodded. She placed the rock in her net bag and began to search again. She thought the rock unusual, and there were more of them strewn on the ocean's floor where she found this one, and she thought to go back for more.

She turned back toward Martin in order to tell him what she wanted to do and couldn't help but smile as she watched him moving flawlessly through the water. *He's not as strong or as swift as he used to be, but he still dives with me. For how long I wonder?* Her thoughts quieted again, content in enjoying the serenity as she swam through the underwater fauna toward Martin.

Again, as she watched Martin's movements, she couldn't help thinking; *He's taught me everything I know about the sea. Outside of my father, he's my best friend, my confidant, and I'm sure he knows I think of him as my big brother. In any event I don't think he objects. I guess Martin's the only one I ever let fill my head with stories of these Islands, and the treasures of the deep.* She

chuckled ... *he surely does have a multitude of them.*

Trisha felt safe in the water with Martin and she knew her father never worried whenever she went off by herself. She knew that he knew Martin would be there beside her to look after her. For as long as Trish could remember, Martin was there whenever she needed him. While her father was away at sea, she learned to swim and sail under Martin's tutelage. He had been both father and mother to her most of her life. These were the only two men in her life. She often wondered if she would ever find someone who could even measure up to either one of them, or was she content to spend her life, diving and exploring the underwater caves and crevices, searching for the remnants of a people who long ago walked this way with only Martin at her side.

* * * *

Martin had his own thoughts about Trisha. Somehow swimming beneath the surface of the water always brought memories of earlier dives back to him. His eyes were on Trisha as they continued their underwater sojourn. He relished showing Trisha where the most likely treasure areas would be. And on many such dives over the years, Trisha found some strange and interesting artifacts, but so far, nothing of any major importance.

He enjoyed watching Trisha as she endlessly picked up strange objects from the ocean's floor, and from the many caves they passed. When she showed them to him and he shook his head, she threw them away. Only when he nodded did she keep what she found. What really scared him the most was when she entered caves without him. She would always urge him forward, but was inside the cave marveling at the eeriness of its contours and markings long before he got to her. When he admonished her, she would hold his face in her hands and bring it close to hers, and when he saw the smile in her eyes behind her mask he knew he lost the argument.

Swimming alongside Trisha, Martin thought, *I so look forward to Trisha's visits and these long dives with her. Who would have thought that gangling kid would have turned into such a beautiful woman?*

She's quite a little adventurer. Too much for me, though. I can't keep up with her anymore. How many times has she scared the living daylights out of me going after artifacts that amounted to nothing, just because they were in an offbeat place? But, there's always the chance she could be right. Someday, I'm afraid, that spirit of hers is going to get her into more trouble than she knows. I only hope that I'm close by to help her out of the mess she might find herself in.

He felt himself slowing down, and he knew he'd have to end this dive now or he wouldn't make it back in so easily. His thoughts turned to Trisha again, *I know she's not going to like this, but it has to be so. Trisha honey, I don't know about you, but I am getting more than a little tired. I think it's long past time that we went in.*

He reached over and touched Trisha's shoulder. He pointed to his watch, then to the surface. Trisha shook her head. She didn't want to go in just yet; she wanted to go back for the other rocks. Martin insisted. Trisha again shook her head. Martin insisted more forcefully. Trisha shrugged, turned to look at where her "treasure" was, and then reluctantly followed Martin as they turned toward shore and headed back in.

As they walked out of the water, Trisha pulled her hood off and shook her hair loose. "Didn't you think the water was a little warm today," she asked Martin.

"Seemed so," he answered. "But there's nothing unusual about that."

"You don't think so?"

"No, why ... do you?"

"Oh, I don't know," she said, shaking her head, "it seemed a great deal warmer than usual today, almost too hot to stay in for very long."

"Oh, I don't know," Martin answered with a slight smile. "Seems to me as if we had been in the water far longer than we should have been, at this moment in time."

Trisha laughed, and said, "Maybe for you, but not for me. Anyway, it wasn't only the heated swim, but there seemed to be an unusual amount of destruction below as well, as if the entire ocean floor was turned upside down," she said thoughtfully, "or maybe I don't remember how it was before, since it's been a while since I was here last. What do you think?"

"That could be it," Martin answered. But remember Trisha, my love, like the desert sands that shift with the changing winds, so it is with the floor of the sea shifting with the flow of the changing currents and turbulences that can wreak havoc deep beneath its calm surface."

"There is that. Then again, it could be something else. Something we haven't even considered," she said, with a gentle laugh.

Martin shot a quick look at Trisha, *wonder what she meant by that. No matter, I'm too tired to think about that now. Whatever it is, she'll tell me about it soon enough.*

* * * *

It was early evening and Martin's shack was silhouetted against a row of palm trees. Light shone from the windows, through the open door and across the clean wide sandy expanse to the ocean. Moonlight reflected on the calm seas, as waves crested, broke, and rolled up on the sandy beach.

Martin sat snug in his black, soft leather chair while Trisha, enraptured by his words, sat on the floor by his feet ... spellbound as he wove his magic. *I could sit here for hours listening to him talk about these Islands*, she thought. *He makes it all seem so real.*

Stopping momentarily, Martin looked down at Trisha's upturned face. Her eyes were shining and she looked as if she had been transported back into the past. He smiled to himself. *She looks like I must have, so many years ago, each and every time I heard the ancient stories. These stories handed down from one generation to the next affect me the same way today as they did when I first heard them.*

With his voice taking on a mysterious intonation, Martin continued. "Legend has it that Pele, the goddess of fire and volcanoes, first tried to make a home on this island for herself and her lover, Lohiau, who at that time, was the King of Kauai. But when she couldn't dig a dry pit, where she could start her fire, she moved on to the other islands. She finally made her stand at the island of Hawaii, where she lives today ... in the volcano Kilauea—That's why it still belches fire, now and again." He smiled down at Trisha, waiting for her to comment, but when he looked at her, she seemed to be in another world, so he continued.

"And besides being the original home of the goddess Pele before she moved southward, Kauai belonged to the homeland of a great race of people who pre-dated the Polynesians. These people, I am proud to say, were my ancestors."

That comment shook her out of her reverie. "You keep saying that. But you never say who they were or where they came from?"

"I guess it's because no one really knows. Many legends have been passed down through the years. But the one my people believe most is the one that says our people are survivors from the Lost Continent of Lemuria.

"Of course that's not its real name. That name was given to it by some people who needed to explain how lemurs ... you know those funny little monkeys ... got from one place to another. Naturally, there had to be land of some kind involved, a bridge, a continent, something ... so around 1887, for want of a better name they gave the land of my ancestors the geological name, Lemuria.

"The legend goes on to say that Mankind's first civilization appeared on this giant continent approximately 78,000 years ago and lasted for over 50,000 years until it was destroyed by earthquakes."

"For someone who isn't interested in this stuff that would be hard for them to believe ... You know that don't you?"

"Yes, but the important thing is I believe. Do you?"

"I don't know, yet. But I must say I do find it fascinating. How big was this continent and where was it located?"

"It was a giant continent. Some say it covered the entire Southern Hemisphere. Others say it touched North America on the east and Asia on the west. Still others say that present day Australia, New Zealand, The Philippines, western North America and everything in between including Easter Island and these Hawaiian Islands are remnants of that giant continent. Its real name, however, was not Lemuria as some would say, but Mukulia, or Mu and it disappeared below the waters of the Pacific many Centuries ago."

Trisha, thoroughly enthralled, listened intently as Martin continued to talk long into the night.

Chapter 3

Trisha's home in the foothills of the West Maui Mountains was comfortably furnished. Even to a casual observer the living room had the look of a retired sea captain. An unusually large carpeted room, closed in on one side by sliding glass doors, opened to the back patio affording the Holden family a wide expansive view of the mountains. A large picture window on the opposite wall looked out at a lush green valley.

Joe Holden, tall, lean, graying at the temples, lit his pipe as he looked at the barometer hanging on the fireplace wall, next to the sliding doors. A crackling fire burned in the huge fireplace on the main wall. Trisha stood in the kitchen doorway with an enormous amount of research material in her arms and watched her father.

Joe tapped the barometer with his pipe stem. Without turning he addressed Trisha. "Looks like a storm brewing. The barometric pressure is falling."

Trisha didn't answer right away. She felt a surge of sadness for her father. *Guess Dad really misses the sea*, she thought. *One look at this room will tell anyone that.*

Smiling brightly, she said, "That's okay. I've got enough material from our local library researching Martin's stories to keep me busy for awhile. A storm will only add to the mystique of the legends."

She walked into the room and spread her papers and books on the floor in front of the fire. Joe turned away from the barometer, sat down in his favorite overstuffed chair, and puffed away on his pipe as he watched his daughter. His tanned handsome face cracked a smile.

"Did you know there is a lot of material here," she said, waving her hand over the papers laid out in front of her, "on the legends of the Menehunes?" Trisha asked.

"Now why would I know that?"

Trisha looked up at her father and smiled. "I just thought you did."

"No, never went in for that stuff. Got all I wanted to know from Martin."

"Well, I'm fascinated by it. According to this particular book," she said, reading from the pages before her, "the Menehunes were short, stocky people and were strong, skilled workers in stone." She stopped momentarily thinking about what she read before she continued, "The reason people refer to Alakoko as the Menehune Fishpond in Huleia River is because the Menehune's were building the pond for a princess and her brother. But there was a condition attached. No mortals could watch the little people as they worked and the job had to be completed in a single night.

"But Royalty being what it is couldn't stay away. In the glare of the moonlight the princess and her brother watched as the little people lined up in double rows, as far as the eye could see, passing each rock from hand to hand to workers at the dam. Mesmerized by the scene before them, the Royal Couple became careless and were discovered by the Menehunes. True to their code, the Menehunes turned them into twin pillars of stone, at the spot where they stood, on the mountainside above the pool.

"It says here, you can still see the statues if you'd care to, standing where they were, when the Menehunes caught them. You see, according to this, if anyone watched the little people building their heiaus ... you know, dams, ditches, and trails, the Menehunes would turn them into stone. No one was allowed to see what they did."

"Fascinating," Joe said puffing on his pipe and chuckling.

Trisha put the book down and stared off into space thinking about the Menehunes, how they would complete a job in a single night, under cover of darkness, or never return to it, and she wondered about the many heiaus—dams, ditches and trails—supposedly built by these little people scattered all over Kauai.

She looked at her father suddenly and asked, "Do you think there really is anything to this?"

"I don't know, Honey."

A sudden thought struck Trisha and she giggled, "I don't know if they know it or not, but we definitely have something in common with the Irish..."

"Such as?" he asked, amused.

"Leprechauns!"

Joe looked up suddenly and they both laughed.

She sobered quickly. "But for all of this," she waved her arms over the material spread on the floor before her, "there is precious little information about where Martin's ancestors came from. It's just as Martin said. Some people, Martin included, believe the pre-Polynesians were survivors of the Lost Continent of Mu..."

"Did Martin say that?" Joe asked, puffing on his pipe and chuckling again.

Trisha looked puzzled. "Didn't he ever tell you?"

"Many times."

"About them being his ancestors?"

"Yes."

Trisha shook her head. "Strange, it's as if they suddenly appeared on Mu from out of the blue."

"Maybe they did."

"What?"

"Maybe they did come from out of the blue!"

"Dad. Be serious."

"I am Honey, I am."

"You don't mean space. Do you?"

"Anything is possible. You said so yourself."

"Okay, Dad. Okay."

Sitting cross-legged on the floor, Trisha shuffled the papers as if she was looking for something special. After a moment or two, she picked up some Xeroxed sheets, and read:

"According to the information on these papers, which by the way the Librarian let me copy from a book at the library, the physical location of Mu at one time actually touched North America on one side, and Asia on the other," she paused momentarily, then added, "know what I think?"

"No, but I'm sure you'll tell me."

Trisha laughed. "See this. If you look at these maps, and a map of the mainland, you can see where Mu, or at least the eastern part of it, is now part of the North American Continent. See where the Continental Divide is?"

"Yes, I see it," Joe said slowly.

"Well if you look closely at the contour of the Divide and the contour of this other map of Mu, you can see where it all seems to fit together."

"Okay, what's your point?"

"My point is that all of this territory," she swept her hand from the Continental Divide to the Pacific Ocean, "was, or I guess you could say is, part of the Lost Continent of Mu. That would make North America the oldest as well as the newest Continent on this planet."

Joe Holden stared at his daughter.

Encouraged by her father's undivided attention, Trisha continued, "I'll go even further and say that the first Americans, both north and south were colonists and survivors from Mu."

Joe cleared his throat, "Colonists and survivors?"

"Yes, don't you see? People from Mu had colonized Earth long before it disappeared. It was called the 'Cradle of Civilization'. Mu was considered the 'Motherland of Man'. Certainly people from Mu would colonize the Earth. Aren't we trying to do the same thing, sort of?"

"You lost me."

"Space exploration ... wouldn't we colonize space if we could?"

"Yes, I suppose that is our ultimate intention sooner or later."

"Well then, why is it so hard to believe Mu would colonize Earth? Her civilization flourished for 52,000 years."

"Is that what Martin told you?"

"No, he only said that Mu disappeared beneath the waters of the Pacific 12,000 years ago, obliterated by devastating earthquakes, and volcanic upheavals causing it to vanish in a vortex of fire and water, taking with it its sixty-four million inhabitants."

"Is that so, and with sixty-four million people to boot? Did Martin really say that? Did he really tell you that sixty-four million people were swept away with the continent? He couldn't have been serious when he told you that. He was just embellishing on a legend ... right?" Joe asked, frowning.

"No, Dad. Martin wasn't exaggerating. It was all in my research. Mu did exist and there really were sixty-four million people living on that continent. And Mu did colonize other lands before it disappeared beneath the surface of the waters, just like he said," Trisha answered, sadly.

She stared at her father waiting for some comment. Joe nodded, sat back in his chair and puffed on his pipe as he assimilated everything Trisha had said, wondering what she had on her mind. She broke the silence between them.

"The more research I do, the more I think about how things were."

"Such as?"

"The Memorial at Pearl."

"What has that got to do with your Research?"

"I can't help wondering about the Arizona and the men who were lost on it. And the people who were lost on Mu..."

Joe waited for Trisha to continue.

"...I can't help wondering what other tragedies or mysteries are hidden beneath the waters of the Pacific."

Joe watched Trisha carefully.

"Just think. Every time we visit Martin we could be stepping on the very spot where one of the Ancients may have walked upon before they returned to Mu and a watery grave."

Trisha shuddered visibly. "It makes me shudder when I think about it. But I'm caught up in the mystique of this Ancient Civilization. Somehow, whenever I go swimming, or scuba diving off Ke'e Beach, I seem to feel closer to the people who once inhabited Kauai so many centuries ago. It's almost as if I transcend all time and space. As if I've traveled backwards in time ... to 12,000 years in the past. Wouldn't it be something if we could actually see what Mu was really like?"

A worried look creased Joe's face as he watched his daughter. "Honey, don't get carried away with this. It's nice to learn about the beginning of things, but I don't want it to become an obsession with you. Remember, Honey, they were Martin's ancestors, not yours."

"Don't worry, Dad. I'm fascinated, not bewitched. Besides, Father dear, maybe they were ancestors of ours, as well. If Mu was the 'Cradle of Civilization' and the 'Motherhood of Man' as it has been written, then maybe we did all come from that place on Earth and can claim to be descendents of those who walked its hallowed grounds. And if at first they came from the stars, what's to say we didn't either? You know, Dad, anything is possible." She laughed suddenly.

Joe Holden looked at his daughter incredulously, shook his head and, moments later in spite of himself, had to laugh along with her.

Chapter 4

Early the following morning Joe Holden walked out into his pineapple fields simply to watch the sunrise. It was a ritual he enjoyed doing as often as the 'gods' would allow.

"Dad!" Trisha called to him as she ran out to meet him. "I see you're still up to your old tricks. Had breakfast yet?"

"No," he called back grinning as he watched her close the distance between them. "I've been waiting for you."

Trisha hugged and kissed her father, then laid her head on his shoulder as she, too, watched the golden orb ascend into Maui's sapphire sky. Sighing audibly, she murmured softly, "It's so beautiful. I wonder if Maui was always like this."

"Maui hasn't changed one iota since the day it was first discovered from what I can see," Joe said.

"I know, isn't it marvelous?"

Giving her father another squeeze, Trisha cried, "Beat you back to the house. Last one in has to make breakfast."

Joe laughed, "How about a nice juicy pineapple to start with?"

"Sounds great to me," Trisha yelled, as she slackened her pace so that her father could catch up.

Standing at the kitchen door Trisha watched as her father, bending over the counter, expertly cut up the pineapple for their breakfast.

"Do you want cereal, toast, bacon and eggs, or what to go with it?" she asked.

"No, I don't think so, wouldn't want to spoil the taste of this fresh, juicy pineapple with something as mundane as bacon and eggs. This will do for me," Joe said, "how about you?"

"Yeah, I can go along with that. Like you, I can also enjoy a fresh pineapple without any added ingredients," she answered, with a slight shake of her head as she smiled inwardly at her father's remark.

Trisha looked around the kitchen, as if she was making an important memory, she didn't know why she felt the need just that it seemed to be important to do so at the time. It was the calendar that caught her eye, as she set the coffee cups on the table, and eased her unexpected anxiety.

"Hmmm," she said, laughing. "Dad, do you know what day this is?"

"Yes," he said without looking up. "It's Friday. Friday the 13th," he added, as he placed the plate of cut pineapple on the kitchen table. "Why?" he asked, as he sat down and prepared to serve himself.

"Oh nothing," she said as she joined him, sitting across from him and reaching for the fruit to place on her own plate. "I was just wondering if you knew where the ominous 'Friday, the 13th' originated from?"

"Never gave it much thought," he grinned, enjoying his pineapple before sipping his coffee.

"I know you won't believe this, but it has something to do with the research I'm involved in."

"Really! Now why doesn't that surprise me? Let's see, let me guess. You can't possibly mean Mu?"

"Well, actually, yes."

"Tell me, what has one got to do with the other?"

"Well, in one of the books I read, it mentioned something about numbers and the number 13 being unlucky, especially in conjunction with Friday, and with Mu."

"So?"

"Well, according to ancient records and legends, Mu, the 'Motherland of Man' disappeared beneath the ocean on a Friday, and on the thirteenth day of the month of Zac, which was also known as a white month."

"What in blazes is a white month, and what or who is the month of Zac?"

"I don't know. I haven't found any reference to it, or how they were able to determine the exact day or month. But, for what it's worth, as Martin would say, because Mu disappeared on Friday the 13th, that's where the myth originated from," she quipped.

Dropping her voice to simulate Martin's, she continued, "Legend has it that in memory of that catastrophic day, the date will always be considered an unlucky one for mankind.' So, there you have it."

"Guess that's as good a reason as any."

"I knew you would say that."

"Well, Honey, what do you want me to say? It's possible that's where the legend came from. It's no different than the 'three men on a match' theory, which originated during the First World War.

"As the story goes, three men were huddled together on the front lines somewhere in France, I believe it was, lighting their cigarettes. By the time the third cigarette was lit, the Germans had a bead on the men and the third man was killed. You know, Honey, every legend has something behind it. And who knows ... you could be right. Besides, you know, I kind of like the one you have about Mu. It has a mystic flair about it."

"Yeah, I thought it was pretty neat, too. And, I'm sure Martin will be pleased as well. Speaking of Martin, as soon as we're finished with breakfast how about coming to Ke'e with me? Martin would love to have you diving with us again. C'mon Dad. It will do you good."

"Some other time, perhaps, but Honey, I'd just as soon stay here and check the fields, okay? Say hello to Martin for me and tell him it's been awhile since he's been here. I expected him here two weeks ago. He'd better have a good reason for not showing up," Joe chuckled and Trisha laughed lightly.

"I'll tell him, Dad," Trisha said as she hurried to clear the table, wash the dishes and rushed to get her things together for her week long visit to Ke'e.

* * * *

Ke'e held a fascination for her she could not explain. And the more she swam with Martin, the more adept at scuba diving she became. It was as if she was possessed. She bought all the extra latest equipment she could afford, including a facemask with a purge valve in it. She wanted to be sure she could get rid of any water that might get trapped inside her mask.

Several days later, anxious to try out some of her newest equipment, Trisha met Martin at the beach. The launch was ready and waiting, as soon as Trisha climbed aboard they sailed out a short distance and Martin proceeded to test Trisha's skills with the new equipment. After watching and checking Trisha's ability to balance the nitrogen and other gases she would be diving with, Martin believed it was time to move out into deeper water. Thirty minutes later, he felt it was time they headed back in.

As always they would spend the evening catching up on the news and Trisha's continuing search for information.

"How's the research going?" Martin asked, as he settled himself into his favorite chair and waited to hear what new revelations Trisha was going to spring on him.

As usual, Trisha would sit on the floor eager for more of Martin's legends, but first it was her time to tell of her recent research, and she began almost immediately before settling down.

"The other day I came across some information that more or less confirmed a theory of mine."

"And what could that be?"

"Well, one day Dad and I were talking about Mu and I said I thought all the land west of the Continental Divide, on the mainland, was the eastern end of Mu..."

"What did he say?"

"Not much, just listened, mostly."

"It wouldn't be Joe if he didn't."

"Yes, I know, but wait, what I'm trying to say is that the Californians have some very strange and mysterious traditions that seem to stem from some ancient history that has nothing to do with the rest of the United States."

"Hmmm, that sounds like a very profound statement," Martin said in the most somber voice he could muster.

Trisha looked up at Martin, cocked her head to see if he was mocking her, when his expression didn't change, she shook her head, and plunged on. "Well, take the name California for instance..."

Martin smiled. "Yes, I've heard the story about Queen Califa and the Island of California that she ruled over, as well as how romantic and mythical her people were."

"Do you believe it?"

"There is some truth in all legends."

"There is a globe in Nancy, France, dating back to 1531 that shows California as an Island off the coast of North America and was considered a part of a larger continent that disappeared. Of course, California doesn't look anything like that now, but the people who made the globe constructed it with information received from ancient mariners, so there must be something to it.

"There are all sorts of stories about California. There's even speculation about Queen Moo and the islands off Santa Barbara being remnants of Mu. And about Mt. Shasta in northern California, with her mysterious and secretive people, and other areas on this side of the Divide, all as having been a part of it. Artifacts have been found in all those areas that substantiate the theory that all the lands west of the

Continental Divide are indeed remnants of the ancient continent of Mu. And the books I have been reading seem to bear that out."

"Most of the stories I tell you say the same thing, so why are you spending so much time on this, Trisha. Don't you believe me?"

"Yes, Martin, of course I do. But I like to know that others have written it down, so there is a permanent record of it. You know, Martin, it's like I said to Dad, wouldn't it be great if somehow we could go back in time and really see what Mukulia was like? I really do like calling it Mukulia rather than Lemuria, don't you?"

"I think you're getting too carried away with this, Trisha. It's long past time you concentrated on other subjects as well."

"You sound just like Dad."

"I don't wonder."

Martin and Trisha continued this ritual throughout the summer and Trisha became more of an expert diver than even Martin believed possible.

* * * *

On one of the waning days of summer, Trisha coaxed Martin into deep sea diving. Reluctant, at first, Martin finally capitulated to Trisha's request and they were soon enjoying their underwater sojourn.

Time passed quickly and Martin was about to suggest they go in when he felt a sharp pain in his chest. He started toward the surface hoping to reach the launch before the pain overwhelmed him. Trisha, momentarily distracted by a school of fish swimming past, was unaware of what was developing behind her.

She turned toward Martin to point out the aquatics, and realized immediately he was in serious trouble and rushed toward him. She grabbed for Martin and desperately tried to guide him toward the launch. She realized she was racing against time. She had to get him aboard the launch and into a hospital. Her beloved Martin was in danger, and all she could think of was, he would never dive with her again.

She fought back the tears as she struggled to push Martin into the boat. Under full throttle, Trisha raced toward shore, calling the Coast Guard on the ship to shore for help.

Periodically checking on Martin as she pushed the boat forward, Trisha hoped against hope that Martin wasn't showing any signs of the bends. She saw him writhing in pain and wasn't sure what was happening. When they reached the dock, the Coast Guard was ready for them and immediately transferred Martin to the decompression chamber and into an ambulance as he was being taken to the hospital.

It was touch and go for a time, but luckily for Martin it turned out to be a near miss as far as the bends were concerned. Martin was hospitalized for several weeks and Trisha spent as much time visiting him, as her father would allow.

* * * *

On one such visit when her father was with her, Martin was sleeping. Joe was worried. He turned to his daughter and said, "You know, Honey, Martin isn't going to be doing any more deep sea diving. You understand that, don't you? He's going to need your help to keep him away from doing something that could kill him."

"I know, Dad. Don't worry. Maybe we can talk Martin into moving in with us. There is plenty of room, and maybe Martin would like the company. I know he loves the water and his shack, but he doesn't have to give it up. You can both look on it as a vacation place to get away from everything and just relax by the ocean. Even I can use it, if he'll let me; I can spend time there when I'm off treasure hunting.

"No Dad, don't worry, I won't go in alone. Martin has introduced me to many good divers and I'll only go out with the ones he trusts the most—okay?"

"We'll see," Joe said. "First things first, get Martin well and at our plantation where he can recuperate, sit, and watch the mountains, while enjoying our luscious pineapples..."

"Sounds good to me," Martin said. His eyes were closed but he heard every word. "I trust Trisha to make the right choice with partners, Joe. Don't worry. All the people I've introduced her to are tops in the field."

"Take your word for it Martin," Joe said.

Trisha beamed. "Well glad that's all settled," she smiled.

* * * *

Martin's confidence in her was all Trisha needed to spread her wings and join other treasure hunters. These were people who would be diving deeper than she had ever gone, even with Martin. They were divers who would not risk their lives with someone who might prove unreliable when the going got rough and Trisha had to prove herself before she could become a part of them.

Martin no longer felt the excitement, the curiosity, the challenge, deep water diving held for him. He felt he was too old, and the near miss he had shook him to the core. His only regret was that Trisha might find something significant and he would not be able to share that moment with her. All he wanted to do now was 'putter' around the edges where diving was concerned and he was reluctant to do anything else. He was content to live at the plantation with Joe and Trisha and he decided to deed his shack to her.

"After all," he said to Joe, "Sooner or later she's going to want to spend some time alone and not with two old fogies like us."

Someone younger, stronger had to take his place alongside Trisha as her diving companion. He would continue to look. He would find the perfect partner for his beloved Trisha, he was sure of it, he assured Joe and himself.

Trisha had yet to meet anyone who enjoyed spending as much time under water as she did. Consequently, her diving partners were always different and somewhat reluctant to go along with her. Sooner or later, she knew, she was bound to run out of partners—and she dreaded that day.

* * * *

The day came sooner than she expected. It was a beautiful and warm day. The sun shone brilliantly in the deep, soft blue sky, and Trisha wanted to go diving. She tried talking Joe and Martin into going to Ke'e with her, but neither wanted to budge.

"Too bad," she said, "Ke'e is only a short flight away, and it wouldn't hurt either one of you to spend some time by the ocean."

"I know, I know," Joe answered. "But neither of us is up to it now."

Trisha shrugged, "Well at least take me to the airport, Lihue's only twenty minutes away can't either one

of you spare the time?"

"Okay, okay," Joe laughed, "We'll take you to the airport."

Trisha said her good-bye's before boarding her plane and Martin admonished her one last time.

"Don't take any unnecessary chances, Trisha. Remember stay with your partner no matter what."

"Don't worry, Dad, I won't do anything that Martin wouldn't do," she said, laughing as she called back and waved to them, before she entered her plane.

Joe and Martin stayed behind long after the plane had departed before heading back toward the plantation.

"Hope she doesn't do anything foolish," Joe said, as they stood there watching the plane disappear into the distance.

"My thoughts exactly," Martin echoed.

* * * *

From Lihue, Trisha's plane flew north to Princeville Airport, where she rented a car then drove to Ke'e beach. Martin's shack was empty and waiting for her. Even though it was hers now, it would always be Martin's shack. She stood at the door and looked out over the ocean. The sun's rays reflecting on the shimmering water made it look warm and inviting. *I can hardly wait to go in*, she thought. *Hope someone's around to join me. I suppose there are always the wet and dry caves to explore here, but it's not what I want to do. I have a feeling this is going to be a great day ... A truly, magnificent, day!*

Trisha felt a sense of adventure, a real find in the offing, and she did not want to miss it. She could not explain the feeling. All she knew was that she had to find someone to go with her, and they had to go today, tomorrow would not do. But there was no one, no one who wanted to spend that glorious day under water. In spite of all her pleading and cajoling, Trisha could not change anyone's mind.

* * * *

She was excited. But she did not know why. She knew she shouldn't be doing this, *but once can't hurt. Who's going to know anyway?* Somehow she sensed this was going to be an important day for her. And she was confident. She had dressed quickly. Her wetsuit matched the morning sky. She secured her facemask, flippers, two air tanks, weights and other equipment in place. She was not planning on going much beyond 200 feet, maybe 225 or 250, but no deeper. Deciding on her underwater camera as well as her light, she fastened both for easy access. She sat on the side of the motor launch and adjusted her facemask, checking the purge valve one last time. In truth, she looked like an invader from space, sitting there, dressed in blue and blending in with the sea and sky as she prepared to dive into the deep waters of the Pacific.

There would be no one with her this trip, no one waiting in the launch for her return, and no one knowing what she was up to. For a fleeting moment she wondered if she was making a mistake, going it alone, but she shrugged it off. So against all the rules of diving safety, and Martin's admonitions, Trisha plunged into the sea.

* * * *

The water seemed blacker than she remembered. Surface light no longer penetrated to the depths of the cave. She had not planned on being this deep, and she had the strangest feeling that nothing would ever be the same again.

She began her quest carefully inspecting everything that came within her range as she moved further and further away from the launch. She had no idea what she was searching for, but the air of expectation would not leave. Something was there—waiting for her to find it—she knew it. Trisha explored one underwater cave after another until she felt she could no longer stay submerged.

Trisha checked the air in her tanks. Her time was almost up. There was no question; she would have to surface soon. *Still*, she thought, *I do have enough air so I don't have to rush. I know I have been lucky*, she thought, *luckier than most*. She had never experienced the 'bends' *and I certainly am not planning on starting now*. Then, too, thanks to Martin's training, she knew she could always attempt to 'breathe her tanks dry' or wait until they were completely empty before surfacing. *I would have to come up slowly, if I did that, about a foot per second, exhaling all the way, or risk a burst lung sac, but that*, she thought, *is too dangerous to attempt without Martin at my side*. But Martin wasn't with her, no one was, and she didn't think she could do it alone. She shook her head. *Guess I'd better stick to what I know*, she thought.

Trisha swung her underwater camera around for one last look. She was astounded to see how the recent subterranean earthquakes and volcanic activity had changed everything since her last dive. New underwater caves appeared where there were none before. But time was growing short. Yet, the air of expectation would not leave. Again she swung her camera, slowly, methodically. *What was that!* Startled by a moving shadow that caught her eye, she swam quickly toward it, her heart pounding, and her legs working furiously, while she rapidly depleted the precious air from her tanks.

It was then she saw the object. She wondered, briefly, why she had not seen it earlier. *No matter*, she thought, *I see it now*. It was to her right about twenty-five feet inside the cave. It seemed as if it had suddenly sprung from the floor of the cave, while she wasn't looking, just to catch her. Trisha quickly looked around. She shook her head and smiled at her unreasoning nervousness.

Reaching her prize, she tried frantically to dislodge it. She realized almost immediately, it was deeply imbedded. Gripping the edge of the 'artifact', she tried to wiggle it free. Her gloves made it difficult for her to hold on. She felt the object move, but the pressure of the water at that depth hindered her efforts. She continued to struggle with it until she managed to expose enough of the monolith to see that something, some kind of a flower and inscription, was carved into it. She was pretty sure she was looking at a lotus flower. But she had no idea what the inscription meant, nor did she have time to wonder about it. If only she could wrench it free and bring it to the surface with her. *Wouldn't Martin and Dad be surprised?*

Her efforts were expended. Her safety measure, the time and air she needed to reach the surface safely, was gone. She knew now she would have to surface quicker than she had anticipated, and without bringing the object up with her. Trisha wavered, knowing if she left the area now, she might never find it again. But if she didn't, she may never dive again. She had to hurry. She would never make it to the surface if she didn't start now. But Trisha Holden had hesitated much too long.

Chapter 5

Beneath her the ocean floor began to move. *A shift in the plates*, she thought. *Oh God, no! Not an earthquake ... not now. Please not now.* In a panic, Trisha dumped her weight belt, camera and lights unceremoniously. Pushing them aside, she scrambled out of the cave in an effort to reach the surface, before its full force struck her.

In the semi-darkness she could see the water churning violently. She heard the rumblings as the underwater caves began to crumble and disintegrate. Huge rocks and boulders spewed out all around her, as if they were huge pebbles, as she raced for the surface.

Trisha felt the shock waves moments before being caught up in a whirlpool. The vortex held her fleeing body captive, bouncing and tossing her around as if she was a bubble of air, dragging her back to the depths below. As the destruction of the underwater caves continued unabated, Trisha was driven further and further away from the surface and the safety of her motor launch bobbing lifelessly in the sea above.

Convinced all was lost, her mind raced crazily on as she fought desperately against the churning, angry waters. There was no escape. She needed a miracle to release her from her watery grave. Her tanks were all but empty. She was gasping at the air that was left, *not enough to reach the surface. No one, not Martin, not Dad would know what happened.*

She felt cheated. She didn't want to die—not like this. Life was ending for her before she had a chance to live, a chance to meet that special person her father always talked about. *And Dad*, a sob caught in her throat, *what would he do without me?* She wished she had listened. She wished she had heeded Martin and Dad's admonitions. She wished she could see them again. But it was too late. And as she felt the tears flowing down her face, her mask began to cloud.

* * * *

Trisha felt light-headed and giddy. Suddenly nothing mattered. While in the grip of the turbulent water, she seemed to be drifting through space. Inexplicably the bottom of the sea cracked open with a muffled roar. Trisha could not believe what was happening as she was swept through the fissure in the ocean's floor. The whirlpool, the awful churning blackness, the horrifying deafening roar was gone, and the rift sealed above her. All was silent, stilled, in this abyss. As she lost consciousness, she was vaguely aware of a deadly silence descending upon her, and a brilliant, blinding glow exploding everywhere. All motion stopped. Far above an empty motor launch, the only visible evidence that something occurred in the depths below waited patiently at anchor on a now calm sea.

* * * *

A blinding light jolted her back to reality. The brilliant glare hurt her eyes. She could not escape it. She was confused, disoriented and frightened. She felt as if she was in a trance, hovering in endless space, cradled in a soft billowing cloud. It was as if some huge, gentle hand held her, carefully carrying her through a labyrinth, a bubble, a ceiling, or an illusion to a beautifully marbled room and lowering her gently to the black variegated floor beneath her. The air was deathly stilled. She could not speak. She was no more stunned than the young golden-haired man who watched or 'controlled' her fall appeared to be.

She stared at him, bewildered. Somewhere in all the recent turmoil, she lost her facemask and her gloves. Unconsciously, she rubbed her bare hands on the black mottled floor as she looked up, from where she was sprawled, at the young, golden-haired stranger standing alongside her, who somehow seemed familiar. The young man looked down on her and smiled. He did not speak, and he did not take his eyes

off her.

The room was exquisite, breathtakingly beautiful. The white, marbled statues that circled the room, each depicting a special scene of some kind, symmetrically broke the black striated walls. The one that momentarily held her attention stretched from the ceiling to the floor.

At first glance it looked as if two small golden rings shone inside a six-pointed star. A pair of larger outer circles, which were divided into twelve perfect scallops, embraced it. A huge wide ribbon, divided into eight segments, fell from the base of the perimeter. But what struck her most about the setting was its golden aura. On either side of the princely tableau were black marbled stairways leading away from the room to other parts of this strange New World.

She wanted to scream, when she first looked up, but she could not. Still sprawled on the marbled floor, she stared at the waters, wide-eyed, terrified. Above her the now contained waters of the Pacific flowed visibly overhead. She was afraid to move, afraid of breaking the spell. Afraid that if she did, the ocean would come crashing down on her. If this were a dream, she would just as soon leave that part out.

* * * *

"You are not where you think you are," her rescuer said quietly.

Her escort continued to observe her. "Don't be afraid," his deep, penetrating voice said. "You are quite safe here. It can't hurt you."

She heard the words as if they were coming from a great distance, and turned away from the menacing waters overhead to fix her eyes on the young, golden-haired man. He smiled down on her but did not speak.

He helped her to her feet. His eyes were like two blue sapphires. Deeply set in his soft, gentle, milk-white face, they caught and held hers captive.

"Don't look up if it bothers you." He smiled, and the warmth of it eased her fears.

"Aren't you worried?" she whispered, with a horrified look at the waters overhead then to her rescuer and back to the waters again.

"No," he said quietly, trying to reassure her. "There's no cause to be."

"Won't, won't," she repeated; "the water?"

"No," he said before she could finish. "It won't."

"Oh," she sighed relieved, then smiled nervously.

"Come," he said. "There are others waiting to welcome you."

"Others? What others?"

"You'll see."

"How could 'others' be waiting to welcome me if I had no way of knowing I was going to be here myself?"

"You were expected."

"I don't understand."

"You will."

She stared at him momentarily confused, still trying to place him, shrugged her shoulders and followed his lead, past the golden tableau to the steps beyond. Trisha looked back over her shoulder at the large statues and muffled a cry. *That's not a star!* Her thoughts rushed on. *It's two equilateral triangles. They're interlocked with one another. And there's a tiny golden disc inside its small golden rings. This all means something*, she thought more quietly, trying to hold down her excitement and her fears. *I'm sure of it. But, what?*

"Yes," her escort answered. "It does mean something. And you are quite right. It is religious in nature. It is the very reason for our being. In time, you will learn the meaning of our existence and our world."

"How did you know what I was thinking? How could you know? What do you mean ... in time? I have no plans to stay here and I'm not staying here! Not if I have anything to say about it," she said stunned, nervously fingering the diamond pendant she wore around her neck.

"Not with that..." She pointed her right index finger to the waters above, and vigorously punched it up and down to drive home her point, "...that hanging over my head!" She made a concerted effort not to look up as she spoke.

The young man sighed patiently. "We can discuss all of this at another time."

* * * *

He continued to guide her down the black marbled steps to the huge white variegated hall below. The people in the huge chamber, obviously waiting for something, were milling around. They stopped, gasped audibly and stared unashamedly when Trisha appeared on the steps with one of their people. Trisha stared back, not only at the people, but also at the huge assemblage below. She saw a race of beings with milk-white skins, blue eyes, and flaxen hair. They saw a beautiful young woman, who stood out in their golden-haired society, a young Terrestrial with long, black hair, fair complexion, and large blue eyes. No one moved. No one made a sound.

Marble seems to be in abundance here, and they used it most effectively, Trisha thought. She laughed quietly to herself. *But this wasn't imported from Rome.*

Her subterranean escort smiled. Taking Trisha by the hand, he gently wrapped her arm around his as he placed his hand possessively on hers. "Come Patricia, the Governor is waiting."

"How, how, do you know my name?" Trisha asked, bewildered.

"You told me."

Her hand tightened in his as their descent brought them closer and closer to the people assembled below. He squeezed her hand reassuringly.

"No, I didn't." Her eyes did not stray from the gathering in the auditorium. "I never gave you my name."

"Then, how could I have known?" he asked, smiling.

"I don't know," she answered, annoyed. "But you did that before."

"What?" he asked, as his smile widened.

"I'm not sure, but..." she hesitated before plunging on, "I think you read minds. I think you read my mind. You do, *do that*, don't you?"

"Are you asking or telling?"

"I'm asking."

"Well then, as long as you're asking, yes. There are many things we do that may seem strange to you, but," he smiled disarmingly. "It is all quite natural for us, as you will soon learn."

"You keep saying that!" Trisha said increasingly annoyed. She was not only annoyed with herself, but with him, whoever he was, and with her situation, and it showed.

She asked, more in anger than she intended, "What is your name, anyway?"

"I thought you'd never ask," he said laughing softly.

"Well!" Trisha demanded.

The subterranean answered, quietly, "My name is Kan."

"Kan? Kan, what?"

"Just Kan."

"Oh," she said, finally looking away from the people and looking up at him, puzzled.

* * * *

People milled around her, touched her and she smiled at their awkwardness, half-heartedly. She watched as a figure suddenly entered the hall. She saw a duplicate of Kan coming toward them as people gave way to him. He looked as if he was covering the huge chamber with a few long strides and was almost upon them.

Trisha turned to Kan. "The Governor I presume."

"Yes, Zac. Zac is our Governor."

Zac was beaming, his arms outstretched. "Koaha-E, Kan! What have we here?"

"Koaha-E, Zac!" Kan replied, grinning. "A Terrestrial, a frightened Terrestrial."

"Ah Trisha," Zac said, beaming once again. "There's no need to be frightened. Once we were 'Terrestrials', but..." he smiled patronizingly, "that was many centuries ago."

"She wants to return to the surface."

"She'll get over that. She'll have to."

"What did you say?" Trisha asked, stunned.

"I said you wanted to return to the surface," Kan answered.

"And I said..."

"No ... I mean before that?"

"That you were frightened...?"

"No ... When the Governor first came in."

Kan and Zac looked at one another then to Trisha.

"You said, Koaha-E. I heard you. You both said Koaha-E!" Trisha whispered in disbelief, staring at the two of them.

"Yes," Kan said, "Koaha-E means..."

"I know what it means! I just can't believe you said it here. I mean, in this place."

"Now I don't understand you," Kan said glancing at Zac as he addressed Trisha.

"That's an Ancient greeting. I mean Martin said it was handed down from one generation to the next. How come you know it?"

"Yes. That sounds like something your Martin would say."

"What do you know about Martin? I mean, how could you?"

"All in due time Trisha, but Koaha-E? Yes, it is an Ancient greeting handed down from one generation to another and it all began here."

"How could it?"

"Later, Trisha."

"Martin?" Trisha persisted.

"You brought him with you in your thoughts."

"What else?"

"The images uppermost in your mind were your father and Martin. You transmitted those images to us. And yes, we are sure they are quite concerned about you."

"I want to go home." Trisha said, her eyes filling with tears.

"But you must know there is no way back."

"There's got to be. I've got to go home. I can't stay here. I won't."

"I am sorry, you feel that way, but there is no way back," Zac interrupted as he moved closer to Trisha.

"Consider this for a moment. If we had a choice and there was a way to the surface, wouldn't we have used it years ago?"

Trisha looked at the people milling around her and nodded.

"That's better. It will take time, but you will come to love all that we call home, just as we do. You'll see. Arrangements are now being made for your living quarters so I will leave you in Kan's capable hands.

"We will speak again, Trisha, after you have adjusted. Kan's family will see that you have more comfortable clothing to wear and whatever else you may need," he smiled at her attire. "We will do whatever is necessary to help you adapt."

Before Trisha could answer, Zac, with a wave of his hand, turned, bid everyone goodbye, and left the chamber.

Moments later, Trisha finally able to gain some semblance of control coldly demanded, "Who does he think he is? He can't control my life like that? I won't let him."

"You have no say in the matter."

"Really? That's what you think. I've always done pretty much as I pleased and I'm not about to let someone else run my life now."

"Yes, I know. That's what got you into this mess in the first place, isn't it?"

"That's none of your business," she said haughtily glaring at him.

"Oh, but it is now," he laughed pleased with himself.

Trisha stared long and hard at Kan. A memory began to flicker in her mind and she was just about to retort when Kan said quietly, forcefully,

"Come outside with me, Trisha, outside where we can be alone and talk. It wouldn't do for any of the others to hear or see your anger. We have rules and regulations that must be obeyed. Rules you must understand, if you are to survive, or you won't be around very long."

"Good. The sooner I get back home, the better I'll like it."

"You're not listening. I didn't say anything about your going home. I only said that your stay will be short."

"Well, what else could it possibly mean?"

"More than you really want to know."

"Such as?"

"To begin with, it could mean complete isolation from all forms of life, your total destruction, or both."

"Kan, what are you talking about?"

"For now..." he stopped speaking and gently, but force-fully, guided her through the milling people, out of the white marbled chamber, through massive gothic doors, and down black marbled steps to the outside of the Council Building.

* * * *

Trisha stared at the world outside the Council Building. Everywhere she looked, she saw beautifully shaped tall trees arrayed along carved, broad stone roads, plush, green meadows, rolling hills and the ever-present water-sky stretched as far as her eye could see.

Neatly lining all the roads were illuminated globes of light suspended in mid-air. These spheres gave the appearance of broad daylight across the land, causing the water-sky to seem a more ominous, deeper, blacker gray. She was awed by the view, oblivious to everything else, as she surveyed the area, until Kan's voice penetrated her thoughts.

"...I will only tell you that there is a difference, here, between a person's family, and their parents. My family has been appointed your Guardians, as they are mine. I have no parents."

"But..." a perplexed Trisha stammered.

"Hush, now," Kan said interrupting her. He placed his finger to her lips to silence her. He led her down

the black marbled steps of the Council Building to a strange looking vehicle, waiting on the road, at the foot of the steps in front of the building.

"We can use this vehicle while I show you what's left of our land, and you can talk to your hearts content."

Chapter 6

Mystified by the vehicle, which captivated her attention, Trisha did not see the strikingly beautiful woman emerging behind her through the gothic doors at the entrance to the Council Building. The woman hesitated momentarily, and then gracefully descended the black marbled steps approaching Kan and Trisha. Her name was Myaculi.

Trisha could not draw her eyes away from the vehicle before her. *How*, she wondered, *is he going to get that thing to move?* There were no controls of any kind. An emblem, similar to the golden symbol she had seen in the black marbled room, was where the controls should have been. *If I didn't know better*, she thought, *I'd swear they swiped the car from an amusement park ... from one of the roller coaster rides.*

Startled, she turned and looked at him. "Did you say something?" she asked.

"Only that I wish you would get in."

Trisha smiled suddenly, surveyed the vehicle and finally climbed aboard through the opening, which one could assume, was a door, and seated herself.

"Okay," she smiled again, "now what?"

Kan's face broke into a wide grin. "Sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride."

The vehicle began to move. Trisha watched Kan intently. He hadn't touched anything, yet the vehicle was moving effortlessly over the tree-lined, smooth, broad-stoned road, rapidly picking up speed. Kan's grin widened, as Trisha's bewilderment increased. And Myaculi, left standing at the foot of the steps as the car, with Kan and Trisha, pulled away, was incensed.

Engrossed in Trisha's childlike enchantment, Kan listened as her skepticism grew. "What makes this thing go?"

"I do."

"I don't see how, you're not touching anything?"

"I don't have to."

"You are not trying to tell me you are willing this thing to go ... are you?"

"In a manner of speaking, yes ... how did you know?"

"I didn't. I was only joking," she said, her voice suddenly shaking.

"Whether you were joking or not, doesn't matter. You are quite right. Moving objects is as natural to us as, well, as diving for instance, or swimming, is to a Terrestrial. Much of what you see us do may seem unnatural to you, but in time..."

"Yes," Trisha said interrupting him, "I know. I will come to accept it. Well, don't bet on it. Did you say diving or swimming?"

"Yes. Why?"

"That's where I know you from?"

"What do you mean?"

"That's how you know about Martin and my father. Isn't it?"

"I'm sorry. I don't follow you?"

"Yes you do, Kan. You know exactly what I'm talking about. You and Martin! You're one of the divers Martin introduced me to. It might have been awhile ago, but you were one of the people I was talking to the other day, you or your twin brother. And I'm sure you don't have a twin of either sex. You're one of the divers who didn't 'want to spend this glorious day under the water' remember?"

"Trisha, you're not only mistaken, but that's a dangerous accusation to make. You can jeopardize both our lives with statements like that. It is imperative that you believe me when I tell you to be careful what you say or think. Any word intentional or otherwise said in jest or anger could be extremely dangerous. I don't know how much stronger I can make this to help you understand, but you must listen to what I am telling you. Not for your own sake but for others who are with you as well."

It was as if Kan hadn't said a word, Trisha continued on as if Kan's words were just a slight breeze blowing around her. "I'm right, aren't I? I have met you before. Why are you turning around?" she asked startled at the abrupt change in direction. *Did I push it too far?* She wondered. *And if I did what's he going to do now? I did push it too far, and now he's angry, that's what?*

"Myaculi is calling us to return," Kan answered, smiling broadly. He was going to let Trisha squirm, then added, "She wants to join us."

Trisha looked around perplexed. There was no one in or near the trees on either side of the road. There was no one anywhere in their vicinity. *There's no one, no where*, she thought, staring at Kan as if he had lost his mind.

She swallowed hard before speaking. "I didn't hear anyone call. I don't see anyone either. Who is Myaculi? Where is she? And why do you have to go back just because she wants you to?"

Kan's face broke into a broad grin, "She is waiting for us in front of the Council Building."

"Are you trying to tell me you heard her call from way back there? I don't believe you."

Kan roared with laughter. "It wasn't a vocal call. It was telepathic."

"Telepathic? That's right. I forgot. You can read minds, can't you? But why do you have to go back? Who is she anyway?"

Patently, Kan answered, "I don't have to. I am because she asked us to. Consider yourself lucky, Trisha. Zac could have made you one of her hand-maidens, instead of a ward of my family's."

"What difference would that have made?" She turned and stared at Kan, but could not read anything in his expression. "Who is she? What is she?"

"Myaculi is a Priestess. It wouldn't do for you to get on the wrong side of her. And if, for some unforeseen reason, you do find yourself in her Court, be careful, Trisha, for your own sake for your own life."

"You're afraid of her. Aren't you? That's why you're really going back."

"No, Trisha," Kan said wearily, "I'm not afraid of her, but if we don't go back, she won't leave us in peace."

* * * *

Myaculi waited impatiently for their return in front of the Council Building. When they arrived she greeted Trisha with a sickening sweet smile, and shot a withering glare at Kan. She entered the vehicle and seated herself behind Trisha.

"Kan," Myaculi said, sweetly, "you should not have gone off without me."

"I didn't want to disturb you."

"Disturb me? You're not disturbing me, Kan. I'm just as interested in Trisha as you are. After all, she is a newcomer to our land and since I have been designated to be your High Priestess one-day," she said with decided emphasis so there would be no mistaking her words, "it is my sworn duty to go along with you. In fact, I insist."

"That is your decision, Myaculi. I don't believe Trisha cares one way or the other. Do you Trisha?"

"Not really."

Trisha looked over her shoulder at Myaculi and flashed a bright smile, as Kan again moved the vehicle away from the massive ancient Greek style edifice known as the Council Building.

"What were we talking about before Myaculi's call?"

"I believe you were discussing telekinesis, or was it that you and Kan have met somewhere before? Some person named Martin, or some such thing."

"How do you know? You weren't there."

"Kan isn't the only telepath," Myaculi said triumphantly.

"No, I'm not, Trisha. We all are, including Myaculi, who at this moment thinks she can wrest control of this vehicle away from me."

Trisha watched fascinated as Myaculi, with a grimace on her face, tried mentally to gain control of the vehicle. Her face became more contorted as she struggled against a much stronger force. Kan, on the other hand, smiled as he forced Myaculi to back down.

"But I'm not about to let her. Not just yet anyway."

After watching them for several minutes, Trisha finally broke the tension, "You two do this often?"

"Whenever I get the chance," Myaculi answered, glaring at Kan and Trisha.

Kan smiled, Trisha looked back at Myaculi, then to Kan, then straight ahead, to hide a wide grin. "Wish I could do that," she said, laughing softly.

With a sickening sweet smile, Myaculi said, "Perhaps, in time, Trisha dear, you may be able to master some, ah, little thing."

Trisha was looking at the passing countryside. Somehow, regardless of the threat their water-sky imposed, these people managed to keep their meadows, plush and green. Their beautiful foliated trees growing alongside the road accented the neatly, evenly carved stone road they were traveling on. But it

was quiet, too quiet. Notwithstanding the two she was with. She listened, but could not hear the rustling of the trees, for there was no wind. The movement of the car created the only breeze she felt. Yet, something was missing from all this strange beauty surrounding her, in spite of the grayish-black water-sky hanging over their heads.

She looked at the swiftly passing green meadows. Meadows she could see for miles, because there were no obstructions marring her view. And suddenly she knew that what was missing from Kan's land was the happy chirping sound of birds—any birds. And no animals of any kind were visible anywhere—for there were none. Kan spoke before Trisha could. He ignored Myaculi as if she didn't exist. He kept his eyes on the smooth, broad, stone road before them.

"Trisha, I don't know if you will ever be able to learn and master any of the abilities we have. What we know has been handed down from one generation to the next and without this knowledge we would have perished many centuries ago."

Intrigued by Kan's statement, Trisha hesitated before asking, "Can you share any of it with me?"

Before Kan could answer, Myaculi forced herself into the conversation, irritating Kan.

"We are able to change the molecular structure of an atom into its finer properties..."

"Myaculi, please," Kan said irritated.

Myaculi's thoughts penetrated Kan's. *"Don't worry. She's obviously infatuated with you. You don't have to shut me out."*

Kan sends a telepathic message back. *"And you're jealous."*

Trisha aware that something was happening between Kan and Myaculi, sat quietly and waited, as the vehicle continued its journey along the countryside.

Suddenly she was startled as she stared at the road ahead of her. Mesmerized, she watched as several stones rose from their places in the road, and began to do a jig-like dance in mid-air. Dancing from one side of the road to the other, back and forth they went, her eyes following their every movement. As the stones began climbing higher and higher they formed an arrow and aiming straight down at her, rushed toward her as the vehicle rapidly approached them. She covered her face with her arms and waited for the bombardment that was sure to come. But before the dancing missiles pummeled her, they just as suddenly settled back into their places in the road, as the vehicle rode smoothly over them. She flashed a quick look at Kan. He did not appear to be aware of what she saw. Other than carrying on his conversation, he was busily concentrating on moving the vehicle along the smoothly, carved stone road.

"As I was saying," Myaculi said haughtily and with a snicker, "we are able to change a solid into a liquid, a liquid into a solid, or change the laws of gravity to anti-gravity, so that even the heaviest object would be light as air."

Trisha didn't know whether her eyes were playing tricks on her or not, but she was still badly shaken by what she saw. In an attempt to recover her composure and lighten the atmosphere, she answered Myaculi.

"I can do some of that."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. I can change a solid into a liquid, or a liquid into a solid."

"How?"

"Easy. Heat the solid until it melts, then freeze the liquid."

Kan roared with laughter. Trisha looked at Kan and laughed. And a dark cloud crossed Myaculi's face.

Myaculi answered, arrogantly, "We are pleased you found something to laugh about, Trisha. Our only wish is that your humor serves you well. How do you think, that is of course, if you do think," she punctuated that statement with a smile, "we keep the waters of the Pacific Ocean from finishing the job it started 12,000 years ago?"

"What did you say?" Trisha asked, surprised at Myaculi's animosity, "No. Don't repeat it. I heard you."

"But you don't believe it. Do you?"

"Believe what? That you've been holding that water back for 12,000 years? You've got to be kidding."

"I don't believe I said *I* was holding the waters back for 12,000 years. I merely stated that what happened to our beloved land occurred 12,000 years ago, but obviously, we are still here."

Myaculi's sends another message to Kan. *"I knew she couldn't think!"*

"Enough! If you don't stop this nonsense, I will drop you off here, and you can walk back."

Turning his attention to Trisha, Kan asked, "Trisha, have you any idea of where you are?"

"I'm afraid to guess."

"Try?"

"I remember, once, telling my father about a continent that Martin told me about. You remember Martin, don't you?"

"Yes, I remember you mentioning him before. What about it?"

"He claims to be a descendent of yours. Come to think of it, he does look a little like you." She shot a look at Kan and he smiled.

"Anyway, Martin was always talking about a continent he called Lemuria that disappeared beneath the Pacific centuries ago. But its real name was Mukulia or Mu, anyway that's what both Martin and my research told me. At any rate, the continent disappeared just about where I dropped in on you, so..."

"Yes?"

"So, my father warned me not to get carried away, by Martin's stories. He was afraid they were obsessing me. He kept telling me they were Martin's ancestor's not mine. And I laughingly told him, I was fascinated by his stories, not bewitched. He should see me now."

"What else did 'Martin' tell you?" Myaculi asked, with an intense stare at Kan.

Trisha caught the look, cleared her throat and said, "He believed the pre-Polynesians were survivors or colonists from the Lost Continent of Lemuria. Only, only it's not lost anymore, is it? It's right where we are, or what's left of it. That's what you meant, keeping the water away for 12,000 years. This land is all that's left of Lemuria or Mukulia or Mu, or whatever you call it, isn't it?"

"We have always referred to our home as Mu. You say Martin is our descendent?"

"Yes, Myaculi, that's what *he*, says. Only I'm not so sure he'd feel the same way, once he met you. Don't take offense. I don't believe he visualizes people like you. Then again," she said glancing at Kan, "I could be wrong."

Kan ignored her look and asked, "What does he visualize?"

"I know it isn't anyone like you."

"Why not?" Myaculi asked.

"Because," Trisha said glaring at Kan again, "if you've ever heard Martin speak, you'd know that he believed his ancestors to be invincible. They would never live like this. Wouldn't you agree, Kan?"

"If you say so, Trisha. Perhaps if Martin had to live in our world, he would think differently. So must you, if we are to get on with the business of living."

* * * *

Trisha waved her arm at the surrounding countryside and at the waters above them as she spoke, "You call this living? How can this be living? How can anyone live here, with the Pacific Ocean hovering, watching ... day and night, never sleeping, just to catch any one of you in a little mistake, waiting to burst through whatever is holding it back to claim what it lost 12,000 years ago? How?"

"You make it sound alive," Myaculi gasped.

"What makes you think it isn't?" Trisha asked.

"What would you suggest we do? Look around you. Once this giant land was the only inhabitable land that stretched its rolling countryside over most of the surface of this planet..."

"Now only one third, of once was, is what you see before you..." Myaculi said, interrupting Kan.

"...Exists as a constant reminder of what we have lost," Kan finished interrupting Myaculi.

"It was a beautiful, tropical country, once. It had green valleys, and immense plains, covered with rich grazing grasses ... Much more than we have now."

As Trisha continued to listen to Myaculi and Kan, she was suddenly forced to lean back into her seat in an attempt to protect herself from a bevy of huge, fully leafed, widely branched trees, she saw falling rapidly toward her from their places alongside the road and threatening to entomb her within their branches. She stifled a scream, and waited for the impact. But before they could hit her, the trees suddenly righted themselves, stood tall and proud, and then with a sweep of their branches, bowed as the vehicle passed beneath them. Visibly shaken, she stared at the trees' strange behavior as they passed under them and looked back over her shoulder as they went beyond them.

Again, she turned to Kan. And again, he seemed pre-occupied with moving the vehicle along. She shook her head, as if to clear it. *I must be tired*, she thought, *I am beginning to imagine all sorts of things in this strange land*. She tried to concentrate on what her companions were saying.

She missed the first part of Kan's conversation, "...there were low rolling hills shaded by lush tropical vegetation. Something like what you see here now. But, just as now, there were no mountains, or mountain ranges anywhere throughout our beautiful continent. Because, you see, at that period in time, the planet Earth had not yet given birth to mountains anywhere."

As Trisha absorbed the landscape passing before her, a faraway look crossed her face. It was as if she had been transported back to the distant past, to the time when Mu was in flower. She laughed suddenly, *what was it I said to Dad? Something about really seeing what Mu was like? God! He should see me now.*

"What did you say?" Kan asked.

Trisha shook her head, "It wasn't important."

"I'll bet you didn't know there were many wide, lazy streams and rivers winding their way around wooded hills and through fertile plains. That there were trees and shrubs covered with bright, fragrant flowers adding glorious color to the landscape. Or, that tall palms with their great feathery ferns edged our shores and lined our river banks for miles inland, spreading their long arms outwards shading our rivers," Myaculi said quietly, gesturing at the passing countryside to emphasize her words.

"Only from what I could visualize in the books I read—but, here, I can almost see it," Trisha said awed.

Kan smiled down at Trisha. He watched her momentarily before adding, "There were many places where the land was low, and the rivers could broaden out into shallow lakes. And around those shores was where a myriad of sacred lotus blossoms dotted the water."

"Butterflies, hummingbirds, songbirds, all added their happy chirping sounds over the rivers and the land," Myaculi said. "But as you can readily see, they, too, are now gone."

"I know it's difficult for you to believe, but once our continent teemed with laughter and happiness. Once there were ten different tribes, or groups of people, who were very distinct from one another, yet all believed in one and the same government and in one and the same religion. Sixty-four million people lived in complete harmony. And our Empire, known the world over as the Empire of the Sun, worshipped the sun as a symbol for God, or Ra, as we called Him, then and now."

"Not really—that's what it said in most of the books I read." There was a great sadness in Kan's voice, as he spoke of the past and he stopped speaking momentarily.

Myaculi picked it up as a cue for her to speak. "The King was selected by the people and given the prefix, Ra, to his name, and as such became Ra Mu, the Heretical Head, Emperor, High Priest, God's Representative, all in one and he was so honored." Then she, too, fell silent.

She read all about what they were saying to her, but even though it still hadn't penetrated, she was living it, here and now. Trisha suddenly stifled a yawn, it had been a long day, then a scream. Flying horizontally across the road before them was a monstrous tree. She had seen it pull itself out by its roots, before flying across the road and now, as she stared at it, its roots were digging into the ground and replanting itself. Once, done, the tree shook itself, as if to feather its branches and ruffle its leaves, and then seemingly smiled at her. Trisha stared at the tree, dumfounded, as the vehicle passed its new location. She shot a quick look at Kan, but he was oblivious to anything she saw. Totally bewildered, Trisha thought she heard a slight giggle. She looked around, but only saw two Subterraneans deep in thought.

Trisha watched and wondered. She couldn't help thinking that both Kan and Myaculi sounded like recordings. Except for the emotion and anguish in their voices for their lost land, she would have believed that was what she had been listening to. But she could not escape the fact she had seen and felt the way it was as if she was actually there, so many centuries ago, as they spoke. Now the vision of a happy, bountiful land had vanished from her thoughts and all she could see was a gray pall hanging over a once magnificent continent.

How can they stand it? No one seems to notice or care. The people in the chamber, or these two, don't seem to be aware of that ever-present, menacing danger hanging over their heads, and this—the last remnants of Mu—the home of Martin's ancestors. How do they know what it was like anyway? I mean it's not as if they have been here 12,000 years. How could they possibly know? She wished for her own land, her own sun, to lift her spirits.

Kan's voice startled Trisha. "To answer your thoughts, we know what it was like because of the legends passed down from one generation of survivors to another, as well as the tablets and manuscripts, which are preserved in the Temple of Dawn that describes all that was. You may read them for yourself, anytime you wish, Trisha. That privilege is one, which is granted to all of our citizens. And you are no less a citizen of Mu now. As for not knowing or caring, how could they know? They have never seen the sun that shines on the terrestrials."

"You are fortunate, Trisha, that you have. That you know what it looks and feels like. All we know is what we see here," Myaculi said.

"That's not entirely true." Trisha answered.

"What do you mean?"

Quietly, almost a whisper, Trisha said, "Kan has seen my sun. Haven't you Kan?"

"You are entirely wrong, Trisha. Neither Kan nor anyone else has seen your sun. Isn't that true, Kan?"

"What do you think? How could the surface's sun reach these depths? I think Trisha has had enough for one day; her mind is playing tricks on her. She's beginning to imagine things."

"Perhaps you are right. For her sake, you'd better be." Myaculi answered.

"No! He has seen the sun ... my sun. I'm not imagining that. He has felt the sun on his face and the warmth of the rays on his body. He does know!"

His voice carrying a veiled warning, Kan insisted, "I know only what you see before you."

"No! That's not true! You have been to the surface. Not once, but many times. I know. I've seen..."

"Trisha, stop! This nonsense has gone on long enough. Not another word! Do you understand?" Kan admonished.

"I don't think," Trisha started to say, but the look in Kan's eyes stopped her. She thought better of saying anything else.

"I almost believed Trisha was speaking the truth. She said it with such conviction. Yet, I can't imagine where she could possibly get those ideas from, can you?" Myaculi asked, malevolently.

"I'm sorry, Myaculi. I guess I did get a little carried away. I don't know what I could have been thinking of. I guess I wanted to believe you've seen my sun, so you'll know why I want to get back. Kan is right. I am a little tired. It has been quite a day for me."

"Yes, dear. It has been for all of us," Myaculi answered, dangerously sweet.

* * * *

The strain of the day was beginning to affect Trisha, and the ride was making her drowsy. She was oblivious to the passing, plush green countryside, and her eyes closed on her. Suddenly a drop of water

struck her forehead, then another, and another. Startled, her eyes flew open and to her horror, the water above was now a massive waterfall, cascading down on her. She screamed. Kan stopped the vehicle and stared at her dumfounded. Myaculi laughed softly to herself.

"Maybe we'd better escort Trisha to her quarters so she may rest. We can continue our tour another time," Kan said, concern showing on his face.

"I would appreciate it. I'm more tired than I thought. And I would like to get into something more comfortable," she smiled weakly.

"I am sorry, Trisha. I should have thought of that sooner," Kan said apologetically, as if seeing her attire for the first time.

"That's okay," Trisha said. Sliding down in her seat, Trisha closed her eyes as if to sleep.

Myaculi looked at Trisha and sends Kan a telepathic message.

"You're not fooling me, Kan. She knows something, and you know she knows it."

Kan answered in kind.

"I know what's going on in that warped mind of yours, Myaculi ... but leave her alone. Trisha knows nothing."

Their telepathic conversation continued for several more minutes. *"I don't know why you are protecting her. After all, she could be quite dangerous to you. If you have been to the surface and you've kept that secret to yourself..."*

"Drop it, Myaculi. The only one, who is dangerous around here, is you."

"Protect her if you will, Kan my love ... but remember, you can only belong to me!"

Myaculi laughed, a deliciously, fiendish laugh, and Kan sensed a sudden and real danger for Trisha.

Kan turned the vehicle around. Instead of returning to the Council Building, he drove to the Temple of Dawn where Trisha was to stay, and where both he and Myaculi had their own chambers. When they arrived in front of the Temple, all three left the vehicle and entered the building. Minutes later, Kan led Trisha to her quarters. She smiled weakly at him and momentarily resigned entered the room. Kan turned to leave. Trisha heard Kan's parting words as she closed the door. "Pleasant dreams, Trisha."

* * * *

Trisha stood in the middle of the room and looked around her. The bed had been turned down, and a gown and robe had been laid out on the bed for her. Slippers were neatly placed together on the floor beneath the draped nightclothes. Above her, the contained waters of the Pacific Ocean flowed, unconcerned, overhead across a roofless temple. As she bent to slip out of her wetsuit, her diamond pendant swung free from her body. She stared down at it, and tears stung her eyes. In a trance-like state, she donned the nightgown and moved slowly toward the opened window, fingering her pendant as she walked. She looked out at the unfamiliar landscape, as visions of Hawaii and her father clouded her mind.

Later, tears flowed from Trisha's eyes as her mind returned to the present. She turned away from the window, held the pendant tightly to her and whispered, fervently, "Dad, I wish I could tell you where I am, but I can't. Don't give up on me yet, please Dad, somehow, someday, I'll find my way back to you, I promise."

Trisha climbed into bed. Unable to quiet her thoughts, Trisha laid there seemingly wide awake fingering her pendant, until she drifted off to sleep.

Chapter 7

Several hours passed before a Coast Guard Cutter, from Ke'e on a routine patrol, came across Trisha's empty motor launch drifting aimlessly in the water. When they realized the motor launch was anchored in position and unattended, they immediately conducted a search of the surface area. The clean sweep showed nothing unusual on the surface, so the Officer-In-Charge didn't hesitate to send the cutter's deep sea divers down below to search for an injured or trapped diver. This was normally a routine exercise for them, due to their training, and on more than one occasion the Cutter's divers had been sent down to rescue divers who managed to get themselves trapped within the fauna below. But in this particular rescue attempt, they were greeted with a different problem. The discovery of the total upheaval created by the recent underwater earthquake changed the terrain. They knew they had to search more thoroughly now due to this chaos. A diver could be buried anywhere within the devastated area, unseen and perhaps unconscious, and their time under water was limited to their oxygen tanks. They saw that most of the caves had crumbled and were totally destroyed. Divers found Trisha's mask and gloves near the entrance to a sealed cave. Her weight belt, camera and lights were discovered broken and scattered all along the bottom. They sent word up of their find and said they weren't too optimistic of finding anyone dead or alive. Their orders were to keep looking as long as they were able or until they were sure that there was no hope.

Racing against time, divers began a desperate effort to move the huge rocks and boulders sealing the cave where Trisha's equipment had been found. Once the entrance was partially cleared, they penetrated the depth of the cave as far as they could, but quickly realized the interior of the cave had been totally devastated by the cave-in. It would take days, weeks, maybe even months, to clear the cave itself. In an effort to avoid leaving empty-handed, the divers began searching in a wide a pattern as possible in the area around the cave, hoping that maybe the diver was somewhere else. But as their tanks began to empty, hope was fading rapidly. Feeling any further effort would be useless the lead diver broke off the search and ordered his divers topside. On the surface, the Coast Guard secured Trisha's launch to the Cutter and towed it to shore. Remnants of Trisha's personal diving gear were also brought back.

Returning to their station, the Cutter's Officer had the registration number of the launch checked. The family of the hapless diver had to be notified of the mishap. Perhaps the diver had been picked up by another boat. Anything was possible, he thought, still, the Officer-In-Charge didn't hold out much hope. This was the least likely part of his job, notifying families of a missing member.

The Coast Guard notified Joe Holden and Martin of their discovery. Devastated by the news, the two men rushed to Ke'e to begin their own search. As much as they believed the Coast Guard did a thorough job, still it wasn't their daughter who was lost, it was theirs. Joe had given up diving years ago, and hadn't entered the water since. And Martin—well, he wasn't in perfect condition either. Nevertheless, the two men donned diving gear and with the help of younger, stronger, volunteers they began their search beneath the waters of the Pacific. For days they concentrated their efforts in the general area they believed Trisha had been lost. They tried to clear the cave the Coast Guard thought would be the most likely place to find Trisha. But their search proved futile.

The Coast Guard ordered Joe and Martin to cease and desist. Be reasonable, they told them. No one could have survived the cave-in. It was useless. Even if her tanks were still in one piece, she would have run out of air days ago. But Joe and Martin persisted. They wanted to bring her body home. They both went down again, watching as fully equipped Navy Frogmen went in to clear the cave. When the last of it had been cleared away, Joe and Martin went inside the cavern. There was no sign of Trisha or that she had ever been in there. Their last hope gone, Joe Holden and Martin returned heartbroken to their empty

home at the pineapple plantation in Maui.

* * * *

Two mornings after her arrival in Mu, Trisha awoke from a deep sleep. She opened her eyes, stared at the openness above her and stifled a scream.

"Where am I? Dad? Oh no. It wasn't a dream. It's ... it's a nightmare."

Her eyes wide open she stared above her and scrambled out of bed. She ran out of her room, down the corridor and slammed into Kan, who was heading toward her quarters. He steadied her, held her at arms length and laughed.

"Well, it's about time you were waking up, sleepy-head."

Trisha stared in disbelief above her and at Kan. "How ... how long have I been asleep?"

"By your time? More than twenty-four of your hours—by our time? The length of time you needed."

Trisha pointed above her as she spoke. "And that's been there, all the time?"

"Of course."

"Whose house is this?"

"It belongs to my family, to me and now to you."

"But it doesn't have any roof?"

"It was designed that way."

"Why would anyone design a house without a roof?"

"Actually, Trisha, this is not a house, it's a Temple."

"A Temple?"

"Yes."

"What's that got to do with anything? It still doesn't have a roof."

"It has to do with our beliefs," Kan answered, patiently.

"I don't understand."

Kan drew Trisha close to him, and placed his arm around her shoulder. He walked her back to her room, retrieved her robe from the floor, and placed it around her shoulders.

"Why don't you get dressed? Then, we'll go down to the dining area to have something to eat, and I'll try to explain it to you?"

Kan left Trisha standing by the bed and walked out of her quarters. He turned to Trisha before closing the door after him and smiled. "I'll be out here. Don't keep me waiting too long, I'm famished."

Moments later, Kan escorted Trisha into the Dining Room and seated her at the table. It was a huge carved stone room with a long marble table in the middle of it. On either side of the table were long, marble benches with throne-like chairs at either end. Kan seated at the head of the table had placed

Trisha on his right. The table was set and arrayed with luscious fruits, strange foods and a pitcher full of an aromatic liquid before them.

As Kan served Trisha he explained, "The foods we eat are those we grow and harvest in our undersea world and our liquids are processed from the residue of those foods. Nothing is thrown away. Everything has a place and a purpose here."

Trisha nodded as she watched Kan place one strange item after another on her plate. Her eyes did not wander as he poured the odd looking liquid from the pitcher into the goblet for her. She waited until he served himself. She also waited until he began to eat and drink before she gingerly placed a morsel of food in her own mouth, or tasted the liquid. Kan watched her face as she began to chew. Her facial expression changed from one of surprise to one of pure pleasure.

Her warm smile delighted him, as she acknowledged her appreciation. "It's delicious."

"I'm happy you approve. Did you really expect anything different?" he grinned widely.

Trisha ignored his question, devouring her food. She pushed her plate away and sighed. "I didn't realize I was so hungry. Now, if only this Temple of yours had a roof over it."

"Yes. I did promise to explain, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did. And you now have my complete attention."

"It's very simply, really. Our Temples and homes were built in this manner so that the rays of the sun, or Ra, as He was called, would fall on the heads of the worshippers.

"That may have been good for them, but now, why do you call this the Temple of Dawn?"

Kan looked around, then at Trisha before he spoke. "The real Temple of Dawn lies somewhere beneath the ocean; with the rest of Mu. In order to retain some of what we have lost, this Temple was renamed the Temple of Dawn. Here, as in the original, is where we maintain and preserve our documents, tablets, manuscripts, heritage, and all that pertains to our way of life, past, present and future."

"The Temple of Doom is more like it," Trisha said without thinking and looked at the waters flowing overhead. Her voice faded when she saw the expression on Kan's face.

"I didn't really mean that, I'm sorry," she tried to explain. "It's just that..." her voice trailed off helplessly as she looked up.

Pushing his chair away from the table, Kan stood up, "I have some work to take care of in another part of the Temple. If you need anything, or if you want to research our history, what better place than the Temple of 'Doom', as you call it. Be our guest, Trisha. It's all open to you."

"I said I was sorry." Trisha nodded as Kan left the Dining Area, and headed into another section of the Temple. Still seated, Trisha watched him go. *Damn*, she thought, *I would do something stupid like that*.

She moved away from the table and walked over to an opened window. From her vantage point through the window she saw the Golden Gates that surrounded the Temple and the smooth, broad, stone roads beyond them running in all directions, like a giant spider's web. The stones were so perfectly matched that not even a blade of grass grew between them.

Matched just like the Pyramids of Egypt, she thought. *Wonder if their ancestors built them as well.*

As she continued to look out the window her thoughts ran on. *What's left of this land is still beautiful, tropical, covered with bright, fragrant flowers, but the pall that is hanging over this land and that ... that ocean above us, is like a time-bomb ticking away the seconds.* She looked up and shuddered. *It doesn't matter what time of the day or night you lay down to sleep. The last thing you see before you close your eyes, and the very first, when you open them again, is that ominous grayish-blackish waters of the Pacific overhead, threatening, waiting to engulf everything. A constant reminder of one's imprisonment.*

She shuddered again and turned away from the window. She looked around her taking in everything. *I think, I think if I was alive when disaster struck ... she scanned the room again ... I think I would have preferred to have gone down with the rest of the continent. I've got to get out of here.*

Myaculi had entered the doorway behind Trisha and was eavesdropping on Trisha's thoughts. Her voice startled Trisha. "And where do you think you could go?" she asked, amused.

"Home! Where else?" Trisha answered, startled.

"But Trisha, dear, you are home," Myaculi said sweetly, pausing for effect. "Now tell me, what would you like to do?"

"Surprise me. And, Myaculi, this is not my home," Trisha answered, sarcastically.

"Hmmm. Well, no matter. Now, let's see. Come along then. I'll show you through the Temple. What was that you called it? Oh yes, 'The Temple of Doom'. You might find it interesting," Myaculi smiled, mischievously.

"Good Lord, isn't anything sacred around here?" Trisha asked. "I apologized once, I'll apologize again. I won't refer to it as the Temple of Doom anymore, okay?"

Myaculi's laughter caused Trisha some concern. But it quickly dissipated as Myaculi guided Trisha on a tour of the Temple. It was a beautiful edifice and Myaculi explained the original Temple of Dawn was named for the Dawn of Civilization. In it was preserved the records of mankind, all of its teachings, religion, and its education.

As they moved from room to room, Trisha was completely taken with the giant hand-carved stone rooms. Each one was bedecked in gold and precious jewels and each one seemed more beautiful than the one before it. When they reached the Main Room in the 'transparent' Temple, the way was barred the doors were closed. As Trisha moved toward the doors, Myaculi shook her head. This was the one room they could not enter. Myaculi did not explain, only warned Trisha never ever to attempt to enter that room. And she left it at that.

They continued on their tour, up to the Tower Room, the last room at the top of the Temple, which Myaculi described as actually being the Sacrificial Room. The shiny black marble altar sat upon a white marble, jewel encrusted, pedestal, which rested on top of the platform on the pyramid shaped black marble steps. There were seven evenly spaced steps leading to the altar, and where once 'Ra' had shown down upon it, only the Pacific Ocean did now.

Myaculi and Trisha stood inside the room at the base of the altar. Trisha was awestruck, "Myaculi! It's beautiful!"

"Yes, we have always thought so. Would you like to examine it closer?"

"May I?"

"Of course, dear, you go right ahead. Take your time."

"Thanks."

Oblivious to Myaculi, Trisha started up the steps to the altar in the Temple of Dawn running her hand along the smooth, marble as she climbed the stairs. All she could think of was I'll bet this place really dazzled when the sun shone in here.

Myaculi smiled widely, "So we have been told."

Trisha shook her head at Myaculi's remark. She continued on to the top and stood beside the black marble altar. "Did they really use this as a Sacrificial Altar?"

"Yes they did."

"People?"

"No! Of course not! Our religion forbids the taking of lives as sacrificial lambs."

"Then who? Or what?"

"Sacrifices to Ra were only symbolic in nature. But, there's always a first time for everything. Don't you agree?"

Myaculi looked up at Trisha, smiled, then turned and left Trisha alone, standing by the altar, and wondering. *Martin never mentioned anything like this to me. I wonder why? Of all the stories he had told me about his ancestors, not once did he mention sacrificial lambs, real or imagined to me. Wonder why? Did he think I would think less of him and of his people if he told me about this? Why would I? Martin has been my lifeline through my entire life. What his ancestors did or did not do has absolutely nothing to do with him. Was he ashamed of this part of their history? Or, did he just decide to ignore it completely? Now I wonder, what else didn't he tell me about his ancestors? What other surprises am I going to run into here?*

Trisha stared at the altar for a long time, and let her mind drift back to her father, to Kauai and to Martin. She could see herself sitting by the fire with all the papers spread before her, talking to her father about Martin's relatives, and see herself listening to Martin at his shack on Ke'e. She shook her head to clear it. Memories that's all they are now, memories. Several minutes later, she returned to the present still staring at the altar and shook her head, puzzled. *No, Martin never mentioned anything about this at all. I guess I have a great deal more to learn about the Mukulians, especially Kan ... And the one named Myaculi, why does that aspect not thrill me?* she wondered as a cold chill suddenly began to creep over her and she shivered ever so slightly.

What was it that Kan said. I have access to any of the archives I want? Well there's no time like the present. Now what room did he say it was in? Trisha mused as she moved away from the altar and headed down the steps out of the Tower Room and in search of the Ancient Mukulians.

Chapter 8

Trisha discovered her Ancient Mukulians in the crypt directly beneath the Tower Room. Tablets, records, manuscripts handed down from one generation to the next were everywhere. There were some even from the days of Mukulia itself. She browsed through the archives, awed by the huge treasure lode stretched before her. She gingerly reached for the manuscripts, tablets and records within easy access as she passed them wondering if they would self-destruct as soon as she touched them.

Satisfied that these priceless objects were not only well cared for, but also well marked as to what era they represented, Trisha selected three or four of the artifacts for her own perusal. She drew a chair away from the table, set the material down, seated herself and began to read.

It told of how the people of Mu were highly civilized and enlightened. How savagery did not exist nor had it ever on the face of the Earth. That one of the great themes of Mu was creation itself. At times it seemed as if she was reading her own Bible, particularly when the records indicated that Mu also contained a quote that said 'In The Beginning...' it was referring to the chaos and the dark, soundless universe that predominated over all. She read where the Ancient Mukulians were a monotheistic society that believed only in one Supreme Being which they worshiped through a symbol ... the sun in the sky. The Supreme, the Creator, was given many attributes, each of which was symbolized. *Well, Trisha smiled to herself, some things never do change.*

As she continued to read one book, record, or manuscript after another, Trisha learned much about Martin's ancestors. The seats of religion, science and learning were all concentrated in their seven great cities. There were many large towns and villages scattered throughout the land, but the cities themselves, seats of trade and commerce, were built near or at the entrances to rivers, where ships arrived from and departed to all ports of the world. The books told of the great navigational feats performed by Mu's navigators and sailors, who sailed their ships over the world from the eastern to western oceans, and from the northern and southern seas. Trisha looked up from the book, and thought, *They must have known how to shoot the stars, or had a magnetic compass, or some such navigational attributes to be able to sail all over the world and leave their mark and find their way back again. Wonder what it was like to sail the seven seas on a sailing ship the way they did. Not only that, how big were their sailing ships? Hmmm, I even wonder if they knew there were seven seas. Of course they did! What a thought.* She shook her head and went back to the book she was presently reading.

The words continued on. Their architects built great temples and palaces of stone. Their monoliths and monuments were carved and meant to last. Mu was the center of Earth's civilization, and all the other countries in the world were her colonies and or colonial empires.

She looked up from the books and thought about the time when some of the Native Indian Legends she read believed America was Mu's first colony. The Indians believed the first Americans were highly civilized people who came from a land in the west beyond the setting sun. They had called this land Mu. And even today they considered America to be the oldest land above water, which had been inhabited by man after the destruction of Mu. Other documents from her other readings confirmed the Indian beliefs that America antedated Atlantis, Egypt, Greece, Babylonia, India and all other ancient nations. Her thoughts went back in time. *What must it have been like to be living in that era, with all that greatness, how exciting and advanced they appeared to have been according to these records. Hmmm, she thought, much more, most likely than people appear to be now.*

She wished she could discuss all this with her father and Martin. *What a treasure house of information, if only there was some way to bring it all to the surface. Ha, she laughed, might as well wish for*

the moon, for all the good it will do me. What an archeologist's nightmare, she thought ... to hit the mother lode ... and not be able to do anything with it.

She sighed loudly, stretched, then pushed on, absorbed by each new discovery. She continued to replace each book and manuscript with others as she finished them. There was so much to learn, so much to read, it might take her a lifetime. *So what*, she thought. *I'm not going anywhere.*

One religion, one language, one government prevailed throughout the land. Education, a basic principle of the Empire's success, demanded the training of every citizen in the Laws of the Universe and in a profession or trade. *Was it any wonder that they prospered*, Trisha thought? Compulsory education to the age of twenty-one was the law in order to be eligible to attend citizenship school. The required citizenship training was seven years. Only at age twenty-eight, when requirements were met, was citizenship conferred upon a subject. "Maybe *we* ought to consider that," Trisha pondered.

But that was not the end of it, as Trisha soon discovered. In order for a 'citizen' to be eligible for elected public office, a lifetime term, an additional seven years of special training was required. She quickly realized that the Mukulians were referring only to male citizens holding office. And that not only did the special training earn him two votes, it also meant no one under thirty-five would ever hold office.

As she continued to read, she ran across information that told of the peoples' profound knowledge of the origins and workings of the Great Cosmic Forces. There were Four Primary Forces and they were created by, were under the command of, and abide by, only the will of the One Supreme Being. Limitless in their scope and power, they reach from one celestial body to another. All other forces were generated by and were secondary to the Primary Forces, which were still at work today. Each arm of the cross, the original symbol, reaching out of the center signified the Four Primary Forces as coming from and out of the Deity. These were the forces that brought order out of chaos throughout the Universe. The forces that created all life both physical and spiritual and at the conclusion of that creation were given charge of the physical Universe and all within it.

No wonder Hitler wanted the symbol of the Primary Forces, as an emblem of Nazi Germany. There was no mistaking the symbol's four arms as one which Hitler latched on to. The one we all learned to call the Swastika. Guess he thought he could capture what the four forces stood for, for his own use, which could somehow transfer power over to him and give him the status and everlasting power to control the entire world with his Aryan Troopers marching across the world under this Ancient Symbol of the Universe.

Of the Four Forces, one was called Life. A Life Force because it was instrumental in the creation of and maintenance of life itself. This Life Force was a broken down into four categories heat, as well as three different magnitudes of magnetic forces. *Sounds as if they're talking about energy*, Trisha thought, *but it's pretty obvious, we don't know half of what the ancients knew. Wonder if we ever will?*

She was getting tired, her back ached and her mind reeled with the information gleaned from the records. *Guess I'd better call it a day and continue some other time*, she thought at she stretched and yawned. She replaced the material she had used and returned the chair to its original position, then slowly walked out of the crypt. At the door, she turned looked at the documents stored in the archives and thought, *what a waste that no one in my world can ever know what has been preserved in there.*

Chapter 9

The following morning, at the Dining Room table, Kan asked Trisha if she would like to see more of Mu. Trisha nodded as she sat down to eat.

"After breakfast, then," Kan said, "We can go out to the countryside. Even if we are far below the surface, there are still some nice places to visit."

"Fine with me," Trisha smiled as she continued to eat.

"I have a small matter to attend to before we leave, so I'll meet you out front, take your time, Trisha. We have all day."

"Myaculi?" Trisha asked.

"Never mind," Kan grinned, "I'll see you later."

"Myaculi," Trisha said again smiling, as she continued to eat her breakfast.

Thirty minutes later they were moving along the road heading out to the countryside. It wasn't a long trip, for most areas in Mu were within easy reach in no time at all. Kan stopped the vehicle at the entrance to the park and asked Trisha if she would walk with him.

"It would please me, if you would consider it," he said.

"Yes, I'd like that very much," Trisha answered, as they both slipped out of the vehicle.

They walked along the path in silence for a long time, before Kan spoke, "Once, we were told, many parks such as this existed. Now there is only the one. Once our parks were alive with exotic, bright, fragrant flowers ... sacred flowers, like the Lotus, grew in abundance everywhere..."

"That's the Lotus flower?" Trisha interrupted, pointing to the ornately beautiful, red, pink and white flowers growing alongside the pathway. The shrubby herb-like plants, laden with their jujube fruit and large, floating, lily-type, leaves, saturated the air with their fragrance.

"Yes, the first to adorn Earth. As Mu was the land where the wonder, and origin of man began, so it was with the Lotus blossom. And because of that dual event, the Lotus has become the Symbol of Mu."

"It seems so strange to see the Lotus flower in blossom and opened. All the pictures I've ever seen of them show the petals closed."

"Yes, I've seen it that way, too."

"Really? When? Where?"

"Here ... in your memory, Trisha. Your mind projects it vividly."

"You expect me to believe that?"

"Believe what you want. Did you know that if you ate the fruit of the Lotus Blossom, it would induce a dream state where you would be completely content and not only wouldn't remember anything but wouldn't want to?"

"No. But why would I? And why would I want to eat the fruit of a Lotus Blossom in the first place? What makes you think I want to forget?"

"It is a delicacy."

"Really?"

"Yes it has the appearance, texture and flavor of a sweet date-like substance. And it is delicious."

"Do you eat it often?"

"No, but some of our people do," he laughed.

"Well don't expect me to," she said vehemently.

"It seems as if we've gotten off the beaten path."

"Guess we did, didn't we," she smiled slightly.

"Where was I ... oh, yes? As you can see, like the rest of my land our parks, too, are gone ... trapped beneath the surface where my continent lies. And with them, most of the sixty-four million people who once lived on Mu. Like the flowers, only a handful of my people survived with this," he swept his arm to include all that existed around them. "And we have been here ever since." He smiled wryly.

"It must have been horrible for those who survived the initial collapse."

Glancing down at Trisha, Kan answered, "Yes. I would imagine it was. But what came later was probably more traumatic for them."

"How could that be?"

"Imagine, if you can, what it must have been like when they finally realized that the piece of land they were occupying was trapped in an air bubble beneath the sea, and that all else was lost. Here they were, several days later, thinking they were safe only to discover they weren't. It was decision time and no one wanted to make it. They debated for days, coming to near blows among themselves, as to which course they should follow."

Trisha bent to pick a flower. Kan's hand was on hers immediately and stopped her. He shook his head. She smiled slightly embarrassed, smelled the flower, and then continued walking.

"You make it sound as if they had a choice," she said incredulously.

"Actually, they did. It wasn't easy for them to choose the course they followed. I don't know if I would have. Maybe it would have been better if they chose the other."

"What other?"

"They knew the air bubble couldn't last. Either they form their own, or let the air dissipate, and join the others at the bottom of the sea. But the desire to live is strong, so as you can see, they formed their own. They solidified the waters of the ocean above, and around them. And it has managed to hold throughout all these centuries."

"You mean..." she said, horrified, almost stuttering.

Not quite sure of her words, her eyes scanned the park. Beautiful, tropical flowers and tall majestic trees

dotted the area surrounded by plush, green grass covering the grounds. The only exceptions to the greening were wide, perfectly matched, carved stones marking the walk. Symmetrically cutting through the park, they appeared to be the spokes of a giant wheel.

She stared at Kan in disbelief, "...that the sky, or ceiling, or whatever you choose to call it, hanging over this land is just ice?!!!"

Her skepticism brought a smile to his face. "Simply put, yes. But it is more than ice. It really is a solid translucent shield that holds back the waters of the Pacific and away from us. Energy field, if you like, that totally surrounds our submerged island. Through the passage of time, the land began to give out. This you must realize is all in the records."

"Oh yes, I meant to tell you, I've been going through the archives ... ,"

"Yes, Trisha, we know."

"You do?"

"Of course, do you doubt our ability to know?"

"No. I just forgot about it. That's all. You were saying something about the passage of time?"

He smiled at her anger. She looked up at him, shook her head and thought *nothing really is sacred here, is it? God, how can they stand not having any privacy? Okay, so you know what I'm thinking, so what. Keep that up and you're liable to hear something you don't want to*. She looked and smiled sweetly at him. "Continue..." she said.

He grinned widely, kept his answer in check and continued on. "When the land began to give out, other methods had to be found to replenish the nutrients they had lost and that by the way is one of the tasks handed down to me.

"Even with all of their abilities, the mere fact that they were surrounded by water made many of the solutions to their problems untenable. Therefore, they had reached a conclusion that is carried out today. Nothing is wasted in this land. Nothing! Even in death, the citizens of Mu serve the land."

Trisha stopped walking, and stared once again at Kan. After a few more steps, Kan stopped and turned to look at Trisha.

"What do you mean, even in death they serve?" she demanded.

"There are no burial plots here, and we do not throw ashes to the wind ... we couldn't afford the luxury, even if we did have the wind. We simply liquefy the remains and return them to the land."

"That makes sense, I guess. But you still haven't answered my question."

"What question was that?"

"As if you didn't know. Several days ago, when Myaculi was with us, I asked you about my sun, but you never did answer. Myaculi isn't with us now ... ,"

"Believe it or not, Trisha, I am answering your question, the only way I can. If I could only get you to realize, how unwise it is for you to continue to dwell on the surface and its sun."

"A sun you claim you have never seen, huh!"

He continued as if he hadn't heard a word she said, "I wish you could understand that you are now and will always be a part of my family."

"You mean if stayed here."

He shot her a look, "Years ago when I lost my parents, as was our custom, they became a part of this land. In that respect there is continuity to the family. But even as the practice of life to life continues, the land is not enough to feed us, therefore we have had to find a way to supplement or replace our food supply."

"What are you getting at?"

Drawing in a deep breath Kan looked long and hard at Trisha before he spoke again. "I wanted you to understand why I do what I have to do and why you must forget the existence of another world."

"Why should I? We both know it exists, don't we. As a matter of fact, everyone here knows it exists, because I exist. Isn't that right?"

"That may be, but it isn't going to help the situation any."

"Why not? You've been to the surface, not once, but many times. Why stop now?"

"You're certain of that?" he asked, smiling.

"Yes, I am."

"How can you be?"

"Remember, I said you were one of the ones Martin introduced me to. I'm not one to forget a face. I haven't yet, and I'd stake my life on that."

"I believe I said you were mistaken then, and I reiterate. You are mistaken now. And don't be so quick to surrender your life on a whim."

"No, I'm not. And my life is as important to me as yours is to you. But for the sake of argument, say I am wrong, not that I agree mind you. You have made some statements that can only lead to one conclusion. You have been outside the perimeter of this sphere. How do I know? You said you had to supplement your food supply. The only way you could have done that is by going outside this little bubble of yours. And once outside, it's just a short swim to the surface ... right?"

"I wouldn't know."

"Well, someone does. Myaculi?"

"I don't believe so."

"Who then?"

"Why are you so positive that there is a way out?"

"There has to be?"

"Why?"

"Because I am here! If I got into this world, there had to be a way in. It only stands to reason if there was

a way in, there has to be a way out."

They had come full circle, and were back at the vehicle again. Trisha paused and looked at Kan. He had already entered the vehicle and waited patiently for her to seat herself. Trisha continued speaking as Kan moved the vehicle toward the Temple of Dawn.

"You do agree with me, don't you?" Kan didn't answer.

Trisha groped for words. "Why don't you answer? Is it because you know there's so much more out there than here? My world is full, alive. Yours is a dying world ... a dead world. You know there's no future here. All that you have, all that you know, cannot stop the inevitable. Unless, of course, you're working on a miracle to lift this land to the surface and wipe away all that keeps it captive here. Are you?"

"What?"

"Are you trying to raise this land to the surface?"

"Where did you get an idea like that?"

"I was only asking. Since you didn't answer, I thought maybe you were."

She waited for him to answer, he didn't. "I know this so called miracle of yours has lasted for 12,000 years, only because you and the archives said so. But it can't go on forever. You know that and so do I. Can you be content never to see the sun again? The others may not know the difference but I do. You and I both do. Don't we Kan?"

She stopped abruptly. "What am I thinking of? Why can't we all go? What's to prevent us from doing just that?"

"That's impossible!"

"Why?"

"In the first place, there's no way out. And even if an exit did exist there's no way we could get everyone to the surface safely. And if that little exercise was possible what would the Terrestrials do?"

Trisha shrugged.

"Your world wouldn't allow a people with our abilities to exist in peace. They would destroy us as surely as they would destroy anyone they considered a threat to their existence."

"You don't know that. You're just making excuses. With the knowledge you have, why couldn't you get everyone out? People with your abilities would be pretty hard to destroy. No. If anything, you would be the destroyers, the enslavers, not us."

"Yes, there is that, too. Some may resort to that. There's no way of telling. Then, too, there is always the possibility we would be good for the riders of our planet ... the air breathers. Wouldn't you agree?" He smiled, hoping she would smile, but she didn't. She was preoccupied.

"You said we couldn't take them all ... why not?"

"What kind of an exit do you think could possibly exist?" he asked, irritated.

"I don't know."

Obviously she was irritating him to some extent. His driving suddenly erratic ... she held on for dear life, as the vehicle swung closer and closer to the trees lining both sides of the wide stone road.

"There is no escape exit."

She didn't answer. She didn't dare. She had all she could do to hold on as the vehicle swung dangerously close to the tall tree growing alongside the road.

"When I said it could be dangerous for you, I meant it. That is one of the reasons you are with me. It's to keep you out of Myaculi's Court and to stop you from talking others into searching for a way out."

"Because there is a way? Right?"

"It's not what you think?"

"Then explain it to me?"

"When the catastrophe first occurred, centuries ago, the High Priests who shielded the land provided for an opening that would allow the waters to flow in rapidly, so that whenever the existing population preferred death, the end could come quickly."

"That doesn't explain how you know."

"The knowledge of the universe, and of the prime forces, was passed down from one generation of High Priests to another..."

"You're a High Priest?"

"You could say that. But there is little for us to do, except carry on the traditions, and preserve the teachings, knowledge and history of the Ancients."

"Doesn't everyone?"

"Doesn't everyone what?"

"Have access to all of this information?"

"No, only to what is essential to their growth. The High Priests have always been aware of the exit, along with other secrets entrusted to their care. There are those who would not understand why it must be so. And this information in the wrong hands could destroy us all whether we were willing participants or not.

"However, we will continue to pass the 'secret' along until someone, sometime decides to open the flood gates. 12,000 years is a long time to spend in prison."

"You don't have to be a prisoner. You can leave anytime you want. That's one advantage you have over the rest of the population. Why won't you take it? Why won't you let me go? If you want to stay, I can understand that. But why must I?"

"The people know you are here. They will also know if you suddenly disappear."

"So what?"

"Explanations would be necessary to avoid a disaster. What explanation could we give them?"

"You, or someone else, could say that you liquefied me, that I had some horrible disease, that I was a

menace to your survival. Anything! I'm sure someone could think of something to explain my disappearance."

"That's not as far-fetched as it sounds. It could very well be what they might decide to do."

"Who?"

"The Family."

Trisha caught her breath. She didn't dare believe what she was thinking. "You mean they may decide to send me back to the surface after all?"

"No. I mean they may decide to liquefy you for the very reasons you describe."

"They wouldn't dare?"

"Who's to stop them?"

"The Authorities, the Law!"

"They are the Authorities, the Law as you put it. They can do anything they deem necessary for our survival."

"What you're saying is that my survival depends upon my cooperation with the Family of Kan?"

"Yes."

"That's what you meant when you said there are things I must understand, or I won't be around for very long."

"Yes."

"Isn't that all the more reason for you to help me escape?"

"Why?"

"Because, if you don't help me, and if you force me to stay here there's no telling what I might do."

"What could you possibly do?"

"I don't know. But I'll think of something."

"And we will know what it is as soon as you think of it."

"I'll tell everyone the High Priests know all the secrets ... ,"

"We could stop you before you uttered a sound."

She looked at him quizzically, and then asked, "Why can't you change the exit to an escape hatch."

"What?"

"You can change the molecular structure of things. Why not that? You can make enough equipment for people to use, and then when the exit is opened, everyone could get out. It wouldn't matter if the Pacific came flooding in, everyone would be safe."

"All of these people, suddenly and without warning appear on the surface of the planet looking as if they had arrived from a distant star? Can't you see what would happen? The Terrestrials would think they were being invaded, and I wouldn't blame them if they did. That is, of course, if all of these people could get through any exit so devised before the entire energy field collapsed and took them all down with it."

"But they'll have oxygen. You can manufacture oxygen can't you? Maybe all won't survive, but a large number would. They would all have the same chance. Anything would be better than living here."

"You can say that after seeing this beautiful undersea paradise?"

She stared at the trees lining the road, at the meadows beyond, and at the gray-black water sky above her and nodded, "Yes, most definitely."

"For you Trisha but not for them."

"How do you know? Has anyone ever asked them?"

"What?"

"Has anyone ever asked what they would rather do? Maybe, just maybe, if given a choice the people of your world would prefer to live in mine."

"There is that possibility. However, they are not going to be given any such choice."

"You can't do that."

"Why do you say such things? You have come among us and interrupted our way of life, such as it is. You are an uninvited guest, a threat, but do we treat you as such? No."

"But you're denying them the right to choose."

"You don't understand. My people pose no danger to your world, but let one, just one of your world, idealistic or just plain stupid, stumble into my world, such as you have done, and you can destroy all life here."

"How?"

"Our people have no immunities to your diseases. Even a common cold is deadly to them. They wouldn't last one day in your world."

"Then let me go. Or, better still, take me back to the black marbled room, and I will find my own way out."

He smiled down at the dark-haired creature from the world above and shook his head.

"You know I will, don't you?"

"I know you will try. Whether you succeed or not is another matter."

"Oh, I'll succeed alright. I know the exit has to be in that room somewhere. The marker in the cave has something to do with it. Sooner or later I'll find what I need to get out of here, and when I do, whether I'll close the opening behind me, or let it stay open is another matter."

"If I believed that, your existence would end right now."

"There is only one way you can be sure, and that is to come with me, to make certain I do close the exit."

Kan smiled widely, "You'll have to find it first."

"I will."

"At least it will keep you out of harm's way for awhile. But if the time does come, we can continue this discussion. Meanwhile, I'd watch my thoughts in front of the others, especially Myaculi, if I were you."

"Does she know everything you know?"

"No."

"But she can read my mind as well as yours."

"She can read your mind and your thoughts. Mine are a different matter."

"You mean she can't tell what you're thinking."

"Not unless I want her to."

"Then keep me away from her and the rest of them. The less they see of me, the easier it will be to disappear."

"I'd like to keep you with me forever, but that doesn't seem to be what you wish. In the short time you've been here, I've grown to care a great deal for you. Perhaps, in time, you may even learn to like me a little."

As the Temple of Dawn loomed up before them, Trisha suddenly smiled and her face lit up like her Terrestrial Sun. She looked at Kan evenly, laughed capriciously and said, "And I thought you could read minds."

Chapter 10

Myaculi was in the Dining area waiting impatiently for Kan and Trisha to return. As the time went on, her irritation mounted considerably. She bristled when they finally arrived and saw them walking in holding hands. A dark look covered her face.

"Well I trust you two have enjoyed yourselves," she said glaring at them. "And from where I stand it certainly looks that way!"

Myaculi's words cut Kan's and Trisha's laughter short, but Kan would not let go of Trisha's hand.

"Myaculi, must you?"

"Irritated even more so by Kan's words, all she could think of to say at the time was, 'I'm sorry, Kan, I'll leave.'" Myaculi's hurt and anger manifested itself as she turned and hurried out of the room before Kan could stop her.

"If looks could kill," Trisha couldn't help blurting out. Turning to Kan she asked, "What's she so upset about, Kan. Why did she leave in such a hurry?"

"For the first time in her life, everything isn't going her way, and she's jealous."

"Jealous? Why should she be jealous?"

"You have to understand, Trisha, we have been promised to one another since childhood and naturally, she expects us to marry. After all, it has been a way of life for us for Centuries. A High Priestess is chosen for the High Priest at birth, so that the traditions may continue. And up to now, no one has ever challenged that. At least, no one who had the courage to do so."

"You never mentioned that before, no wonder she's upset. Is that what you want to do as well? Marry Myaculi?"

Kan held Trisha at arms length and smiled. "What I want, Trisha, only you can give. Besides, Myaculi was not of my choosing. It was the ruling authorities' decision, not mine. After all, I was only a baby at the time."

Trisha nodded, wondering what she should say next. "I'm not sure I should be asking you this, but what is it you want from me?"

"I want you, your love and, your willingness, to spend your life here, with me, in my homeland."

"I didn't know you cared that much for me. I had hopes but when you refused to help me get out of here ... ,"

Kan drew Trisha into his arms, and held her close to him. "You know I can't do that, Trisha. Not even for you and certainly not for anyone else."

"If you really cared, Kan, you would. No one has to know."

"What about you Trisha? If you really cared, you'd stay. And as far as anyone not knowing ... how long do you think it would take for someone to realize you were no longer here? No one disappears for very long in our small world."

Kan released Trisha and crossed the room to the window. Trisha followed behind him. Seconds later they were both staring out at the landscape.

* * * *

Inside her chambers, in a distant part of the Temple, Myaculi telepathically interrupted Kan's thoughts.

"She's going to bring you a lot of trouble, Kan ... Especially if she carries out her threat. Oh yes, Kan, that was quite a conversation you two had today."

Myaculi had been stuffing her face with exotic foods, as she lounged on her couch, in her chambers listening in on the conversation taking place between Kan and Trisha. Her terrified handmaidens scurried to cater to her wishes. She smirked as Kan's thoughts shot back at her.

"Eavesdropping again?"

Kan looked down at Trisha. Deep in her own thoughts Trisha was totally unaware of the telepathic conversation taking place between Kan and Myaculi, and from two very different areas of the Temple. He could sense trouble brewing ... trouble that would involve Trisha, if Myaculi had anything to say about it. Myaculi's thoughts interrupted his.

"Only when it serves my purpose," she shot back.

Their thoughts flew back and forth between the Dining Room area, where Kan was standing, and Myaculi's chambers, where she was reposing, as their telepathic conversation continued unabated.

"Apparently it always suits your purpose to interfere into areas that are none of your business ... sort of sticking your nose into places where it doesn't belong. Isn't that so, Myaculi?"

"You'd better watch what you're saying to me, if you know what's good for you!" she shot back angrier than she had been.

"Really! Why should I? I'll say anything I want to you, or completely ignore you if I so choose. Who are you to tell me how to speak? And if it bothers you so much, you don't have to listen. Besides, what could you possibly do about it?"

"I haven't decided yet ... I'll let you know when I do. In the meantime, beloved, I consider you holding an outsider in your arms while you are pledged to me a totally unforgivable insult."

"I will hold Trisha in my arms as often and as long as I want and there is nothing you can do or say that will change that. Besides," he said, *"I didn't think anyone could insult you."*

Angry at Kan's words, Myaculi pushed her handmaidens aside, scattering all the food laden plates and baskets every which way to the floor. Rising from her couch she stormed back and forth, fuming, plotting, as she flung her telepathic answer back to Kan.

"Those who try, Kan ... Sooner or later, live to regret it."

A smile appeared on Kan's lips as he heard Myaculi's thoughts.

"Is that a threat?"

Myaculi smiled wickedly as she returned to her couch and ordered her handmaidens to again serve her.

"To you? Of course not, my love!" Her thoughts came through sweet and soft, *"Why would I threaten you?"*

Kan shook his head. Myaculi could be very devious when she wanted to and her sweet talk didn't fool him at all.

Meanwhile Trisha had been watching Kan's face closely. She knew something had his complete attention.

"Kan, what are you thinking about?"

"Not much ... Nothing that's of any importance anyway," he said with a smile.

"I heard that!" Myaculi shot back.

"Did you now? Well, that's what you get for eavesdropping,"

Smiling broadly, he turned his attention to Trisha and gently placed his hands on her shoulders before he kissed her on her forehead. *"And I bet you caught that too!"*

Fuming at his remark, Myaculi continued her pacing back and forth. Still, she persisted in eavesdropping on Kan and Trisha. Ignoring Myaculi, Kan kept his thoughts with Trisha. "I have to leave you now. It's getting late, and you can do with a little rest."

He paused, held her at arms length and looked intently at her. "Think about what I've said Trisha. I really do care a great deal for you. And in case I didn't make myself clear, I am asking you to be my High Priestess."

* * * *

Kan heard the ungodly scream coming from Myaculi, which reverberated in his head. He wasn't going to answer her in any way. He wouldn't give her the satisfaction of knowing that her scream jarred him. He thought that it was about time she knew how he felt and that she might as well get used to the fact that Trisha is and was his choice ... not her, no matter what the ruling authorities think or say.

Trisha stared beyond him, past the window to the outside. "I understood perfectly, Kan." She looked at him and shook her head. "But Myaculi may not."

"That's my problem ... not yours."

He smiled, drew her close to him, kissed her tenderly, then released her, and left her standing alone. She stared after him as he disappeared through the doorway and out of her sight.

"That's easy for you to say," she whispered, shivering slightly.

* * * *

Myaculi, angered by what she overheard, screamed Trisha's name with so much venom that her handmaidens scurried away as rapidly as they could so as not to incur her wrath. "They'll pay for this," she screamed. "Mark me!" she screamed again as the last of her handmaidens disappeared from view. "Come back here," she screamed at her hand-maidens, but they knew better to be anywhere near in her presence when she was in one of her tirades. Her look wasn't lost on Kan. A look he would not soon forget. And a threat he would not soon forget either. He wondered about how much danger he had placed Trisha in. He will have to be very watchful and instill in Trisha not to trust Myaculi, no matter what. It was imperative that Trisha understood.

* * * *

Trisha didn't feel like sleeping so she headed back down to the archives to do more research. After making herself comfortable she reached for a manuscript and began to read. For days she had been

listening to Kan talk about his precious land and often wondered, but never asked, *if everything was as perfect as he said, why was it destroyed?* She soon discovered some of the answers she had been looking for were right in the palm of her hand.

* * * *

It told of how the seeds of destruction were sowed many centuries before the actual demise of Mu. During the formative years of the Empire, the nation's growth was much greater than its mechanical and scientific development. Consequently, the citizens felt the need to import manual laborers to supplement their work force. Being generous and high-minded, they offered these non-citizens the same benefits and lifestyle they themselves enjoyed.

As a result the new influx to the nation did not feel the importance or necessity of acquiring citizenship. This required schooling, which they shunned. Only citizens could vote, but the laborers didn't care, they had all the benefits of citizenship, and none of the burden. Before long, the nation was inundated with laborers who outnumbered the citizens, and a class structure developed establishing the Citizens as the Masters. Still the Citizens continued their efforts to enlighten the laborers, but the laborers would have none of it. *Gosh*, Trisha thought, *even then, they had their problems. How does the saying go? No good deed ever goes unrewarded?*

Beautiful churches were set up for the masses, in hopes they would learn the Universal Laws, and wish to better themselves. But in the end all the Plan succeeded in doing was drive a further wedge between the classes and spawned the birth of a Priesthood that undermined everything the citizens tried to do. During that time and in the ensuing centuries Priests lured the laborers away from the citizenry with promises of a return to Paradise and Eden. There was no explanation how this would be accomplished, only that the laborers should put their faith and trust in the priests and believe that they could make it work.

Hmmm, Trisha thought, *sounds like many of our present day politicians. And of certain organizations who promise the same thing today.* She turned the pages and continued reading.

For generations the priests held the people in complete control. Whenever the government objected to the stranglehold on the masses, the priests were quick to promote sedition. They had no intention of relinquishing their power. The priesthood continued to undermine the Mukulian Empire until open civil war manifested itself, and greed reared its ugly head.

Boy, Trisha thought, *talk about history repeating itself. How many other civilizations have been destroyed by good intentions?*

"That's enough of that." Trisha said emphatically, closing the manuscript with a bang. She returned the papers to their proper place and left the archives.

* * * *

As she walked back to her sleeping quarters Trisha ran into Kan. "In the archives again, I see. I thought I asked you to get some rest."

"You did, but I wasn't sleepy."

"Come, it's time you were resting. I'll walk with you to your chambers. Now!" he said emphatically.

"That's what I was planning on, but ... ,"

"But, what?" they stopped moving.

"What happened? I mean, how did it all end? What really caused the destruction of the continent?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"I just do."

"Must it be now?"

"Yes, please. If you want me to rest, I need to know."

Seeing there was no persuading her differently, Kan agreed to answer her questions. He urged her forward toward her chambers before he acquiesced to her request. While they were walking he began the oratory of Mu.

"Where shall I start?"

"Where you want," Trisha answered.

Kan looked down at her, smiled and felt he could delay no longer. He began with as close to the beginning of the end as he thought was necessary.

"While Mu was at her pinnacle, the first in a series of disasters struck. Earth-quakes and violent outbursts shook the southern continent. Huge cataclysmic waves from the ocean rolled in over the southern shores, destroying city after city, while the volcanoes belched fire, smoke, and lava. But in time, the cities were rebuilt, trade and commerce were resumed, colonization continued, and everything was back to normal."

"God!" she shuddered. "That was terrible!" Somehow Kan had the ability of making his words become so vivid in her mind that she felt as if she was there, watching, while it all happened.

"That was just the beginning," Kan smiled.

This was a new experience for him. Every citizen of Mu had already committed the History of Mu to memory. Trisha was the first person he had ever encountered who didn't know, and to see her senses reel as her mind absorbed his mental images was fascinating. But he did not want to hurt her, so he softened some of the blows by shielding her mind. Still, he wanted her to know, so that she might understand, and stop her search for a way out. He wanted her with him for all time, but he wanted her to want that as well.

"Where did you go?"

"What?"

Smiling, she replied, "I said, 'where did you go?' You started to say something, then a blank look crossed your face, and you appeared to be off somewhere. Where were you?"

"I didn't go anywhere. What are you talking about?"

"Never mind," she said laughing and shaking her head. "What were you saying?"

He shot her a quizzical look. *Strange creatures these Terrestrials*, he thought, and then began again. "Several generations later, disaster struck again. Only this time it was different. My country became a victim of earthquakes. The entire continent heaved, and rolled as if it had become the ocean's wave. The land trembled and shook like the branches of a tree in a summer's storm. Temples and palaces came crashing to the ground. Huge monuments and statues were overturned. The cities were again in ruins.

"As the land heaved, it quivered, and shook. Fires that were consuming everything below burst through the ground, piercing the clouds above with roaring flames that were three miles in diameter. Shafts of

lightning, that filled the heavens, joined them, adding to the terror and destruction. A thick black pall of smoke hung over the land. Huge waves rolled over the shore, there was nothing left to stop them. Cities, and all living things, were swept before them to total destruction.

"The air was filled with cries of people who sought refuge in their temples, only to be driven out by fire and smoke. They cried out, men as well as women for Mu to save them. But it was too late. During the night the continent was torn apart. In the cataclysm of multitudinous thunder, the doomed land sank. Flames shooting up enveloped her, and then, from all sides, the huge waves came rolling in, meeting at what had been the center of land. Here, they seethed and boiled, like a giant witch's cauldron.

"Mu, the Motherland of Man, with all her proud cities, her temples, her palaces, her arts, sciences, and centers of learning, now belonged to the past ... A blanket of water, now, her burial shroud. Only a handful of survivors clung to safety, and huddled together on the newly formed islands.

"Destitute with no food, clothing; shelter, or tools, the cries of their friends, and brothers, who had perished in the holocaust, still ringing in their ears, they inherited a tradition that must have seemed a mockery to the stark reality they saw around them. Within hours, man had been hurled back to the stone ages. How were they to know, that a part of the civilization they knew was trapped below the surface of the water in an air pocket?"

"All of what you say is written down and contained in the archives? All of this?" she asked. Where did it come from? Who wrote it?"

"Yes, it's all in there. As soon as the survivors could restore a semblance of order, they put all this down for future generations. It's all there. All you have to do is look for it."

Trisha was quiet for a time, and then asked, "Why? Why did this all happen?"

"It had something to do with the subterranean foundation of the continent. Apparently, volcanic gases undermined it. Granite, the primary rock in the formation of the earth's crust, appears to have been honeycombed with huge chambers and cavities filled with highly explosive volcanic gases. When these chambers were emptied of their gases, the supporting roofs caved in, and the submersion of the land above was inevitable."

"Then, then..." she trembled.

"Yes," Kan asked, "what's troubling you?"

"What you said."

"I'm not sure I understand you."

"I mean, it can happen again!"

"Probably."

"To what is left? To, to, this?" she stuttered, sweeping her arm in a circle.

"Probably."

"We've got to get out! Kan! We have got to get out of here!"

"What makes you think you can leave?"

"We both know there is a way out."

"You know," he said thoughtfully, "the possibility exists for it to happen again, but in a different way."

"What do you mean?"

"It is possible you know, for this land to surface, rather than plunge to the depths, the next time the gases erupt or some other natural phenomenon occurs."

"Is that really true, or are you just saying that?"

"I wouldn't say it if the possibility didn't exist. But just because it does exist, doesn't mean it could or would happen."

"Then why bring it up?"

"I just thought I would mention it. It seemed an appropriate time."

"Did it now?" Myaculi's thoughts thrust their way into Kan's mind. "For whose sake? Mine or Trisha's?"

"For both of you, I knew you were eavesdropping again."

"Who was that? Myaculi?"

"Yes, how did you know?"

"I'm getting so I can tell when she pops in, now." Trisha laughed and Kan laughed with her.

"There is another possibility, it's considered folklore, as to why our continent sank, but I'll have to save that for another time. It is way past my bedtime, I don't know about you, but suddenly I feel very tired."

"That sounds intriguing ... can you give me a hint?"

"It has to do with the balance of life on Mukulia and the treachery that destroyed the life force contained in the Sacred Crystal."

"Tell me about it."

"No. Not now. Go to sleep Trisha. Goodnight."

Kan left Trisha standing at the entrance to her chambers filled with curiosity and wonder. *Damn*, she thought. *He would leave now*. She turned, sighed heavily and entered her chambers.

* * * *

It was after midnight before Trisha returned to her bedroom. Every time she entered her quarters she was astounded by the nobility of the sparsely furnished, huge, stone carved room. Within minutes Trisha was sound asleep in the massive bed that dominated the room.

Myaculi had slipped into Trisha's chambers and hid herself in the darkest corner of the room, where the light would not reach. She had waited patiently for Trisha's return and for her to fall into a deep sleep. Now she stood over Trisha's sleeping body, looking down on her malevolently, and contemplating what her next move would be. She made it a point to block her thoughts and what she was doing so that Kan would not be aware of what she was up to. Kan was right to be worried about Trisha's safety.

To begin with, Trisha's slumber was quiet, restful. Myaculi smiled maliciously down at her, waving her arm over Trisha's prone body as she quietly chanted some unintelligible words. Suddenly Trisha's sleep

became disturbed, agitated, and almost violent. In a short space of time decidedly self-satisfied with her efforts, Myaculi turned away from Trisha and slipped out of her room. Hours later, with her hair and face damp against the pillow, Trisha's sleep returned to relative normalcy.

The following morning Kan and Trisha were having breakfast when Myaculi came bouncing in. Seating herself at the table, she looked at the choices for breakfast then served herself while she directed her question to Trisha.

Checking the food on her plate, Myaculi asked, "Did you sleep well, Trisha dear?"

"Yes, I think so. No, I'm not sure. I thought I did, but I seem to be so tired today, so drained of energy. It's almost as if I've been running in my sleep, all night long, as if someone was chasing me. Trying to catch me ... to hurt me. No. I guess I didn't sleep well after all."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Well, never-mind, I've got something that will help you sleep. I'll get it for you later so that you'll have it when you need it."

"Why thank you, Myaculi. That's really nice of you."

"Yes. I thought so, myself." She beamed at Trisha.

Kan, quietly listening to the conversation between the two women, decided to interrupt. "I didn't know you were having trouble sleeping, Trisha. Why didn't you say something earlier?"

"I didn't want to bother you. Besides, I wasn't sure what to think. I wasn't sure if it was the water overhead, the strange room, my digging in the archives, or what was affecting me ... so I didn't say anything."

"It probably has to do with all sorts of things. Maybe a hidden guilt complex manifested itself, while you were asleep and unable to control your subconscious."

Trisha shook her head and looked strangely at Myaculi. "I don't think so. Where would you get an idea like that? I was probably just plain tired."

"Perhaps you're right. I don't know why I thought you'd feel guilty about something or other."

"Perhaps it had to do with someone, rather than something. Wouldn't you say, Myaculi?" There was a deep frown on Kan's face. *What did I miss?* He wondered.

Myaculi smiled maliciously, "Anything is possible, Kan."

"Well, don't worry about it Trisha. I'm sure it won't happen again," Kan said shooting a look at Myaculi. "Wouldn't you agree, Myaculi?"

"Probably not, Kan," Trisha answered before Myaculi could. "Especially since Myaculi has been kind enough to offer some relief. Whatever it is, I'm sure I'll get over it."

"That's the spirit, Trisha." Myaculi laughed.

Myaculi heard Kan's thoughts coming at her, *"I must say you are taking this very graciously, Myaculi, since you obviously know how I feel about Trisha."*

"I thought I'd give it a try Kan ... For your sake, not hers."

"I know, and I appreciate it." There was a slight doubt in his mind he couldn't shake. So he made it a

point to block Myaculi from hearing his thoughts. *Maybe, he thought, I'm making too much of Myaculi's threats. Still, she will bear watching.*

Studying both of them Trisha suddenly said, "I wish you two would stop that."

"What?" Kan asked.

"Your telepathic conversations," she answered.

"I am sorry about that Trisha," Kan said, "but you have to understand, most of our conversations here are telepathic, so it is natural for us to converse in this manner."

"I keep forgetting that. What were you two talking about anyway?"

"If we wanted you to know," Myaculi said haughtily, "we would have told you. There are some things we'd prefer to keep to ourselves, if you don't mind."

"I guess it's my turn to apologize," Trisha said, sheepishly, "I am sorry." Then as an afterthought she added, "But you didn't have to be so nasty about it. After all, it is unusual for me to see people talking to one another without words coming out of their mouths so that the other person can hear what is being said. Just because you do it all the time doesn't mean everybody does."

"Everybody here does," Kan answered with a smile. He finished his breakfast and rose to leave. Myaculi was quick to follow. "I'll see you later, Trisha, and we shall continue our conversation. Perhaps then, you'll have an answer for me," Kan said.

"We have other things to discuss first."

He grinned, bent down and again kissed Trisha tenderly, while Myaculi did a slow burn, then he hurriedly left the area. Myaculi smiled sweetly at Trisha and started to leave herself.

"I'll get those tablets for you now, Trisha, before I forget. I wouldn't want you to have another restless night." She was gone in an instant.

Trisha continued to eat slowly. Myaculi returned as abruptly as she left, with a strange vial in her hand.

"Here you are. If you take one now, then every few hours, you'll be able to rest comfortably tonight. Here, take this now so that I can be sure you did."

She handed Trisha a gelatin-like tablet and a goblet of water, then watched closely as Trisha swallowed the tablet. Satisfied, she turned to go. "I'll leave you to your breakfast, Trisha. Enjoy it."

"Thank you, Myaculi. I really appreciate this."

Myaculi smiled, "It's nothing, really. But, nevertheless, you are quite welcome, Trisha."

Myaculi laughed softly to herself as she left Trisha alone in the Dining area.

"I'm not in any hurry to eat. I certainly don't want to spend anymore time alone in the archives either. But I've got no place to go except to walk around the Temple on my own. Maybe I will." Trisha said as she slowly ate her breakfast.

She stifled a yawn, shook her head as if to clear it, then slowly rose from the bench and proceeded to walk out of the Dining area and into the inner recesses of the Temple.

Chapter 11

Sometime later when Trisha, was walking aimlessly through the Temple, trying to amuse herself, she noticed that the door to the main room was slightly ajar when she passed it. She hesitated momentarily, and then shook her head. "Maybe I'd better not," she said, thoughtfully. *I think that's the room Kan said to stay out of. But it's strange that the door is ajar. Maybe someone forgot to close it.*

She moved on and paused at the steps that led to the Tower Room at the top of the Temple. She glanced at the water-sky overhead, drew her eyes away, and then cast a brief look along the wall to the bend in the stairwell halfway up. The thought crossed her mind that around that bend and to the top of those stairs was the Sacrificial Chamber. *Why not?* She rationalized. With a huge shrug of determination, she started up the stairs.

Suddenly, every step produced a loud pounding sound. She stopped and whirled about, "What's that?" she whispered.

She scanned the area ... Nothing. The pounding increased. *Maybe someone's trying to tell me something*, she thought. She ventured nervously forward, as she continued her climb, her bravado decreasing as she climbed each step.

She reached the top of the steps and hesitated before she stepped into the Sacrificial Chamber. She stared up at the altar. She caught her breath. The altar seemed more imposing, more ominous than it did the first time she saw it. "It, it's mesmerizing," she whispered. And the din she heard continued unabated.

Trisha tried to ignore the thumping sounds enveloping her, as she pushed forward and continued to climb to the top of the pyramid shaped, marbled steps inside the chamber. She stared at the most imposing altar she had ever seen now within reach. She felt compelled to run her fingers along the top, and nervously extended her hand. Her fingertips brushed against the shiny black marbled stone and she winced, mystified. Gingerly, Trisha touched the stone again only to recoil in horror.

"It's hot," she cried out, blowing on her hand in an effort to cool it. "It's hot! It's hot," she cried again, trying to stop the pain as the pounding increased mercilessly.

Her hands flew to her head in an effort to block out the sound, only to realize that the noise was coming from within.

"It's me. It's only me ... it's only my heart ... beating wildly," she laughed nervously. "Guess I'm not as brave as I thought."

She stared at the black marbled stone and once more stretched her hand out, then abruptly changed her mind. She felt the pounding in her heart starting to subside, and knew she was regaining control and conquering her fears ... not that she minded. *But*, she wondered, *Why was that stone so damn hot? It just doesn't make any sense.*

She glanced around her, up at the Pacific Ocean flowing overhead, and back to the altar, mystified. Down in the shadows, in the corner of the Sacrificial Chamber, Myaculi watched and smiled victoriously.

Trisha turned away from the altar and descended the pyramid steps to the main floor of the chamber. At the door to the chamber, she turned once again, scrutinized the area one last time, shrugged, then slowly left the chamber. She slowly descended the steps back around the bend and down to the main floor of the Temple. Suddenly all the pounding she had been subjected to disappeared completely.

Still puzzled by her experience in the Tower Room, Trisha continued her lonely sojourn within the Temple of Dawn. She had come full circle and was once again facing the Main Room. The door to this forbidden sanctuary was now partially opened. *Guess I can't pass up this obvious invitation a second time now can I? Maybe you should, her thoughts continued, remember what Kan said. Don't go in there!.*

She scanned the area around her. No one was in sight. She peered through the doorway to the darkness within. She couldn't see anyone inside and there was no one around to ask if they minded if she went in and looked around. She wasn't going to touch anything, just look. So, seeing no one to ask, and no longer able to restrain herself, she cautiously pushed on the door. Instantly, the portal swung wide into the blackness ... beckoning to her. Trisha hesitated momentarily, and then stepped boldly into the room. The door banged shut behind her. She panicked. She turned back but could not find the door or see her way out. She stood perfectly still, frozen in her spot. Moments passed before she was able to move, or determine where she was, or distinguish any of the objects within the room.

"I can't believe it's so dark in here. What's that over there? Looks like a large tank or something," she said, startled by her own voice echoing in the chamber.

Trisha cautiously felt her way toward the object for a closer look, careful not to disrupt or disturb anything. "It really is a tank ... a large reservoir," she whispered. "But not much water. Maybe that's why this room is forbidden. If the people knew how scarce their water supply was they might panic."

She looked around to see if someone might have heard her. Seeing no one, she walked up to the tank, held on to the top edge and peered in.

That is the strangest looking drinking water, if that's what's in there that I've ever seen, she thought.

Staring more intently at the water, Trisha mumbled, "That's not drinking water. It's got to be their Ceremonial Water or something."

Trisha looked above the tank, at the huge lid suspended above it and suddenly stifled a yawn, then another and another.

"Wonder why they left that up like that, and why I'm yawning so much all of a sudden."

She yawned again and again. "Must be the air in here ... it's so stale."

Her yawning continued unabated. Now that her eyes were accustomed to the darkness, Trisha could see more clearly. There were several marble benches encircling the large tank situated in the middle of the chamber. And, flushed tightly against the side walls, were two marble benches. At the back of the chamber, on the opposite wall to the door she could now see, was an elaborate jeweled bedecked, marble altar. *Hmmm, another altar,* she thought. *Wonder if that one is hot too.* There were no other furnishings that she could see, in the tremendous stone carved room.

Trisha, walked over to the side wall, sat down on one of the marbled benches, and surveyed the room around her. She could see the entire magnificent altar and the huge tank from her bench in the shadows. She looked up at the immense lid hanging above the tank, and yawned widely. She stretched out on the bench and wondered why.

Strange they leave that up like that. They really shouldn't do that. All that liquid is going to evaporate if they're not careful about such things.

Her yawning deepened, and her eyes closed. Soon she was in a drug-induced sleep. Myaculi stepped

out of the deep shadows and hovered over Trisha. Staring down at her, she waved her hand over Trisha, and Trisha's dreams began anew.

Trisha was in the throes of a nightmare. Her head tossed from side to side. Rapid eye movement beneath her closed lids agitated in unison with her hands frantically pulling at the air in front of her face. Her breathing was labored and uneven. Beads of perspiration appeared on her forehead as she gasped for breath. Myaculi waved her hand over Trisha's face and Trisha's breathing became shallower. Her hands, still pulling at the air, were weakening, and Myaculi began to smile.

Holding her hand, in mid-air, over Trisha ready to strike a devastating blow, Myaculi stopped suddenly and listened intently to the faraway sounds. Then with a quick, desperate look at Trisha, Myaculi changed her mind and hurried away. The spell broken, Trisha slipped into a deep sleep.

* * * *

Into the Chamber the lower priests came, dragging a reluctant victim between them. The High Priest followed behind. All of the Priests' faces were covered with Ceremonial Masks and Robes, while the victim was covered with a white sack cloth. His screams woke Trisha who in a semi-trance state watched the drama unfold before her from her perch in the shadows.

His screams jolted her, "No. Please. I won't do it again. I promise," he pleaded.

But his pleas fell on deaf ears.

"You seditious ingrate! How many times have your escapades been overlooked? How many times have you been brought before this Court only to be granted a reprieve? How many times have you promised? As long as you've caused no harm, and obeyed the rules, you were left alone, but this time, this time it is quite a different matter.

"Because of your wanton desire to usurp power you have cost the life of a child. And there is nothing you can do to replace that loss. You know what the penalty is and must be for the taking of a life. And there is nothing we can or will do to change that. Much as it grieves us to carry out your sentence of death, we have no other choice, it is the Law. You will be terminated before your young victim is returned to the soil."

As the High Priest spoke, Myaculi slipped in from behind the altar, dressed in Ceremonial Mask and Robe, and took her place beside him. The victim kneeled before them, his hands clasped in supplication as he pleaded for his life.

"Please! One last chance! I didn't know a child would die! I didn't know anyone would die. Please!"

Unmoved by his pleas, Myaculi addressed the prisoner. "It matters little that you knew the consequences of your acts. You have committed a crime against which there is no defense. We are all subject to the New Laws of Mu, whether we like them or not. No one, not even a High Priest, may break the Laws without punishment."

She looked sideways at the High Priest standing next to her before she continued. "In Ancient Times, you would have been rehabilitated, or perhaps banished to some god-forsaken land, where you would have been left alone to eke out your own existence. But since that is no longer possible your body can be used to benefit the Law-abiding Citizens of Mu."

"Please!" the prisoner begged.

"No. Sedition is one thing, but the death of a child for one's own gratification is inexcusable. And the

penalty for such an act is termination. No excuses will be heard. No excuses are acceptable.

"A child's life is far more precious in this land than yours, or even my own, for the children of Mukulia are its future ... such as it is. You chose to ignore this principle. You, as one of the guardians of these principles, and sworn to protect them with your own life, violated them to such an extent that a young life was lost."

"No one knew the child was not in school. No one was looking for him. Not even his parents reported him lost. They didn't come to me for searchers. They said nothing about his disappearance, did nothing, aren't they just as guilty? How was I to know the child would be in the cave when we detonated it?"

The High Priest answered, quietly, "No, my misguided friend, the parents have nothing to do with this. Unless they deliberately placed the child in the cave, and ordered him to stay there, knowing what you were going to do, and said nothing. Were they a part of your conspiracy? Did they play a part in your seditious actions?"

"You have killed their child and you try to place the blame on them. The guilt is yours and yours alone. You have caused a life to be lost. It is only fitting that you forfeit yours."

"You don't understand ... I didn't mean ... ,"

"Silence! There is nothing more to be said." Myaculi ordered.

She clapped her hands twice, and four of the robed and masked priests held and lifted the victim above their heads. He screamed, tried to kick and break free from their grasp, but he was held fast. Two of the priests held his shoulders and arms, the other two, his legs. They moved solemnly along the sides of the tank, until their victim, spread-eagled high above their heads, was suspended in the air over the liquid in the tank. They waited for a signal from the High Priest, while Myaculi intoned the sentence of death.

"For his crimes against the people of Mukulia ... this nameless one is to be put to death. All references to his existence shall be obliterated from the records of this Land from this moment on."

Myaculi reached over the altar and pressed a button that partially lowered the tank into the floor of the chamber so that the priests would have easy access to it. Once done, she signaled the priests, and the four of them lowered their victim into the tank. His body touched the liquid and a glow appeared to encircle his torso. Within moments a whitish, bluish-green pulsating light began to outline then engulf the victim's entire form. As the oscillating light disintegrated his substance, the victim's screams echoed in the chamber. Long after the demise of the prisoner, and the light surrounding him disappeared, his screams still cast a pall in the air.

Moments later, the top of the tank descended and locked in place. A gurgling sound was heard as the liquid began draining from the tank and into the pipes that ran underground, feeding the soil of Mu.

Myaculi once again reached over the altar and pressed a button. This time the empty tank rose to its full height from the floor of the chamber, while the lid rose to the chamber's ceiling.

"There is no reason to replenish the liquid, or to lower the tank. We will not need it again for quite some time," the High Priest said quietly.

Myaculi nodded to the High Priest and removed her hand from the altar, "As you wish."

A terrified, semi-conscious Trisha watched the proceedings from the deep shadows while staring at the High Priest and Myaculi.

Myaculi, conscious of what she was doing, removed her mask, and deliberately fluffed her hair, as she waited for the High Priest to remove his. Trisha watched stunned as the High Priest raised his hands and removed his mask. She screamed, when she saw his face.

"Kan!"

Myaculi smiled triumphantly. Kan moved quickly to Trisha's side. "Trisha! What are you doing here?"

Completely dazed, Trisha answered, "The door was opened. I just stepped in for a minute, but the door closed on me. I didn't mean to stay."

Myaculi projected a telepathic message to Kan. *"You know, of course, she has violated our Laws."*

He answered in kind. *"It was an accident."*

"Accident or not, she's guilty of a crime! She must be punished."

"You can't be serious, Myaculi. Forget it. Besides, she's under my protection."

"Not even a High Priest may break the Laws without suffering the supreme penalty."

"That's the second time you've threatened me, Myaculi."

"It wasn't meant as a threat. I only mean for you to be careful."

"Really! Forgive me, if I find that hard to believe ... now about Trish ... ,"

"As High Priestess, it is my sworn duty to bring her crime before the Council."

"You do persist, don't you? What else are you planning to bring before the Council?"

"There was something. It was just on the tip of my tongue, now for the life of me I can't remember what it was."

"Just as well," Kan smiled, "Now, I suggest you forget about Trisha, too. Her being here was an accident. She is still half-asleep. It will be an easy matter to make her believe it was all a very bad dream."

"You know that's impossible. I must report it to ... ,"

Kan's eyes burned into Myaculi's mind. She backed away from him, shaken. *"What was that you were going to report?"*

Myaculi shook her head as if trying to remember she turned to leave the chamber. "Dinner will be ready soon, Kan. You had better wake Trisha."

"I'll do that, Myaculi. Thank you."

Myaculi walked out of the Chamber with a perplexed expression on her face and an unusual excruciating headache, and holding her head as if to lessen the pain. Kan reached down to Trisha and helped her to her feet, then guided her out of the Chamber, admonishing her. They walked through the Temple toward the Dining Area, his hand on her shoulder.

"Trisha, I don't care if the door to this Chamber is off its hinges, wide open and the priests invite you in. Don't ever step inside this room again. For your information, it is a crime punishable by death, for any

Citizen of Mu to enter this Chamber without the approval and guardianship of the Council."

"You forget I am not a Citizen of Mu. Your Laws do not bind me. I intend to leave this paradise of yours, as soon as I am able. And you can keep your precious chamber. What's so special about it anyway? I never want to see it again," an angry Trisha retorted.

Smiling widely, Kan said, "Be that as it may. But as long as you are here, you will respect the Laws of this land, and obey them, as any Citizen of Mu must. Someday, I'll tell you what's so special about it, but for now, come along, Myaculi is waiting dinner on us."

Kan moved his arm around Trisha's shoulder and gently but firmly drew her close to him as they walked to dinner.

* * * *

Trisha and Kan arrived at the Dining Area and noticed that the place settings and food were already on the table and Myaculi was seated at the foot of it, waiting patiently for both of them. Next to Trisha's plate, Myaculi had placed another of her gelatin tablets and a goblet of water.

Trisha was very quiet during dinner. Deep in thought, she pushed her food around on her plate with a fork. Kan watched her concerned. Myaculi smiled as she unobtrusively looked from one to the other. Kan broke the silence.

"If you'd rather have something else for dinner, Trisha, I'll be happy to get it for you."

Startled, Trisha looked up, and then smiled. "Oh, no ... It's okay, Kan. There's nothing wrong with the food. I guess I'm just not very hungry." She laid her fork down, and folded her hands on her lap.

"Perhaps Trisha would like to retire," Myaculi offered, in the most, gentlest, sweetest voice she could muster.

"Yes. Yes ... I think I would."

Trisha pushed her plate away from her and started to rise from the chair. "I seem to be very tired. Maybe a good night's sleep will help."

"Did you take my tablet?"

"Yes."

"Good. It will help you sleep."

Trisha shot Myaculi a weak smile, and nodded to Kan. "I'm sorry I spoiled your dinner, Kan. But I've got to lie down."

"Don't worry about it, Trisha. There will be other dinners, come ... ,"

He rose from the table, crossed to Trisha and took her by the arm. "I'll walk you to your room. You'll feel much better in the morning."

"I'm sure she will, Kan. Perhaps the events of the day were too much for her."

Trisha stopped, looked at Myaculi, then at Kan. She appeared to have momentarily gotten her second wind.

"Somehow, Myaculi, watching another human, being disintegrated and turned into liquid fertilizer doesn't

strike me as the best way to spend an afternoon, nor does it do much for my appetite."

"Perhaps not, but it is something one has to get used to if one is to survive," Myaculi said, with a slight mocking tone to her voice.

Trisha shuddered. "I could never get used to that."

Myaculi smiled openly, "Don't worry, *you* won't have to. It's part of the duties of the High Priestess, a role I am sure you will never have to assume ... ,"

She hesitated momentarily, then added, maliciously, "...and of the High Priest. Kan and I have become quite adept at dispensing this type of punishment. Isn't that so, Kan. Kan?"

Thoroughly annoyed, Kan answered, curtly, "I don't think this discussion is necessary."

"Oh, but it is. How else is Trisha to understand what her position is in our land, or for that matter survival?"

"She is quite aware of it."

"Is she? Anyone else, who 'accidentally' witnessed the punishment, wouldn't get off so easily."

"What do you mean by that?" Trisha asked.

"Didn't Kan tell you? If it weren't for his interference, you would have paid the penalty for your transgression, as would anyone else in our land. Kan saved your life."

"You sound disappointed, Myaculi. I'll bet if you had your way, I wouldn't be here now."

"But the point is, you are, Trisha dear. And the mere fact that you are, you owe to me."

"I think you lost me somewhere."

"I wish," Myaculi muttered under her breath.

"What are you mumbling about?"

"It doesn't matter. I should have turned you in, you know. But Kan asked me not to. So you see you do owe your life to me."

"Kan, is that true? She didn't turn me in because of you?"

"Yes."

"But she wanted to?"

"She only thought she did."

"You changed her mind?"

"Yes. He did."

"And you're sorry, now."

"Not at all, I'm glad he talked me out of it ... now."

"What if she changes her mind again?" Trisha asked of Kan.

"Now why would I do that?" Myaculi asked.

"I could think of a number of reasons."

"No one's going to change anyone's mind. I thought you were tired."

"Yes, I was on my way up, wasn't I?"

Beaming, Trisha turned to Myaculi and said, "Even if you couldn't help yourself, thanks anyway, Myaculi."

Myaculi nodded to Trisha, and then smiled as they both left the area. "My pleasure, Trisha dear ... until the next time," she whispered softly and laughed.

* * * *

"Trisha, I really do wish you would stop trying to antagonize Myaculi."

"It seemed to me that she's the antagonist."

"That may be, but you're no match for her."

"I would be if we were on even terms."

"What are you getting at?"

"As if you didn't know! Teach me to do the things Myaculi does. Give me some of the powers she possesses. I learn quickly."

"That's not possible."

"Why isn't it? Powers were given to her, why not me? I'm not asking for all she has, just enough to hold my own."

"I'll have to think about that one."

He stopped walking momentarily and looked at her. "Do I read you right? You're planning on staying then?"

"I didn't say that?"

"But you expect me to allow you to possess abilities Myaculi has, and then just walk away?"

"Yes, if it's necessary."

Kan shook his head. "I don't think our Supreme Leader, will allow it. But like I said, I'll have to think about that one."

"I don't think He will either, Kan dearest ... at least not if I have anything to say about it."

The one and only, reprehensible eavesdropper, Myaculi, laughed, as she smugly settled herself into her bed.

Chapter 12

In the wee hours of the morning, in the massive bed that occupied most of Trisha's quarters, Trisha was in a deep sleep and Myaculi, who slipped in the room unnoticed, stood alongside, watching.

"So you want some of my powers, do you? Well, I'll give you some of my powers all right. I'll give you one you won't soon forget ... one you can take with you when you leave us," she said softly, barely above a whisper.

Laughing inwardly, Myaculi placed her right hand on Trisha's forehead and silently erased the events of the day, implanting a new memory into Trisha's brain. She stopped momentarily, and then with a firm nod, implanted another suggestion. If Trisha was stopped, the implanted memory would fade, and the original memory, the one with the day's events would return.

"Just in case Kan happens by and interrupts her, there won't be anything in her memory that might implicate me," she whispered deviously.

Myaculi was certain that her plan would work. She had accomplished her devious mission undetected. Completely satisfied with her accomplishment, she firmly believed there was no way anyone would ever know why it happened, or be able stop Trisha. She was careful to block her thoughts from everyone, especially from Kan, and now she, Myaculi, Mu's High Priestess, will be in command again.

As Trisha began to stir in her sleep, Myaculi silently slipped out of Trisha's room and returned to her own. Not even her handmaidens were aware of her absence. Within seconds of Myaculi's departure, Trisha was wide-awake and completely refreshed.

Rising from her bed, Trisha crossed to the window and looked out. All the lights in her undersea world had been dimmed to simulate nighttime. But even in the dim light, the land appeared beautiful. *Hmmm, she thought, it looks like it's still the middle of the night, but it can't be I'm wide awake and ready to face the day, such as it is.*

She yawned, stretched her arms above her head, and sighed. "Guess I'll take a shower before anyone else gets up. Oh damn I forgot, they don't have showers here. It looks like it's going to have to be a bath, again."

She hesitated, thought for a moment, and then said, "Now where did I see that pool? Oh yes. It's in the Main Room. That explains why it's the only room in the Temple with a ceiling. They didn't want the rays of 'RA' shining down on them while they were stark naked." She giggled.

"Well, at least I'll have the tub to myself that is until the rest of the crew wakes up. I'm not really used to this community bathing."

Trisha stopped briefly and thought, *now why did I say that? When was the last time I was involved in any community bathing? Strange, very strange*, she shook her head. *Oh well, that's something I'll have to take up with Kan later.*

Trisha dressed only in her robe, slippers and carrying a towel, took leave of her room and headed for the Main Chamber, and the 'tub'. Moments later, she was standing in front of the door to her destination. Pushing open the portal, she stepped inside and headed for the large container in the center of the room. The room had a strange and eerie greenish-bluish, hue to it, but Trisha didn't seem to notice as she moved straight to the 'tub'. She tried to think if she remembered that the 'tub' had a high translucent wall

around it but couldn't quite grasp that memory.

Standing in front of the tank, Trisha looked momentarily puzzled. She glanced around the room, when she saw the ladder she smiled. *I remember now, this is the way in.* She grabbed hold of the ladder dragged it over to the tank, and lowered the shorter side into the receptacle. The last rung stopped short of the liquid that was now in the tank—thanks to the malicious diligence of Myaculi. She let go of the ladder, stepped back, and surveyed her handiwork.

"There, now that wasn't so difficult to do. Now I won't have to try to shinny up the side of the tank or dive into the water from the top"

Trisha hung her towel on one of the outside rungs, removed her robe and slippers and began her climb up the outside of the ladder. When she reached the top she looked down into the tank.

"What strange looking water. It ... It almost appears as if it has a bluish-white tinge to it ... so alive, friendly, warm, and inviting."

She stopped for a second to look closer at the water. "What an odd effect it has on me. It's captivating."

Trisha beamed, "Well, here we go. Over the top, and into the drink," she laughed. *I'd dive into it, but it's too shallow. Can't jump in either, I'd probably break my legs, if I tried.*

Trisha didn't see the movement in the deep shadows. Nor was she aware of anyone's presence. She was now on the inside of the tank and moving down the ladder toward the liquid, one step at a time, until she was one rung away.

All the while, someone was urging her forward. *I wish she would hurry and plunge her foot into that liquid before someone comes.* Glancing around furtively, her thoughts aimed at Trisha urged, *what is taking you so long? Put your foot in,* the urging was adamant. *Go ahead, do it now ... now!*

Trisha slid her right foot off the last rung and was about to dip it into the liquid when Kan suddenly appeared. Thrusting his arm out, hand and fingers extending toward the tank, he mentally projected an energy beam and froze Trisha in position before her foot could touch the water. And a shadowy figure quickly and quietly slipped out of the room, unobserved.

"Trisha! What are you doing in here?" Kan demanded, while he kept her safely away from the water.

"I don't know." Trisha replied, perplexed and alarmed.

"You don't know?"

"No! I don't know! I don't know how I got here, or what I am I doing here! I can't move ... I'm paralyzed," she cried out frightened.

"No you're not paralyzed, I'm holding you there for your own safety. You must lead a charmed life. That's all I can say. This is twice I've tuned in to you in time. Take a good look as to where your foot is."

Trisha looked down in horror.

"In another second, it would have been all over for you. Now listen to me very carefully. Trisha! Are you listening? Trisha!"

"Yes!" she answered, terrified, unable to draw her eyes away from the danger beneath her.

"Now listen carefully and do exactly as I say."

"Yes. Okay."

Trisha could not look away from the bluish liquid waiting patiently below for her to make a mistake.

"Don't look down!" he admonished. "I'm going to release you, on the count of three. As soon as I say three ... raise your foot and place it on the rung above your left foot. Do you understand? Don't hesitate, don't even think about it. Just do it. Your foot must not touch the liquid. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes. Don't yell at me. You're making me nervous."

"I only meant to emphasize how important it is for you to do exactly as I say. When I release you, your foot will have a tendency to drop. But you can't let that happen. You must pull your foot up instinctively. Think about what you're going to do for a few seconds. Think positive. Think, pull up, pull up, pull up!"

"I'll try," she answered, terror-stricken.

"No, you will not try. You will do exactly as I say."

"I'm scared."

"I know you are. So am I," he muttered under this breath. "But it will be all right."

He smiled confidently, and moved toward the tank. His arm and hand still extended to hold Trisha in position.

Myaculi attempted to interrupt by projecting a telepathic message to him, but Kan shot back, "*Not now, Myaculi. Can't you see I'm busy,*" shutting her off.

"Don't look at the liquid, Trisha, look at me. Trisha. Look at me."

She pulled her eyes away from the liquid and stared fixedly at Kan. He smiled, encouraging her to trust him. "Keep your eyes on me. I'll tell you when. Okay?"

"Okay," she answered, unsure of herself.

"*Kan ... ,*"

"*What is it with you, Myaculi? I'm busy I told you. Go away.*"

"Let her go, Kan. Let her go."

"This is some of your handiwork isn't it, Myaculi?"

"Let her go ... it will only take a minute ... let her go."

"*I warned you, Myaculi ... now I'm telling you ... get out of my thoughts.*"

Kan mentally projected an image at Myaculi that sent her reeling, causing her a considerable amount of pain. "*That ought to keep you busy for awhile.*"

Having disposed of Myaculi's interference for the time being, he turned his attention back to Trisha.

"Ready?"

She nodded, afraid to speak.

"Good. I'm going to start counting ... ,"

"No. Wait. Please."

"Why?"

"I can't ... I'm terrified of touching that. I can't do this ... I can't."

"Then I guess Myaculi wins ... doesn't she?"

"What?"

"Who do you think is responsible for the mess your in?"

"Myaculi? Myaculi did this to me? Is that what you're saying? This is all Myaculi's fault?"

"So it would appear. But if you can't do as I ask to get yourself out of this, we'll never know will we? The only thing we will know for sure is that she won."

"Oh, no, she won't. She's not going to win this way ... not if I can do anything to stop her. Let's go, I can do whatever it takes now."

"Sure?"

"Positive!"

"On the count of three then ... one, two, three!"

Spurred on by her anger at Myaculi, Trisha raised her right foot to the rung above her left foot, as soon as she heard Kan say three. She hung on to the ladder, not daring to move, knowing that she still had to get herself out of the tank. And, as for Myaculi, *Someday, sometime there will be a way.*

Kan watched Trisha, and smiled appreciatively at her for a few moments, before he calmly said, "Trisha, climb to the top of the ladder, then down this side. Come on, one rung at a time."

Trisha started up the ladder slowly, carefully. *This is not the time to falter*, she thought.

"That's the girl. You're almost there. Don't hurry, take your time. I'll wait."

Trisha reached the top of the ladder, swung herself over and climbed quickly down into Kan's waiting arms. She buried her head in his shoulder and cried softly. Kan wrapped Trisha's robe around her, held her close to him and let her cry. Moments later, with his arm still around her, he guided her toward the door, out of the Main Chamber and back to her room.

"You couldn't do it, could you love? You couldn't let her go. Well no matter, there will be other times."

"Myaculi, if you don't leave Trisha alone, you will live to regret your actions, believe me. And that's no idle threat."

"We'll see. Bye Love."

Kan was beside himself. He didn't want Trisha to really know what Myaculi tried to do and wondered how long this battle of wits would keep up.

* * * *

Kan held Trisha at arms length, and looked approvingly at her. She clutched her robe around her and squirmed nervously under his scrutiny.

"I think you'd better go."

"I'm in no hurry."

"I still think you'd better go."

"If that's what you want."

"It's got nothing to do with what I want."

"Didn't you want me to leave?"

"No. But I think you'd better."

"I can change your mind."

"I know you can, but don't. Don't make it any more difficult than it is."

"You're right. It isn't morning yet."

He smiled suddenly, drew her close to him, and then lifted her in his arms. He looked tenderly into her eyes and kissed her. Trisha's body went limp. He crossed the room with Trisha in his arms, and then gently laid her down on the bed.

Hours later, Kan whispered softly, "You'd better get some sleep."

He bent over her, kissed her one last time and quietly slipped out of her room.

Chapter 13

The following morning a radiant, happy and beaming Trisha bounced into the Dining Area. Myaculi, caught off guard, stared in disbelief. Kan's smile matched Trisha's while Myaculi did a slow burn.

"Koaha-E, everyone, I can really say that now and mean it. Isn't it a lovely morning? Even the Pacific Ocean flowing over our heads looks pleasing for a change."

With a wide grin on his face, Kan answered, "Koaha-E, Trisha. Yes it is, isn't it?"

He looked up at the contained waters overhead, "You know I do believe you're right. It does seem more pleasant. Did you sleep well?"

"Marvelously well, thank you."

"You did?" Myaculi asked, surprised.

"Of course, I did, Myaculi. Didn't you expect me to? After all, it was you who gave me that tablet ... ,"

"Yes, yes of course. I had forgotten that," Myaculi flashed a bewildered smile.

Kan, watched both of them, then glanced at the food on the table, and proceeded to serve Trisha first, Myaculi, then himself.

"The food looks, and smells delicious this morning, Myaculi, not that it doesn't every morning," Kan said.

"Thank you," Myaculi murmured.

"I don't know about you two, but I'm famished," Trisha enthused, digging in.

Laughing softly, Kan answered, "I'm rather hungry myself, this morning."

"Well, I'm not! If you two will excuse me, I don't think I can stand much more of this," Myaculi said, discarding her napkin with a vengeance.

She rose from her chair, looked disgustedly at both of them, threw her head back and stormed out of the room. Trisha watched, amused.

"What's her problem?"

"You, I believe."

"Me? Why? What did I do?"

"What do you remember about last night?"

Beaming, Trisha answered, "Only that you kissed me, not once, but several times."

"Anything else?"

Trisha put down her fork, folded her hands in her lap and said softly, "I remember you holding me close to you, and feeling so safe in your arms that I wanted to stay in them forever. I felt your gentleness, your touch, your love for me, and that you wanted me as much as I wanted you. Am I right?"

A smile crept slowly across Kan's face, as he pretended to consume his breakfast, "Yes. I suppose you could say that."

"Didn't you mean it?" Trisha asked, suddenly alarmed.

Laughing softly, and gazing lovingly at her, he answered, "Yes, of course I did."

Trisha beamed again, and held out her empty plate to Kan, "May I have more?"

"You are hungry this morning."

"I'm starved! I'm going to have to run around the block to burn up some of these calories, if I keep this up, but I can't seem to stop."

"Maybe we can do something about that. I have nothing pressing this morning, we could always go for a ride, if you'd like."

"Great! I would like to get out of here, but you never did say what was bothering Myaculi."

"She's jealous of you, my feelings for you. After all, she never expected any competition, particularly from an outsider."

"I am sorry for her, truly I am. But I'm happy for me ... for us. Boy that was good. I feel stuffed."

Trisha pushed her plate away from her and sat back in the chair. Kan looked at her and laughed.

Rising from his chair, he held his hand out to Trisha, "Shall we go?"

Trisha reached for Kan's hand as she, too, rose from her chair, "Yes, let's!"

* * * *

Hand in hand they left the Dining Area and walked out of the Temple of Dawn and down the steps to the front of the Temple. Myaculi standing at the doorway watched them. Kan was consciously aware of Myaculi's presence.

"Shall we ask Myaculi to come along?"

"I'd rather be alone with you, but," she sighed, "if we don't ask she'll probably hate me even more."

Trisha looked to Kan. "I don't suppose we could ever be friends?"

"No, I don't suppose you could."

"Maybe, if I tried harder? Do you think?"

"Trisha, Myaculi is not one who forgives easily, nor does she forget. Be friendly, if you like, but don't get too close and don't for your sake trust her for one second."

Trisha nodded, turned, looked at Myaculi standing in the doorway, smiled and waved to her.

"You'd better call her, Kan."

"I don't have to, she heard us."

Kan turned and beckoned to Myaculi. She smiled, then slowly, and deliberately walked down the steps toward them.

* * * *

The vehicle moved away from the Temple and toward the countryside. Myaculi sat behind Trisha, Kan drove and Trisha was talking.

"I'd forgotten how bad this gray pall out here is. Somehow it didn't seem to be that bad inside. It sort of takes the joy out of everything, doesn't it?"

"Only if you'll let it," Kan said.

"It doesn't seem to bother your people, though."

She looked at the Citizens of Mu, walking along the streets. "They seem completely oblivious to everything. Yet, they certainly don't appear to be a happy lot. Why are they staring at us?"

"Probably because they haven't seen much of you and suddenly here you are in public. And, quite naturally, it occurred to them, that there is another world somewhere, a world they have never seen. Don't worry about it that, too, will pass in time."

"Do I sense a hint of a class structure existing in paradise?"

"Unfortunately, there is that, but many changes had to be made to insure our survival."

"Yes, I suppose so. It's too bad, though."

Trisha continued to watch the people strolling along the streets, and the passing countryside, as they rode by.

"It must have truly been beautiful when the sun shone on this land."

"So the Legends tell us."

"You're awfully quiet, Myaculi. Don't you feel well?"

"Yes, I do ... thank you very much," Myaculi said, icily.

"Brrrr, it suddenly turned chilly out here."

Kan looked at Trisha, shook his head and smiled.

"It'll get a lot chillier by the time I'm finished with her."

"If it does, you can walk back, Myaculi."

"Why do you always defend her? Ever since she came here, you've treated me as if you've hated me."

"I don't hate you, Myaculi. I've never hated you. But until Trisha, I've never had a choice. I do now."

"And you're choosing her over me?"

"She is my choice. And what I do is my business ... not yours."

"No. You're not getting off that easily. I want to know. No! I demand to know! How dare you?"

"Enough of this, I don't care to discuss this with you any further, now or later. I've made my choice and the matter is closed."

"No. It is not. There is a higher authority. He will not approve of your actions, or of your displacement of me! I have been chosen to be your High Priestess, not the outsider."

"He may be the higher authority, but he is also human. He cannot deny me my right as High Priest to choose my own mate. I don't love you Myaculi. I could never love you even if Trisha wasn't here. If Ra Mu forced me to take you as my mate, living with you would be a living hell, something I was not prepared to do, then or now. You are the most irritating person I have ever known, and I am being kind about that description."

"We shall see about that, your Lord High and Mighty. You just wait."

"Yes, we shall, Myaculi. We shall indeed."

"Hey, you two, did you forget about me?" Trisha asked, lightly.

"How could we possibly forget about you?" Myaculi said, with fire in her heart.

Trisha shrugged and smiled weakly, then looked to Kan. Kan smiled back reassuringly. "Sorry about that Trisha."

They continued to travel in silence. Not one word passed between them, either telepathically or normally. People strolling along the land, gave a cursory glance at Trisha as the vehicle passed. Trisha in turn surveyed the passing countryside and a look of sadness crossed her face.

"You told me how it all ended, but you said there might have been another theory. Something, you said, that had to do with folklore. Now seems like a good time."

"What possible difference could it make to you?" Myaculi asked, haughtily.

"None, really, I just thought it might be interesting."

"Then let Kan tell you. He says it so much better."

"Thank you, Myaculi. That's the nicest thing you've said to me all day. That's very gracious of you."

"I didn't mean it that way."

"I know."

Trisha tried to stifle a laugh, but she couldn't. "Well, who's going to relate the story, Myaculi or Kan?"

"Kan."

Kan laughed and bowed to Myaculi. "As I mentioned to you before, it had to do with the balance of life on Mukulia and the treachery that destroyed the life force contained in the Sacred Crystal ... ,"

"Yes! That's the one! The legend you were talking about."

"I suppose I could start this off with a once upon a time theme, but I won't. There is something to be said for legends, though most of them seemed to be based on fact."

"Yes, those are my thoughts exactly."

"Isn't that sweet ... She believes in fairy tales."

"Knock it off, Myaculi."

Trisha realized Myaculi and Kan were at it again and said nothing, but wished she knew what was going on between them.

"Fat chance," Myaculi shot at Kan, reading Trisha's mind.

"Maybe not," Kan answered.

"You wouldn't dare."

"Wouldn't I?"

"You were saying something about the legend as something that actually took place?" Trisha interrupted.

"Yes," Kan laughed. "As a matter of fact it was. Several weeks before the destruction occurred, a simple-minded laborer from the western provinces, under the influence of a high ranking Council Member stumbled upon a sacred cave, deep within the very core of the continent. Unknown to this innocent man, he was sent in search of the Sacred Crystal, which held all life in balance on Mukulia. The Councilman knew that with the Sacred Crystal in his own hands, he and he alone could control Mukulia and launch a full scale attack on Atlantis ... ,"

"Atlantis? I didn't know the Mukulians knew anything about Atlantis."

"Really, Kan, and you want her to be High Priestess?"

"Myaculi, why do I think you said something nasty just now?"

"I wouldn't know. *What's she doing, reading our minds now?"*

Kan could not contain himself. He roared with laughter and glanced at Trisha.

"I told you I knew when she was popping in and out of your mind. I knew what her feelings were, too. She sends out some really bad vibes."

"Do I continue, or shall I let you two, finish?"

"If I knew my statement would start a war, I wouldn't have made it."

"Keep that in mind for the future, Trisha. It can save us both a great deal of trouble."

"No doubt!"

"As I was saying..." Kan interrupted, moving the vehicle forward faster in an attempt to shake them up long enough to regain control, "...someone wanted power and didn't care how he got it."

"Sounds familiar," Trisha said, dryly.

Kan looked down at Trisha and shook his head. Determined to finish his story, he spoke loud and clear drowning out both Trisha's and Myaculi's thoughts and words. But once he had their attention, he lowered his voice.

"When the laborer first set eyes on the Sacred Crystal, he was astounded by its beauty. A giant prism emanating rays of brilliant, multi-colored light inundated the cave and his very being. He felt the Crystal burning into his eyes, but could not close his lids against the onslaught. He stood transfixed, unable to move or draw a breath. He watched terrified as the oscillating life force within the Crystal sent vibrations of throbbing light and sound coursing through his body, knocking him senseless. He could feel the

pulsating forces getting stronger and stronger, roaring in his head, until he heard himself screaming.

"He ran toward the Crystal, stumbling and falling, feeling his way toward the warmth and light, until he was upon it, for he could no longer see. He seized the Crystal and marveled at its exquisite softness against his rough hands. He sought to caress the sacred object but his touch only served to pierce the external skin of the Crystal. The horrendous glow of the liquid's translucent life force turned cold as it slowly oozed through the laborer's fingers and hands from the fatal wound he had dealt it.

"His terrifying screams reverberated throughout the cave until a thunderous roar from the recesses itself drowned all sound. The Sacred Crystal lay mortally wounded under the crushed rock, its life force ebbing away. And with its end came the destruction of Mu."

"You don't really believe that, do you? I mean a Crystal, Sacred or otherwise, holding the balance of life inside it? You're not really serious? Are you?"

"About the Crystal? Why not? Many believe there are Crystals, which hold a great deal of power. The life force inside a Crystal, why is that any different than the life force existing inside an egg? Isn't that where all life springs from?"

"I suppose, when you put it that way. But, about the laborer, where's the truth in that?"

"There is truth in the fact that an explosion in one of our caves could cause a major catastrophe. A laborer did trigger an explosion on Mu. It was in a cave. No one knew what he was doing in there. He was under the influence of one of the Councilman who was known to harbor visions of grandeur. And it was the cause of a major breach in the continent itself. It could have been the rift that started it all. Who's to say it wasn't?"

"Didn't anyone ask him why?"

"No one could. He was killed in the explosion."

"What about the Councilman? What happened to him?"

"He was stripped of all powers and banished from Mu forever."

"So he survived."

"That is a possibility."

"It is also possible that he was tracked down and killed by those who actually survived the destruction he caused," Myaculi offered.

"That is a distinct possibility," Kan said.

"If that's true, who could blame them?" Trisha asked.

"No one..."

"I'm not sure what version I'd care to believe," Trisha said after thinking about it for a moment or two, interrupting Kan.

"...It doesn't matter really. Mu was destroyed. Whether it was by one man, more than one, or nature itself, the result is still the same."

"True enough. But you left out something."

"Oh. What was that?"

"As if you didn't know," Trisha answered, sighing.

"Of course we know. She means Atlantis."

"Thank you, Myaculi."

"She said I meant Atlantis, didn't she?"

Kan stared at Trisha. "Can you hear us?"

"No. But it wasn't hard to guess."

"Well, yes, she did."

"What did Atlantis have to do with any of this? With Mu? What was the connection?"

"Later, Trisha, later ... when the time is right."

"When will the time be right, Kan? What is the secret of Atlantis? A secret you've kept to yourself all these years?"

"I said later."

"Oh, I see. Trisha, dear sweet little Trisha, is to be granted special privileges, and allowed into the inner sanctum, while I'm to be left in the dark. Well, we'll see about that."

"Myaculi ... , "

"Yes?"

"Shut up."

Myaculi folded her arms, sat back in her seat, and glared at the back of Trisha's head.

"Myaculi, leave her alone. Stop your stupid mind games. That is a command."

"Take me back to the Temple, immediately. I no longer wish to ride with either of you."

"Believe me, the feeling is mutual."

"I think it's best if we continue this another time, don't you agree, Trisha."

"You're probably right. I somehow have the feeling that things are getting out of hand. You do want to go back, don't you, Myaculi?"

"Yes." she said icily.

"Brrrr, it really did get cold, didn't it?"

* * * *

Kan laughed, Myaculi fumed, and Trisha smiled. Trisha glanced at Kan and her smile faded. He was listening to someone or something. He nodded his head. Trisha looked back at Myaculi. She was triumphant. Trisha again looked to Kan. He gave her a reassuring smile and patted her hand.

"It's nothing to worry about, Trisha. The Titular Head of the Family requests my presence. It wouldn't do to keep him waiting."

"The Titular Head of the Family? But I thought you were the High Priest."

"I am a High Priest, but the Highest Priest is the Titular Head of the Family, and Leader of our Land."

"What does He want?"

"You, Trisha dear, you." Myaculi said, malevolently.

"What does she mean by that?"

"Don't pay any attention to her, Trisha. She's just trying to scare you."

"Don't tell anyone, but she's doing a good job of it."

"Ignore her, Trisha. It's me he wants."

Chapter 14

The Titular Head of the family sat on his royal chair waiting, with a heavy heart, when Kan walked into his august presence. The Council Chamber an impressive, but intimidating sight was not lost on either one of them. A thick, rich, dark blue, carpet ran down the wide steps and between the marbled columns on either side of the long corridor that stretched the full length of the chamber. Kan stood at the foot of the steps waiting for Ra Mu to speak. Ra Mu was troubled and unhappy with the situation thrust upon him, but he had no choice, he was the Law.

"My son, I have called you before me because you are, after all, my son. I have often promised not to interfere in your life except when I deemed it necessary for the survival of our people, but ... ,"

Ra Mu stopped speaking. His intense blue eyes riveted on Kan. His pure white hair, against his pale white skin, made his skin seem paler than it was. His face softened and he smiled.

"...I do not wish to interfere now."

"Then, why do it?"

"You know why."

"No. I don't believe I do."

"Your actions of late, leave me no alternative, but to order you..."

"Why do you deny me the right to choose?"

"My son, have you taken leave of your senses? The choice has already been made for you. You can not change what must be."

"I have changed it. And to one of my choosing not yours or the ruling authorities, as you well know."

"You can not do that?"

"Why? Because Myaculi objects and demands that I love her? I couldn't possibly love that witch or accede to her being by my side for a lifetime as High Priestess? She can object all she wants. If you think she's so great, you take her as your mate and leave me to my choice."

Ra Mu jumped to his feet and angrily shouted, "You will honor my word."

"I will not honor your word! You can not force me to! Not in my lifetime and certainly not in yours. And if you persist in this, I will no longer honor you."

"You will do as I command. And you will turn Trisha over to Myaculi, immediately."

"Ra Mu. I will do no such thing. Not now, not ever. You can't possibly be serious."

"Very serious. Trisha will join the ranks of the High Priestess' hand maidens and learn to serve her."

"Myaculi is not High Priestess yet. And she never will be. No. I will not place Trisha in that woman's clutches. I forbid it."

"Until my death, *my* word is Law."

"I can not and will not place Trisha's life in danger."

"You have my word Kan. Trisha will be safe, even in Myaculi's Court."

"That is no assurance. Your word no longer means anything to me. You don't know Myaculi. If you did, you wouldn't do this."

"Myaculi has been disturbed because of your attentions to the Terrestrial. Now that she will no longer be a problem, Myaculi will not harm her. You'll see."

"You do not listen. Myaculi will never be High Priestess. I will not relinquish Trisha. Not for you. Not for anyone. And whether you believe it or not, Myaculi can not be trusted. She had already made an attempt on Trisha's life, and you want me to place Trisha in her hands so that she can surreptitiously carry out her plan in the confines of her lower chambers? No, I will not!"

"The question is mute. Either you deliver Trisha into Myaculi's care, or the lower priests will. In either case I want Trisha in Myaculi's hands within the hour."

"Not only do you deny me the right to choose. You ask me to destroy that which I love. And you do so in complete ignorance of the current situation, and without giving me time to soften the blow."

"I didn't intend to. You are making too much of this. Now go, my son, and obey my command. You will see I am right."

An angry Kan shouted out, "When have you ever been right where Myaculi is concerned? What does Myaculi hold over you that you are so willing to submit to her demands so easily?"

"How dare you speak..." he stopped abruptly and with a smile that was meant to ease the situation, added, "You are angry now and your words do not mean what they say. I forgive you my son. Now obey me," and with a wave of his hand Ra Mu dismissed Kan.

But Kan was not to be denied. "From this day forward and for all eternity, I am no longer son to you." Kan angrily declared, as he turned and stormed out of the Chamber, down the long corridors, and out of the Council Building, as a heart-broken, bewildered, and uncomprehending Ra Mu stared after him.

* * * *

Myaculi was waiting outside at the bottom of the steps of the impressive Council Chambers as Kan came raging down them. She smiled triumphantly. "I'll expect you to deliver Trisha to me within the hour."

"She'll be there. I won't forget this Myaculi, mark my words. You *will* pay for this. I have all I can do to stop myself from destroying you, once and for all, right now where you stand. Hear me, and mark me well, you will never as long as there is breathe in me be High Priestess of this land."

Kan pushed past Myaculi with such force that he accidentally caused her to crumble to the ground; jumping into his vehicle he roared away leaving Myaculi stranded and alone.

"Come back here," she screamed over and over again as she pounded her fists on the ground. "You can't do this to me, I am the High Priestess!"

* * * *

Kan paced back and forth in the Dining Area, getting angrier and angrier with every step he took. While he wondered how he was going to break the news to Trisha, she entered the room unobserved.

Startling him with her bright and cheerful greeting, she called out, "Koaha-E, Kan."

Angrily, Kan whirled around only to see his beloved standing before him. His anger melted and he smiled at her. "Koaha-E, my love."

"Koaha-E," Trisha said again, wondering.

"What have you been up to?"

"Nothing much. Just looking around, waiting for you. How did your Command Performance go?"

"My what?"

"Command Performance. You know ... your audience with the Highest Priest of all."

"In a word?—Disastrous."

"Why? What happened?"

A worried frown creased Kan's forehead before he spoke. "Trisha, my love, there's only one way to say it, so that's what I'm going to do."

"Okay. Go ahead. I'm listening."

"I've been ordered to personally deliver you over to Myaculi."

"Myaculi? Why?"

"To be one of her hand-maidens."

"Myaculi? Her hand-maiden? No, thank you. I don't care to have anything to do with that witch. I thought you loved me."

"It doesn't matter what you or I want. Ra Mu has ordered it. And I do love you. You are the only one I will ever love."

"I don't care what Ra Mu ordered. I'm not going. And you have a funny way of showing it."

"You'd better care. Ra Mu's commands must be obeyed. Myaculi got to him first, and there wasn't anything I could do to change his mind. Believe me, I tried."

Neither one of them spoke. Trisha walked over to the window and stared out. Kan walked up behind her and took her into his arms.

"Don't worry, my love. It'll be all right. I will always be with you."

"Are you telling me I have to leave here?"

"Unfortunately, for the present, you'll have to stay with Myaculi's other hand-maidens."

"I'm never going to see you again, am I?"

"That's not true. As soon as I can straighten this out, we'll be together again. Don't worry, it won't be forever."

"Yeah! Sure! Where have I heard that before?"

"We have to leave now."

Trisha nodded, turned and searched his face. He smiled reassuringly, held her closer to him for a pregnant moment, tilted her head up and kissed her long and passionately. Then reluctantly turned and with his hand in Trisha's, escorted her out the Dining Area to grudgingly obey his High Priest. Moments later, he surrendered Trisha into the hands of her archenemy.

* * * *

"Thank you, Kan," Myaculi smiled.

"Don't thank me, you witch. You haven't heard the last of this."

Myaculi laughed, "Oh, Kan," she said. "You can be so amusing at times."

"Laugh while you can Myaculi. Soon you won't be able to laugh at all."

Myaculi looked at Kan and wondered. *What could you possibly do?*

Reading her thoughts, Kan answered in kind, "*You'll know when it happens, and so will your co-conspirator, Ra Mu!*"

"*I heard that, Kan!*" Ra Mu interrupted.

"*Just remember what I told you, Ra Mu. Nothing has changed and nothing will.*"

"*Kan,*" Ra Mu called back. But Kan had tuned him out and no longer heard or would answer him.

Myaculi although shaken by the communication was determined to carry out her objective. She snapped her fingers and two of her handmaidens appeared. "See that our new arrival is made comfortable," she smiled at Kan, but the angry look in Kan's face, stopped her. She nervously waved her maidens off.

As Trisha was being led away by Myaculi's servants, she looked back at Kan and tears stung her eyes. Kan smiled encouragingly at Trisha as she disappeared through the door of Myaculi's Chambers.

"Don't worry, Kan. I'll take good care of Trisha for you. Come, sit by me, and join me in some refreshments," Myaculi said sweetly as she patted the place next to her.

Kan's eyes, fixed on the doorway through which Trisha disappeared, answered, "I'd just as soon sit down with a boa constrictor than with the likes of you. You'd better understand something Myaculi, even if you do have Ra Mu in your clutches at this moment. You do anything to hurt Trisha and you will live to regret it and so will Ra Mu, and that's a promise."

Kan turned on his heels and stormed off. As he left the chambers, he heard Myaculi's voice and laughter echoing after him, "Do come back and visit us, Kan. We'd love to have you." As soon as Kan left, a storm clouded Myaculi's face. *Who does he think he is threatening me and Ra Mu? Well, Ra Mu will have something to say about this you just wait, Kan. You just wait. I'm no where near finished with you or Trisha.*

* * * *

A short time later, inside the Handmaiden's Quarters, Trisha tried but could not control the flow of tears. The sympathetic handmaidens made a valiant effort to comfort her as they bathed and clothed her. Then, in accordance with Myaculi's orders, they dressed her hair in the style befitting a servant of the High Priestess. When properly attired, she was brought before Myaculi.

Myaculi, savoring her victory, was still lounging on her couch, pillows propped all around her. She smiled as Trisha was brought before her. "Well now, that's more like it."

Myaculi made a twirling motion with her hand, and the handmaidens turned Trisha around. Myaculi ordered them to stop and dismissed them. Trisha watched as Myaculi continued to indulge in her favorite pastime ... eating.

As Trisha stood before Myaculi, awaiting her pleasure, the handmaidens continued to serve their mistress. Offering her fruits and other foods to eat, as they stole glances at Trisha. Celae, one of the servants, filled her mistress's goblet to overflowing, and the liquid drenched Myaculi, angering her. Celae cringed.

"You clumsy little fool. You'll pay dearly for that."

Trisha looked first to the servant, Celae, then to Myaculi. As Trisha started to speak, she saw Celae shaking with fear, her eyes wide with terror.

"It was an accident, Myaculi. She didn't mean to..."

Myaculi jumped to her feet and screamed, "Silence! How dare you speak?"

Drawing back slightly, Trisha said, "I was only trying to explain..."

Screaming and angrily waving her arms, Myaculi shouted, "Be quiet! I have not given you permission to speak."

"I don't need your permission to speak!" a now angry Trisha retorted.

Myaculi stopped and stared unbelieving at Trisha. "What did you say?"

"I said, I don't need your permission to speak," Trisha answered, boldly.

Myaculi moved across the room to her royal chair and sat upon it, as if she had already been ordained the High Priestess of the Land, before she spoke.

"Oh yes you do. You most certainly do, and maybe it's just as well. The sooner you learn your place here, the better it will be for all of us."

Trisha turned and stubbornly faced Myaculi. "My place! Who are you to tell me of my place? If you mean as your servant, you'll have to wait until Hell freezes over first!"

Myaculi smiled malevolently. "We shall see who will ask for quarter first. Guards!" Myaculi snapped her fingers and two of the lesser priests entered her chambers. "Take these two..." She pointed to Trisha and to Celae, the offending handmaiden. And the priests moved swiftly to obey. "No wait. Just this one."

She pointed to Trisha. The priests seized her and held her fast. "We shall allow the hand-maiden a chance to redeem herself."

Celae hurried to Myaculi, fell to her knees before her and bowed her head, pleading for mercy. Myaculi placed her foot on the servant's head, and forced it lower until it reached the floor.

"Trisha doesn't quite understand that one word from me and she forfeits her life, or if it pleases me..." She looked down at the handmaiden and pressed her foot harder on the girl's head, "...to crush this insolent girl's head."

Trisha stared at the hapless girl. Celae's face reflected the pain and terror she felt of Myaculi. "You really are crazy, aren't you?" Trisha said, appalled.

Trisha glanced at the two priests holding her. "Doesn't your Highest of the High Priests know about her?"

"This is my domain, Trisha. Only I control what happens here. Don't look to them for help they are totally in my service."

Trisha stared at the two priests, then to Myaculi. "They look like your type." She said about the one on her left, "He must be Curly, and the one on my right must be Moe. Personally, I prefer Kan."

"I'm sure you do. But he, too, is in my service," Myaculi interrupted, smiling sweetly.

"Don't you wish? Myaculi there is nothing you can do that will force him into your arms. Not now, not ever! And that's what's really bugging you."

"One thing is certain you will never see him again. That I can promise you."

Trisha's mouth flew open to retort, but before she could speak, Myaculi ordered the priests to take her away. As she was being led away, Trisha shouted back for all to hear, "You'll never get him, Myaculi! Never, not in twelve million years."

* * * *

It had taken the priests thirty minutes to get the struggling Trisha deep within the bowels of the Temple, to Myaculi's special dungeons. Here, they shackled her wrists to the wall above her head, and her ankles to its base.

Myaculi stared at the servant beneath her foot before she spoke. "You will go to the dungeons and see to it that Trisha has only one cup of water every four hours. She is to have no other liquids and no food, until she begs to serve me. If you fail ... ,"

She pressed her foot down harder until the girl cried out in pain. "...I will crush your head. One more thing, you will take all your meals in the dungeon while she watches. You will prepare your food before her and eat slowly. You must not speak to her or offer her help. Hear me, Celae, and mark it well. Disobey me and your family will suffer with you as well. Now go!"

Myaculi sat back in her royal chair and smiled. *"Not in Twelve million years, Trisha? Really!"*

Laughing, Myaculi removed her foot from the head of her servant. Celae crawled backward away from the chair before standing. Once on her feet, she kept her head bowed as she backed out of the chamber and headed for the dungeon.

Once Celae had disappeared from view, Myaculi said, more to herself than anyone else, "Then we'll invite Kan to visit, and Trisha will serve us both. He'll see how easily she obeys my every wish. Yes, I think that would be perfect, our little Terrestrial the lowest servant of all. And he wanted her to be his High Priestess. Ha!" She threw back her head and laughed maliciously.

* * * *

Three days after Trisha was first incarcerated in Myaculi's dungeon, she noticed her wrists and ankles were sorely bruised and cut from the rubbing of her shackles. She could feel her throat closing on her, but she was not about to give in. Celae carried out Myaculi's orders to the letter. She did not speak to Trisha, but carefully served her a full cup of water every four hours, allowing Trisha to sip slowly, so as not to lose a single drop. On several occasions she was tempted to give Trisha more water and food, but knew if she did, Myaculi would find out. And she was terrified of her mistress.

Celae prepared her own meals as Trisha watched. The aroma of the food only served to strengthen Trisha's resolve. As Celae set her table before Trisha, tears rolled down her face. She ate and drank as

instructed, gagging and choking on each bite, afraid of incurring Myaculi's wrath, if she did not do as she was told. Celae furtively glanced around her.

"Please, Trisha. Do as Myaculi demands." Celae pleaded, barely above a whisper.

"No, Celae, I will not give in to her," Trisha voice was hoarse.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything. If Myaculi should ever find out ... ,"

"Don't worry, Celae, I won't tell her."

"Forgive me Trisha. I don't enjoy doing this any more than you do. But I have no choice."

"I know, Celae. I know."

"I can say no more, Trisha. I dare not. Myaculi hears everything and sees everything. As long as she's awake, no one is safe here..." she giggled slightly, "not even those stooges she has as guards."

"I know Celae, I know, but right now she is more interested in snagging Kan as her mate than what we are doing here."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," Celae said. "Don't even think that way."

Celae fell silent again and continued her meal. Trisha smiled at Celae's unusual display of courage. Then, she closed her eyes so that her newfound friend could finish her meal in private.

* * * *

Later that same day, Myaculi paced back and forth in her chambers waiting for news. She called for the Guards and the priests appeared.

"Has Trisha capitulated? she demanded."

They shook their heads. Myaculi angrily pointed to the door. "Get out of my sight."

The priests looked at one another, bowed to Myaculi, and backed out of the room. They were more than anxious to get away from her.

Myaculi continued her pacing, while angrily demanding of no one in particular, "How long? How much longer must I wait for that wretched Terrestrial to obey me?"

She snapped her fingers and her maidens appeared. She pointed to them and they cringed. "One of you, bring Celae to me! Now!"

The handmaidens scurried away. Moments later a terrified Celae appeared alone before Myaculi.

"Well, is she ready to give in to me?"

Celae shook her head. She didn't dare speak.

"So, she thinks I will relent, does she? We'll see about that. Get out. Get out!"

Celae rushed toward the door, but stopped short as Myaculi turned and pointed to her shouting, "Wait. Return to your quarters. Perhaps a little solitude will serve to convince the Terrestrial. Now leave me."

"But Mistress who will bring her, her water?"

"Don't concern yourself with that. The priests will see to her from now on. I thought I told you to get out."

She waved her arm, motioning the servant to leave. Backing away from Myaculi, Celae left the Chamber with tears in her eyes.

* * * *

Trisha was shivering. With Celae gone the days seemed longer and the dungeon felt suddenly damper and colder. The priests, angry at having to care for Trisha were sloppy. Most of Trisha's meager water ration ended on the floor, when the priests remembered to bring it. And as they hurried away from their intermittent visits, she had all she could do not to despair as the receding light left her in darkness.

Then one night, as the last flicker of light disappeared, Trisha bowed her head and whispered, "Kan, Kan! Where *are* you?"

Myaculi's voiced flooded Trisha's mind, and in the darkness took on a more ominous sound. "*Call all you want. He can't help you. I am your only salvation. Kan can do nothing for you.*"

No, Myaculi. I don't believe you. Kan will come. Trisha's thoughts struck back.

Suddenly vulnerable and exhausted, Trisha slumped against the wall and her hand slipped down into the iron ring around her wrist.

She felt the adrenaline surging within her and began to tug on the ring, until finally, her hand slipped free.

A slow smile crossed her lips. "The only advantage to a water diet, that Myaculi never considered was, the losing just enough weight," she cried jubilantly as she yanked her second hand free.

Chapter 15

Two days after the incident in Myaculi's dungeon, Ra Mu sat alone in his Throne Room wondering what he was going to do, when an angry Kan stormed into the Council Chambers and stood defiantly before him.

"Why do you appear before me in such anger, my son?"

"You call me son after what you have done? You above all people know what is in all our hearts and minds, and you ask why I feel such rage now?"

"Calm yourself, Kan. She is in no danger."

"You say that knowing Myaculi is threatening Trisha's life?"

"Kan, you are overreacting. Myaculi is not threatening Trisha's life ... ,"

"No! The witch chained Trisha in that miserable place she calls her dungeon. She's starving her. Giving her little or no water, if that's not a threat to her life, I'd like to know what is."

"Myaculi must maintain discipline among her servants. She can not show favor to the Terrestrial. Besides, she is no longer chained, as you well know."

"Her name is Trisha, and the fact that she is no longer chained is not of your doing or mine. And if you know she is not chained, then you also know what Myaculi's has been doing to her, starving her, letting her imbecilic guards spill her water so that she has little or nothing left and with no food or water, withering away in that dungeon of Myaculi's. If this is what you call maintaining discipline, then perhaps you have been Ra Mu too long."

Ra Mu's patience was strained. Knowing Kan was right did not help matters, Myaculi had been chosen High Priestess and that was that. But he never expected Kan's anger to be so great, and he didn't quite know how to handle it. *Why or why did he let Myaculi talk him into this travesty? I shouldn't have listened to her. Now it's all coming down on my head. And Kan is angrier than I have ever seen him and all because of that Terrestrial. The one he calls Trisha.*

"I know you are angry, Kan, so I will forget your outburst this one time. But do not do more to incur my wrath."

Kan's anger increased steadily as Ra Mu continued to brush aside his fears. Ignoring Ra Mu, Kan rushed on.

"What other alternative do you leave me? If you have so hardened yourself to the sufferings of others that you no longer show mercy, you have been Ra Mu too long, and should step down."

Ra Mu bolted upright. "Kan, enough! You take advantage of your position. I do not dismiss the sufferings of others as easily as you may think. But the survival of all my people, not just one, must be my major concern."

"She is not one of your people. She is a visitor from the surface and should be treated as such. When did our land become so hardened to the sufferings of others that we no longer have compassion for those who are being tortured by a power-hungry madwomen who wants to be High Priestess? Why do you allow this to continue?"

"My son, your future has already been ordained, and like it or not, Myaculi is part of that fate. It is a destiny you can not escape."

Kan brushed aside Ra Mu's words. "I see her suffering, and hear her cries for my help ... but you have forbidden me to interfere. Now, you say to me, her torturer is part of my life. If that is truly so, I want no part of a future that includes Myaculi or you, or for that matter the very existence of Mu."

"My son, you tread on dangerous waters. It is unfortunate that your love for this Terrestrial, ah Trisha, is so great, but you must put her aside. There can only be one for you, and she has already been chosen."

"You are the one treading on dangerous waters, or have you forgotten that if I feel there is no longer a reason to continue this life, what I could do to change the existence of this land? As to the choice you speak of, it was not one of my choosing. It was a choice made by others without knowing the consequences of their actions. It was a choice I did not make and will not honor. Myaculi will never be my High Priestess and there is nothing you can do or say that will change that. Not in this lifetime!" Kan answered, defiantly.

"Nevertheless, it has been made." Ra Mu answered ignoring Kan's threats.

"That remains to be seen. Are you going to stop Myaculi, or shall I?"

"I will speak to her about her diligence."

Kan exploded, "Diligence! What you really mean is that you're not going to stop her."

Ra Mu sighed heavily, "Trisha must learn to obey! There is no other way."

"Oh yes there is."

"You must not interfere. What you have in mind is against our principles."

"What you have allowed and what you continue to condone is also against our principles."

"Kan! I forbid it!"

"Forbid all you want. Trisha will have the powers she needs to defend herself."

"You defy me?"

"Yes."

"How dare you?"

Kan stood before Ra Mu tall, straight and in total defiance as he answered his Leader. "I dare by the right given to me as your Successor."

"I can change that."

"No! Ra Mu, you can not. I am the next Ra Mu and we both know that."

"My word is still Law."

"Yes. Your word is still Law only so far as I choose to obey it. I will protect Trisha, with or without your consent."

"All right, Kan. I will order Myaculi to stop."

"Now?"

"Yes. Yes. Now!" Ra Mu said, angrily shaking his hand.

"Thank you, Ra Mu," Kan smiled.

Ra Mu nodded and with a heavy heart, dismissed Kan. He knew that if he did not do as Kan asked, he would carry out his threat and lose him for good. He really didn't think that Kan would carry out the threat to destroy Mu, as least he believed Kan wouldn't do that. But then, what of Myaculi? What can he do with her? She was determined to be High Priestess at any cost, and that was another problem he did not want to face at the moment. He sighed and as he slumped in his Royal Chair, Kan turned and left the Throne Room feeling a sense of accomplishment. Trisha was safe.

* * * *

Later that same day, deep in Myaculi's dungeons, her priests entered Trisha's cell with their bucket of water, and they were awestruck. Trisha was slumped against the wall, free from her shackles. She smiled at their feeble attempts to re-chain her and refused their meager offer of water. She took the dipper from their hands, filled it with water, and drank slowly savoring each drop, before returning the dipper to the bucket. Before the priests could walk off, Trisha took the bucket and candle from their hands.

Smiling at them, she said, "I'll keep these." Her voice barely above a whisper, she added, "You can leave now," and waved them away.

The priests, staring at her dumfounded, were motionless. She waved them away again. "Go, go, go," she said. Her words were scarcely audible.

Suddenly terrified of the unforeseen changing circumstances Myaculi's priests hurried out of Trisha's cell and slammed the door shut behind them. As they locked the 'keep' they peered through the barred opening and stared at her, before scurrying off to report to Myaculi.

It didn't take long for the priests to reach Myaculi's chambers and blurt out their message that Trisha had somehow freed herself and that the shackles were now too large to restrain her.

Angrily, Myaculi shot back, "Then devise smaller ones. Restrain her. Take that light and water away from her."

She struck at the priests. "You dolts! How can one so weakened and a female at that take the water and light away from the two of you? I'm surprised she didn't take the keys away and lock you both up as well. Go! Make new restraints immediately."

The two hapless priests rushed away to do their mistress's bidding.

* * * *

Moments later, Kan, seated at the Dining table, instead of eating, listened in on Myaculi as she admonished her priests. He slammed his fist on the table causing the food to spill and jumped to his feet.

"What is that she-devil up to? Ra Mu promised to stop her."

Projecting his anger at Ra Mu, Kan telepathically accused his Leader. *"You have broken your promise to me."*

Ra Mu pacing back and forth in his chambers heard Kan's anger reverberating in his mind. *"I have not! I ordered her to stop!"*

Kan strode back and forth in an angry, agitated state knocking dishes and goblets on the floor as he passed. *"Well, look at what she's doing. Obviously, she doesn't think you mean it."*

Ra Mu was beside himself. He reached out to Myaculi. *"You have disobeyed me! I command you to release Trisha immediately!"*

Lounging on her couch, while her handmaidens rushed to serve her, Myaculi obviously enjoyed the confrontation she had provoked between herself, Ra Mu and Kan. She answered Ra Mu the only way she could at the moment ... telepathically.

"You have given me dominion over Trisha. I will do with her as I please. I will not release her until she begs to serve me. Whether Kan likes it or not I am the High Priestess ... you said so yourself. Trisha must be made to obey. After all, I can't have her chasing after Kan for the rest of our lives, now can I?"

She smiled wickedly, *"Don't worry, dearest. Trisha will learn, sooner or later, where her place is, and then you can see her all you want ... when she's serving me."*

"I'm warning you Myaculi ... leave Trisha alone."

Ra Mu threw his hands up in despair, as he listened to the conflict between Myaculi and Kan. Sending his telepathic message to both of them, his mind projected his words to the two separate areas of the Temple at the same time.

"Stop this! Both of you! Myaculi, release Trisha immediately! Kan, stop threatening Myaculi!"

Myaculi had not moved from the couch in her quarters, nor had she stopped eating and drinking. Her handmaidens, including Celae, had continued to serve her throughout the entire confrontation. Her arrogance and defiance toward Ra Mu only increased her servants' fear of her. She shot her telepathic answer back to both Kan and Ra Mu insolently.

"When I am finished with her, Ra Mu, and not before!"

Kan, upon hearing Myaculi's arrogant answer, was incensed. He had continued to pace back and forth all the while waiting for his chance. And he did not hesitate the moment it was upon him as he shot his telepathic arrow at Ra Mu and Myaculi.

"You asked for it."

"Kan! I forbid it!"

"Ra Mu! You promised Kan wouldn't interfere!"

"It doesn't matter any more. You, Myaculi, have over-stepped your bounds."

Kan's message reverberated in their minds and there was no stopping him.

Myaculi rose from her couch, and with an agitated wave of her hand, dismissed her handmaidens. She paced back and forth, mentally listening in on Kan's thoughts before she telepathically called out to Ra Mu.

"Ra Mu! Stop him! He's going to give Trisha powers ... he can't do that ... you forbade him!"

Ra Mu's sudden laughter came back at her and she was puzzled. Ra Mu was laughing at Myaculi's fears. It was the first time he had laughed in a long time. He shook his head, then raised his arms to the

water-sky above and answered her.

"Have you forgotten who I am? I am the Law here, not you, not Kan. Kan does not have the power to defy me!"

Ra Mu stopped suddenly looked around and listened. There was no response from Kan. Myaculi also stopped and listened. She too, looked around and waited—Still no response from Kan.

Kan had stopped pacing and was scanning the area outside his window as he heard Myaculi and Ra Mu's telepathic conversation. He knew they were waiting for him to answer. He could hear Myaculi's and Ra Mu's thoughts as he waited. Both of them called out telepathically for him to answer. A smile crossed his face when he heard Myaculi's frantic demands, and Ra Mu's orders coming through at the same time.

Instead of answering, Kan threw a mental block around him so that neither Ra Mu nor Myaculi could read his mind or know what action he would take. He seized a plate from the sideboard and loaded it with food from his table. He grabbed a jug of water and left the Dining Area. He headed for the dungeons and Trisha, smiling to himself because he knew it would drive both Ra Mu and Myaculi crazy not knowing what he was up to. And as far as he was concerned, it served them both right.

* * * *

Meanwhile, Trisha, weakening by the hour, surveyed her prison. Aided by the light, she could see little rivulets of water dripping down the carved stone walls of her prison cell and shuddered. She wondered whether the water was seeping in from outside the shield, or whether it was just there. *If it was coming from outside ... Lord, what a horrible thought*, and she shuddered again.

She whirled suddenly, at the sound of the lock snapping open and listened. There was no sound of a key entering the lock. She held her light out toward the door in an effort to see what was happening. The door swung open, she caught her breath ... nothing was there. She stifled a scream when Kan suddenly appeared in the darkened doorway.

She cried out, "Kan. Kan. I thought you abandoned me."

She lowered her arm, forcing the light down away from the door and Kan's face, and cried softly.

With a few swift strides, Kan was beside her. He searched for a place to set the food and water. He saw the table pushed into a darkened corner of the dungeon. He walked swiftly toward it, placed the food and water on it, and then dragged the table to Trisha. He took the light away from her hand, and placed it in the center of the table. He gathered Trisha into his arms and held her tightly to him.

Trisha buried her head in his shoulders and sobbed. He tightened his hold on her, and let her cry. Finally, Kan held Trisha at arms length and caressed her with his eyes, drew her closer to him and kissed her tenderly. Moments later, taking her by the hand, he led her to the table.

"Come, my love, eat, drink, regain your strength," he said, his voice soft and warm.

Trisha stared at the food before her, shook her head, and then hesitantly said, "I don't think I can."

He was insistent. "Yes, you can. You must. Here."

He picked up the fork and pierced a morsel of food, then held it up to her mouth. "Eat! I'll help you."

Trisha permitted Kan to place the food in her mouth and started to chew. She had almost forgotten how good food could be. She continued to allow Kan to feed her as she chewed the food, then she began to

smile.

"You will notice, my love, that with every morsel or food you eat, your strength increases rapidly."

Trisha's eyes did not leave Kan's face as she ate the food he offered her.

"You'll notice something else, too, my beloved. With each morsel of food, you'll be acquiring powers you never had before."

He saw the question in her eyes. "No. It has nothing to do with the food. When I held you in my arms, I transmitted the powers to you. As your strength returns, they will also strengthen. But you must learn to use them. Do you understand?"

Trisha's eyes widened as the full implication of Kan's words hit home. Then a slow smile spread across her face, and she took the next bite Kan offered her with relish. Kan felt the time was right to remove the block. *So now they would know. What did it matter? It was best that they did.*

Trisha balanced herself on one edge of the table across from where Kan had balanced himself. A plate of food, a jug of water, and a light flickered between them in the darkened 'keep', as Kan continued to encourage and feed her.

* * * *

Myaculi was enraged when Kan's block was lifted and she 'saw' what Kan had been able to accomplish in spite of her. She stormed around her chambers as she continued to eavesdrop on Kan and Trisha. Shouting, she called out to Ra Mu, her arm outstretched, pointing in the direction of the dungeons.

"Ra Mu ... Look what he has done!"

Ra Mu was no more stunned than Myaculi. Never, in his wildest imagination, would he have believed that Kan could defy him. His anger matched Myaculi's.

* * * *

Kan and Trisha had been eavesdropping on Myaculi and Ra Mu. Trisha was ecstatic that she could now tune in on others, as they had been able to tune in on her. They looked at one another and laughed hilariously.

A sudden explosion of noise stopped them. They turned in the direction of the sound and waited. Suddenly, an angry Ra Mu burst through the dungeon door. He stormed toward Kan. His arm was fully extended and his fingers shook violently as he pointed to Trisha.

In an angry voice he shouted, "How dare you? How dare you defy me and give this, this, Terrestrial powers? Remove them at once."

Kan stared at his Leader and calmly said, "I warned you that if you did not stop Myaculi, I would protect Trisha."

"His voice still shaking," Ra Mu retorted, "I am Ra Mu. I do not have to answer to you. Remove those powers at once, or I will."

Quietly, Kan answered, "I will not."

Shaking, Ra Mu threatened, "Then I will."

His voice unchanged, Kan said, "No, Ra Mu. You will not."

Visibly shaken by Kan's defiance, Ra Mu desperately tried to control himself. "You actually believe you can stop me?"

"Believe? It has nothing to do with belief. I know I can."

Ra Mu exploded. He extended his arm and the concentrated beam of power he released from his hand, threw Kan hard against the dungeon wall.

"Do you still think you can stop me?"

Kan was on the floor. A twinge of pain registered briefly on his face. Trisha was beside him. He gave her a quick reassuring smile before he answered.

"You are Ra Mu, and because I respect your Office, I will not answer in kind. But I will not allow you to do that again."

"You will not allow?" Ra Mu cried out incredulously.

Raising his hand, Ra Mu again released and directed a concentrated beam of power at Kan. Kan raised his hand and redirected the same beam of light and expended it harmlessly against the far wall of the 'keep'.

Trisha stared in awe of Kan. Ra Mu was stunned, momentarily and Kan grinned widely. "It's as I had said ... I will not let you do that again."

Kan rose from the floor and helped Trisha up. They both turned and faced the shaken Ra Mu.

"I don't know how you did that, but I am impressed." Ra Mu said, shaken by what had just happened. But more important was realizing exactly what Kan's action really meant, not only to him, but to Myaculi as well.

"Thank you, Ra Mu. Coming from you that means a great deal to me," Kan answered quietly. He knew he had impressed his leader more than Ra Mu would admit, and he was certain Myaculi was shaken by it as well. Kan was determined to let them both know, that he would brook no more interference with him or with Trisha.

Ra Mu looked at Kan then to Trisha. *"What a strange pair, these two. Standing here, side by side in the half light defying me, or ready to defy me, in order to stay together, even if it should mean their deaths."*

Kan and Trisha heard Ra Mu's unspoken thoughts and grinned widely at him as they waited for him to continue.

"I will relent, for the moment, Kan. But we have not heard the last of this yet. We both know Trisha can not be allowed to retain her powers. There can only be one High Priestess, and she is already in a rage over this."

"How many times must I say it? Trisha is my High Priestess. It matters not what Myaculi wants or thinks. I have made my choice. And since I have, we both know Trisha must have these powers to defend herself against Myaculi. You can not take them away."

"For how long?"

"For as long as it takes ... forever if necessary."

"And if I don't agree?"

"I have already said I respect your Office. Why don't we let it go at that?"

"We can not. You know that."

"We can, and we must, at least for the moment, if you'll let it."

"For the moment then, until the time comes, when we must face the issue."

"If we're lucky, we won't have to."

"Yes, if that were only possible. But then again, there is Myaculi. For now, however, we will let it rest."

"It is time for Myaculi to learn and to understand that she will never be High Priestess. As of now, I demand that all powers given her must be removed. She cannot and must not be allowed to continue her tirade against the citizens of Mu, or of Trisha for that matter."

"I cannot do what you ask for now. As we have agreed the situation will stand as it is for the moment. After that we shall see what the High Court will decide."

"Hear me, Ra Mu. It makes no difference what the High Court decides, Myaculi will never be my High Priestess. There is no point in discussing this any further."

A seemingly resigned Ra Mu sighed heavily, nodded to Trisha then patted Kan's shoulder. There was sadness in his eyes as he turned to leave, then he moved quickly away and disappeared through the dungeon's door. The flickering light, dancing on the walls, added a sense of the macabre to the 'keep', as Kan and Trisha stared long and hard at its empty doorway.

Chapter 16

Myaculi stormed around in her chambers. Enraged, she threw vases, dishes, goblets, utensils, and food at the walls and at her handmaidens who were skillfully dodging each missile aimed at them. Her thoughts echoed throughout the Temple, so that wherever Ra Mu, Kan and Trisha were, they heard her loud and clear.

"So, she's safely back in her own room, is she? She may think she's safe, and she may think her powers will protect her, but she's no match for me."

"Myaculi, give it up. I'm warning you for the last time. Leave Trisha alone," Kan shot back disgustedly.

"And if I refuse. What are you going to do about it?"

"If you don't stop you will find out soon enough," Kan shot back.

From her quarters, Trisha listened quietly. In an effort to stop the confrontation from getting out of hand, she offered, *"It's okay, Kan, I can take care of myself."*

"So, you think you can take me on, do you? We'll see about that."

Without hesitation, Myaculi shot a mental image of pain at Trisha reeling her backward against the bedroom wall, then another, and another, in rapid succession. Trisha cringed and crumbled to the floor against the wall, holding her head in her hands as she cried out in pain.

"Trisha. Use your powers. Defend yourself!"

"I can't Kan. I don't know how!"

Myaculi grabbed her head and cried out as a sudden rush of pain, caused her to relinquish her hold on Trisha.

"Now will you stop, Myaculi? Trisha, you must learn to defend yourself," Kan ordered, exasperated.

Her head still in her hands, Trisha waited and listened. She looked around and gingerly rose from her bedroom floor. The pain was gone. With a sigh of relief, she smiled and sent a telepathic message of her own.

"Thank you, Kan. Boy, wasn't that something? And you're right. I'd better start learning how, and now."

Myaculi's hand-maidens were terrified at seeing their mistress in pain, not that they thought she didn't deserve it, but because of what she might do to them. Holding her head against the onslaught, Myaculi begged, *"No more, Kan ... Please."*

"That's completely up to you," he answered quietly.

"I promise," she cried out. *"Really I do."*

"In that case," Kan said. *"We need no more of this."*

From his quarters, Kan relinquished control. Myaculi slumped on her couch in tears. Her handmaidens waited, wide-eyed and apprehensive. Myaculi's face changed rapidly from one of fear to one of vengeance. Her face appeared venomous as she stared past her terror-stricken handmaidens and out her chamber windows.

"He thinks that's the end of it, does he? Well think again, Kan," she thought, careful to block her thoughts so that Kan wouldn't know what she was thinking.

* * * *

Kan was already seated at the head of the table when Trisha entered the Dining Area. She seemed happy. "Koaha-E, Kan."

Pleased at the joy in her voice, Kan answered, "Koaha-E, Trisha. Did you sleep well?"

Trisha laughed. "Yes, thank you. I no longer need Myaculi's tablets, so I returned them to her, vial and all."

Kan stared quizzically at Trisha, his head cocked to one side. She was smiling and he was puzzled.

"And?"

"And? Oh nothing, Kan. I heard through the grapevine ... ,"

"The grapevine?" he echoed, interrupting her.

Trisha laughed at Kan's bewilderment. "Yes, the grapevine. That's what I call my new telepathic powers."

Kan shook his head and looked at her, quizzically.

"A 'grapevine' is a sort of whispered communication system between people. That's how you hear things. Since I haven't yet learned how to shut people out, the way you do, I pick up a lot of information, particularly about our precious, Myaculi."

"Such as?"

Trisha laughed as she helped herself to more food. "Well, Myaculi's been having difficulty sleeping lately. So, I thought it would be a good idea if she took some of her own medicine. But she still said she didn't sleep too well."

It was Kan's turn to smile. "Really? I wonder why."

"Uh, well, seems she's been having some really weird nightmares during the night and because of her lack of restless sleep, she's been on a rampage ever since, scaring her handmaidens, throwing things at them so much that they have become experts in 'dodging the ball' so the speak."

"Dodge Ball?"

"Yeah, that's a game we Terrestrials play, especially during the summer."

"I'm still a little bewildered."

"Oh, well the object of the game is to hit your opponent with the ball and it's your opponent's job to make sure you don't. So when the ball is thrown they dodge it so they won't be hit, hence the name of the game ... 'Dodge Ball. See?' she asked.

"I believe I do," he said.

Oh, oh, speaking of the devil as the saying goes, don't look now, but here she comes."

"Trisha!"

"Sorry, I couldn't help myself," she said and smiled.

They could hear Myaculi ranting and raving, long before she appeared at the door, and screeching like a banshee as she charged down the corridors toward the Dining Area. They both turned and looked when the thunder hit the door as Myaculi stormed in. Her anger was directed at Trisha.

"How dare you? How dare you drug me?"

Stunned, Trisha asked, "Drug you? What are you talking about?"

"Those tablets! You had one of my hand-maidens put one in my drink ... ,"

"I gave it to you, myself, no one else did. Besides, what's wrong with them? They're the same ones you've been feeding me." Trisha interrupted.

"You? You drugged me? How?"

Trisha stared at Myaculi as if she was looking at a two-headed monster. She shook her head and continued to eat her breakfast.

"Myaculi," she said between bites, "I don't understand you. They're your own tablets. I couldn't possibly mistake that vial of yours for anything else. I only meant to help you get some rest the way you helped me. Thought you could use the sleep, you seemed to need it so."

Kan made several attempts to break into the conversation. Finally forcing himself in, he said, "Why don't you both forget it. There's no harm done. Eat your breakfast, Myaculi. You look terrible."

Myaculi turned her anger on Kan. "Stay out of this, Kan. It's between Trisha and me. Trisha! How could you? How could you, put that tablet in my drink?"

Trisha smiled shook her head and winked at Kan. "That was easy. Just as easy as dropping a tablet into the drink you've got in your hand now"

"Awwwk!"

Myaculi grabbed for her throat, screaming at Myaculi, "You witch! You're trying to poison me!"

She threw her drink, goblet and all across the dining room, causing Kan to duck, as she screamed, "It's poisoned! She's trying to poison me. I'll get you for this, if it's the last thing I do."

She stormed out of the dining room, throwing a piece of fruit at an astonished Kan, while a startled Trisha looked on.

"It's all your fault! You'll pay for this, too. Just you wait," she screamed at him.

She was gone before Kan could say a word. He looked quizzically at Trisha. She was just as astounded.

"Honest Kan. I don't know what set her off. I didn't put anything into her drink this morning, yesterday morning yes, because she was complaining so much."

Kan looked at Trisha and a smile crossed his lips. "But you knew what would happen, didn't you?"

"Not really, Kan. All I did was give her one tablet. If she had nightmares, it was through her own evil thoughts. If her tablets didn't poison me, how could they possibly poison her? Good Lord. I only gave her one. What would she have done if she consumed as many as I did?"

Kan shook his head. He was greatly disturbed and puzzled. "She shouldn't be that upset. Unless, unless, there was more to those tablets than she let on."

It was Trisha's turn to stare. "Do you mean she was trying to poison me?"

"That's the only thing that makes sense. Over a period of time, the effects could build up rapidly. Then, one night, during one of your nightmares, your heart stops, and no one would be the wiser."

Trisha was appalled, her voice rising as she spoke. "Couldn't you tell what she was doing? Couldn't you read her mind?"

"One of the powers bestowed upon a High Priest or Priestess, is the ability to block our thoughts, so that no one else may know what we are thinking. Myaculi has that ability, as do I. But, unfortunately, you do not and Myaculi knows your deepest thoughts, so be careful, Trisha. She means what she says."

Trisha was angry now. "Well I hope she's listening in now, and knowing her, I'd bet on it. Too bad you didn't let me know those tablets were poisoned, Myaculi, I would have dumped the whole vial in your drink."

"Trisha!"

"Well, I would have!" she answered, defiantly.

* * * *

Myaculi had been eavesdropping. In a total rage, she stormed into her chambers screaming at her handmaidens, waving her arms wildly.

"Get out! All of you! Get out! Out of my sight!"

Her handmaidens hurried out of her chambers, grateful for the chance to be away from her. Now, alone, Myaculi paced back and forth, plotting.

"So she thinks she can poison me, does she? Well, she's going to find out differently."

She continued to pace as her scheme took shape. "Just as soon as Kan's out of the way, she'll see what a real High Priestess can do."

She stopped to listen, then continued to pace, waiting, and wondering, *isn't he ever going to leave her alone?*

She stopped again and listened, then smiled. She moved quickly to her couch and waited.

* * * *

Kan dropped Trisha off at her quarters, kissed her good-bye and went on about his own affairs. Trisha entered her bedroom and moved slowly across the room to the open window. As she was about to reach the window she was thrown backwards against the wall. She cried out in pain. She attempted to move away and was thrown against the bed, then backward against the open window. She grabbed for the stone edge of the window and held on, digging her fingers into the crack in the stone, and pressing her

legs hard against the bottom frame.

She felt a tremendous force crushing against her, forcing her back, back through the open window, where the drop to the ground was twenty-feet below. She could not tell where the attack was coming from. She tried desperately to gather her wits about her so that she could contact Kan, but the tremendous assault on her body kept her from thinking straight. It seemed as if ages had passed before she was able to form and send out a telepathic message to Kan, but she could not get through or reach him.

"Kan! Where are you? Why don't you answer me?"

She listened for an answer, but there wasn't any. All she heard was total silence. Her fingers were rubbed raw and bleeding, as were the back of her knees and legs. She called out to Myaculi.

"Myaculi! Answer me, please!"

She listened intently, and again heard nothing.

Trisha looked out over her shoulder and to the ground below. She tightened her grip on the window's stone edges while forcing her pain-riddled knees and legs back for added support. She called out again.

"Kan? Myaculi? Anybody!"

She strained to listen. Again there was no response. She tried again. *"Kan, please! Myaculi! Anybody! Help! Please!"*

She waited but instead of answers she heard laughter. It was low at first, and then as it increased in volume it reverberated off the walls of her room and filled her head with its sound. She started to lose her grip. She cried out.

"Myaculi!"

"Did you call, Trisha dear?"

"Stop this! Myaculi, stop! Kan!"

In her Chambers, Myaculi was engaging in her favorite pastime. Lounging, eating and drinking, ordering her handmaidens to get her more food. They often wondered why anyone who ate the way Myaculi did, never seemed to put on weight. Celae once had suggested that perhaps Myaculi's evil demeanor had something to do with burning it all off. Anyway that was a thought they held dear to their hearts. It was a thought they could not hide from Myaculi and they knew she knew it.

Watching them now, Myaculi laughed. She wanted to give them something more to think about. Fear was her weapon. Fear they would never forget. She knew they wanted Trisha in her place as their Mistress. *Maybe they would like to share Trisha's punishment as well*, she thought. She would show them how she dealt with anyone who tried to get in her way or attempted to usurp her authority. *Trisha would never be High Priestess and it was time she showed them all that ... Trisha, Kan, Ra Mu and yes, her handmaidens as well.* She turned her attention back to Trisha.

"He can't hear you, Trisha. No one can. Yell all you want! It won't do you any good."

Her laughter became more malevolent. *"Soon, Trisha! Soon it will be all over. You can't possibly hold on much longer."* Her handmaidens recoiled in horror.

Trisha heard Myaculi's thoughts echoing all around her as she hung partially out the window. The force against her increased tremendously, but she held on for all she was worth.

"Look at your fingers ... see how raw they are. Look how they bleed. The pain in your knees, Trisha? Feel how it increases with every second. Feel the pain, Trisha ... feel its intensity. You can't hold on much longer. Look below, Trisha. Look below ... the ground is waiting to embrace you."

"No!" Trisha cried out with such force that it reverberated back to Myaculi knocking the wind out of her momentarily.

With a determination borne out of survival, Trisha fought back. She felt the adrenaline flow as she closed her eyes and exerted her own will. She directed the power against her, back to where it was coming from, back to Myaculi.

Myaculi was knocked off the couch, and slammed against the floor with a resounding thud, totally breaking her hold on Trisha. Her handmaidens, wide-eyed and terrified, wanting no part of this, scurried out of the chamber and away from impending danger.

Her body wracked with pain Trisha pulled herself back into her room. She shot another concentrated beam of power against Myaculi, while she agonizingly dragged herself toward her bed. Trisha collapsed in a heap, when she reached the bed and called out to Kan.

"Kan, where are you? I need you now. Hurry!"

With Myaculi's hold broken, Kan finally heard Trisha's call.

"Trisha! Hold on. I'll be there."

"Hurry, Kan! Please!"

"Trisha!"

Kan rushed through the corridors of the Temple toward Trisha's quarters. He was worried. He hadn't heard Trisha's thoughts or words for some time and knew something was up. When he finally did hear her, it was for a short period of time. Trisha hadn't answered his last call and he could not get through to her. He knew someone, Ra Mu, or most likely, Myaculi, had thrown another block around her, and that could only mean she was in terrible danger.

Trisha was pressed flat against her bed as a concentrated beam of power held her there. She closed her eyes tightly and directed the beam of power away from her and back to Myaculi. *How much longer can I keep this up*, she wondered?

Flattened against the wall, Myaculi deflected Trisha's beam back to her and called out to Ra Mu while maintaining her block, isolating Kan.

"Ra Mu, help me. Please. I don't know how much longer I can hold out against her. She's trying to kill me. She's already tried to poison me. Kan knows, but he does nothing. She's bewitched him. It's not the first time she's broken our Laws ... but Kan is protecting her. Help me, Ra Mu ... please!"

Myaculi screamed, as Trisha returned the punishing force back to her with a tremendous jolt that flattened her against the wall.

* * * *

Ra Mu was in his chambers astounded by the message Myaculi had sent him. He walked slowly across the room, disturbed by the High Priestess' accusations, particularly those pertaining to Kan. He attempted to communicate with Kan. But Myaculi, anticipating Ra Mu's move, held the block that isolated Kan from Ra Mu even while captive in Trisha's grip.

"Kan, my son ... come to me."

Ra Mu stopped moving to listen. He waited. But Kan didn't answer. He began to walk again. He called out a second time.

"Kan. It is imperative that you answer."

Again he stopped, listened and waited—Still no response from Kan. His anger began to swell, and he spouted as he paced back and forth.

"There must be some truth to what Myaculi said. First Kan defied me ... he's never done that before. Now, he refuses to answer me. He goes too far. There is only one way to bring him to his senses. Remove Trisha's powers. Yes ... that ought to do it."

Ra Mu reached out with his mind and neutralized Trisha's powers, automatically releasing Myaculi from the force, which held her against the wall.

* * * *

Myaculi moved away from the wall, triumphant. Ra Mu believed her and now Trisha was completely at her mercy. Kan was in deep trouble with Ra Mu, and she could not be happier.

"I told you you'd pay for it, Kan. And you won't even know why. Now to finish off my competition!"

Myaculi flitted around her chambers, relishing the many ways she could torment Trisha before disposing of her in the tank.

"I know Ra Mu will send the priests for Trisha. But before he passes sentence on her, I want her to see Kan and I married. I'm certain I can convince Ra Mu that the Ceremony must take place at once, in order to free Kan from Trisha's spell. He's so easy to manipulate it is almost indecent."

She smiled to herself as she continued to think and talk. She was almost dancing around her chambers in gleeful triumph.

"I know Kan isn't going to be easy to manage, but the challenge will be worth it. Hmmm, I wonder. He's going to be very angry and probably cause a lot of trouble for a while. But, in my hands, he'll forget Trisha in time. He'll have to. Won't he?"

"Yes, of course. When I am High Priestess of the Land and Kan is by my side, I will insist he give the order that sends Trisha into the tank."

She laughed, clapped her hands for her handmaidens, and ordered them to make ready for a Ceremonial Wedding, to take place within the week. Her handmaidens looked at one another, then at her.

"Well, don't stand there as if you've been struck dumb. Do as I say!"

She clapped her hands dismissing them. Strolling around in her chambers, she laughed and hummed to herself. "I won! I beat both of them. Kan is mine and there is nothing he can do about it. Not now, not ever." And she threw her head back and laughed malevolently.

* * * *

Trisha was shaken. The force pushing against her was gone. She rose from the side of her bed and walked around the room, unsure of herself. She listened intently, but couldn't hear anything. She didn't know what had happened. She attempted to contact Kan, but had lost the ability to transmit her thoughts. She felt suddenly vulnerable and she was frightened.

"Oh Kan, please, wherever you are, hurry. I need you."

She whirled at the sound of her bedroom door flying open. She stared open-mouthed as an anxious Kan rushed through the opened doorway. He crossed quickly to her and held her in his arms.

"Trisha! You look as if you've been in a knocked-down, dragged-out fight! Your face, your hands, your legs ... are you all right? Are you in pain? I couldn't hear or contact you. There must have been a block, someone, probably Myaculi, had a mind block on you."

Trisha nodded, and then buried her head in Kan's shoulders. "Hold me, Kan. Hold me. Don't let me go."

Kan smiled, relieved, "I don't intend to. Not now and not ever again."

Trisha looked up at Kan and smiled. He smiled back, then tilting her face up, he bent to her and kissed her tenderly and passionately.

"Enjoy, yourself, Kan ... For it will be the last time you'll ever kiss or hold her. The next time you two meet will be her last ... mark my words ... beloved."

But Kan had other things on his mind and did not hear Myaculi's angry threats.

Chapter 17

Ra Mu, Highest Priest of the Land, overcome with the feelings of helplessness and defeatism bearing down on him, sat upon his Seat of Authority. The four priests he summoned stood before him at the foot of the blue carpeted steps waiting for him to speak.

"We have very grave duties to perform. Duties I would prefer to set aside, but as you will see, it cannot be so. Trisha, the Terrestrial, must be brought before us for trial and punishment for her crimes against Mu, specifically, our High Priest and Priestess.

"The High Priestess, herself, has brought these charges of witchcraft and other crimes, against the Terrestrial. You must hasten to protect our High Priest who, Myaculi insists, is under the spell of this Terrestrial."

Ra Mu smiled gently as the puzzled priests looked to one another wondering what this latest struggle between Myaculi, Kan and Trisha was all about, and why Ra Mu was involved in it.

"But Sire," one of the priests stepped forward and asked, "Are you sure about this? Kan is our High Priest and we have seen him daily. We know he is smitten with Trisha, but he didn't look bewitched, just happy to have someone to love, which is more than we have." he insisted.

"You do not understand. These matters are left to those of us who have a higher knowledge. It may look to you as if Kan is content to be with the Terrestrial, but he is not in his right mind. The High Priestess has seen it herself."

"But Sire, how can you be sure what the High Priestess is saying is true and not a fabrication in order to destroy her competition? Trisha herself said the High Priestess couldn't win over Kan in 12 million years, no matter what she did. We heard her tell Myaculi that in her Chambers—Isn't that so?" he asked, the others who were standing nearby. They only nodded, afraid to speak. "And Myaculi just laughed at Trisha."

"Be careful what you say, priest. Your accusation against our High Priestess is a dangerous and seditious crime and punishable by death."

"I do not accuse, just suggest," the priest answered meekly.

"Well, I am sure you must have interpreted the conversation incorrectly. The High Priestess wouldn't charge the Terrestrial with a crime if it wasn't true, because she knows full well the law that pertains to you, also pertains to her. Do you not agree?"

Beaten down, and knowing it wouldn't do any good to say anything else for fear of losing his own life, the priest simply nodded his head and backed away.

Ra Mu satisfied that the priest would offer no more resistance, began again. "We must do all in our power to restore our High Priest to health, quickly. In this effort, I have decreed that the Ceremonial Wedding will take place within the week ... Kan and Myaculi will be joined together for all time."

The priests stared dumfounded. The only thing wrong with Kan's health was Myaculi. Now Ra Mu was going to force a marriage between the two. Myaculi's behind this, they were certain of it. After all, who else was capable of bending Ra Mu to their will? *Poor Kan*, they thought, *and poor Trisha. Doesn't Ra Mu know what he's doing? Doesn't he realize the life he's condemning Kan into?*

"I heard that. If you know what's good for you, you'll do exactly what Ra Mu says. If you fail, you'll have me to deal with. And don't expect any help from him. Ra Mu can't even help himself. And as for you who accused me, and then tried to squirm out of it, I have something special in mind for you."

The priests looked to one another and the one in question was visibly shaken. They knew full well, if Myaculi did succeed in becoming the High Priestess, all in Mu, including Ra Mu, would be in danger.

Myaculi's thoughts came through loud and clear. The priests looked at Ra Mu who didn't seem to be aware of Myaculi's message. They only knew that he had paused and waited long enough for them to acknowledge his words before continuing.

Ra Mu plunged on, "My first assignment to our newest High Priest and Priestess will be to terminate Trisha. It is Myaculi's belief, and I agreed with her, that if Kan, alone, ordered the Terrestrial to her death, he would be free of her. Now leave me. Perform your tasks swiftly," he commanded, heavy-hearted.

The priests bowed, and quickly hurried out of the Council Chambers, each one feeling in their hearts that Kan and Trisha were doomed. Ra Mu rose from his Seat, moved to an open window and stared out.

"It's for your own good, Kan. In time, you will thank me for what I must do now."

* * * *

With Trisha snuggled contentedly in his arms, Kan listened in on what was taking place in the Council Chambers. When the priests finally left, he pushed Trisha away from him, held her at arms length and looked quizzically at her face. She was puzzled.

"What is it Kan? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Didn't you hear?"

"Hear what?"

"Ra Mu?"

"No. I can't hear anyone anymore. I don't know why either."

"Trisha, you must leave here immediately."

"Where would you suggest I go?"

"Come with me, now! Hurry!"

Trisha drew back. "Wait. Where are we going?"

"There's no time to explain, and no time to take anything."

He drew her into his arms, looked tenderly into her eyes and kissed her long and passionately. Then, staring deeply into her eyes said, "Remember, Trisha. Whatever happens, I will always love you."

She nodded, perplexed. "Why do you make it sound so final? Kan what are you afraid of? I love you ... you know that. And you know I always will ... what is going on?"

Kan kissed her again, moved his arm around her shoulder and gently, but firmly propelled her toward the door.

"Just remember, always ... I love you."

His arms slipped from her shoulder and his hand caught and held hers in his. They moved swiftly out of the room and down the corridor. He stopped suddenly, cautioned her, then pointed to another direction and moved her down a different path.

As they moved along the hallways of the Temple of Dawn, they entered secret passageways known only to one other.

"Kan, what is it?" Trisha asked, her voice etched in panic.

"Ra Mu's priests ... Four of them obeying his and Myaculi's orders ... reluctantly. They're in your bedroom now, Trisha, wondering where you've gone. Don't worry, I've blocked them off. They don't know where we are, what we're doing, or what we're thinking, nor for that matter does Ra Mu, or Myaculi. No one does."

"They're not alone. I don't either."

He smiled, listened, and then suddenly laughed.

The priests' were frustrated. Furious, Myaculi ordered them to continue searching. But they had no idea where to look or which way to go. Tugging Trisha along with him, Kan moved swiftly down one corridor, through secret passageways to another. He avoided the priests who were now searching the corridors for them.

"Down here, Trisha. Hurry!"

Trisha looked down the corridor. It was one she had never seen before and wasn't sure how they got there. She looked to Kan. He smiled.

"Secret corridors, they run behind Ra Mu's Chambers and into hidden passageways that lead to where we want to go."

"I didn't know Ra Mu's Chambers were in the Temple."

"Yes, but in a special section of the Temple."

"I thought we had to go outside to get to his quarters?"

"Not always. Besides being seen outside would have been fatal."

"But how?"

"We can go anywhere we want without going outside. Only Ra Mu and I know of this. Hopefully, he hasn't thought of it or Myaculi will certainly find out. Don't make a sound; we're behind his Chambers now."

They heard Ra Mu pacing back and forth in his Chambers, waiting for word from his priests. His voice could be heard in the hidden passageway.

"Where are they? Why haven't the priests located them? *Myaculi why haven't you found them? Why?*"

"I don't know, but I will find them. You can be sure of it."

Trisha stopped, suddenly paralyzed, and held her breath. Kan tugged on her hand, and finally forced her to move. They slipped quietly past Ra Mu's Chambers and hurried onward.

"How much further is it Kan? Can't we rest awhile?"

"Not now, Trisha. It's only a little way ... we'll be there soon."

The passageways were damp and dark. Trisha could not see where she was going.

"I can't see a thing, Kan."

"You don't have to. Just hold on."

"Why is it so damp in here?"

"Probably due to seepage."

"You mean the shield?"

"Possibly."

"There was some water in the dungeon. I wondered then if it was seepage."

"Yes, I noticed it, too. You know, every time there's a volcanic eruption or earthquake on the surface, or under the sea, it does affect the shield. Lately, there's been a rash of them."

"How do you know?"

She couldn't see his smile, but his voice told her he was smiling. "I just do. And the explosion, detonated by one of our seditious members, did little to help the situation."

"They never caught his co-conspirators did they?"

"We knew who they were, but decided not to press the issue."

"Why not?"

"After the termination of their leader, sedition no longer appealed to them."

She stumbled against him and almost fell. He caught her, steadied her, and cautioned her to be careful. She laughed nervously. "I would if I could see where we were going. As it is, I can only follow your lead."

"Sorry about that, can't be helped, but we only have a short distance to go now."

"You still haven't told me where we're going."

In the darkness, Kan's soft laughter echoed eerily back to them. "Didn't I?"

"No."

"You'll know in a few minutes."

They continued moving, down the dark, damp passageways until finally, Kan said, "We can stop here, catch our breath, and rest for a moment or two. We're going to need all our wits about us once we step out of this passageway, if we're going to pull this off. There won't be any turning back for either of us."

"Why? Where are we?"

"Where we want to be."

"And where, pray tell, is that?"

Kan laughed softly, reached for her, and drew her down to the floor to him. With their backs against the wall, he leaned over and kissed her, and then laughing softly at her said, "Patience, my love. You'll know soon enough."

* * * *

Several hours had passed before the two fugitives stirred from their place of rest. Kan stood up and tugged at Trisha until she, too, was on her feet. He held her close to him and buried his face in her hair. He tightened his hold on her causing her to gasp for air. Relaxing his hold, he tilted her face up to his, bent to her and kissed her with such intensity, he took her breath away. He held on a moment longer, and then released her. Before her astonished eyes, he drew a package from a niche in the wall behind her and fastened a special breathing apparatus around her neck.

"Don't try to say anything, my love ... just listen."

She raised her hand to remove the special device when Kan reached for her hand and stopped her.

"No, Trisha. You have to go it alone. There is no other way. Understand, my love, it's the one and only chance we'll ever have."

She shook her head vigorously. Kan stopped her, held her head in his hand, and ordered her to pay attention. "When you get there, you'll have a long climb to the top. Difficult, yes, but it's the only way because we can't go back into the Chamber. We'll have to go up behind the altar in the Main Room."

She stared at him, questions marring her face.

"Yes, I know. I'll tell you the rest later. Ra Mu will be in the passageways before long. He leaves me no choice but to take you where no Citizen of Mu has ever been. It'll be an experience you won't easily forget. Come now, we are running out of time."

Trisha yanked the breathing apparatus off her neck, before Kan could stop her. "I can't leave you. Don't ... don't send me away."

"Trisha, we both can't go out together. I can survive another twenty-four hours or longer here, if I have to ... but you won't."

"Kan, please! I don't want to go without you."

"Trisha, please, be reasonable. There's only room for one, now move."

"You're going to stay here, aren't you?"

"Trisha, you're wasting precious time."

"If you're going to stay, so am I."

"No. You're not. If they find you, you won't have a chance. You wouldn't live long enough to tell about it."

"What do you want me to do?" she asked, crestfallen. Her shoulders sagged, as the tears streamed

unrestrained down her face.

"Strap your breathing device around your neck, and stay close behind me," he said softly. Drawing her to him, he kissed the top of her head.

Her motions were automatic as she obeyed him. Kan gently brushed his fingers against her cheek. She held his hand close to her face. He waited until she was ready. Moments later, almost robotically, she nodded and motioned for him to lead the way. They climbed the ancient spiraling staircase until they reached the door to the Tower Room. A circle with a dot in the center was engraved in the door. Trisha asked him what the symbol meant. As he unlocked the door to the Tower Room he quickly explained.

"The Circle, one of the first symbols used in our teachings, represented a picture of the Sun, called Ra. And since a circle has no beginning or end, it was a perfect choice for the meaning of infinity and everlasting life. The dot inside represented Mu."

Kan unlocked the door. It was dark inside until Kan pulled the coverings off the opening to the water-sky. A burst of light struck a huge crystal in the center of the room. The Sacred Crystal was a secret shared only with Ra Mu, the Highest Priest of the Land. Trisha was dazzled by its beauty and was about to ask, when Kan interrupted.

"You wanted to know what Atlantis and Mu had in common." She nodded slowly. "You're looking at it."

"I don't understand."

"This crystal was given to Mukulia eons ago by the first leader of Atlantis ... to be used only in extreme emergencies. For it contained the power to communicate directly with one another, both mentally and physically, through the magnetic grid. I don't know about you, but I think one could call our situation an emergency."

Trisha was stunned. "But ... Atlantis is gone. You don't mean you can still do this? Communicate with Atlantis underwater? I mean now? Do you?"

Kan laughed. "No. That's not what I meant. All forms of communication with Atlantis was lost Centuries ago when our continent slipped beneath the waters."

"Then what?"

"Call it," he laughed again, 'Cinderella's Coach', for this crystal is your carriage home ... at least as far as the pillar."

Before Trisha could say anything else, Kan placed his hands over the crystal, not actually touching it, letting his energy field and that of the crystal merge together. He stroked the air around the crystal. He felt its power activate as the cold air around his hands heated rapidly. Suddenly a sound emitted from deep within him. A sound solely his, passed on to him by those who came before him. Trisha watched mesmerized as Kan stared into the crystal and focused all of his attention on it. As Trisha stood beside him, Kan reached for her hand and they both stepped inside 'Cinderella's Coach'.

Trisha discovered she was inside a cave lined with translucent crystals, each radiating subdued light. A kaleidoscope of light danced from crystal to crystal illuminating the golden eight-pointed star etched in the blue crystal embedded in the floor. Floating over the center of the star was a large orb carved out of clear quartz and filled with sinewy strands of celestial clouds.

Trisha turned to Kan, "It's beautiful," she said.

Kan nodded. "It is what has kept Mukulia alive all these years ... the very essence of our being. Put your breathing cone on and step inside the orb, it will take you to the pillar ... inside the Golden Statue. Once there, you will know what to do.

"Your primary goal is to get to the top. Feel for the hand and foot holes in the wall, now go. Once this astral sphere would have taken you all the way, but that is no longer possible."

Trisha wrapped her arms around Kan and kissed him, her tears wet against his face. He held her close to him, one last time, kissed her then pushed her into the floating crystal and moved quickly away. She stood there, surrounded by the milky clouds, tears streaming down her face and waited for the journey to begin.

* * * *

She had the feeling she had been through this experience before. Light-headed and giddy, hovering in empty space, soft billowing clouds, through a strange sort of tunnel until she reached her destination, the pillar. It was dark, she could not see, she felt utterly alone.

He said I'd have to feel for the hand and foot holes. But he didn't say what I'd do when I got to the top. Kan! What do I do now?

She couldn't breathe and she was scared. She remembered the breathing device around her neck, and placed it over her face and took a deep breath. *Guess there's no time like the present*, she thought as she began her climb up the inside of the Sacred Golden Statue. Her hands and feet groped for the small openings in the wall as Kan suggested. Painstakingly, she pulled herself up an inch at a time. She fell back down time and again when she couldn't hold her grip or lost her footing.

She pushed on determined to get to the top. She saw a pinpoint of light above her and rushed feverishly toward it. She reached the pinnacle. She was only inches away from the shield and the waters of the Pacific Ocean.

What am I supposed to do now? That's not much light and not much help. Kan said I would know. I wish I had his optimism.

She moved her hand along the wall searching for anything that would open the shield. She touched a ridge and felt around it with her fingers. It was a ring. She grabbed on to it. With both hands on the ring, she pulled herself up to look through the tiny hole. Through it she saw the black marbled walls and the white marbled statues in the room she first entered when she arrived on Mu. *I was right*, she thought triumphantly. *Big deal! What do I do now?* She stared through the hole to an empty room. Her feet, swinging free.

I can't stay here forever. So do something. What? Think, Trisha ... think!

She balanced one knee on the edge of the ring and quickly realized she could bring both knees up and use the ring for leverage. She heard voices in the marble room and strained to peer through the hole. She saw the priests and quickly pulled away, holding her breath, hoping they didn't hear her. She moved her hand along the ring until it reached the top, pulled herself up and stood on the bottom curve of the ring. She looked up raised her arm above her head and touched the shield. Her hand moved along the entire shield inside the pillar, still no opening. She looked around her but could find nothing.

It's got to be here somewhere. But what is it, and where is it?

She searched anew—Still nothing. She moved her hand along the shield again, and along the walls inside the pillar. All the while, a tiny pinpoint of light shone through the tiny opening.

"There's nothing here. Nothing at all," she said, softly, suddenly dejected.

She stopped her search and held on to the top of the ring. "You're not thinking, Trisha. You're not thinking at all," she admonished. "Think ... think!"

Again she moved her hand along the outer edge of the ring wondering what part it played to the outside of the Golden Statue. Somehow, she felt it was connected to the largest circle, the scalloped one, around the triangles. And the light seeping through seemed to have something to do with the small golden disc inside the two golden circles.

But where was the disc? What happened to it? She bent down and looked through the hole. It was crystal clear. *No wonder*, she thought, *the disc is translucent.*

It's not a hole. It's a ... a window into the marble hall. Odd, it didn't look translucent on the outside. Is that it? Is that the keyhole? Then where's the key? It's got to be here somewhere.

Excited now, she searched for anything that might fit into the disc. There was nothing. She moved her hand both inside and outside the rings, dislodging a piece of marble that fell to the bottom of the pillar, and she shuddered. *Was that the key?* She shook her head. *Lord, I hope not ...* but she wondered. She tried to force her little finger into the disc, but it wouldn't fit. She searched her mind for answers.

What have I got that would fit? She looked around again. Suddenly she looked down. The pinpoint of light struck her diamond pendent. She stared at the diamond then at the disc. She held the pendant tightly in her hand. Then, gingerly, inserted it into the disc and pushed it in place.

Once in place, the golden disc turned moving the diamond to the outside of the statue, isolating the chain. Rays from the golden disc, magnified Trisha's diamond, projecting a beam of light that traveled diagonally into the black marbled chamber to the smaller golden statue standing at mid-point on the right wall. It continued directly across the room to a smaller golden statue on the opposite wall, and back to the large golden statue, hiding Trisha, forming a large triangle, as Myaculi and Ra Mu's four priests rushed into the Chamber.

Myaculi and the priests stopped and looked up in astonishment at the concentrated beam of light forming a triangle in mid-air. Inside the pillar, the shield above Trisha slowly opened. She felt a force beneath her pushing her upward. She tried to pull her pendant free, but the disc caught it. She struggled with it, but the pressure against her was too strong and the chain around her neck snapped. She was capitulated through the opening and into the cold waters of the Pacific Ocean. Her diamond pendant momentarily locked in place by the golden disc.

The shield sealed immediately, and the force that sealed the shield dislodged Trisha's diamond pendant from the golden disc. It fell to the floor of the marbled chamber and landed silently, at the base of the golden statue, and at Myaculi's feet.

Myaculi glanced down at the pendant, and stared at it as if it was possessed. The priests did the same. Gingerly, she picked it up, examined it, looked up at the statue, and to the priests. They shook their heads; they were just as bewildered as she was. She inspected the pendant closer, turning it over and over in her hand until she suddenly cried out.

"It's Trisha's. She's here ... somewhere! Look for her! Find her!"

The priests rushed around in circles, not knowing which way to go, until finally they scurried out of the chamber leaving Myaculi standing alone in front of the statue. She looked at the pendant, then up at the statue again.

"Where did it come from? How?"

* * * *

Kan heard Ra Mu in the passageways. Trisha was safely in the pillar. Kan moved swiftly away from the crystal, the tower room and down the passageways toward Ra Mu's quarters. He led Ra Mu down the many passageways of the Temple and into the Dining Area. When Ra Mu, gasping for breath, finally caught up with him, Kan was seated at the dining table, eating. Ra Mu exploded.

"Where is she? I demand to know."

Kan feigned searching the dining area, looked up at Ra Mu, smiled widely and shrugged.

"Obviously, she's not here. Isn't she with Myaculi?"

Ra Mu's anger did not cool. "You know very well, she's not. Where are you hiding her?"

Kan continued to eat, and said quietly, "I'm not hiding her."

Ra Mu stormed around the dining area, occasionally reaching over the table for a piece of fruit, or a morsel of food, which he angrily devoured.

"You shouldn't be eating that way while you're so angry Ra Mu. It isn't good for you. Sit down, you'll enjoy it more."

"Thank you for your concern." Ra Mu said sarcastically. "Now, tell me, where is that illusive Terrestrial hiding?"

"Your answer is as good as mine."

Ra Mu reached for several more pieces of food, which he held in his hand. He turned to leave.

"We will find her, have no fear, Kan. She can't have gotten far."

He looked confidently at Kan, smiled, popped a morsel of food into his mouth, and left the dining area.

Kan smiled back and shouted after him. "Let me know when you do."

Laughing sarcastically, Ra Mu shot back, "You'll be the first to know."

Kan heaved a sigh of relief, smiled to himself and said softly, "I'm sure I will, Ra Mu. I'm sure I will."

Chapter 18

The white sail flapped in the breeze. The tranquil rocking of the small ship lulled her senses. Lying quietly on the deck, she drank in the beauty of the deep blue sky. She watched the soft wispy clouds drifting lazily overhead and felt the warm embrace of the golden sun gently caressing her face. She sighed, knowingly. She was home.

She turned her head and saw a shadow standing in the sun and whispered, "Kan. Oh, Kan. You really did come back with me."

She heard a familiar voice cry out, "Trish, Trish! Thank God you're alive."

The sun reflected off the metallic object around his neck almost blinding her. She reached for it, and held it in her hand. She stared at it long and hard. She knew he was tending to her, but she couldn't see his face.

Deep furrows marred his forehead as he leaned over her and said, "You gave us quite a scare."

For the first time, Trisha shaded her eyes with the back of her hand so she could see his face. She shook her head and said softly, "You're not Kan. Where is he? Where is Kan?"

"There's no one else here. Not today, anyway. All these weeks, day after day, we've been searching for you, your Father and me. But today, I made him stay behind. Coast Guard gave up on you long ago, but we wouldn't. Couldn't! Your Father and I refused to believe you were gone and we'd never see you again. Searched all the islands, all the nooks and crannies, not once, but many times, hoping to find you or some clue to where you might be. But there was nothing, until today.

"On my way back from the islands, there you were, waiting for me, in the water. I couldn't believe my eyes. Wait until your Father sees you. I called the Coast Guard to notify him immediately. He'll be waiting on the dock for us."

"But you're wearing..." Trisha said, as if she hadn't heard a word that was said.

"What, Trisha?"

"The medallion!"

"But you've seen this before."

"Yes. I have. I really have."

He was smiling now, as he looked at her, somewhat relieved. "Yes, yes, of course. I've shown it to you often enough."

"No! Not the medallion! The statue! The real Golden Statue! I've seen it."

The smile faded from Martin's face as the worry lines deepened. "Have you now? Of course you have," he said patronizing her.

She ignored his comment and continued to speak as if he hadn't said a word. "I have seen Mu's Golden Statue and I have actually been on Mu itself. I walked its streets, my sleeping chambers were in its Temple of Dawn, almost got killed in that Temple because of that malevolent High Priestess of theirs. They called her Myaculi ... Madam Dracula would have been a better name for her."

"Trisha, you're only imagining it. Mu has been gone for over 12,000 years. You couldn't have seen it, never mind actually walking on the land itself."

"Martin. Yes, I know who you are. The pendant my Father gave me, is gone ... swallowed up by that statue beneath the sea ... all of my diving equipment, my suit, everything, gone. If I wasn't on Mu, then where was I all this time? I certainly was not treading water in the middle of the Pacific Ocean all these weeks 'waiting for you' now was I? And if I was," she added, "what took you so long to rescue me?"

She watched the white sail flapping in the breeze, inhaled the fresh air deeply, and waited for Martin's answer.

"Trisha, you could have lost your pendant anywhere. And you are not the first diver to lose equipment in the Pacific, including diving suits. As for where you have been all this time ... I have no answer to that question," he smiled. "And I am not even going to try."

"Martin, this was not a figment of my imagination. Don't you think I know the difference between what is real and what isn't? Don't you have any faith in me? And about that medallion ... you know darn well, you've never shown it to me. I would have recognized it anywhere. It's exactly the same as the one Kan wore around his neck."

With her eyes focused on the sail snapping briskly in the breeze, she asked, "Martin, if I've lost everything, as you say, in the Pacific, then how do you account for the ... ah, ancient clothing I have on?"

Martin's bronze face cracked with a wide grin. Accented by his thick white hair, his even white teeth seemed whiter against the golden brown of his tanned skin.

"Take a closer look, Trisha. After I fished you out of the water, I had to cover you with something. After all, you weren't exactly the type of marine creature I would catch in my nets, even if I did believe in mermaids ... which I don't."

For the first time she looked down. Martin was right. She did lose everything. She had nothing to prove what she said was true. No Kan, not even the clothes he provided for her while she was there. Instead, wrapped around her otherwise naked body, was one of Martin's shirts.

She looked hard at Martin, but he only smiled, and for the first time, she couldn't tell what he was thinking. Concerned with Trisha's bizarre story, Martin urged the tiny boat closer to shore. He was anxious to reunite Trisha with her Father who was waiting, apprehensively on the dock, for his long lost daughter.

The flapping white sail again caught Trisha's attention. As a now worried Martin watched her closely, she stared longingly at the swaying sail. Her gaze drifted back to the deep, blue sky. She watched the clouds billowing overhead and tears stung her eyes. A sob caught in her throat as her thoughts raced back to Kan. If I only had him here with me now, she sobbed, and the tears flowed freely down her face.

* * * *

Myaculi was in the corridors of the Temple of Dawn searching for Ra Mu clutching Trisha's pendant in her hand. She heard Ra Mu in the secret passageways and wondered what and where they were.

"Where are you, Ra Mu? What is that place? Why are you hiding from me? Answer me!"

Wondering where Trisha might have gone, Ra Mu suddenly realized he was thinking of the secret passageways and inadvertently leaked their existence to Myaculi. He immediately blocked his thoughts drawing a curtain around himself and isolating Myaculi.

"It's too late!" her thoughts screamed at him. "I saw them. Trisha's in there somewhere ... and I mean to get her."

Although they were in different areas of the Temple, both Ra Mu and Kan heard Myaculi loud and clear. Ra Mu could not believe the impact on his own thoughts.

"Of course, where else, but in the passageways?"

"I told you Kan was bewitched. Now do you believe me?"

"Yes ... yes."

"Then show me the way in."

"No. I will not."

"If Kan can take Trisha through our sacred areas, you can show me the way through them as well ... and I mean right now Ra Mu!"

She could smell the blood. She'll show them. She'll show them all. Soon she would be in the passageways and have Trisha safely in her clutches. With Trisha's diamond pendant dripping from her clenched fist she threw her head back as the sound of her maniacal laughter echoed throughout the corridors of the Temple of Dawn. It was time, Kan thought, blocking his thoughts, time for decisions. Myaculi or Trisha? Which would it be? He shuddered. Was there any doubt?

* * * *

Ra Mu shook his head. Myaculi stood at the base of the steps with Trisha's pendant in her hand. She angrily threw the pendant at him and it landed on the blue carpet, two steps below Ra Mu's Royal Chair. He stared at it, uncomprehending, for a long time not saying a word. His mind went completely blank.

"Show me the way in! Now! Ra Mu! Now!" she demanded.

"Kan," Ra Mu called out.

"He won't answer you ... he's with her. Well he won't be for long. Now show me!"

Reluctantly, Ra Mu pointed to the curtain behind him. Rushing over, Myaculi tore the curtains down, revealing a blank wall with the symbol of Mu, the circle and dot, etched on it.

"Where!" she demanded, her anger increasing steadily. She moved her hands all over the area and pounded on the wall. "How do I get in? Open this up now!" she screamed.

Ra Mu held his head before answering her. With a huge sigh of defeat, he said, "Press the dot in the center of the circle."

Gleefully, Myaculi pushed on the dot and the panel slid open. "Ah," she cried as she rushed into the secret passageways.

Ra Mu slumped in his Chair, dejected and in total defeat. *"Good Lord, what have I done? That she-devil! Kan and Trisha please forgive me. I didn't understand. Even though it was right in front of me, I simply couldn't understand. No, really it was I wouldn't understand. I didn't want to!"*

"Don't worry, they will. I'll see to it." Myaculi's venomous thoughts came crashing back at him.

* * * *

Myaculi raced through the secret passageways searching for Kan and Trisha. Going down one path, up the other and finally had come full circle with no success. She by-passed the ancient spiral staircase believing, at first, it was too old to be of any use. Now, however, as she stood in the doorway behind Ra Mu, she had second thoughts.

She stared at Ra Mu seated dejectedly before her. She thought about speaking to him, but changed her mind, waved him off with such disgust at his weakness, and began weaving her way back to the spiral staircase. She was astonished when she realized it was behind the altar in the Main Room.

It's been here all this time, she thought. And I never knew it. But Kan did, her thoughts rambled on, Kan did and I'm not going to forgive him for that one either. I could have taken an easier route, and entered through here, if I knew the way in. I'll bet Kan knew and now Trisha does too. Well, they're going to tell me, as well. You just wait and see. They won't hide anything from me ever again. Wait until I get my hands on them they'll be sorry they ever defied me, she promised.

She climbed the ancient spiral staircase, a step at a time, until she reached the door to the Tower Room. She felt as if she was closing in for the kill. She tried the handle, but the door wouldn't open. She pounded on it, stopped momentarily to look at it, and pushed the dot in the middle of the circle, but to no avail.

"Ra Mu!" her telepathic message screamed, echoing through the sacred passageways and down the corridors of the Temple of Dawn.

"Where is the key?"

"Kan has it," He shot back, straightening up and smiling for the first time.

"Aghhhhhhh," she screamed, pounding on the door and severely rattling the ancient spiral staircase.

* * * *

"Why didn't you tell her the truth?" Kan asked, as he stood unannounced at the foot of the blue carpeted steps.

"Shhhh, she'll hear you." Ra Mu cried, almost apoplectic.

"No, she won't. I won't let her."

"Kan, I am truly sorry. I had no idea she was like that."

"It's over with, Ra Mu. Trisha is safe and there's nothing she can do to her ... what have we here?"

He mounted a few steps, reached down for the pendant and held it tightly in his hands.

"It's Trisha's isn't it, Ra Mu? How did it get here?"

"Myaculi threw it at me. She said she found it at the base of the Golden Statue. Trisha must have lost it running through the Chamber."

"Most likely," Kan said. "I'll keep this, if you don't mind," he said, slipping the pendant into his pocket.

"And even if you do mind, I'll still keep it ... a memento, of my lost love, you understand."

Ra Mu nodded, "What are we going to do about Myaculi?"

"She's your problem, Ra Mu, not mine. By the way, she's going to be screaming for that key, and sooner

or later, she'll realize you know where it is. I'd hold out as long as I could if I were you ... at least a couple of days before capitulating. It wouldn't do for Ra Mu to be bested by one who has not yet attained the rank of High Priestess now, would it?"

"Yes, yes, you're right. I'll do that ... where is it Kan? I really can't remember."

"Don't worry it will come back to you in a few days. After that, there's no telling what she'll do."

"What are you going to do, Kan?"

Kan smiled, "Explore a sanctuary of my own, far away from her ... where not even you will be able to contact me."

"Wait ... ,"

"I must leave now, I hear Myaculi's voice echoing in the halls and I'd rather not be around when she gets here. Good-bye, Ra Mu. Stay well."

With a wave of his hand, Kan slipped quickly out of Ra Mu's chambers before Ra Mu could say another word. Almost immediately, Myaculi was before Ra Mu screaming at him and demanding he produce the key immediately.

"I don't have it, Kan does. And I don't know where he is or what he's doing."

Myaculi glared at Ra Mu. "I'm not leaving here until you produce that key."

Fuming, she stormed around Ra Mu's chambers wondering what to do next. Her eyes on Ra Mu watching his every move when she suddenly realized the pendant was no longer on the blue carpeted steps.

"Where is it?" she screamed.

"What?" the perplexed Ra Mu cried.

"Trisha's pendant. It's gone!"

"Oh that," he said, relieved. "Kan took it?"

"Kan? Kan was here? Where did he go? Where?"

"I don't know. He said goodbye to me and left," Ra Mu shrugged. "He didn't tell me where he was going."

"I don't believe you," Myaculi shrieked.

"I'm sorry, but that's the truth."

* * * *

Trisha spent the next two days at her Father's pineapple plantation relaxing and recuperating. The two men in her life doted on her hand and foot. But she grew restless and informed her Father and Martin that she wanted to spend some time at her shack in Kauai. She promised she would never again go into the water without a partner. She would call them every night, so as to not worry them. She suggested they could come along with her if they wanted to. But neither one wanted to leave the plantation. The following day, Trisha hugged them both and left the plantation. She flew to Kauai and her lonely shack by the ocean.

Trisha, dressed for diving, was standing at the water's edge. She made ready to push her launch in, and secured her camera and light in place. She was to rendezvous with one of the other divers where the dive was to take place. Her thoughts rushed on. *There is a cave out there, somewhere. And in that cave is the entrance to Mu. That object, with the Lotus Blossom carved in it, is the key. And I'm going to find it again, no matter how long it takes.*

She pushed her launch into the water and climbed in. She began her search in different areas each time she went out. The other divers promised to take pictures of any caves they ran across for her and she thanked them, but did not say why she wanted them.

She felt a closeness she didn't think possible, and was certain the cave she sought was in her space. She knew the other divers hovered within range as she searched the area beneath the launch. *It's here, somewhere*, she thought. *And I'm going to keep looking until I find it. No matter what anyone says!* She continued exploring, entering one cave after another, taking pictures as she went and waving to her diving companion periodically so as not to worry him.

Sooner or later, she thought, *I will find him again. I'll search one more cave today, and if that isn't it, we'll just have to come back tomorrow.* She entered the cave and swung her camera around. *If I can't see anything, maybe the camera will. Anyway, after they're developed, I'll have something to look at.*

Her oxygen was diminishing rapidly, and she left the cave. She waved her partner in and they surfaced, returned to the launch, and headed for shore. She thanked her diving partner and asked if he would be around tomorrow, he said he would and would meet her at the usual place. She said her good-byes and headed toward her shack.

* * * *

Trisha showered, washed her hair and put on a comfortable lounging outfit. She made herself a pineapple drink, a few snacks and went about developing her pictures. As she developed them, she was careful to note which pictures belonged to which cave. She was impatient for them to dry. When they were finally ready, she brought all the pictures together, those she took and the ones the other divers brought to her, and spread them on the living room floor.

"Lord, please let me find something tangible. Oh, please," she said softly, "Let it be there ... please."

She carefully studied each picture. Even the assistance of a magnifying glass did little to help the situation. She didn't see anything, anywhere, except empty caves, and she was extremely disappointed.

"Nothing! Nothing at all! Will I ever find him again?" she cried.

Dejected, Trisha carelessly stacked the pictures together paying little attention to the order they were in. She tossed the pictures carelessly on the table. She turned to pick up her pineapple drink when one picture caught her eye. She grabbed for it and stared at it as she reached for the magnifying glass. She scrutinized it. There, at the very edge of the picture, almost obscured, was the object she was searching for. The object with the closed Lotus Blossom embedded in it.

She had scrambled the pictures and now couldn't tell where the cave was. She wasn't sure if she or one of the other divers had taken the picture. She examined it closer and there, she didn't imagine it, at the very edge of the picture was the object. And next to it, next to it, almost behind it, was what she was really searching for, a figure of a man emerging from the object. She couldn't see it very clearly but knew, almost instinctively, it had to be Kan.

* * * *

During the two days Trisha relaxed at her Father's pineapple plantation, Myaculi searched everywhere in the Temple of Dawn for Kan, Trisha, and the key. She tore through both Trisha's and Kan's quarters. Up and down the secret passageways she went, always coming back to Ra Mu's chambers, and the spiral staircase. By the end of the second day she was totally convinced Ra Mu had the key and that Kan and Trisha were safely protected behind the locked door at the head of the ancient staircase.

"Ra Mu! I know you have it. I want that key now!" her telepathic message screamed at him from the passageways.

Covering his head, he tried to block out her message, but she would not stop. Finally, in desperation to shut her out he shot back, *"Come and get it!"*

In no time at all Myaculi was again before Ra Mu screaming at him and again demanding he produce the key immediately. Beaten, Ra Mu handed it over as meekly as a newborn babe. Triumphant, her eyes bright with fever, Myaculi raced back to the passageways, to the spiral staircase, and to the door. Her quarry was behind it, she was certain of it.

She inserted the key, unlocked the door and threw it wide open. The darkness beyond the door stopped her cold. Then, with a maniacal lunge, she tore the coverings off the opening above and the sudden light exploded everywhere, dancing off the Sacred Crystal in the center of the room. Caught off guard, Myaculi stared momentarily confused at the spectacle before her.

Recovering, she searched the room for her quarry, but they were nowhere to be seen. Screaming in total and unbridled fury, she raised both hands and let fly beams of energy all around the room, over and over again. Her anger increasing in intensity until several beams struck the Sacred Crystal, breaching it, revealing the Celestial Orb and the crystal-lined cavern beyond.

Before she could stop herself, another beam struck the orb. As she looked on horrified, the orb exploded, causing a chain reaction inside the cave. Crystals exploded everywhere loosing shards in all directions. She saw the one coming at her. It was immense. Her blood ran cold, as she stood frozen, watching the giant shard racing directly toward her. It struck with such force that it carried her backwards, impaling her to the wall behind her.

Before her life's blood ebbed away, she heard the unmistakable rumblings of an earthquake as the ground beneath her moved and the cavern around her crumbled. The roaring increased in intensity until loud devastating explosions rocked the very core of Mu.

* * * *

Trisha ran out of the house into the early evening light and stared at the figure walking in from the water toward her. She shielded her eyes for a clearer look. She caught her breath, clutched at her throat and with tears of joy streaming down her face, raced to embrace Kan.

They held on to one another, hugging each other, both talking at once, until Kan, smiling broadly, interrupted. "I think you dropped this," he said, as he pulled the pendant out of his pocket and dangled it before her.

Trisha cried in delight, "My pendant! I thought it was gone forever. Where did you find it? How?"

"I didn't. Myaculi did ... At the foot of the Golden Statue. She threw it at Ra Mu's feet, that's where I saw it and picked it up. Since I was coming this way, I didn't feel I could leave it behind," he said, laughing.

"Oh Kan," she cried, "thank you. Thank you. You have no idea how much this pendant means to me."

"Oh yes I do, my love. I most certainly do."

Their reunion was violently interrupted when inexplicably, the two active volcanoes, Mauna Loa and Kilauea, which had been raising havoc, on and off for the past several years, began to belch fire, spewing rivers of red hot lava down their mountainous sides.

The glow from the erupting volcanoes illuminated the evening sky, as roaring flames reached for the clouds. The ground beneath their feet began to shake, causing them to lose their balance. As they struggled to keep from falling, huge waves began to roll in against the shore. The once serene seas became a boiling cauldron of water, agitated by the erupting volcanoes.

Kan held Trisha away from him, and looked to the sea, then to the sky, and back to the sea again. As Trisha watched him closely a knot began to form in the pit of her stomach.

"Kan, what is it? What's wrong? What do you see that I don't?"

She stared long and hard at the raging waters and shook her head, "I can't see anything," she whispered, "Can you?"

Kan looked away from the red sky and the angry seas, and smiled nervously at Trisha. "The volcanoes ... the two together erupting that way, I'm not sure, but ... ,"

Unexpectedly, a tremendous rushing, ear-splitting sound riveted their attention to the seas. As they stared in awe at the angry terrifying waters, a small, shiny bubble appeared. It grew larger and larger, rising from the depths of the Pacific as if time had stopped, until at long last, a huge mass settled on top of the water.

They continued to watch, frozen in time, as the pageant unfolded before their eyes. The shiny bubble slowly disappeared revealing a new landmass. After the passing of centuries, the land once again felt the wind rippling through her trees. The waters of the Pacific crested, broke, and rolled anew upon its shores.

Kan spoke before Trisha could. "Mu! Good Lord, Mu has actually surfaced. I didn't really think it possible. I don't know how or why, but I know Myaculi's responsible for this. Somehow she penetrated the Sacred Crystal and destroyed the Sacred Orb. She must have been insane ... Good Lord, Myaculi, do you know what you have done?"

But Myaculi, dealt a crushing blow by her own hand, now lies in a watery grave deep within the depths of an angry Pacific Ocean, with all the inhabitants of Mu including Ra Mu, and could no longer hear, read or answer Kan's thoughts.

Astounded by the events unfolding before them, Kan and Trisha, holding on to one another, stare thunderstruck, as witnesses to the rebirth of an old continent and what appeared to be hope for a new beginning. What was once the past is for now the present, as the Legend of Mu ushers in the dawn of a new beginning!

Epilog

It had taken several days before the waters surrounding the newly formed island settled down and the island appeared to be sturdy enough to venture forth that Kan and Trisha set foot on the remnants of the Lost Continent of Mukalia.

They couldn't believe they were actually standing on the land that only recently had been encased in an energy sphere deep beneath the waters of the Pacific and where they had actually lived, ate, slept, and fell in love. They watched as the Pacific Ocean washed ashore ever so gently, and as the waves crested and broke, and the ripples it formed gently lapping at the shoreline before receding, just as normally as it would do on any beach on the surface of the planet.

It had been 12,000 years since the last time the Pacific Ocean washed over the land of Mu and it was a fascinating feeling for both Kan and Trisha. Neither one spoke for hours as they drank in the enormity of the moment. Finally, Trisha spoke, but in a gentle whisper as not to disturb the serenity surrounding them.

"Was there an explosion in one of the caves that caused this? You said it could happen, but..."

Kan interrupted, "Perhaps, but I think it had to do more with Myaculi than anything else. She was searching for us, remember?"

Trisha only nodded she couldn't speak, thinking of what must have happened below the waters.

"She must have torn up the Temple. When she found your pendent she threw it at Ra Mu demanding he tell her where he was hiding us. Ra Mu couldn't block his thoughts from her quick enough, and she learned about the passageways and where they led. Seems as if Ra Mu was no match for her, neither could he stand her screams reverberating throughout the Temple. I took my leave before she forced the key from him; and at this point I can only surmise as to what had happened.

"Poor Ra Mu," Trisha said, thinking out loud. "He was putty in Myaculi's hands. There was no way he could have kept anything from her ... the she-witch!" Trisha added with a vengeance.

"She must have found the Tower Room and entered it. When we weren't there she must have gone completely insane. Destroying the symbol that had kept Mu safe for 12,000 years, wiping out any chance anyone had to survive. She must have breached the Sacred Crystal then destroyed the Celestial Orb causing the force inside the Orb to implode with tremendous energy, instantly destroying Mu and triggering tremendous underwater earthquakes, sending the remnants of Mu to the surface."

"I know this is a dumb question to ask, but all the people ... what happened to all the people, and Ra Mu?" she asked softly.

"No it's not a dumb question, but I can only hope that it was all instantaneous; that when Myaculi destroyed the Celestial Orb the end came swiftly before anyone realized what was happening.

"I know," he said and smiled down at her. "Just because you wanted to return to the surface didn't mean that you couldn't appreciate what we once had."

"It is such a shame, all those historical documents, the Temple of Dawn, and that beautiful park, not even a monument, everything gone. Only the trees are left standing on a lonely strip of land. To see this once beautiful land uninhabited like this really is heart-breaking." She said once again.

"I know," Kan answered sadly, "not even a lotus blossom is left, and to think that I once stopped you

from picking one that was growing in the last beautiful park, which no longer exists."

Standing on the beach quietly looking over the tree-studded landscape, watching the breeze of the surface rustling through them, Trisha searched Kan's face. *What is he going to do now*, she wondered. *All the historical documents I once accessed are gone and he has no proof of the existence of his homeland. Is he going to stay here and claim this island as his? Without documents how could he? Where's he's proof?*

Yes, I do, he answered her telepathically. *There are descendents of Mu scattered all over the planet and with the proof of the existence of that land, which is known to all as the 'Cradle of Civilization' and as High Priest of that land, I will and can claim this island as mine.*

Trisha was startled. "You can still do that? Even here, on the surface?"

Yes, he smiled, *and so can you now.*

Trisha looked puzzled at first and then she decided to see if she could actually speak to Kan without speaking. *Well, my love, now that you are a surface rider what are you going to do now? live here like a hermit?*

Simple, he answered. *Marry my one and true love, raise a whole bunch of kids, and re-populate the Land of Mu where we will live happily ever after.*

No, seriously, she said. *What are you going to do?*

What do you expect me to do? I thought that was a good idea. Who else has the once in a lifetime opportunity to repopulate an entire nation?

I don't know, but with your abilities anything is possible.

Yes, he answered with a deep knowing smile, *anything is possible.*

* * * *

Suddenly, the ground beneath their feet began to move slightly at first, then more violently. Kan searched for the reason, and saw that Mauna Loa was belching fire again. "We'd better leave now," he said.

"Why," Trisha asked looking at the volcano spitting fire.

"Can't you feel the ground beneath you moving? It's not stable. We've got to get back to Ke'e now."

He gently, but firmly drew her towards their launch, "Hurry," he said get in!"

"Seems like the 'gods' have decided they don't want Mu re-populated," Trisha said, with a slight laugh.

"You think?" Kan said laughing while hurrying Trisha along. "Too bad, it could have been fun."

"Yes, I suppose so," she said, as she acquiesced to Kan's demands realizing it was no longer a laughing matter.

As they pulled away from the island, they could see water begin to flow over the land. The ground was sinking and the volcano was erupting. Kan started the launch's engine and quickly moved them far away from the island. It didn't take long before the volcano began to erupt, spewing rivers of fire down along its sides that the newly formed island began its descent. It would only take a few hours before the depths of the Pacific Ocean once would again claim the remnants of the lost and ancient continent called Mu.

About Elena Dorothy Bowman—An Honors graduate of Fitchburg College she earned her BS Degree in Engineering and Management. She has held the offices of State President, Treasurer, and Letters Chairperson of the Massachusetts Chapter of the National League of American Pen Women and is currently President of the Merrimack Valley Branch. Her published science-fiction mystery/romance novel *Sarah's Landing-I*, won the coveted APA award for its audio book. Credits include: *By-Line Magazine*, *Parentguide Magazine*, regional newspapers, and organizational newsletters. She has co-written and co-produced a Musical Workshop Production, and her prize winning short story was published in *The Lowell Sun*. A Software Engineer turned author, she has completed six full-length fiction novels, 3 non-fiction books, thirty-four short stories, and has completed a sequel to a mystery romance novel. The mother of four, Elena resides in Chelmsford, Massachusetts with her husband James.

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