

Queen



**Stolen
Magic**

A. J. Llewellyn

Pentacles

The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000.

Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Stolen Magic – Tarot: Queen of Pentacles

Copyright © 2008 A.J. Llewellyn

ISBN: 978-1-55487-183-4

Cover art by Martine Jardin

All rights reserved. Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by eXtasy Books

Look for us online at:

www.extasybooks.com

Stolen Magic

By

A. J. Lewellyn

Dedication

To Madame Pele, Goddess of the Volcanoes.

Author's Note

In tarot decks, *The Queen of Pentacles* is depicted as a solitary woman on a throne, surrounded by the symbols of prosperity: usually money and fruit. She is the original mother earth—solid, reliable, practical, yet deeply sensual. She can be counted upon when times are tough and can be relied upon to act decisively.

I like to work with the Mythic Tarot, which uses characters and stories from Greek mythology. In this deck, *The Queen of Pentacles* is depicted as *Omphale*, daughter of the River *Iardanus* and queen of the ancient kingdom of Lydia in Asia Minor.

After the death of her husband *Tmolus*, *Omphale* successfully continued to reign on her own. The Greeks did not recognize her as a goddess. They saw her as a barbarian queen, despite the fact that Lydians were the first people to use coinage made from refined gold and silver.

Queen *Omphale* actually bought *Heracles* (or Hercules) as a slave at the lowest point of his heroic life from the god messenger (and patron of magic) *Hermes*. *Hermes* sold him after an oracle declared *Heracles* must be sold into slavery for three years for murdering his friend *Iphitus* and attempting to steal the *Delphic Tripod*, (a cauldron

like symbol of prophecy).

Heracles went to visit several Oracles, including the powerful Oracle of Delphi, begging her for counsel on how to purify himself after the theft and murder, but she insisted he must fulfill his destiny. Not only that, but he was to complete twelve difficult tasks during his slavery; tasks to be set by Queen *Omphale*.

To his ultimate humiliation, *Heracles* was sentenced to perform his servitude as a woman. *Omphale* used the mighty hero to rid Asia Minor of unwanted riff raff and, with an eye to true male beauty, used him as a lover. In their three years together, he fathered three children with her.

Stolen Magic: Queen of Pentacles is based on this interpretation of the card.

Chapter One

It was after midnight when I closed the store and headed home along the old *Pali* Highway. It would have been much quicker to take the new *Kamehameha* Freeway, but I, like so many native *Hawaiians*, refused to ever set foot or tire on the abomination that had caused the destruction of so many ancient *heiaus*, or temples of my ancient people.

The *Pali* still held its mysteries and enchantments, despite the encroachment of development. With no streetlights and no homes, it had its eerie qualities, but not being a particularly superstitious man, it carried no fear for me. Just ahead of me in the damp glow of my old jalopy's headlights, I was shocked to see a woman in a long black cloak. She held up her hand to me. I slowed to a stop. I could easily have missed her except that she was standing in the one spot where it would be hard to miss her, the very tip of the *Mokahu* Peninsula.

Clutching the steering wheel with anxious fingers, I peered out at the woman, wondering what she was doing out here alone in the middle of the night. I'm ashamed to admit that at the age of thirty-two, as a man who should have known better, I did not want to help this stranger. I had two reasons. I was suddenly petrified. I saw no reason for *anybody* to be out here, especially since she was not apparently a stranded motorist.

Secondly, I was in a rush to get home. After long years of solitude, God had granted me the grace of a new lover, and even now, as I weighed my options, *Koa* was lying in my bed, waiting for me. Instantly ashamed for being so selfish, I opened the door and advanced toward the woman.

"What are you doing out here all alone?" I asked her. She kept her head down, her facial features hidden by a hood. She wasn't young, at least she didn't present herself that way.

She pointed to my car and reluctantly I walked back, opening the passenger door. She came toward me, slowly climbed in and it was only then her stench became apparent. She smelled awful, like dead, rotting fish.

"Where do you want to go?" I asked her, my voice unnecessarily harsh. I wanted this over with. My lover was lying in bed, probably wondering by now what had happened to me.

The woman didn't respond and I closed the door with a heavy heart. I walked around the back of my car to return to the driver's seat, narrowly avoiding being hit by another car passing by. As I approached my door, I was shocked to see the woman had vanished. I looked all around me and decided I'd imagined it.

As I drove away, the smell lingered and I touched my hand to the passenger seat. It was damp. A long piece of seaweed came away in my fingers. I stifled an inward scream, pressing harder on the gas.

This was an experience I intended to put far, far behind me.

At home in *Ka'ala*, I parked in the driveway, creeping around the side of the main house to the back cottage I rented from the old couple who had recently told me I would need to move. They'd sold their property and were moving to the mainland. The news had rattled me since I'd lived here for ten years and it was my refuge, my solace from a world gone mad. Maybe God had found me more miracles. First *Koa*, now the need for a new home. I still marveled that in three weeks *Koa* had brought me so much pleasure, so much happiness.

My cock stiffened as I unlocked my door, a rare pleasure in knowing high passion awaited me in

my once lonely bedroom. I was not a classically handsome *Hawaiian*, I had the thick black hair and dark brown eyes, a big, hard body thanks to hard work in the gym and in my daily life. *Koa* couldn't seem to get enough of me. For a moment, I stood in the entrance to my bedroom, hardly able to believe what was waiting for me. The long, lean body of my lover lay waiting for me. That magnificent ass was an offering. Sheets covered the beautiful thighs of the body I coveted, and I advanced without even pausing to remove my clothing. I had to taste that skin.

Moving the sheet back, my face went to that perfect butt and I held it in my hands, licking, sucking, feeding on my beautiful lover, my cock straining in my pants. I was out of my clothes and *Koa* moaned as I plunged into that waiting ass as quickly as I could. In the blue moonlight of the cold, still night, his body responded swiftly to each forward thrust. The ass I was fucking rose to meet me with just a slight, erotic tilt of the hips. The harder I stroked, those hips continued to move back into me with measured, languid angles—designed, I felt, for my pleasure, not his.

I couldn't help myself. I was berserk with the need to come, to possess the most fearsome boxer in *Kalakaua* Avenue Gym with my cock. How could such a magnificent, muscular brute of a man want me, *me* to fulfill his needs?

“Fuck me, *Manalo*,” he groaned, the first words spoken. “I need you, baby.”

My body shook as his ass maddeningly rotated to bring me even more stimulation and I gripped his hips, giving him everything he wanted. He milked my cock with that cherished ass and as my orgasm subsided, he turned to his side, giving me a radiant smile.

“Hmmm...my turn, lover.” Reluctantly, I removed my cock from his perfect body. I was always anxious when we weren’t actively engaged in fucking. I was always worried this time would be the last, but so far, the heat of our shared and secret rapture was only increasing. He might have been the most closeted gay man in the universe, but his thirst for cock was prodigious.

Night after night, day after day, we loved and fucked one another, and in the last week, I’d grown to adore coming home to find him waiting for me, begging for me to dominate him. Now his long, strong arms were pushing me up so he could turn over on his back. I stared bleakly between his legs to the ass I could never tire of pleasing. My hungry eyes fell on the mammoth, absolutely gigantic cock that was reaching toward my needy lips.

“You suck cock better than anybody, *Manalo*.”

I bent forward to accommodate his heavy, wide girth with the precision I knew he’d come to crave.

I felt his intake of breath and the flush of warmth across his body and I knew he'd waited impatiently all day for this first contact, just as I had. He was supposed to be in training for a big fight. He wasn't supposed to be indulging in any sexual activity at all until after he successfully fought for the world heavyweight boxing championship.

Koa was a rare specimen since he was the only national heavyweight champion to ever come out of the *Hawaiian* Islands. He had the reputation for hard living, womanizing, starting fights with strangers and having the personality of paint stripper, if you believed the newspapers. I did know his reputation of being a very difficult man to deal with was true until I seduced him with my tongue...not that he hadn't been seduced before.

He was just completely and publicly dishonest about his desire for other men.

Koa had come from his home somewhere in the islands (he wouldn't say where) to train and complained about everything. He was mean and rude, but talented as all hell. Me, I didn't have a need for public recognition of any kind. I just wanted him. I went to the gym to watch him train because he wanted me there. *Koa* liked that I had my own thing going. Even as I tore myself up each moment we were apart, I found him remarkably easy to deal with. I gave him all the sex he wanted

and he started going to the gym each day and training hard, his personality mysteriously transformed to a contented, well-fed mountain lion.

He watched me now as I worked with complete abandon on sucking and stroking that massive cock, his fingers tracing the muscles in my neck and arms. He liked the feel of me. I was no mamby-pamby boy. I was not as physically imposing as he was, but I had an enormous amount of strength. I heard his increasingly shallow breathing, my hand resting on his pounding heart.

“Oh that’s it, *Manalo*. You love to suck cock, don’t you?”

His hands moved to my hair and I loved knowing that I quickened his vital organs and that, in this moment, only I could bring him relief. For a second I took my mouth off his succulent stick.

“You want to come in my mouth, or in my ass?”

“In your mouth! Christ, I want it back, get it back on me!” His body jumped all over the place in his haste to get back into my moist, hot mouth and then he fed me his slick, salty juices. I savored the flavor of him and he held my head tight, almost sobbing with the sheer pleasure he was feeling. For a long time after he came, I kept

sucking and licking him. He might have been violating his own rules, but he did have some will power. He allowed himself only one orgasm in the evening and one each morning.

“You greedy boy,” he chuckled, pulling me into his massive arms. “You just want to drive us both crazy.” He kissed me. “Give me your tongue, I want to taste our juices.” He sucked on me as if he would tear it from my throat and his hand reached down between my legs.

“Mmmmm, fresh meat.” His fingers closed around my growing cock. He loved to give head and I loved the way he did it. My single greatest pleasure was having him fuck me, and I was happy as his mouth grazed its languorous way down my body, knowing that a damned good fucking awaited me first thing in the morning since he had chosen to come in my mouth that night.

We liked to run in the mountains together in the mornings. It seemed to be one more test I’d passed. He, like I, rose early and liked to run in silence with nature and he liked the path I showed him, a four mile circuit during which I stopped half way to observe the hidden valley below me, a valley that had changed little in the last century.

I felt I could hear the calling of birds long extinct, I could swear I detected sandalwood on

the air, even though the trees had been harvested to non existence.

“You love it here, don’t you?” *Koa* asked, his hand resting on the small of my back. It was a gesture he would never do in public if anyone was around and I smiled, just loving the feel of some part of him on *any* part of me.

“I do love it.”

I was mesmerized by his looks. Part Portuguese and *Hawaiian* on his father’s side and about ninety per cent *Hawaiian* on his mother’s side, all I knew of his past I’d read in the papers. His father had been a tough, but loving man and he’d been close to both his parents.

He was sitting now on an old log, retying the laces to his running shoes. He was naked to the waist, wearing long shorts and his shoes. I dropped to my knees and crawled over to him, putting myself between his legs.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

“Making you feel good.”

He shook his head. “I don’t think so. I’m happy to tangle all you want in the privacy of the bedroom, but...” He stopped speaking. My hands were at the open zip in his shorts. Hand to cock contact rendered him speechless. Hand to guzzling mouth rendered him senseless. He allowed me to work my magic on his long, hard cock, as I got his shorts down to his ankles.

I spread his legs and wanted to get near his ass.

“Oh no. You are *not* going there.” Even as he said it, I knew, as he knew, he wanted it and I pulled at his legs, propping one up on the log, the other remaining on the ground as my fingers and tongue went from his ass hole to his cock. He jutted against my open mouth and when I looked up at him, I saw anger, but also arousal. I had to make this good. First one ball, then the other found its way into my mouth, but he pushed my face away with surprising force.

“You think I’m going to let you dominate me? Gimme your ass right now.” His eyes glittered as he pushed me over the downed tree trunk and his hands worked at my pants.

“Undo them,” he ordered. “Now!”

I undid the Velcro snaps to my own shorts and he pulled them down roughly, two fingers running along the crack of my ass. I trembled slightly knowing he would punish me with an aggressive fuck and he proved me right. He was inside me in seconds and I could feel his hot cock stabbing my insides like a branding iron.

Unused to the long hours of fucking we’d been having, my ass was sore since he’d hardly given me time to get ready for this newest assault. I still felt that gnawing longing for him lapping at my belly like a malnourished dog attacking a long withheld bone.

“Oh, please,” I moaned. “*Koa*, please let me have it. Please fuck me with that huge cock.”

He went insane, planting harder, longer strokes inside me until his balls slapped at my thighs. I braced myself over that log, feeding his need for total control, and when I begged for him to come inside me, within seconds I helped fulfill his other wish for immediate gratification.

“Here it comes, *Manalo*.” He unleashed a violent orgasm inside me, filling me up, overfeeding me, so that his precious juices tumbled out of me and he fed me liquid heaven from his fingertips. He laughed, giving my ass a playful smack. “Fucking a woman doesn’t do the same thing as owning a man’s ass does for me.”

He frowned. “I kinda worry about how much I covet you.” He helped me to my feet. “Come and watch me train today.” Something had shifted between us, a chill that almost made me shiver. When I hesitated, he whispered into my mouth, “Please, baby.”

The *Kalakaua* Avenue Gym housed the best athletes on the islands, though it was no showpiece. I didn’t think the carpet had ever been shampooed, maybe occasionally a damp rag was run over the blood and spit spatters. I know it was never vacuumed. The windows were grimy and signs everywhere warned fighters to *Work Hard Here, Bleed Less in the Ring* and *It Takes Balls to*

Conquer the World.

Okey dokey.

He was already there when I walked in, dropped my bag and started jumping rope. The gym was already packed with boxers from all weight divisions gearing up for a mainland tournament in San Francisco. Brian Bilosi, the kid they called *The Hawaiian Punch*, was training for his first fight since losing his lightweight championship title in Japan. He'd been floored in a devastating knockout and I knew that everybody was behind the kid, giving him ample encouragement, including *Koa*.

Brian's father, Smoke, as he liked to be called since his own time as a fighter, was a former champ. They say his opponents didn't see him for smoke because he moved so fast. He was an old friend of mine. We'd run together as kids and when he'd married and had a family we'd kept up a friendship. He was *Koa's* trainer as well as Brian's and had no clue *Koa* and I were lovers.

When *Koa* befriended me, he warned him, "In case you didn't know, *Manalo Kapanui* is a *mahu*. He's gay. He's a good man, but a *mahu*." *Koa* had told me the story thinking it was funny. I'd been unable to bring myself to speak to Smoke ever since.

I watched *Koa* shadow boxing and knew he was enjoying my eyes on him as he jabbed at invisible

demons. My mind went back over our beginnings...the weeks I'd stood beside him hitting the crazy ball, the speed bag and the heavy bag and how we'd eventually become aware of each other. We recognized in one another a need, always submerged, for connection. I never made any overt moves or eye signals to him, knowing this would send him either running for the hills or my ass through the nearest window and onto the street.

Koa knew he was a magnificent specimen. He was proud of his manhood, his spectacular strength and his unbeaten record. His birth name was *Kekoa*, *Hawaiian* for brave. His full name, *Kekoa Guerrero*, seemed tailor-made for boxing since it translated to Brave Warrior. He'd shortened his first name to *Koa*, partly because it was easy for people to remember in boxing circles, but also because *Koa* was a rare and precious *Hawaiian* tree. Furniture made of this wood had become prized among collectors of island antiquities.

Koa himself was built like a rare and precious tree. His boxing nickname was *Akua*, The Ghost. He, like *Smoke*, was known for being fast and elusive in the ring, but being a Ghost Warrior was an unusual trait in a heavyweight boxer.

There was something else that was rare, and for me precious. I recognized in him a mutual need

for a man to fuck, because it takes one to know one. It hadn't been hard to get him alone. When his car broke down one day, I'd offered him a ride home and by unspoken agreement, we'd driven to the nearest remote spot. Wordlessly, I'd unzipped his pants and he'd allowed me to feast on his exceptional cock.

After that, we took risks. I sucked him off in the shower at the gym each morning and almost getting caught provided an especially erotic thrill. I dreamed of him at night and couldn't wait to return to the gym each day. One afternoon, after he'd had a heavy eight rounds of sparring, he didn't want head. He wanted to fuck.

"Your place or mine?" I asked and he gave me a lusty smile.

"Yours. And my cock is going to be in your ass all night, so I hope you've got no place else to be."

He hadn't quite told the truth about being inside me all night. He was for much of it, only allowing himself to come once, then fucking me several times until he came close to coming again and again. This was followed by long, cooling down stretches during which we talked and even ate dinner together after I picked a ton of vegetables in my garden and stir-fried them with ginger and lemongrass I grew outside the kitchen window.

Koa loved my home, said it had Bohemian flair

and he loved my bedroom, which was big and had large windows opening onto the edge of the *Ko'olau* Mountains.

"You're living in the middle of a tropical rainforest," he marveled. "Who knew anything like this existed on *Oahu*?"

He was mysterious about his own home and I didn't push. After dinner, he took my hand and led me back to bed, where I got one final fuck from him that left me dizzy with longing, since he had insisted that I could not come until he said I could.

Then suddenly he had to go home.

I let him go without an argument, even though he'd left me with a serious case of unspent desire. He said he would see me again. Well of course, he would. I knew we'd both be at the gym the next day. My lack of histrionics intrigued him. Our blazing hot sex kept his focus on me intense. The next day he wanted to come home with me again, only this time I needed to get back to work after we went crazy between the sheets.

"What is it that you do?" he asked me, letting his now-sensitive cock remain inside me for as long as possible until I had to leave.

"I own a tree farm."

"Trees, huh?"

"Not far from here." When he took his dick away from me, I felt my soul shriveling from the

misery of this lost connection with his life force. It was like he was taking away my sun. He insisted on coming to work with me and I was silent, thinking he would never see me the same way again. Instead, he was fascinated by the business, the trees and herbs and plants I sold, the acres and acres of greenery I showed him in a small golf cart I took customers around in while they selected plants.

My brother *Loki* had opened a goat dairy on the property next to mine. People drove for miles to see the goats that provided the cheese and the goats loved to amble over to my farm and eat everything in sight. *Koa* loved it all. He introduced himself to my staff, my brother's wife *Kala* and her brother *Keo*. Since there are only twelve letters in the *Hawaiian* alphabet, many names are similar.

I did not immediately show *Koa* the greenhouse where I carefully tended ancient herbs and flowers I grew for a select few clients who used them in medicines. He found it himself the next day, for he insinuated his way into my life as he had my bed. He loved coming to the farm. He started coming every afternoon after we'd fucked, following his morning gym session, and in the late afternoons he returned to the gym for his conditioning training. In the evenings we would meet at my house and eat and fuck, not always in that order.

Despite some very real passion between us, he

did have his quirks. He didn't allow me to kiss him until many weeks after we first became lovers.

One night I worked very late taking delivery of a huge shipment of trees from Portugal, and he surprised me by working right beside me, helping me unload and stack the trees in rows. For me, plants have always been healing, putting my hands in the rich brown earth doubly so. All I wanted as we headed home was to reward *Koa* with hot food and even hotter sex.

"Don't I get a kiss for my efforts?" he demanded, after he helped me with those trees. I like to think there was something in that kiss, because he became insatiable after that.

He drove home in his own car, arriving before me, and the sight of his hot ass waiting for me on top of the bed got me hard. When he begged me to fuck him, it was the first time I would be inside him. It was also the first and last time he couldn't help himself from coming twice in a single fuck session.

"As soon as my fight is over, I'm gonna want you all day long," he told me between kisses. He always reminded me that this self-imposed sexual curfew was temporary.

He was facing a formidable opponent—a six foot six Russian champion, *Wladimir Petrenko*, a man with a lot of hair, a big punch and a

reputation for a hair-trigger temper. They were going to fight in Las Vegas and the odds were stacked against *Koa*, despite his unbeaten record, merely because *Petrenko* was bigger, meaner and more experienced.

Koa was now sleeping all night, every night with me. We spent hours watching *Petrenko's* fights on tape and he'd talk to me about strategy and how being the underdog gave him the extra impetus to win. When the fight was first announced, he and *Petrenko* had embarked on a three week PR tour throughout the US to promote the fight.

"He was revolting to me," *Koa* spat. "No respect. Most fighters you know, you find something about them to admire, or like...but him, I *hate* him. He called me a bum, a loser. I've never really hated an opponent before, but I wanna hurt this guy. I really do."

I loved *Koa's* trust, loved hearing him talk war, then make love to me. When I had my one late evening, he would be home waiting, ass in the air, ready for the fucking he'd started to obsess over.

"Three days before the fight, I can't even see you," he told me one night. "I can't look at you and not want you. Right after the fight, I'm gonna want to fuck you immediately, so I'll make sure you get a credential so you can be in the dressing room waiting for me."

The idea that he couldn't look at me and not want to fuck me was giving me a secret thrill as I came back to the present, watching the envious way other guys eyed his splendid conditioning in the gym. He was in perfect shape for his fight in just over four weeks.

I was trying not to think about how every bite of food I made for him, every mile he ran, every bit of resistance work he did in the gym was to build the perfect beast, only to have it all torn down in the hands of another man on fight night. He gave me a swift, wicked grin. I knew he loved that I was watching him, wanting him, yet being completely unobtrusive at the same time.

And then a girl entered the gym and I felt the crackle of attraction between them. He might have been toying with her, using her to bolster his skirt-chasing image but she clearly viewed him as *caught and conquered*, strutting toward him in her tight pink workout clothes.

I knew then he wanted me to see this, wanted me to know I had competition, even if the extent of their ardor was mere banter. I wanted to get up and walk out, but I knew if I wanted this thing with him I had to sit there and take it.

Feeling lost in my misery and the depths of the cruelty he could inflict, I believe I kept my expression neutral, even as I wanted to punch somebody...me...her...*him*. He was laughing now

as she laced on gloves, a tall, slim woman with sizable tits in her pink midriff-baring top that accentuated all her assets. I knew her by her boxing nick name, *Hardtack*. She'd modeled for *Playboy*, or was it *Penthouse*? She'd also been in a couple of action movies. She might not have been taken seriously as a fighter, but every guy in the gym lusted after her.

Koa was looking at her in that hungry way with which he usually looked at me and I knew then that if he hadn't yet fucked her, he soon would.

He's doing this for show, a voice deep inside my heart told my head. That might have been the truth, but I dreaded what would happen. I already put myself through trauma each night that maybe he wouldn't be waiting for me. Now I knew there was a rival for his affections, more importantly, a rival he'd *deliberately* put in his path, it was more than I could bear.

In that moment I reached my emotional fork in the road. I could walk away now and miss him for a long time, keeping my memories close, returning to my less painful life of solitude, or I could stay in the race and undoubtedly feel like I'd gone a hundred rounds in a championship fight.

But I love him, the voice in my stupid head said.

Fool, said my heart. *Fool!*

The female boxer challenged him to a round of sparring.

He laughed in her face. "Think you can handle me?"

"Yeah, *Akua*. Think you can handle *me*?" I had to hand it to her. She had spunk. Many people called *Koa* by his nickname *Akua*. I couldn't bring myself to act like a fan. To me, he was *Koa*.

"Tell you what." *Koa's* gaze flicked lazily to me, to see if I was watching. "I'll give you three minutes and I won't even hit you. Let's see if you can hit me right here."

She reached out her only gloved fist and held it an inch from the spot to which he pointed on his belly.

"Loser buys dinner," she said.

"Deal."

Her trainer finished lacing up her gloves, everybody except the two fighters and their trainers got out of the ring. The trainers put head gear, or cages as we called them in the gym, on the fighters' heads. The tension and almost sexual expectation were palpable.

They got their mouthpieces next and everybody stopped what they were doing, crushing themselves against the ropes to catch every second of the action. The starting bell rang, the fighters touched gloves and instantly went into battle.

"Kitchen!" he taunted the second she lunged at him. "Women belong in the kitchen!" She wasn't expecting that. His taunting got louder and more

aggressive and although he wasn't even trying to throw a single punch, his footwork, quite dazzling for such a big guy, kept him out of her reach.

"You don't belong in the ring," he jeered. Men box for three-minute rounds, women for two. She knew we'd passed the two-minute mark and I could tell she was digging in deep to her reserves of will and muscle, she got him right in the solar plexus. Everybody applauded and the bell went for the end of the round. They touched gloves and he went off to his corner, the gleam of lust very strong in his brown eyes.

"Damn, that's some potent foreplay," one of the other boxers muttered.

He wasn't kidding.

Chapter Two

I drove home that night along the *Pali*. I felt a pang of nostalgia I couldn't explain...no, it was more than that. The *mana*, the power of the *Pali* was like porn for the mourning. It wasn't just that I knew my lover would not be in my bed waiting for me. He'd kick-started my love muscles, stirring the long dormant feelings I'd buried along with my precious lover Michael, whose untimely passing three years ago had caused my world to collapse.

"Don't pine for me," he'd said. "Don't stop living because I'm gone."

Koa had breathed life into my creaky, prematurely-aged soul again. I had to thank him for that.

Oh, no. There she was again. The woman on the edge of the cliff. I slowed down, very frightened. Why was she was doing this to me? She walked over to me as my engine idled and with great reluctance, I opened the door for her. She got in

but this time, she did not disappear. Long, spindly fingers lay in her lap and I put the car into gear.

The engine sputtered and died. I tried starting the car again. It wouldn't budge. I felt a cold sensation like ice moving across my back.

Her voice was eerie and thin. "When are we leaving?"

"As soon as I get the car started."

She moved impatiently in her seat.

"I can't understand it. The car's never had this problem..." I got out, threw open the hood and tinkered around a bit, but I could barely see in the dark. As I closed the hood again, my mysterious passenger had vanished.

I drove home at a frantic pace. I wasn't expecting to find *Koa* waiting for me, but of course, I hoped he'd be there.

The sight of the tousled sheets left empty from our morning lovemaking filled me with deep melancholy I chided myself for, even as I allowed it to swallow me whole. I turned around, unable to face the bed without him. In the kitchen, I cut myself some bread and cheese. It was a ritual held over from long years alone. With *Koa*, I took this light supper with fruit, vegetables and for me a glass of wine.

"I like cock with my cheese," he always said, and I tried not to think of his little tigress of a female fighter giving him a workout between

different sheets.

Taking my plate outside, I sat on the stone steps overlooking the foot of the *Ko'olau* Mountains, thinking I was losing two things I loved, *Koa* and the mountains I found hard to leave. Unable to eat, I discarded the food into the bushes, knowing the wild birds would gobble everything up in the morning. I took an old comforter from the closet in the hall and went back outside, sleeping on my weather-beaten *lanai*, just like they did in the days of old *Hawaii*, falling asleep with the haze of the mountain chill on my skin, the luminous night stars imprinted on my eyes. I slept like a native. I slept like my ancestors. I also slept like a man afraid of his dreams.

In the morning, I pondered what to do and decided, instead of a run, I wanted to paddle my canoe. I packed it into the back of my work truck and drove to Queen *Kapiolani* Park at the edge of Diamond Head. The scent from her rose gardens hid the odors of the zoo behind it and gave off a potent, sweet smell as I carried my canoe over my head and thrusting it off shore, jumped in with my paddle and fought for my life out there in the ocean waves.

The thing about the ocean is that I have always felt safe out there. But the other thing any child of the ocean will tell you is that whatever troubles you have on dry land stay there, or will force

themselves to stay there, when you are dealing with the all-encompassing element of water. Exhilarated with the freedom of riding the rap, I canoed until I couldn't see land anymore then reluctantly turned around and went back to civilization.

The confidence my early morning voyage had given me sustained me through a pit stop at Starbucks where I bought coffee and made a rash decision to stop by the gym. Something in me felt the need to show *Koa* that I was fine with things the way they were, that I was fine with his abandonment.

Except that he never showed up that day. Not while I was there, anyway. I saw Smoke's outraged expression as he tried reaching *Koa* via cell phone, then reluctantly had to peel off twenty dollar bills to the two sparring partners who had showed up to work with the champ. He did show up the next day, but by then my anxiety over seeing him had morphed into concern for his welfare. He showed up with the girl, his hand on the small of her back. It was too painful to watch.

I turned and concentrated on the crazy ball and felt suddenly that his eyes were on me.

"Work the waist, that's it," a voice beside me said. It was Smoke. He gave the crazy ball an extra flick and it moved back and forth in, well, a crazy way, and through the mirror I glimpsed *Koa's*

appraising gaze as I ducked between swings of the ball.

“Nice,” grinned Smoke. I knew he was greasing me up because he knew I was upset with him. I didn’t need his compliments. The three minute bell rang and I watched *Koa* climb through the ropes. His newest lover was sitting outside the ropes, on her cell phone, as he hit the red leather mitts on Smoke’s hands.

Mopping my face with my towel, I hit the speed bag next. *Koa’s* attention prickled the back of my neck, but I couldn’t turn around. I couldn’t skip a beat. For three rounds, or nine minutes, I worked the bag, pounding out every last ounce of anger I had in me. Losing somebody who hadn’t died was a good feeling. I could still look at him, I could still admire him. I may not be able to touch him again or ever feel his breath on my skin, but I could feel *Koa’s* gaze on me, searching, hunting for mine and I gave it to him briefly, holding him with a big warm smile that seemed to surprise him.

Cutting my glance, I bid farewell to Smoke.

“Not doing the heavy bag today?”

Since when had my routine been even remotely interesting to him? I shook my head, undoing the laces on my boxing gloves with my teeth. Out of the corner of my eye, I watched *Koa* hit the mitts with a staggering amount of force.

“Something got him riled up,” Smoke

shrugged. "You'd think now that he's getting laid, he'd be happy..."

I changed the subject. "Brian's looking good."

"Thanks. It's been a long road."

"I know." I patted his shoulder. "He'll do great, I just know it."

Back at work, I studied the printouts my assistant, *Kala* had made for me of houses in the immediate area. I did not want to live far from my beloved mountains. One house she'd found on an obscure website showed a cabin deep in the heart of the forest. I had a million things to do that day, but this house looked like the answer to all my prayers. I grabbed the phone, dialing the number listed.

A man answered. "My wife and I thought this was going to be our dream house. You...you don't have children do you?"

"No."

"Well, then you should be fine here." He gave me detailed directions, including landmarks I should look out for on my way to the house.

It was way off the beaten path, that's for sure. I passed odd, low-lying single story homes set back from the dirt track that crept up a deceptively sharp incline. As my old car winched up the steep road through the mountain, I felt I understood why the man had been concerned about children.

The place was a little remote, but for me, a born-again hermit, this was more than perfect.

It was a small house, two bedrooms, a *lanai* on all sides. There were trees outside each and every window. The man, who turned out to be a pleasant guy from the mainland, introduced me to his wife and son. The child's room was odd. Everything was bunched up on one side. I didn't think much of it, thinking maybe they were already packed and organized. I agreed to take over their two year lease. The house had everything I needed.

"Are you sure you want it?" the husband asked me.

"Yes."

The relief on his face did not wipe the strange expression from his eyes. They told me they were moving in a few days, returning to the mainland. I wouldn't be ready to move in so soon, but they accepted a deposit, gave me a receipt and all the details of where to send rent checks each month, and although nothing in *Hawaii* surprised me, it was all a little *strange*.

It was only as I drove away that I realized what the expression was on the husband's face. *Panic*. I shrugged it off. I had a long day ahead of me, a couple big deliveries. I didn't want to think negative thoughts...not about my new house, definitely not about *Koa*.

As I started driving home, I allowed myself to think about him, to feel the sensation of missing him.

And there she was again. The woman I now knew was a ghost. I wanted to keep driving but something made me stop. Once again, she got into my car, the chill and smell of her making me shiver.

Once again, my car died and she asked me, "When are we leaving?"

And then, while I was out of the car checking under the hood, she disappeared.

It spooked me tremendously to have experienced this again. It was only when my car started and got me well away from the area that I resolved not to stop next time.

When I got home, I walked through the door and didn't bother to even look in the bedroom. I knew he wouldn't be there.

Throwing off my shoes and leaving them inside the door (leaving them outside, per island custom, has provided me the nasty surprise of scorpions on more than one occasion) and I opened the fridge. That was my second surprise of the evening. Somehow I had a fridge full of food. And then I felt him standing behind me, his bare arms winding themselves around my waist. Damn. The man didn't know his own strength. It was like being surrounded by a boa constrictor intent on

one thing—complete and total consumption of me.

His low voice vibrated in my ear. “What, you thought I wouldn’t come back for what’s mine?” His hands migrated down the front of my pants as he pressed his lips to the soft skin just under my ear. I could have resisted him. *Could have, with a bit more notice.* But with his tongue tracing a long, purposeful path down my neck and flicking around under my shirt collar, his eager hands rubbing at my hardening cock, it was all I could do not to grab him.

“Where do you want me?” His mouth was whisper-close to mine.

I turned around to give him my full attention. My heart almost stopped.

Koa’s face was covered in bruises.

“What the hell happened?” My fingers reached up to touch him.

“Some women can’t handle rejection. You’d better fuck me good. I belong to you now.”

Chapter Three

It wasn't that I didn't want to fuck him. Believe me, it was *all* I wanted to do. But here was the man of my dreams, hurt, in obvious need of medical attention. Not to mention the fact he had a fight coming up in four weeks. Any sign of physical trauma anywhere on his body and the fight would be canceled. All that money, all that time and effort he'd put into training would be out the window.

"Let me look at you." I pushed him gently away from me.

"I want to fuck first then you can look at me all you want."

"Koa, your ribs have bruising. I can see it in the light."

"She's got a kick on her like a mule."

"The cut above your eye looks bad. It needs stitches."

"Nope, no stitches. I super-glued it together. Word gets out I got stitches, my fight's gone."

Kaput.”

“You used super glue? On your *face*? Are you mad? That’s just asking for an infection.”

“Done it a million times before. I can’t let a doctor touch me. It’ll cost me the fight.”

“I know honey, but...” I looked at the knuckles of his right hand. They were swollen. I knew then he’d been the victim of a beat-down. “How many of them were there?” I took a packet of frozen peas out of the freezer.

He looked at me, then away again. “Three.”

“If I could get somebody to help us who is not a doctor, but a *kahuna*, would you be willing to let him work on you?”

“I don’t believe in that spiritual crap.”

“Yeah, well, you’ll believe in this guy.” I checked my watch. It was late and the only person I knew who would be able to help *Koa* and keep things under wraps was one of my best customers. He was also the top *hula* dancer in all the islands and he would be getting off stage about now.

I dialed the number I had for Kimo Wilder, a fearsome *kahuna* and was not surprised when his husband, *Lopaka* took the call. I rarely dealt with Kimo except in person when he consulted me on plants and herbs. His energy was so high, so pure, electronics messed with his *mana*, his power.

Lopaka was gracious and understanding. “Bring him to our property. We’re heading home now.

Wait until I call you because you won't be able to get near the place until my husband lifts the *kapu*, the taboo on it."

"You gotta be kidding me," *Koa* fumed. "I just came here to get laid..."

"It's up to you." I felt stung. "If you don't want the fight to happen..."

"I just want to...I want to fuck you. I don't need a fucking woo-woo nurse."

"You do need a nurse, as it happens. So you want my help or you want to go home?"

"Those are my options?"

"Pretty much."

We sat on the mountain road a good half hour from my place and waited for *Lopaka's* call. *Koa* was insufferable the whole time, until we got the call and we advanced through a thick path of trees. The *mana* emanating from the area was palpable. Even *Koa* could feel it.

"What is that?" he asked and for the first time ever, I saw him nervous.

"And you haven't even seen him yet." At the entrance to the property, I pressed a black button on a hidden box as *Lopaka* had instructed and a big, vine covered gate swung open. We pulled in and lights flipped on, illuminating a path for us to drive down. *Lopaka* was coming toward us and he smiled in greeting.

"He's a good lookin' guy, but he doesn't look so dangerous," *Koa* scoffed. He got out of the car. "You're the *kahuna*?" he asked *Lopaka*, a handsome *Hawaiian* man around thirty years old. Tall, slim, body of a dancer, he was, like his husband, a respected *hula* dancer.

"No, I'm his husband." Reaching over, he shook my hand. "Nice to see you again, *Manalo*."

"Husband?" *Koa's* voice was faint.

"Kimo's inside. He's giving the children their goodnight kisses. They wait for us, you know, until we come home and then..." He smiled. "Ah...here he is now."

Koa gaped as the astonishing, fearsome looking *kahuna* approached us. *Kimo Wilder*, one of the tallest men I've ever seen at six feet, four inches, powerful body, long black hair, his entire right side tattooed in the mysterious and secret symbols of his priesthood, had eyes only for his husband.

Lopaka smiled at him and indicated us. "*Manalo* brought his friend *Koa*."

Kimo's focus zeroed right in on *Koa* who looked wide-eyed and dazed now as the great healer moved forward and stood right in front of him.

"Turn around," *Kimo* said, and *Koa* turned. *Kimo* was frowning. "Did you defend yourself against this woman's attack?" he asked finally.

Koa looked at me. He knew I couldn't have told *Kimo* anything. We'd been together the whole

time I'd spoken to *Lopaka*.

"Not until her two friends showed up and started hitting me."

"*Lopaka*," Kimo said. "Do we have any *pa'u o Hi'iaka*?"

"I'll check. We have coconut, I know that. You'll want him to chew the *pa'u* with that, won't you?"

Kimo gave his husband a look of such searing, lustful adoration, I felt like somebody had opened an oven door. "Yes," he nodded.

"What else?" *Lopaka* asked.

"*Waipine*...lemongrass, and we'll need some '*awa*, of course, so I can fix the wound over his eye." His left hand, bearing a healthy cluster of gold wedding rings on his third finger, was on *Koa's* chest now, causing him to jump.

"They tried to stop your heart," Kimo said.

I looked at *Koa*. "They...did?"

He looked terrified now. "I don't remember. I passed out. One of them hit me in the head —"

"With a stick, correct?" Kimo sighed. "You'd better come inside."

The interior of the house was very comfortable, very *Hawaiian*. The open-plan living room had huge windows that overlooked a blanket of blackness that *Lopaka* said was the ocean. The living room flowed into the kitchen, and an old woman came toward us.

"This is my *Tutu*, my grandma," *Lopaka* said as *Kimo* told us to sit by a low-lying table. *Lopaka* and his *Tutu* bustled over with potions, lotions and I heard an unusual, steady singsong hum coming from *Kimo*. The whole room grew hot and I heard a door open and a toddler, a boy who was an astonishing replica of *Kimo*, came out of one of the rooms.

"Daddy's working, darling." *Lopaka* lifted the child into his arms. *Koa* was in another world, having just consumed a healthy swig of 'awa.

Lopaka disappeared with the baby.

"What's this he used on his face?" *Kimo* asked as *Koa's* head lolled in front of him.

"Super glue."

"Why did this woman punish him?"

"He's been running around with her the last two days. They met at the gym. They're both boxers. *Koa* has a world championship coming up in four weeks."

Kimo's face took on a grave expression. "He's not openly gay?"

"No, he is not."

He finished working on *Koa* and *Lopaka* reappeared, sitting beside his husband. *Kimo* put his hand on *Koa's* head and his eyes fluttered open.

"I feel...strange."

"You will for a day or so."

Koa looked at him. "You're the real deal, aren't you?"

The fearsome *kahuna* burst out laughing.

"What do we need to do now?" I asked.

"Take him home, plenty of rest." He paused. "You know you cannot go back to that gym, don't you?"

Koa looked shocked. "I have to go back."

"You think it's a...coincidence this woman seduces you then has you beaten up a month before your fight?"

"She's working for the other side?" *Koa* looked horrified now.

"I don't say this to give you cause for retribution. I tell you this so you seek protection. Train in secret and don't tell anybody where you are. Don't go to the usual places. Don't take the same route when you're running...that sort of thing."

"But I don't have anywhere to train in secret," *Koa* said.

"I do," I said and he looked at me.

"Good," *Kimo's* gaze was on *Tutu*. "Take these containers with you. He must eat the papaya seeds three times a day for the next week. No contact to that eye except kisses for one week and put this ointment on it. Do not start sparring again until Monday. I'm going to bind his ribs and my husband will give you a list of greens you must

boil and give him to eat daily.”

He got up from the table. “And stay away from that woman. In my experience, a woman scorned...well, hell’s fury and all that.” His focus now was on food as the old lady produced an enormous piece of fish from the oven. She and *Lopaka* hustled us out with their packages and the list Kimo had mentioned.

“But we didn’t get to thank him,” I protested.

“Thank us by winning the fight,” *Lopaka* smiled.

“Watch me on TV,” *Koa* said. “I promise you I’ll win.”

“We don’t own one,” *Lopaka* shrugged. “But I trust you to win.” He gave us a brilliant smile and watched us leave the property.

“That was some spooky shit,” *Koa* said. “Damn. The swelling on my knuckles went down completely.”

“You think that’s spooky? Look behind us.”

He turned to look at what I could see in the rearview mirror. The path we were taking was being instantly swallowed up by vegetation. It was like some mysterious portal had opened up and was closing itself again. I couldn’t have turned back if I wanted to. A strange *whumping* sound could be heard at the magical seal on the *kahuna’s* property.

“Now that’s a place where I could train in secret,” he grinned.

"I've got something even better."

"Yeah?" His hand reached over and covered mine. "You gonna show it to me?"

"In the morning."

He looked at me. We were moving up the old *Pali* Road and I was terrified the strange, smelly old ghost lady would be there, but she wasn't.

"I'm sorry." *Koa* was still studying me. "I'm sorry I was so rotten to you. I'll make it up to you."

That made me smile.

"I got the feeling the *kahuna* wanted us out of there so he could spend the rest of the night eating and fucking his husband there," *Koa* grinned. "You know what's weird?"

"What?"

"That *kahuna*...he's a dancer, right?"

"Yes."

"He used to be married to a woman and she died. It was on the news, oh, about seven or eight months ago. Heart attack or something. So he's gay, he's married to a man now, has incredible powers...powers I've never seen before."

"I heard a piece of gossip about them," I admitted.

"Tell me." His hand ran through my hair.

"Well, I heard that his powers have only increased since he married *Lopaka*. That his...abilities are...incomparable. I've heard..." I

hesitated. Suddenly I didn't want to repeat what I'd heard. I liked Kimo and *Lopaka* and felt very protective of them and grateful for what they'd done for us.

Koa didn't say anything. He just kept staring at the open road ahead of us. His hand stayed on the back of my head and then started moving again. "I would say he is about the scariest guy I ever met. And I've met some bad asses."

I laughed then. He must have truly sensed Kimo's real danger.

"He went inside my body. Like a camera. It wasn't sexual. It was...surreal. I felt like he saw every bruise...every wound. I'll tell you what, I think I can trust you enough to tell you this. Most boxers fight with old injuries. We don't give our bodies enough time to heal and we *never* talk about them. We carry them around like a bag of hammers. Well, he fixed 'em. Unbelievable. He even got in my ear. I got hit in the ear once. The ringing has been persistent. And now it's gone."

The words hovered between us.

"He's the most dangerous dude I ever met. And if you ever tell anybody I said that, I'll deny it." He twisted toward me. "You ever had a man give you head while you're driving?"

"No, honey, but we're home now."

"I need your cock. You have to know I've been going crazy without it." His head shot down

between my legs and I pushed him away. I parked and he followed me into the house, steering me to the bedroom.

“Lie back, *Koa*. Close your eyes.”

“What are you up to?”

“You’ll know in a few seconds.” I opened one of the drawers in the bureau by the bed and extracted a long piece of cashmere. I hadn’t actually done this to a man, but Michael did it to me when we were lovers. In fact, being Asian, Michael had been obsessed with sexual secrets of the Orient, and some of them, forgotten until now, struck me as being perfect for *Koa*.

I didn’t touch him with my mouth. I let the caramel-colored cashmere drape over his cock and I wound it up and down in a slow, sensuous motion as he started to go crazy.

“God, what is that?” His eyes flew open and he watched me wield the cashmere like a slithering, seductive snake around his very hard cock, over the head and back down again. It’s a wonderful illusion to watch and I let one end trail between his thighs, pressing it against his perineum and his now twitching ass. With difficulty, I kept the other end soaring up and down over his cock.

“Oh God...baby...that’s wonderful. That feels...oh...” He stopped speaking and his face took on an expression of disbelief. I’d wound the bottom end around his sensitive balls and I

quickly lowered my mouth and took him in as he humped my hungry throat, rewarding me for my dexterous efforts.

He finally stopped coming and lay exhilarated on the bed. "Do it again! Do it again!"

I laughed. He was a slut for sensuous sex, all right. I was going to have fun down the line with this guy. I was going to drive him out of his skull, given half the chance.

The next morning, I awoke with *Koa's* arms wrapped tightly around me. His face looked worse in the morning light, but I marveled at the rainbow of colors on his skin. *Kimo* must have sped up his healing by several days. It was seven thirty by the bedside clock. I nudged him awake.

"How are you feeling?"

He gave me a slow, warm smile. "I slept really well, surprisingly. Ribs are a bit tender, but I'm not as bad as I should be."

I shifted out of his arms. "You'd better call *Smoke* and tell him what happened."

Koa's hand went straight to my cock. "I want this inside me first."

"I don't think we're supposed to be having this much sex. Call him."

He flopped back on the bed. "And I thought women were bossy."

"I'm not trying to be bossy. I don't want him to

worry about you."

"What am I supposed to tell him?"

"That you got injured. Doctor says no contact for three days. Tell him you'll start training again on Monday."

"He'll flip out."

"Do you trust him?"

"Completely."

"Then let him flip out. By Monday he'll be over it."

"And what about this secret place you mentioned for training?"

"I just took a lease on an incredible house. You can train up there. We can move in first thing Saturday."

"We?"

I sighed. "I just meant -"

"No, I like the idea of us living together. I could stay with you...nobody needs to know our living arrangements, do they?"

"Of course not. And you can train there. Nobody will bother you."

He smiled at me then. "Does this mean I can have my morning ride now?"

That night, I hurried home after a long day at the store. I had been in touch with *Koa* all day by phone and couldn't wait to see him. For a moment, as I swept along the old *Pali* Highway, I

forgot about the ghostly woman, but now my heart dropped.

She was there, in her usual spot. I floored the gas but the car sputtered and died. I tried everything I could to get it going again, watching helplessly as she drifted toward me and got in the car.

“When are we going?”

I closed my eyes and she was gone.

God help me. If *Koa's* nonsense didn't kill me, the old lady would.

Chapter Four

I dreamed of the old lady that night.

After a great evening with *Koa*, who seemed to get a physical charge out of the strange packets of greens that Kimo had prescribed, he was more ravenous for me than ever.

“Do whatever you want to me, it’s all yours, babe.” His husky voice told me he was aroused, and I took him at his word. Grabbing him by his ankles, I yanked him so that he was lying across the bed, his feet on the floor. I got between his legs. I could tell he was really turned on now and I hadn’t even touched him yet.

I started licking from his toes, up his hairy legs to his thighs, where the hair dispersed, thinning out to his smooth inner thighs, which opened up to me. *Koa* was a scrupulously clean man and even together we showered at least twice a day, but he was such a masculine, earthy man his passions lent themselves to that male, musky scent that only men can make.

“Spread your legs,” I whispered and he did, watching every move I made. He was trying to get that massive cock past the lips that normally can’t wait to give it attention, I bypassed all his efforts to jam it down my jaw and my lips puckered up for his pucker.

A long sigh escaped him as I licked his ass hole, flipping his legs up, working my tongue on whatever part of his ass I could reach. My tongue worked a heavy rotation over his balls, which I loved to suck and he watched me, whimpering as I pulled them gently then roughly, then gently again in and out of my mouth. My fingers found their way to his ass hole, my thumb making lazy circles over his now-wet hole, and he fought me to get it inside him.

I took everything off him, hands and tongue and took mercy on his leaking cock. He jerked as my mouth took the head of his dick in inch by inch, down my throat. I released him.

“On your knees.”

Anxious to do exactly what I wanted, he got on all fours and I started slowly and deliberately working the backs of his thighs and his ass all over again. He was panting and I grabbed his cock between his legs so that it was slanted down, licking him from the tip of his cock all the way up to his tailbone.

“Oh fuck...*Manalo*, you’re driving me crazy.”

I ignored him. He was loving all of it, and soon his cock was pulsing and my thumb went back to the circular rhythm on his ass hole. I moved to his cock, giving him my whole mouth as, with one leg cocked in the air, he humped my face and shot down my throat, trembling with the force of his orgasm.

“Stay there, oh...keep your mouth there.” He couldn’t seem to stop coming. When the fireworks were long over, I removed my fingers from his ass and I came off his cock long enough to tell him I wanted him on his back.

“Only if you’re going to put this where your fingers were.” His cock-grabbing hands pulled me toward him. “Show me how much you want me.”

And I did. We came together and he basted my belly and chest with his juices, his thundering heart beating against my chest.

“All this butter.” I licked my fingers and he smiled, pulling me down beside him. As my arms tightened around him, he kissed my face.

I fell asleep, only to find the old lady waiting for me, flagging me down in my dreams. I almost came off the bed.

“What is it, *Manalo*?” *Koa* was up on one elbow, looking down on me, concerned. “You’re having a bad dream? Here, let me hold you. I won’t let anything bad happen to you. Man, your heart is pounding.”

His heavy arms felt good and solid around me. Unbelievably, we started making love again.

“*Manalo*, I swear it’s the food you’re giving me.”

I didn’t care what was causing it. I grabbed him to me, blessing God for creating men.

The next day, I saw *Lopaka* in the store. He gave me one of his serene smiles. Kimo was standing right behind him, that pint sized version of him in his arms. Kimo nodded at us both but there was no recognition apart from that of *Koa*, who became nervous now.

I understood in that second—I didn’t know how, but I did— that their work, their healing work, was performed in secrecy. Of course there would be no public acknowledgment of what Kimo had done for us.

“Good morning *Manalo*.” *Lopaka* handed me a piece of paper. “*Tutu* gave me this. It’s a list of things we need.”

The paper read, *Kimo wants to see Koa. Meet us at the greenhouse as soon as possible.*

They left the store.

“How did he even know I was going to be here today?” *Koa* asked me.

I shrugged. “Just doing his job, I guess. Come on, let’s go.”

They already there when we arrived. *Lopaka*

had the toddler in his arms now.

"How are you feeling?" Kimo asked, his hand immediately going to the back of *Koa's* head.

"You've done wonders for him," I blurted. "I wish he wasn't going to destroy it all in a boxing match."

Kimo smiled. "Guess he'll have to come back and see me again."

Koa had a strange expression on his face. "You're doing it again...going inside me."

"Not me. Spirit. And I think my work here is done. Tell me, how many people know you have kidney problems?"

Koa gasped. "Nobody. I never even told *Manalo*." Kimo's hand remained on the back of his head as if jogging his memory. "Wait...my trainer knows."

"You need to drink lemongrass tea, preferably fresh. I know we have some in here and I give you permission to use it." He took the keys from *Lopaka* and unlocked the door. *Koa* was looking at me. I had never told him who the greenhouse was for.

The toddler wriggled out of *Lopaka's* arms and went straight to the lemongrass. "*Waipine*, daddy." He looked pink with joy when his parents praised him.

"Wonderful, darling." *Lopaka* gathered the child to him.

Kimo spoke softly. "Steep the *waipine*, drink it as often as you can. Don't accept liquids from anybody before the fight. *Anybody.*"

"I...don't know how I can do that. I'm very dehydrated before a fight. I need water as soon as I get off the scales at the weigh-in."

"If you don't mind, I would like to send a very good friend of mine to accompany you on your journey. He will be with you before the fight. I'd like you to make sure he's in the corner with you, that he and he alone, gives you water out of his bottle."

"Who?" asked *Koa*.

"*Manu Lanoit.*"

Koa looked shocked. "How do you know him? He's a former world champion. Tough as nails. Went twelve rounds with a broken nose and broken right hand and won. But I don't see..."

"He's our trainer," *Lopaka* said. "His son, Ramon is married to my sister, *Maluhia*. We're almost finished with our show. We're happy to share him. Kimo received a message last night that you are in danger."

"I trust *Manu* very much. I haven't spoken to him yet, but he understands our work and the need for secrecy..." Kimo glanced at *Lopaka*. "I never touch the phone anymore. My husband will be available by phone if you ever need us for anything. Talking to *Lopaka* is like talking to me."

"We're always together. There is no question we are ready to help. In the meantime, when you start training again on Monday, I would like *Manu* to be there. Your trainer might feel it's unnecessary, but there isn't a better conditioning coach in the world."

"Darling." *Lopaka* touched his nose.

"Oh, yes," Kimo frowned. "In your hotel room, do not under *any* circumstances, use the air conditioning." A chill ran through my body and I saw *Koa's* face turn white. "*Manu* will sleep in your room with you. If the trainer squawks, he will handle him. The important thing is, when *Manu* arrives Monday, pretend you know him. Act as if you are old friends."

"Why are you doing this for me? You don't even know me?" *Koa* was overcome now.

"Because you are a child of the land and you're in trouble. I detest...deceit. I cannot condone sabotage. I'm helping you because I can."

"Thank you," *Koa* and I said in unison.

The toddler reached up to Kimo whose eyes gleamed with pride as he lifted him into his arms.

"What's his name?" *Koa* asked.

"Take a wild guess," *Lopaka* laughed.

"Kimo!" the baby shouted and we all laughed, breaking the tension in the room.

The Wilders looked around at the plants I'd been cultivating for them. "I really do have an

order from *Tutu*." *Lopaka* produced another piece of paper.

"I wish you were coming with me," *Koa* muttered.

"Oh we'll be there," *Kimo* smiled. "In Spirit. And I mean that. Spirit is a powerful thing, *Koa*. You should remember that."

Curious words, and I wondered if he somehow knew that *Koa* had been dismissive of *Kimo*'s powers before they'd met. I put together the plants in a box and *Koa* took them from me, putting them in the back seat of the couple's SUV.

Three baby seats were strapped into the back.

"How many kids you got?" *Koa* gasped.

"Three." *Kimo* looked ecstatic. "We have *Kimo* and our baby twins. Five kids if you count my sister in law's children. We're all one big, happy family."

Lopaka was strapping the little boy into his car seat, a face full of love for the child.

"You're a lucky man." *Koa* shook *Kimo*'s hand.

Kimo smiled at him. "I am. Faith is a beautiful thing." He shook my hand and we watched the men drive away.

"I feel...strange." *Koa* slipped his arm around me. I wanted to tell him people could see us, but he was lost in thought.

"Strange?"

"Empowered...like he shaves off pieces of

knowledge a little at a time, as much as he thinks I can handle, and sprinkles them over me...”

I smiled. Kimo had that effect on people.

Koa fell in love with the house I leased from the second he saw it. He was an enormous help as I finished packing for the move. We took my stuff to the new house early Saturday morning in one of my work trucks, then he took the truck on his own to the mystery residence where he'd been staying and came back with his belongings late afternoon.

We put his futon, his clothes and other personal items in the second bedroom. Should anybody care to look, it appeared lived in, but his focus was on our room. We ate dinner in bed Saturday night, and when we woke up Sunday morning I suggested we have fun buying some new things. We went to the new Ikea store and apologized to the gods and goddesses of our islands for throwing money into foreign pockets.

Then we both went mad in that store. We bought sheets, towels, dishes, glasses, candles, vases, mountains of chocolate and coffee, and *Koa* wanted a Princess Cake. Then we went to Safeway and bought vegetables and fish. It galled me to spend money on vegetables when nothing would taste half as good as the things I'd grown in my just-vacated garden.

At home, we threw open all our windows,

played *Iz* on the I-Pod sound stage and unpacked our new purchases.

“I miss our vegetable garden,” I grumbled and Koa held me in his arms in a comforting way.

“We’ll grow another one. I’ve got a good feeling about this place. We’re going to be here a long, long time.”

Koa made it all fun. We dressed up our room with coconut candles and we loved the cool white curtains and crisp new six hundred thread count sheets.

“Wanna test drive ‘em, babe?” he asked as I brewed his lemongrass tea. How could I resist his gorgeous, naked body, stealing up on me in the kitchen? We made love all afternoon Sunday. I could not believe how far we had progressed in such a short space of time. He licked me from head to toe and back again. He proved to be the most affectionate lover I’d ever had. I had no idea where it came from, because he hadn’t displayed this sort of intimacy before, but when his mouth moved to my nipples and suckled hungrily on them, I felt the rush shoot right through me.

Koa emerged that day as a world-class cuddler. It made me so happy to be with somebody who was opening up more and more and yes, we fucked, but it was the first time I felt like we’d made love. We spent the last gasp of sunset lying naked in bed, totally blissed-out in our new

mountaintop home.

In the morning, I knew he was nervous about resuming training. We wanted to go for a good, long run, so I surprised him in bed very early with tea, scrambled egg whites and chicken and a new topographical map, which we pored over, finding new and intricate trails to run and hike.

"*Manalo*...I love how free we can be now we don't have neighbors. I've never gotten such a kick out of watching somebody walking around naked before."

"You can have me after our run."

After a fantastic run, however, we didn't get a chance to fool around. We'd ordered a regulation size, eighteen foot boxing ring and it, and all the training equipment we'd rented, arrived as we came back from our run. We set it up in the garage and when *Koa's* trainer Smoke, his son Brian who was going to continue his own training here, and two sparring partners arrived, I think they were pleasantly surprised.

"Beats that stinky gym." Smoke grinned. "This is some set-up." He glanced at his son. "Now he can really say he's been to training camp—and with the next world champion no less."

And then *Manu Lanoit* showed up. A small, wiry Filipino, he had a sweet smile but still had a fighter's body. Something in his demeanor begged respect, especially when he produced his odd

training equipment. Wooden blocks, scarves and his own intense instruction.

"I don't believe in long rounds of sparring," he told *Koa* as he set up the blocks in ranging sizes on the floor for press-ups. "Punches are not marshmallows and they're not candies. They go in, but they don't come out again."

Smoke eyed him like a cranky carpet snake but even he was impressed by *Manu's* training system. We watched *Koa* doing complicated and apparently painful resistance exercises until *Koa* whined.

"Do you make *Kimo* and *Lopaka* do this?"

"Oh, yes. They do them all. They're my best pupils."

"How do they cope?" *Koa* collapsed on the floor.

"They kiss each other. A lot." For a moment, *Manu's* expression looked pained and the training room broke up with laughter.

"Well, *Koa* just broke up with his old lady so he'll just have to pretend," Smoke grinned. "Hey, you mind working Brian a little?"

"Go for it," *Koa* grinned. We traded glances and *Manu* nudged him back to work.

"*Lopaka* does a hundred of these pushups on the stairs at a time," he told *Koa*.

"I don't believe you," *Koa* gasped, tears streaming down his cheeks.

“You oughtta see their show some time, before it closes. Matter of fact, I’m gonna talk to them about it.”

Manu blended well into *Koa’s* training camp. I made a big, beautiful lunch for everybody. Salmon, salad, pasta (for everybody except Brian who was on soup only) and I could tell my man appreciated my efforts. A couple of times, I caught him looking at me and I knew he was longing to hug me. It made me feel good as I gathered up the dishes, watching him go back to bust his balls in the garage.

At the end of the day’s session, he cornered me in the kitchen. “I liked knowing you were in here. I’ve been working my ass off out there. Now I’m gonna work *your* ass off in here.”

He whipped my belt from my trousers and bound my hands behind me. My dick was already hard. I’d never gone in for any type of aggressive sex play but here I was, alone in the wilderness with a rutting, fucking, boxing champion who, in three movements, was inside me, the unexpected attack sending a blistering pain, coupled with an intense sexual heat through me. Pain gave way to delirium, my head resting on the kitchen sink as he battered my ass with his huge, hungry cock.

“You like the butter I make?” he held my hips to keep me exactly where he wanted me.

“Oh...yeah.”

"I can make babies with this butter." His fingers moving around to my cock. I gasped as his fingers gripped just the head. He slammed into me one more time and I felt him coming, the wave of pleasure engulfing me, making me explode all over his insistent fingers.

"That's it baby. That's it. Oh, I love fucking you."

Koa and I fell to the floor, grasping, licking and sucking at each other. I'd never wanted anyone so much.

"I can't come again today, *Manalo*. I'm only allowed to come once a day now. Until the fight is over."

"Okay." I hoped my grief wasn't evident.

"I'm not going anywhere. My ass belongs to you. I just gotta share it with *Petrenko* for a while. Soon as he's done spankin' it, it belongs to you again."

The following Sunday, *Manu* called us. "I got us tickets to see *Pele*, the show *Kimo* and *Lopaka* are doing." We swung by his house, picked up *Manu* and his wife *Jinky*, heading for a double date to the *Blaisdell Center*, where the show was enjoying its last two weeks.

The matinee session at three was the only one for the day and there was a bright, happy atmosphere in the theater.

"I'm taking us all to dinner," I told *Manu* and he gave me a bright smile. I quickly called my favorite restaurant *Hoku's* from my cell phone as *Koa* studied the massive photographs of *Kimo*, and a stunning black-haired woman who was playing *Pele* adorning the walls.

"Wow." *Koa* stared at a photo of *Kimo* in a red *malo*, or loin cloth, his body rippling with lean, well defined muscles.

The show was spectacular. *Koa* was intrigued by the outpouring of love *Kimo* received and I was surprised by how erotically-charged the *hula* dancing was. But this was not *hula* by numbers. It was nothing like the tripe trotted out at hotel *luaus* all over the islands. This was a spiritual experience, an expression of ecstasy, of tribal pride that kept the audience completely spellbound for two and a half hours.

Kimo and *Lopaka* had staged theatrical magic, and when *Lopaka* came spinning down from the ceiling upside down on an invisible wire he held with his legs, *Manu* jumped up and cheered, making the rest of the audience go wild.

Lopaka, doing his thing mid-air, managed to stay focused, but *Kimo* started to pace, his eyes fixed on his husband. For the first time during the entire performance, his attention was not on the fire goddess he was supposed to love, but the astonishing, riveting man dancing high above

him.

"Wow," *Koa* whispered. "That is just awesome."

Kimo couldn't seem to relax until that air dance was over. With the crowd's tumultuous applause in his ears, *Lopaka* flew off to the rafters and *Kimo's* attention returned to the temptress before him. It was a wonderful show that made me proud to be *Hawaiian*. At the end of it, when *Kimo* and *Lopaka* took their bows, their embrace seemed spontaneous, earning more applause from the crowd.

"Follow me." *Manu* was running and we had to hurry to keep up with him and his perky wife as we pushed through the crowd and fought our way backstage.

Two burly security guards greeted us. "Hey *Manu*, they're expecting you." One of the guys stretched out a big paw to *Koa* as we passed by. "Hey champ, good luck in Vegas."

"Thank you," *Koa* grinned.

We worked our way to the dressing room the *Wilders* shared, and *Kimo* greeted us. He had changed into a pair of trousers and a dress shirt. He accepted our good wishes, urging us to take a seat. "My wife is up to something. He just told me to get showered and get into these clothes. Tomorrow's our night off...I wonder what he's up to. Think he might be planning a little trip?"

"I'm sworn to secrecy," a tall woman chuckled, walking into the dressing room with a baby in her arms. She was a magnificent *Hawaiian* woman who had to be Kimo's mother, judging by the even taller man behind her, also carrying a baby. The man was an older replica of Kimo, and I guessed the babies to be Kimo and *Lopaka's* twins.

"What are you doing here with the babies?" Kimo asked as toddler Kimo darted around, looking for *Lopaka*.

Kimo's mother and father told him to kiss the babies. He did as he was told, but looked mystified. "Aren't we going home?"

The door to the bathroom opened and *Lopaka* came out. Kimo's whole face changed as *Lopaka* walked toward him wearing the most beautiful *tapa* cloth I had ever seen, a stunning piece he wore as a *pireau*, tied around his waist. His *Tutu* followed him, holding Little Kimo in her arms, smiling in an indulgent way.

Kimo was mute as *Lopaka* walked to him, the whole room now fell silent.

"Do you know what today is?" *Lopaka* asked him.

Kimo's eyes never left *Lopaka's* face as he shook his head. "I know it's not our wedding anniversary...but I do know this is what you wore the day we got married."

Lopaka dropped to his knees, between Kimo's

legs. He was very emotional when he spoke. "Do you remember where we went for our first date? Our first official date?"

Kimo's eyes filled with tears. "Of course I remember."

"Today is the anniversary of that date."

Kimo didn't speak. He seemed to fight to get his emotions under control.

"That was the first night you told me that you loved me."

"No. I told you many times before that," Kimo insisted. "In my head. You just hadn't learned how to hear my thoughts yet."

"But you remember that night."

"How can I forget the day I got my first fruit squeeze?" Kimo asked him, and though his words seemed playful, the emotion was raw. *Lopaka's* hands were on his face now, wiping the tears from Kimo's eyes, though I could see he too was crying.

"I've...arranged for us to go back there. Tonight."

"Is it still there?" Kimo sounded surprised.

"Yes...and no."

"What does that mean?" Kimo was smiling now.

"The tree house is still there but it's closed for business."

I had no idea what they were talking about. *Koa* looked at me and I shrugged.

"But the property is...was supposed to be developed."

"We can't let that happen." Merriment invaded the emotion in Kimo's eyes. "It's our sacred space."

"Which is why I bought it for you...for us." He handed Kimo a piece of paper. "Happy anniversary, darling."

Kimo took the paper and shock rendered him speechless again. "But..."

"There is a car right outside the stage door waiting to take us to the airport. *Tutu* and I prepared the exact same meal you organized for us on our first official date..."

"Oh, how romantic!" Jinky breathed.

"The whole meal?" Kimo asked.

Lopaka nodded. "The two women we trust most in the world will take care of all our babies tonight, and in the morning they'll come and join us. Tomorrow's our night off, so I figured we could give *Tutu* and Sammy and your parents the gift of the experience of a date in that tree house and we'll be with our children. There's a lovely house on that property. But tonight, I need some time alone with you, Kimo."

"We get to spend the *whole* night together in that tree house?" *Lopaka* nodded. "We only got a few hours last time. Looks like you've thought of everything. Except..."

"Except what?" *Lopaka* said.

"I took you in *Tutu's* truck to the tree house."

"And you can take me back in it. It's parked at *Hilo* airport, waiting for us. The keys are in the picnic basket."

"Stand up," *Kimo* ordered.

Lopaka stood before him. *Kimo* licked his lips. "Are you naked under this *pireau*?"

"I'm wearing the *malo* cloth I wore on our wedding night."

Kimo made a strange sound in his throat. He moved forward, hoisting *Lopaka* over his shoulder and getting to his feet in one movement.

"Give me that picnic basket," he said to *Tutu*. "Say goodbye to everybody, *Lopaka*."

"Goodbye to everybody," *Lopaka* giggled, and *Kimo* swept out the door with him.

"Woah," *Koa* said, and everybody laughed.

"What's a fruit squeeze?" *Manu* asked.

"I have no idea," I grinned. "But I'm dying to find out."

Koa, *Manu*, *Jinky* and I wandered out of the theater, our thoughts moving along similar lines.

"I never saw such love in a couple, gay or straight," *Koa* sighed. His voice dropped to a whisper. "I really need to fuck you now."

"Well, can it wait just a little bit? I have something special planned."

"Really, what?"

“You’ll see.”

I ushered everybody down to the *Kahala* Hilton, which was very close to the theater. As we walked along the sweeping driveway, we could feel its soothing, elegant energy permeating our pores. It had been one of my favorite restaurants when my lover Michael was alive. I hadn’t been here since. It was time to kiss some ghosts goodbye.

“Oh, it’s beautiful,” *Koa* and *Jinky* said in unison when we walked into the beachfront restaurant, *Hoku’s*. It was quite simply one of the best kept secrets on the island. Very elegant, but not ostentatious (a rare and beautiful thing to pull off), the waves rolled practically up to our windows as we perused our menus at an outside table.

Sunset was deepening and we’d ordered a round of cocktails, putting all of us in very happy moods.

“I took the liberty of ordering ahead,” I said. “Think of it as a celebration and the last time until the fight is over that *Koa* can eat like a king.”

His eyes drank in the duck ravioli as it arrived in a bowl with dried carrot shavings which became noodles when our waiter poured Chinese five-spiced, hot duck broth over the dish.

“This is amazing,” *Manu* said. “In the Philippines, where I am from, we have a very similar dish.”

Next we had rack of lamb prepared *en croûte*, which was carved at our table.

"I just died and went to heaven, that's all," *Koa* said. He and I had switched to mineral water after one cocktail. *Manu* and *Jinky* were drinking red wine.

"Wait until you see dessert," I grinned. I almost fainted when I overheard waiters telling other diners that they had sold out of melting chocolate cake.

"Please tell me you ordered that ahead. Please tell me I'm not going to have to go to bed dreaming of chocolate cake I couldn't have," *Koa* said and I just gave him a smug smile.

Of course I'd ordered it ahead, and other diners turned and glared when they saw the steam rising off our plates as the waiter scooped homemade espresso ice cream into our cakes.

"That was amazing, just amazing." *Koa* lunged for the check, but I beat him to it."

"I have one more small surprise," I told them, and we went to the lagoon to watch the family of five dolphins frolicking in their safe habitat. One was playing with his soccer ball. He was like a kid with fins. He caught our attention, gave us a joyous cry and swam off with his toy, making us all laugh.

"Thank you." *Koa* touched my hand in an unobtrusive way in the front seat on our way

home. *Manu* and *Jinky* thanked us profusely when we dropped them off and *Koa* snatched my hand the rest of the way.

We were very anxious for each other now and we raced inside to our own variation of a tree house.

"Find out from *Lopaka* what a fruit squeeze is."

"I will." I pulled down his black Calvin briefs, my mouth going straight to his lonely-looking cock, just begging for company. I put good, long, succulent kisses up and down its length and felt him getting irritable with me. He wanted it in my mouth. "Now, I may not know what a fruit squeeze is yet, but I do know a few tricks. Are you comfortable?"

"Sure," he said, lying down on the bed.

"I want you to watch. Half the pleasure is for you to watch what I'm doing to you."

"What are you going to do?" His voice was husky, excited.

"I'm going to give you a blow job you're never going to forget. This is not a blowjob I can probably do again until after training's finished, since I'm about to blow your mind, but honey, you ever heard of a *Pig in Paradise*?"

"No, not that I can remember." His smile was lazy...dazzling. He was one hot man, all right.

"Stay there."

In my linen closet, I fumbled for a bag of

goodies I'd snagged at a friend's bridal shower. A woman had come to the party and taught us all state of the art blowjob techniques. I'd bought just about everything, held onto it for two years and now I was about to give my purchases a test run. *Finally.*

So many delicious toys, which one to try out on him first? Well, I'd said *Pig in Paradise*, might as well do it. I took out the tube canister and shoved everything else back in the closet.

"What's going on? What took you so long?" He was pouting like a sexy magazine model. "What's that?"

I opened the canister and out tumbled the rope of pearls. I took one end in my left hand, the other in my right.

"Think you're ready for it?" I snapped the strand tight.

He nodded, staring at the pearls, too excited to speak.

I got between his legs and started licking his cock head. I made eye contact with him as I took the whole head in my mouth and he moaned.

"Go deeper, baby...*please.*"

I ignored him, taking my time, making sure he was good and wet before I gave him that distinct pleasure. I licked to the base of his cock, then let my mouth follow, keeping it tight around his cock. When I took him down my throat, he started

going crazy on the bed. I took the pearls and slipped them around his cock and balls and wound them around once, twice, three times, as my mouth came back up his pole.

“Oh...*Manalo*...that feels...incredible.”

I used the pearls to move up his cock as my mouth met it in the middle. I let the pearls go around the base, then back around his cock and balls, and then I gave his balls some attention. By the time I'd wrapped the pearls around the base and balls for the fourth time, then tightened my grip, my mouth was sucking like a whirling dervish and his ass shot in the air. He came so hard, he startled me.

“Oh God, Oh God!” Holding my head tight, he battered my throat until I thought he would never stop coming. I kept my grip on the pearls the way I'd been taught, knowing he would still be coming long after he'd stopped gushing. His cock throbbed crazily in my mouth and he fell back on the bed.

“Baby...I'm still coming.” He thrashed on the bed and I marveled at how long his orgasm lasted. I finally took pity on him when he flopped back, a tear escaping the corner of his eye.

I released the bonds on his cock and balls and tongued and kissed everything. He was still rigid when my tongue tip met his cock head.

“You belong to this cock, *Manalo*,” he

whispered.

“I know.” I put the pearls on the night stand and took him in my arms. His heart beat was erratic, like he’d just run twelve miles. *Rode hard and put away wet.*

“Only a man knows,” he whispered, giving me a sultry kiss. “That’s some moves you got there. Got anymore like it?”

“Oh yes.” He wrapped himself tighter around me. “I’m just getting started on you.”

He smiled into my neck, gave me a soft, sweet kiss and fell asleep, his head on my chest. I smiled all night until his steady breathing, like an ancient sea chant on the wind, sent me into a deep sleep.

Chapter Five

In the coming days, *Koa* never mentioned again having me come to Las Vegas and stuck to his word about one orgasm a day. He was so crazy about the pearls, that they became the thing I did to him over the next two nights, his orgasms incredibly intense once I'd mastered how much he could take from the binding, lasting up to five minutes. I didn't care about him reciprocating. I wanted to please him.

I continued to dutifully cook healthy meals three times a day, managing my work life from home. A few days later, two weeks before the fight, *Manu* called me. I was surprised to hear from him.

"Look, I'll be blunt, because I respect you and because I believe you have *Koa's* best interests at heart."

"Hit me, *Manu*."

"You have to stop having sex with him. He cannot bang and box. I know he's smitten...well,

you're both smitten. You make him happy and that makes me happy, but happy is very bad for business."

"I understand."

"He promised me he would stop, but I know he's an insecure guy. There isn't a fighter alive who isn't. He's afraid of you leaving him, afraid of losing what he has with you. Please don't tell him I told you all of this, but he has to stop with the hanky-panky. It's important."

That night, *Koa* too, got a call from *Manu* on his phone and I could hear his heated end of the conversation. He came into the kitchen while I was preparing dinner.

"I can't have anymore sex until the fight was over." He said this with the tone of a man informing me he had terminal cancer.

"It's okay, sweetheart. I understand."

"I'm going to sleep in my own bed."

"You are?"

"I am."

That was hard for me, but I said I understood. Ten minutes later, I was knocking on his door like a lovesick fool. There was no answer. I turned the door handle and a strange, musty smell hit my nostrils. I was surprised to find he wasn't there. Shocked, I closed the door again. I checked around the house, even outside. He was nowhere to be found. Stumped, I returned to my room...our

room, and got back into bed. I got up again to get a glass of water and was amazed to see him coming out of his room.

“What are you doing?”

I looked at the door of his room and wanted to ask where he’d been, but I felt foolish.

“Just getting a glass of water.”

“Can you get me one too, *Manalo*? I don’t want to sleep alone. If I come back to our bed, do you promise to leave me alone?”

What an ego. “I’ll do my best.”

When I was back in our bed again, he took the glasses out of my hands and kissed me, his mouth moving down my chest.

“No go dere, *Koa*.”

“I can look, but not touch?” His eyes raked over my naked body.

“Yeah.”

“But nobody else can touch, either, right?” His eyes held a fierce light as I got into bed beside him, feeling oddly self-conscious.

“Nobody else can touch me.” I felt giddy that he was so possessive. It felt weird not touching him. We were always in bed hugging, kissing, licking...*Koa* and his world-class snuggling. Would I really be able to keep my hands to myself?

“I need to know you’re not going anywhere, *Manalo*.”

“No, I’m not going anywhere. I’m right where I want to be.”

“Why are you still single?” he suddenly asked.

Still single? Here I was, thinking I was happily *a deux* with *Koa*. Was he doing the *go away, come close* routine again?

I propped myself against a couple of pillows and sipped my water. “What about you?”

He shrugged. “I never saw myself as being the type to settle down with one person. I admit, you’ve...confused me. We’re...unbelievably compatible. The sex is through the roof and I *never* get tired of talking to you. I’m just wondering how it is that, until I came along, you were all alone?”

Before I could respond, he said, “I know it was a long time between drinks for you. The first day I was in your house...the other one, I went through your bathroom cabinets...I hunted through everything. I couldn’t find evidence of another man, not a recent man anyway. Then I saw a photo of you with a guy. It looked old, though.”

It infuriated me to think he’d gone through my belongings. So much so, that I couldn’t say anything at first.

“Who was he?”

“Somebody I loved...very much.”

“What happened to him?”

I started to cry, hot, painful tears and *Koa* lay there on one elbow, just watching me. I swiped at

my tears.

"You must still have a thing for this guy to have this kind of reaction." *Koa's* tone was chilly.

"Some days I can talk about him, some days I can't. Today is one of the *can't* days."

"Can't or won't?" He was determined to draw blood. "What happened? Did he leave you for somebody else?"

"No. He died."

That seemed to surprise him. He sat up, that odd, icy detachment gone. "He died? When?"

"Three years ago."

"And you're still crying over him?"

I steadied myself. I wanted to deck him, but I was mindful that he was a professional boxing champion. He could beat me to death with two fingers.

"So, what was, it, AIDS? 'Cos you know, we haven't been having safe sex here and I got a whole heap of tests to take in Vegas."

"It wasn't AIDS." I felt like he was sucker-punching me all over the place.

"So what was it then?"

"He was murdered."

Koa's mean veneer vanished. "*Murdered?*"

"Yeah. It was bad, *Koa*. I can't talk about it right now. But he died on my arms. You...you don't forget a thing like that."

"And there's been no one since?"

"No. Just because a relationship's gone, you don't stop loving that person. You still have all that love, you just don't know where the hell to put it." I shook my head. "Up there in heaven, somewhere, Michael's probably having a cocktail party knowing I've finally met somebody great."

"You haven't been with anybody since him?"

"Well you know...a couple of dates. That's all."

"Anyone we know?"

"No." I looked at him curiously. "Why do you ask?"

"So there's no truth to Smoke's claims that you tried to seduce his kid, Brian?"

I was so shocked, I couldn't speak.

Koa shrugged. "Had to ask. Half the guys in the gym claim you've given them blowjobs, or tried to, anyway."

"Oh...oh." The pain of the unfairness of it engulfed me. Not only was it not true, I couldn't believe anyone could be so cruel. I got out of bed. "Excuse me." I padded out of the bedroom, into the living room, picked up the throw I'd used for so many years to sleep on the old *lanai*. It wasn't the same here. I couldn't feel Michael anymore. That extra padding, my memories, was gone. Until that moment, I hadn't felt it. Now I just wanted to run and hide.

I went outside, tiptoed around to the front of the house, got into my car, which was in the

driveway and quietly unlocked the back door. I got in, settling on the floor, covering myself with the throw. I lay there, distraught and bewildered...why had *Koa* said such dreadful things to me?

I panicked when I heard him calling me. I was beginning to hate him now. There had been such venom behind his words and I suddenly realized, *he has to hate me so he can go and beat up Wladimir Petrenko.*

Somehow, he found me. "Open this door!" He hammered at the window.

"Leave me alone!"

"If you don't let me in, I'll break the fucking window!"

I didn't doubt he would do that, so I hastily and unhappily let him in.

Koa fell all over me. "I'm sorry...I'm sorry...I don't know what's wrong with me. I don't know why I would say things like that to you..."

"It's okay."

"No, it's not. I'm sorry. I...lashed out. I'm furious that I can't have you. I think I'm going crazy." He got on top of me on the floor of the car. I fought to get him off me. I was naked, he was between my legs and the nearness of him always set off a full scale fire in my system.

"No!" I pushed him off me and ran from the car. He followed me, dragging me to the ground. I

pushed him off me but he grabbed my feet.

"I need you. I need you to know how sorry I am. I need you to love me."

"*Koa*...I love you, which is why I can't let you do this. We have to wait."

"You tell me you love me...finally...and you want me to wait?"

He was on top of me now. I was frantic to distract him. "Do you play chess?" He was heavy, very heavy. He could have torn into me in a heartbeat and I wouldn't be able...or to be honest, *willing* to do anything about it

"Chess?" He gaped at me. "What, are you kidding me?"

"*Petrenko* plays chess. All the great boxing champions are masters of it. It's about time I taught you some moves."

Koa loved that I knew something about *Petrenko* that he didn't. We went back into the house and I set up my chess board in the living room.

He grinned. "Now, show me everything."

Koa took to chess very well, wanting to play constantly. We kept the board up and played whenever we could. He was very intelligent, a quality many people do not attribute to boxers, but he, like many others I have known, truly was. So it was no surprise that as he was mastering the art of the ultimate mind game, that those games

began in his own training camp.

Smoke cornered me one morning as I started to clear out a section of my land to build a vegetable garden.

“We don’t need *Manu*.”

“What does any of this have to do with me?” I continued to attack a nasty strand of German ivy, an introduced plant that since 1910 had caused widespread devastation to *Hawaii’s* natural resources. I was following the trail of the long spine I held and was dismayed to find it had taken over my entire hillside.

“You have *Koa’s* ear. He’ll listen to you.”

“I don’t know where you get that idea. Besides, I like *Manu* and I believe he’s very good for *Koa*.” I was disturbed by Smoke’s machinations. “You got a problem, I suggest you take it directly to *Koa*.”

“And here I thought you were a man. What, Michael took your balls with him to his grave?” Smoke was lucky I didn’t strangle him with the ivy.

“Get lost.” I stalked off into the forest of *o’hia* trees that I hated to see choking with the insidious ivy. I was shaking with fury. How dare he talk to me like that? I knew Smoke was trying to get rid of the one person he could not control. I needed to be very careful and stay completely out of the training zone. Poor *Koa*, there was treachery everywhere for him, in and out of the ring.

I had no idea if he had overheard this conversation, but the next day, when I started work on planting, I overheard a conversation between Smoke and *Koa*. I had structured the area for growth out back by the garage and was planting a big selection of avocados, peas, beans, tomatoes, eggplants, squash, purple, white and green asparagus and carrots. I sat back against the garage wall, drinking water. It was an unusually warm day, the mountains usually tended to stay cool. I was about to get back to work when I overheard *Koa*.

“Smoke, how long you known *Manalo*?”

“Many, many years. We go way back.”

“So you must have known his lover, Michael?”

“Oh, yes, I knew him.”

“Is it true he was murdered?”

“Yes, it’s true.” I heard a catch in Smoke’s voice.

“What happened?”

“Mebbe you should ask *Manalo* these questions. What’s going on with you two, anyway?”

“Nothing. You know me. If I wanted it, he’d, you know...service me. He’s made that real clear. But I ain’t into guys. It’s just...he got upset the other night and told me his lover had been murdered. He wouldn’t say anything more.”

“*Manalo*’s a real private guy.”

“So you don’t know what happened?”

“Of course I know what happened. I was right

there after it happened. I was at the hospital when they told us it was no good. He wasn't going to make it." Smoke was emotional now.

I sat against that wall, unable to move for fear they would hear me, yet I couldn't bear all the details coming out. Not like this. Not now.

"So what happened?"

"Mebbe it's mo' betta you hear it from me. They were having dinner in a restaurant. A real old-style place. They were with *Manalo's* mom and Michael noticed these guys in a van kept circling the car park. He was a *Muay Thai* champion, you know."

"*Manalo* dated a fighter?"

"Not just a fighter. Michael was the best kick boxer I ever saw. He had such talent and he and *Manalo* traveled all through Asia, Japan, Australia, back to the mainland here and he beat everyone.

"He wanted to retire because he felt he was getting old and because his perfect, unbeaten record was important to him. He was a very loving man outside of the ring. He adored *Manalo* and his family. He and *Manalo* wanted to have children, build a business.

"Anyway, they're having dinner and Michael had incredible instincts. He just knew these guys were up to no good. Then these four big guys came in with guns and held the place up."

"Oh my God, they shot him?" *Koa* asked and I

squeezed my eyes shut. The scene in that restaurant still played in my mind. Not as often as it once had, but it could still crucify me.

"No. Michael got *Manalo* and his mother under their table and he went after these guys, single-handedly. I think the element of surprise gave him a slight advantage at the start. He kicked the gun out of one guy's hands and knocked him out, shot two of the others, but the fourth guy shot him twice and ran. They *nevah* did catch that ruthless coward.

"The other three all did time for it, but Michael...they got him to the hospital. One bullet was in his shoulder, the second missed his heart but got his lungs and...he died. I'm so mad that it took four guys to take that man's life. It still riles me that they all lived and he died. It still hurts me. So you can imagine how bad it was for *Manalo*."

There was silence for a moment and I started to crawl away, far away from the house because my overwhelming grief made me want to scream out loud.

"I don't know how he lived through it," I heard Smoke say.

It was something I still couldn't explain myself. By the time I'd composed myself and gone back to the house to prepare dinner, *Koa* had mysteriously chosen to hole himself up in his bedroom.

I knocked at his door. "You want some

dinner?" He didn't respond. I pondered driving to the tree farm to collect some more herbs and seeds and check that the place hadn't been completely consumed by my brother's goats. I tried again. "Koa. I'm going to the farm. Wanna come with?" Again, no response. I shrugged it off and drove away.

"Where you been?" *Kala* and *Keo*, my able assistants asked me. *Kala* was dating my brother *Loki* and I knew anything I told her would get right back to him.

"*Koa's* training out of my new place. I've been helping him. It's only a couple more weeks."

"This sounds like love. Should I be happy?"

I remembered the disparaging way *Koa* had been talking about me to *Smoke*. "Be happy by all means, my darling." I rifled through a stack of phone messages. "But not on my account. I'm helping out a friend, that's all."

She didn't look fooled, but she dropped the subject.

Outside in the parking lot, I piled some plants into the bed of my truck.

"Hey, *Manalo*." *Loki* was ambling toward me, his golden retriever, *Gilligan* on his heels.

"Hey yourself." I knew that *Kala* had probably called him the second I walked out of my office. I was two years older than *Loki*, but we were similar in looks, height, temperament; everything except

that he was straight and I was gay.

“So, how’s *Koa*?”

“He’s great. Doing well with the training.” I patted Gilligan’s sweet head. He had a tough life, herding goats all day.

“Sure you wanna get tangled up with another fighter?” He saw the hurt look on my face. “I’m sorry, *Mana*. It’s just that...” He lifted his hand and dropped it. “*Kala*’s been worried because you’ve, like, dumped your whole life for this guy.”

“I’m helping him out. I’m still on top of things, *Loki*. But thanks for the concern.”

He didn’t say anything. What could he say? He had loved Michael too, and I knew that truly there was a part of him that couldn’t let another man into my life. He couldn’t let go.

I got into the truck. My hands gripped the wheel and my brother opened the door and hugged me.

“If it means anything to you, I love you and I will try to love him. Just tell him...he better be good to you, yeah?”

“Okay,” I took off before the tears started. What was wrong with me? I was emotional these days. Back home, *Koa* came out as he saw the lights of my car. He was pissed.

“Where did you go?”

“To work. They all thought I’d died, it’s been so

long since they've seen me." I unloaded things from the truck and he helped me pull the new plants to the back of the house.

"Why didn't you tell me you were going? I would have come with you."

"I tried. I knocked on your door, a couple of times. You didn't respond."

"Really? Wow...I must have fallen asleep."

"Hey, you want some dinner now?"

"Actually, I already cooked it."

"You did?"

In the living room, he'd set our coffee table with napkins, candles, glasses. Everything for a romantic dinner for two.

"You're constantly surprising me," I grinned as he took me in his arms and kissed me.

The next morning, *Manu* was late arriving, which was unusual for him. I was busy chopping up vegetables for the day's soup and was dimly aware of *Koa* talking on the phone with him. I caught his glance a couple of times, but thought nothing of it. Nothing was a come-on with him these days and I'd learned after last night that even a kiss could get him all worked up.

Then *Manu* arrived and I saw him and Smoke and Brian in the backyard, talking. *Koa* kept looking at me through the kitchen window, often enough that I looked up and he beckoned me

outside.

"There's something we need to discuss, hon. You'd better come out here."

Hon. He had to watch that talk unless he wanted the rumors starting. I put down my knife, dried off my hands and hurried outside. I couldn't imagine what was so important that training had been held up so long.

Koa put his arm around me and everybody had serious looks on their faces.

"*Manu* has something to say to you." I was worried about *Koa's* arm being around me and surreptitiously tried to shrug it off, but he was staunchly holding on to me.

"There's no easy way of saying this." *Manu* looked pale and my God, the man was starting to cry. "I only learned yesterday that you were Michael Gong's life partner. And that...and that...um...that means you're the one who authorized all the transplant donations."

I sucked in my breath. "Yes." *Koa's* arm tightened around me.

"Well I know what it cost you. I know his family no longer speaks to you because of what you did, but from the bottom of my soul, thank you and bless you for what you did for my family. For all the families. You made a difference for six people who owe you so much.

"Because of you, my son Ramon, who received

Michael's corneas, can see again. Thanks to you, my son has a full and wonderful life."

Manu and I were weeping now. I think we all were. And then he said, "Ramon wants to meet you."

"I can't...I don't think..."

And there he was, a young man, staring at me, eyes full of tears. Part of his eyes had been a big part of my life once, and I could only hug Ramon as he cried in my arms and thanked me.

"Thank you for your sacrifice," he whispered, and I just could not respond.

Koa pulled me away and held me then. If anybody had had any doubts as to the nature of our relationship, it was all stripped away when he held me as I cried hard tears.

"It's okay baby. It's okay." He took me back inside the house and sat with me, telling me how proud he was of me.

"I'm sorry you lost his family, baby. But you've got me. We're a family now."

"Good." I was determined to move forward and to get him back into gear. "Now get back to work. I've got soup to make."

It was just before lunch that *Manu* turned up in the kitchen. I was already sick of *Koa* checking up on me throughout the day, but *Manu* said, "I am not here to discuss...personal business."

"Good."

"I am wondering how you knew that *Petrenko* is a chess player."

"I don't think it's any big secret. Besides, I've watched him play."

"You did? Where?"

Smoke and *Koa* were in the kitchen now and I glanced nervously at them.

"In New York."

Nobody spoke, so I turned back to my cooking.

"He doesn't list chess as one of his interests in his official resume," *Manu* persisted and I was beginning to feel sorry now that I had defended him to Smoke.

"I don't know why. He's passionate about it and he's a very good player. I was there. I saw him with my own eyes."

All the men looked at each other.

Koa looked pissed. "Why didn't you tell me this?"

"I didn't think it was relevant. Actually, his passion is chess boxing. He's a master at it."

"*Chess boxing?*" *Manu's* laughter was explosive. "Now I've heard everything."

The guys laughed themselves silly.

"It's a big sport in Russia," I said. "One round boxing, one round chess. Their motto is they win *by hook or by rook*. Michael loved the sport. There was a kind of underground tournament in a Russian nightclub in Brighton Beach four years

ago, long before *Petrenko* became champion. There's a big community of Russian immigrants there and we...he took part in this one match."

"You said we," *Koa's* tone was accusatory.

"You're not kidding with this thing." *Manu* sounded surprised.

"Of course I'm not kidding. My brother *Loki* went with us and he taped the whole card."

"You have it on tape?" *Manu* was incredulous.

"Yes. We taped it so we could watch it later and see how *Michael* looked. We were thinking of promoting chess boxing here in *Hawaii* and using *Michael* as the draw. *Petrenko* was on the card. I think he's on the tape and if I'm right, there's something you should see. Something else you might not read in the mainstream boxing media..."

"What's that?" *Manu* asked.

"He's deathly afraid of southpaws."

Chapter Six

It took me an hour to locate the tape and the entire camp fell into a hushed silence, watching it over lunch. *Koa's* face was practically on the screen when he saw Michael enter the ring, me right beside him holding the spit bucket.

"Christ babe, you were his corner man?" *Koa* looked at me. "I'm so jealous."

"I knew you two were bumping uglies." Smoke slapped his knee.

"There is no part of *Manalo's* person that is ugly, thank you very much," *Koa* sniffed. "Every inch of him is damned beautiful."

"If you say so." Smoke laughed. The kidding around that followed broke the tension that had enveloped us all.

"Look at that crowd," *Manu* said.

"I know, right?" I grinned. "It was packed. Couples, families, children. Notice the chess board is set up to the side of the ring on a raised platform so everyone can watch. They set up screens for the chess rounds. The fans go nuts over

the chess, just like they do the boxing.”

“How long are the rounds?” *Koa* asked.

“Same as regular boxing. Three minutes apiece.”

“And you have one minute rounds between them?”

“Yep, so I could patch him up and send him back into battle.”

“You were his cut man?” *Koa* was incredulous.

“Yes. The only difference in chess boxing is that the gloves have Velcro tabs and the fighters are not allowed to remove them until they get to the chess board.”

We watched Michael for two rounds of boxing, two rounds of chess and in the fifth round, boxing, he knocked out his opponent with a big right hook, straight down the middle that sent the guy careening into the corner post.

“What a punch!” *Koa* crowed, watching Michael pace from the sheer adrenaline as the referee counted out the opponent who lay prone on the canvas.

“Class act,” *Manu* approved, as Michael covered the ring in a few steps, hunching beside the fallen warrior. “No showboating there.”

“It was a bad knockout,” I agreed. “I got nervous. The ambulance took a long time coming and Michael and I stayed with him until they got there.”

They were watching me ice down the guy's eyes with a can of Endswell.

"Was he okay?" Smoke asked as he watched the opponent straddled and padded onto a stretcher.

"Yeah. They kept him in the hospital for overnight observation. We went after the show to visit him. He was excited because he said he'd never had so much female attention before."

Everybody watched the screen as Michael and I helped to get him out of the ring. A huge Russian guy hovered at the ring steps to keep the crowd back.

"*Petrenko*," Koa breathed. The next fight started and the massive, incredibly hairy *Petrenko* fought a flabby white guy who should have been an easy fight for the big Russian, except for the fact he seemed thrown by the guy's left-handed stance. In boxing, right handers lead with left, their left foot out. It's the opposite with lefties, or southpaws as they are called.

Koa's eyes devoured the action on the screen. "Look how flustered he is dealing with a leftie!"

Manu was consulting *Petrenko's* official boxing record. "No lefties here. I'm surprised the chess boxing stuff hasn't come out, that nobody's mentioned the fight in New York."

"Well, he did chess boxing in Russia for a couple of years, but it has nothing to do with regular boxing. It wasn't a televised fight," I said.

“They allowed us to tape Michael’s fight because of that. No copyright infringement. *Loki* got carried away and covered everything until he ran out of tape.

“Maybe now he’s the world champion, *Petrenko’s* distancing himself from chess boxing. I haven’t paid any attention, to be honest. Besides, *Koa’s* not a southpaw. It wouldn’t be an issue even if somebody remembered that fight.”

They rewound the tape over and over to watch his three rounds of boxing and each time, marveled at how *Petrenko* stumbled against the southpaw, beating him in the end via a check mate in the chess round.

“I can’t believe how exciting it is.” *Manu* turned to me. “You see these guys sweating and bleeding all over the board, but they never break concentration. What was it you put on that cut over Michael’s eyelid? That could have been a very bad cut, but I see no bleeding.”

“Thrombin Topical, combined with Adrenaline. It’s the best coagulant I know of.”

Koa just stared at me. “You know your stuff. Did you get to know *Petrenko*?”

“No. I think he was upset that Michael beat his Russian kid, but that’s boxing. We all know the score.” I left them all to chat excitedly about what they’d just seen and returned to the kitchen to clear up the mess.

Manu walked in with some empty plates. “Just wanted to say thanks.” He leaned against the counter and dropped his voice to a whisper. “Also...I want to thank you for what you did with Smoke the other day. I don’t trust him, *Manalo*. You and I are gonna have our hands full protecting *Koa*.”

His words left icicles of fear permeating my gut.

As one day slipped into the next, *Koa* was restricted in his diet, per *Manu*’s instructions. Five meals a day consisting of soups, salads, very lean fish. No more *fatty* fish, which *Koa* railed at until *Manu* relented and he got back his beloved salmon. No pasta, potato or meat. He wanted *Koa*’s muscles defined, his skin glowing.

Koa looked fantastic, and I noticed that they’d started boxing rounds in the southpaw stance. It would, I knew, remain a state secret between camp members. It would be a marvelous tool to roll out on fight night, especially since *Petrenko* wouldn’t be expecting it, and up until now, *Koa* had never used the southpaw stance in any of his fights.

We all felt more than ever that *Koa* had a new and potentially explosive weapon in his arsenal, even more so considering that he found he liked fighting left-handed. That should have made him

happy. Instead, he became grouchy and touchy, exploding for the smallest reason. I knew lack of sex was one reason, but the change was dramatic. Michael had never behaved this way. Ever. *Koa* spent more and more time alone in the second bedroom. He still slept next to me at night, but we stopped touching and kissing. As the days wore on, there were no niceties at all. We even took our grueling morning runs in frosty silence, though he still wanted me there, because he hated to run alone.

Me, I thought we were doing a bang-up job of keeping our hands off each other, which was why I was stunned when *Manu* stormed into the kitchen one morning, yelling at me.

“You promised me you’d stop screwing him!”

My shocked expression seemed to calm him down. “I don’t even get a kind word anymore. I promise you, there’s not even a warm handshake exchanged between us.”

“Okay, okay...I believe you. Then why’s he so tired?”

I shrugged. “I have no idea, honestly.” I wanted no reason for his crew to remove him from our home. I wanted them to know I was a good influence, that I had *Koa’s* back. I kept cooking for everybody, but he took to screaming at me in front of the others, embarrassing me for no reason. He would storm off to his room, slamming the door. I

never went in there, I never knocked. Instinct told me to leave him alone.

One afternoon, he threw the pot of soup I'd spent hours slow-cooking, out the window.

"I'm so happy." *Manu* helped me mop up the mess as the others took *Koa* on a mountain walk to cool off.

"You are?" I'd become a nervous wreck. Nothing I cooked, did, said, or even *thought* was right anymore. I was humiliated that *Koa* was treating me this way.

"Oh, yes. He's so angry now that he's being denied everything, chocolate, steak, but especially you, he's ready to kill somebody. I'm so happy I want to kiss somebody."

"Don't look at me. I get enough grief around here as it is."

Manu laughed. "Welcome to the joys of professional boxing." His voice dropped. "You are not to take the meanness personally."

"Just answer me one thing." I removed from my bleeding hand a shard of porcelain that came from a bowl, which had crashed to the floor during *Koa's* rampage. "I know how disciplined the Wilders are. Would Kimo ever treat *Lopaka* like this?"

"God no...but it's apples and oranges. Kimo..." His voice turned soft. "No. Kimo would not."

The next day marked ten days until fight night.

Koa had stopped sparring now, but one of his spar mates, Smoke, Brian and *Manu*, were leaving in the morning for Las Vegas. He would spend the last week or so training at the Top Rank gym there and then he'd have a day of rest before the fight.

"How come they weigh you even though there's no weight limit for heavyweights?" I asked him.

"Because they know what weights we perform best at. They know our bodies very well, unfortunately." He was in our bed, but far away from me. He'd even put a series of pillows between us like some nervous virgin on her honeymoon night. *Koa* turned away from me. I missed him so much. I couldn't touch him because he'd bark at me. I couldn't say anything. I had to lend his gorgeous ass to *Wladimir Petrenko* and I knew, in spite of everything, I would be there to help patch it up again when this whole nightmare was over.

At three a.m. the alarm went off. *Koa* got up in the dark, showered, dressed and roughly nudged me awake. I drove him to the airport as he huddled as far away as he could from me in the truck and pretended to sleep. I had no idea if he thought I was going to make a grab for him as I negotiated the tricky mountain road in the middle of the night, but I had enough on my hands, dealing

with getting him to the airport in one piece.

The irony was not lost on me that his fate was literally in my hands. The lights of the city hurt my eyes as we descended into the real world again, and nothing halted our progress down Nimitz Highway. I was afraid to say anything that would send him into a frenzy and, as I took the bottom ramp at *Honolulu* Airport and pulled in front of the *Hawaiian* Airlines terminal, we waited in silence until *Manu* arrived. I saw him, Smoke and Brian get out of the car, watched *Manu* kiss his wife Jinky, as Brian took their bags out of the trunk and he turned, giving me a friendly wave.

Waving back, I saw another woman get out of the back seat. I was astonished to see she was an exact replica of *Lopaka*, *Kimo's* husband. This must have been the sister they'd mentioned. She hugged *Manu* who kissed her cheek and the woman slid into the passenger seat.

How nice, I thought. He didn't want his wife driving home alone.

Manu lifted his hand in our direction and I waved as *Koa* grabbed his suitcase and the suit bag with his ring wear and bolted from the car. He didn't say goodbye.

"Kick some Russian ass," I said. *Koa* stopped. I thought he was going to jump down my throat, but he merely gave me a small nod. But I knew he liked that I said it, and I knew that he liked that I

was letting him be a prick.

Manu gave me a sympathetic smile and I started to drive away. A car horn honked me. It was Jinky. I pulled up beside her and she wound down her window.

“What an ungodly hour!”

“It sure is,” I laughed. It was nice to relax a little, finally.

“My daughter-in-law and I want to go have breakfast. Do you know The Haunt?”

“No, I don’t.”

“My sons co-own it, they’re going to cook us a meal. Why don’t you join us? I hear *Koa* really put you through the ringer these last few weeks, so breakfast is on us.”

It was the nicest thing that happened to me in weeks and I was overcome by her warmth and kindness.

“Thank you. I would love that.” I followed the two women to The Haunt, which turned out to be a bookstore/café in the charming *Manoa* valley town of *Mo’ili’ili*. It wasn’t open yet but the lovely island girl who opened the door and ushered us in enveloped me in a tearful hug.

“Thank you, thank you. I’m Lydia, Ramon’s wife. I am so happy to meet you.”

God, I was going to start crying again. She took my face in her lovely warm hands and we both had to quit crying.

"Come in, come in." She wiped her eyes as Ramon came out, introducing me to his brother Raul.

"Raul's going to join dad in Vegas in a few days, so you'll see him there." This was the first I'd heard in weeks of my going to Vegas. I didn't think I'd be there, but I just nodded.

"Great to meet you, Raul." I smelled the heavenly scent of freshly ground coffee.

"Best coffee for miles," Jinky smiled. "You like eggs, *Portagee* sausage and *da works*?"

"Sounds fantastic to me." *Portagee* was local slang for Portuguese sausage and *da works* was the mandatory two scoops rice and one scoop macaroni salad that came with almost every meal on the islands.

"We haven't met," said the woman who looked like *Lopaka*.

"Oh," Jinky said. "I'm sorry. I just assumed. This is *Maluhia*, I believe you know her twin brother, *Lopaka*."

"I do." I shook her hand. "Boy, you look like him."

"Yes, but I am not as sweet as him," she smiled.

"I find that hard to believe. I've really come to cherish your brother and Kimo."

Her face glowed. "They're amazing men."

I was shocked to learn she'd only met *Lopaka* eighteen months ago. "Now, I wonder how me

and my boys got along. I have twins, you know. Darling boys, but they're at that age...Kimo and *Lopaka*...I don't know. They just have that magic touch with children. They're with them right now, snorkeling."

"So the baby twins I met, oh months ago, a baby boy and girl, are different children?"

"Oh, yes. That's Kimo and *Lopaka's* babies. I was a surrogate for them. Kimo fathered them."

That shocked me.

"You should see your face," she grinned. "Everybody looks that way when they hear that. I got knocked up with a turkey baster."

We laughed over that. "I want more babies," Raul kissed her cheek. "But via the old-fashioned method."

He went back to the kitchen and *Maluhia*, Jinky and I ate breakfast under a banyan tree on the back terrace. I wandered through the book store afterwards. I had my eye on a few books when a cute little blonde with a baby in her arms tumbled through the door with a hot, and I mean *hot*, *Hawaiian* man in tow. He was an *Aloha* Patrol Officer judging by his uniform.

"I wish you wouldn't do this," he grumbled. "I'm going to worry about you all day."

"Darling, Kimo said I would be fine. I'll keep the phone turned on. You can check on us constantly. Now go and protect *Waikiki* and I'll see

you later.”

“All right.” He caught my eye. “Does your wife give you this much trouble?”

I considered the question. “I’m involved with a man and it’s not any easier.”

Aloha Patrol guy laughed. “I’ve discovered that.”

Now, what did he mean by that?

“I’m Katie and this is my husband, *Kahanu*,” the blonde said.

I introduced myself and Jinky said, “*Manalo*’s boyfriend is *Akua Guerrero*, the heavyweight champion.”

Kahanu’s face lit up. “How cool. We’re big fans. Good luck for the fight. He’s going to beat that Russian, I just know it.”

“Thank you.” I was a little uncomfortable by the way Jinky blithely said *Koa* was my boyfriend.

“How’s the training coming along?” *Kahanu* asked me.

“He looks fantastic. I just dropped him at the airport, they’re on their way to Las Vegas right now.”

“*Manu*’s been working with him,” Jinky said proudly.

“I didn’t know that. How come I didn’t know that?” *Kahanu* asked, and I remembered up until now it had been a closely-guarded secret.

“*Kahanu*, sweetheart, I’m worried about you

being late. Now go," Katie said. "Be safe and don't get shot or anything, okay?"

Her words actually made me flinch and I felt Jinky's gaze on my face.

I distracted myself with a productive day at work, heading home very late that night. I spent so much time catching up on paper work it was four a.m. when I actually went left my office. I'd been awake for twenty five hours and I felt really weird. I had not heard from *Koa*, nor did I expect to, really. I wasn't sure where we stood. I had his stuff in my house, but one thing I'd discovered we both had in common was that we did not covet stuff.

As I drove along the highway, night's hold on the sky deepened. I approached the old *Pali*, praying the old lady wouldn't be there. *Hot damn*. There she was. I pulled past her, surprised the car didn't stop. But there she was again. Just around the next bend. Waiting for me.

Now I was really freaked out. "What is it that you want? Why are you doing this to me?" My voice cracked. I wasn't sure I could take anymore crap from anybody. Not the living, most certainly not the dead.

"I need you take me to *Ka'ena*." Her breath was so foul and icy, it almost choked me.

"*Ka'ena*?" Man, that was miles away. I was

already exhausted, both from lack of sleep, a long day's work and finally coming off the emotional *Koa* roller coaster.

"I have people there I need to see. It is very important," the old woman insisted. Miraculously, my car moved forward and we were on our way. We drove in silence for over an hour and I felt night relinquishing her hold on the approaching day.

"Hurry," she whispered as the first shaft of light broke through the cloud's skin. I drove as fast as I could and she would point, this way, that way until finally, in the dead heart of an old logging road, she pointed. "There."

I took the winding road as far as I could.

"*Mahalo nui*. Thank you very much. Many blessings upon you." She got out of the car and I saw her move with astonishing swiftness toward a seemingly impenetrable forest.

And then she vanished.

I tried to convince myself I'd imagined it as I raced home. Despite my exhaustion, sleep eluded me. I had given up so much since *Koa's* training schedule had taken over my home, that I surrendered to wakefulness, brewed some of the wonderful coffee I'd bought at *The Haunt*, showered and dressed for work. I felt lighter, freer without him, and despite *Manu's* words I didn't think I wanted a life with *Koa*.

Something made me go to that second bedroom. When I opened the door, a terrible smell hit me. I also noticed that oddly, just like the previous tenants, *Koa* had moved everything, squeezing it all into one corner of the room. My cell phone's sudden chirping made me jump. I left the room feeling guilty, like I'd invaded *Koa's* space. It was weird. It was my house and he was not there, but something unseen shrieked *Go away!*

I took the call. It was my brother, *Loki*. "How's *Koa* doing over in Vegas?"

"Great," I lied. It hurt more than I cared to admit that I had not heard a word from *Koa*.

"*Manalo*, we got a new shipment of trees."

I felt guilty that my brother had been covering for me and I resolved to take the staff to dinner that night. I treated them all to *Hoku's*. I could tell *Loki* was pleased to be back there. My heart clenched just a little. Bringing *Koa* here had broken my personal taboo on the place Michael and I loved so much. Driving home after the meal, I was apprehensive about the old lady on the *Pali*, but was relieved she wasn't there. At home, being alone felt odd. Despite his bad moods, I'd become accustomed to *Koa's* outsize presence.

Now the place felt...diminished without him. I paced the house, wishing I could call him and check on him, yet not daring to, fearing his wrath. Instead, I focused on several brochures I hadn't

yet looked at for seeds and plants, setting some aside for Kimo and *Lopaka*.

Kimo and *Lopaka*. Would *Koa* and I ever be like that? I shook off my maudlin thoughts and took a long shower, falling into bed. I missed *Koa* so much, I even kept the pillows he'd put between us right where they were. I could pretend he was still on the other side of that flimsy barricade.

I had strange dreams. I heard drums...odd music. Marching...I woke up shaking, certain somebody was in the house. I slipped out of bed and the noise stopped. No, it couldn't have happened like that. The noise had been in my dreams. I looked around, but nothing had been touched.

In the morning, I washed my bed sheets. In my mind, I was turning back to normal. I picked up the phone to call the store to let them know I was not going to be in today. Instead, a voice greeted me.

"Manalo?"

"Lopaka! How was the tree house?"

His laughter was like music. "Oh, I'm still smiling. It was wonderful. Listen, I hope I'm not calling too early, but I've had a message from *Manu*."

My stomach did a back flip. "Everything's okay, isn't it?"

"I believe so." He paused. "There's something

Kimo and I need to talk to you about. Will you be at the store today?"

"Yes." I would now.

"We'll pick you up for lunch at one o'clock."
The line went dead.

At one, I was sorting through some invoices and instinct prodded me to look up. I saw the Wilders' black SUV pull into the parking lot and, reaching for the brochures I had put aside for them, I headed outside. I heard a click, the back door unlocked and I got in. With a sunny grin for me, Kimo, who had the wheel, turned his eyes back to the road.

"I need this." *Lopaka* reached for his right hand.

"Do you now?" Kimo's laughter reached his eyes. He gave *Lopaka* a searing look and we sped down the highway.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"Our place," Kimo said. "*Tutu's* making lunch. We're having lobster, my favorite."

"I don't think I've ever seen you two without one of the children. Where are they?"

"At home," *Lopaka's* voice sounded small.

"We're almost there," Kimo's voice was indulgent. "This, from the man who was keen to spend a whole night away from them."

"But you had fun, right?" I asked.

"Oh yes. I used all my natural...resources to keep *Lopaka* distracted." *Lopaka* and I laughed.

"It's when you're not using those...resources that I get into trouble...when I start to worry."

"*Lopaka*, our children are safe...and happy."

"I know, but I haven't touched them now for..." he looked at the dashboard clock.

"Three hours, seventeen minutes."

"You've been counting too!" *Lopaka* grinned.

"Yes, baby, I've been counting."

We turned off a hilltop street and the car seemed to hang on a precarious precipice.

"You scared of heights?" Kimo asked me.

"No, but there's no road here." Suddenly, we shot down the side of a mountain. Trees, shrubs parted like something out of an old Charlton Heston movie. I could feel bumps and bangs, jolts and jagged edges and then we were hurtling through trees. I clung to the seat in front of me.

"It would be a much smoother ride if I had both hands," Kimo told *Lopaka* as he rubbed his face with his left hand, his other still in *Lopaka's* firm grip.

Look ma, no hands.

"I love the way you drive." *Lopaka* held onto Kimo's hand, kissing it. My face was frozen in a silent scream and Kimo was now giving *Lopaka* a lingering kiss as we hopped, bopped and careened down the hill. We thundered to a stop.

"You okay back there?" Kimo asked, and I remembered to breathe. How the hell was I going

to get home? I was not going to endure another ride with these two ever again.

"You do this with the kids in the car?" I asked, wondering where I'd left my stomach.

"Sure," said Kimo. "You look a bit green. You okay?"

I tried to open the back door.

"Kiddie proofed." Kimo reached back, pressing a point between my left thumb and forefinger. "Better now?"

Actually, I was. A gate swung open and we were on the Wilders' property. Little Kimo came running out of the house.

"My baby!" *Lopaka* shrieked and the doors clicked open. He took off running toward the charging toddler.

Kimo turned and looked at me. "We'll take the normal way back home if you prefer."

"I prefer." I stumbled out on wobbly legs.

Tutu came and greeted us and we all went to the back of the property where a long table had been set, for the various members of the Wilder family. There were a lot of them, too. And a lot of children. I knew the Wilders were running a school and the small assortment of children gave an energetic, funny vibe to the proceedings as the kids laughed and sang and goofed around.

After a wonderful lunch that would have cost a fortune in any fine restaurant on the islands, Kimo

and *Lopaka* showed me around the various buildings that made up the school rooms. I knew my greenhouse was the starting point for many of the plants and herbs here, but I was simply dazzled by the work they had done. Many medicinal plants long gone from the islands had been lovingly coaxed back into existence.

The toxic and potentially hazardous plants were kept in my greenhouse and harvested as needed. I showed them the catalogues and the couple looked through them, telling me they would give me an order in a few days.

We wandered back to the house and Kimo and I sat outside in comfortable chairs, watching the ocean waves crashing far below us.

“How is *Koa*?” he asked me.

“I have no idea. I haven’t heard from him.” My throat constricted. “He wasn’t very nice to me before he left. He was revolting, in fact. I don’t anticipate ever hearing from him again.” The thought of that caused me terrible anguish.

Kimo smiled. “I wouldn’t bet money on that, my friend.” When I didn’t respond, he said, “*Manu* stays in touch with us. They arrived safely. I believe the other side has, however, already begun the mind games.”

I hated to ask what was going on. I hated getting the information third hand.

“Don’t be too hard on him. It’s...not easy being

in his position. He can't speak to anybody. No phone in his room, even his food is being sneaked in from some other place."

"You would never be cruel to *Lopaka*." I couldn't help myself.

"Oh, but I was." He sighed. "You know a little of our history – that I was a married, straight man when I met *Lopaka*."

I nodded.

"Well, I fell in love with him and discovered..." his voice trailed away. "I discovered life. I found true passion and profound pain...and I punished him for it. I pushed him away and I regret to this moment some of the things I did to him." He turned in his seat. "*Lopaka!*"

Lopaka immediately came out of the house with their two babies in his arms. He gave the little girl to Kimo.

"What's her name?" I asked.

"*Pele Kaiulani Maluhia*," Kimo said. "Which all translates to *Pele's* heavenly peace."

"How beautiful. Wow, Kimo, she has your face."

"I know," he laughed. "And our son looks just like *Lopaka*."

Pele looked up at her father with a radiant, gummy smile and *Lopaka* nestled in a seat beside them, with her brother.

"And who's the hot guy you've got there?" I

asked *Lopaka*.

“*Kamohoali’i Lopaka Samuel*,” Kimo said softly.

“Oh! *Kamohoali’i* was *Pele’s* brother, the shark god!” Suddenly I knew these names had been carefully selected. I understood these children were going to be great and powerful *kahuna*, like their father. I understood too, the concern and the grave duty they had to protect these children from harm. In the old days children designated as *kahuna*, or great priests, were raised in total exclusion.

Kimo and *Lopaka* were watching me. They realized in that moment that I knew, and that I cared. And I felt a shift in our friendship...a deepening of our bond.

Little Kimo came out of the house with a huge wedge of pineapple. He held it up to Kimo for a bite and giggled when Kimo pretended to bite his fingers, too. *Lopaka* got a bite next and then the toddler surprised us all.

“My baby,” he said loudly and clearly, kissing *Pele’s* face. When her brother started to fret, Little Kimo turned to him. “No *huhu*, baby. No cry.” He gave him kisses, too. The baby instantly stopped crying and Little Kimo came and crawled into my lap.

“You’ve got three amazing kids.” I laughed as Little Kimo dripped pineapple juice all over me.

Kimo grinned. “Wow, he likes you.”

"Of course he does." I stroked the little blond head. "I'm a swell guy."

All three of us laughed and Little Kimo, who just loved to laugh, also laughed, making us laugh more.

Tutu came out with a dish of *poi* and all three kids perked up. It was adorable to watch Kimo feeding the babies with his fingers.

"So," Kimo said, in a casual way. "When *Koa* calls you and asks you to go to Las Vegas, I expect you to stay in touch with us. We'll be here if you need us." He seemed so certain I'd be joining *Koa*, I accepted his words for what they seemed to be. A prophecy.

"You're not going to be there?"

"Oh, yes, we'll be there. In spirit. The unseen, what is invisible to the eye, is more real than what we believe we are seeing."

After the hair-raising drive I'd experienced with them, I was prepared to believe anything.

"Think you can hold all your darlings at once?" *Lopaka* asked Kimo.

"Will you just get over here?"

I watched as Little Kimo sprang from my lap and Kimo held his entire family in his arms and on his lap.

"This feels so good." Kimo's expression was one of utter bliss. "Ain't love grand?"

Chapter Seven

Four days later *Koa* called me. “I’m at a McDonalds on Las Vegas Boulevard.”

“Are you eating a hamburger?” I gasped.

“You betcha. Double quarter pounder.” He paused. “With cheese. I don’t have my man here, so I gotta get my meat somehow. I heard you took your staff to *our* restaurant, baby. You took ‘em to *Hoku’s*. I am so pissed, I could spit.”

How the heck did he find out about that? “Yeah, well, my man’s in Las Vegas. I gotta get my fun somehow.”

“Yeah well, it bettah not happen again.” I could hear him eating, stuffing that burger down his jaw. “Did you get ‘em melting chocolate cake?”

“Umm...yes.”

“Shit. Then I’m gonna buy me another quarter pounder just for that.”

“Don’t! No more cheese! Baby, you’ve been through so much. Don’t spoil all your hard work now.”

“Will you stay away from that place until I get home?”

“Sure.”

“Will you keep your cock and your ass to yourself?”

“You know I already am.”

He grunted. “Will you come out here?”

“You know I will.”

“I gotta run. I can see *Manu* outside looking for me. I feel so much better now. It’s not the burger. It’s you. You filled me up again. I’ll have an electronic ticket at the airport for you. Don’t plan anything for after the fight. I got a little...love trip organized. Keep your cell phone on.”

That night, Raul, *Manu*’s son called me and said there was a ticket waiting for me at *Hawaiian Airlines*. I would be leaving for Las Vegas a few days later, the day before the weigh-in and two days before the fight. He gave me covert instructions from *Manu*.

“You’re booked in a room with me at the MGM Grand. A key card in your name will be at the check-in desk. Pick up your fight credentials at the media desk outside the Grand Garden Arena at the MGM. The desk is situated beside the Coyote Café and you will need this credential to get into the weigh in.

“*Koa* needs to see your face there. You are not to contact him until after the fight. Any attempt to

call him, I'll send you straight back home. I will call you and arrange to have you moved to his room the day of the fight. After the fight, after the doctors check him over, he's all yours."

He paused. "And don't, whatever you do, lose sight of that credential. Keep it on your person. It is worth more than gold in Las Vegas right now. Do not leave it in your room under *any* circumstances. Keep it on you at *all* times."

Aye aye, captain.

I wrote it all down so I wouldn't forget. *Koa* had evidently booked some trip for us for four days after the fight, but Raul had no further details for me. So I flew to Las Vegas and took a taxi from McCarren Airport to the MGM. Inside that marble maze was the check in desk, main casino floor of the hotel, and a portal to the trams and a host of other hotels. On big screens, I saw endless footage of *Koa* and *Petrenko*.

BAD BLOOD!

That was what they were calling the fight and those two words were everywhere, under every picture of these two men.

I couldn't believe the massive amount of money poured into the campaign. Pennants reading *BAD* and *BLOOD* hung from every available ceiling space.

"The Ghost Warrior meets the White Buffalo in the fight of the year!" a man's voice boomed over

the TV ad, which was constantly playing in the casino and looked like it had been shot somewhere in the desert. Both men stood face to face, or nose to chest. They were making a big deal of the fact that *Petrenko* looked like a giant next to *Koa*, who himself wasn't exactly a midget. The fight was big news and big bucks in Vegas that weekend.

I got the keycard to the room I was sharing with Raul. It was a small shoebox with a picturesque view of the parking garage and lots of construction in the middle distance. The room was dominated by a massive TV. I dumped my bag by the bed that wasn't surrounded by family photos and poked my head into the bathroom.

Now this was luxury. All marble, sunken tubs, gold taps. Pity I wouldn't be spending that much time in it. I raced down to pick up my credential, clutching my confirmation number. My name was checked off at two different security desks, my *Hawaiian* driver's license was scrutinized repeatedly, and I was ushered through a series of hotel rooms where I was photographed and fingerprinted, a grotesque representation of myself laminated onto a huge card with *Koa* and *Petrenko's* faces peering out at me on either side of mine.

They told me to pick the card up in the morning and gave me an orange *BAD BLOOD* press

credential to use in the meantime. I had a long trek to the media room, feeling immediate discomfort from the glares of passing male gamblers who knew exactly what my credential was. I fought the urge to grip it with both hands as it swung from my neck. I was afraid of getting mugged for it. I followed the discreet white cardboard signs, taking the escalators down to the media room since I was officially part of the media and was surprised to be shunted way out to the parking lot to a white-tented area.

Media types from all over the world—a huge number from *Petrenko's* home country of Russia—plowed through a huge spread of bread, bagels and cold cuts and an array of soft drinks. I picked up some of the newspapers of the day, shocked at how derisive the media was being about *Koa*. Two long tables contained photo copies of every single news article and column piece. I grabbed up everything and, with a cup of coffee from the buffet, retreated to my room.

I sorted through the pro-*Koa*, pro-*Petrenko* articles. Though most fighters favored *Koa* as a human being, they felt *Petrenko* was going to win. There was obviously no love lost between the two fighters and the final week's build up to the fight had been acrimonious.

The thing about prize fighting is that it's all head games. I knew that from my years with

Michael. Being ready physically is one thing. Being unprepared mentally, no matter how strong you are physically, will not win you the championship. Boxing is one hundred per cent mental.

I hadn't been reading very long when *Manu* called me. "Talk to him. He doesn't believe you're here."

"Are you here?" *Koa* asked me without any preamble. "I need to see you."

"It's not a good idea," I mumbled. "I'm starving for you. I won't be able to keep my hands off you and I can't be responsible for you losing this fight."

"A kiss won't hurt." I was surprised he was being so sweet. *Kimo's talked to him*, was my first thought. Then I thought, no. He really misses me and the thought made me feel as giddy as a girl, the way *Koa* always made me feel, when he was being *Koa* and not the Ghost Warrior.

"Come to the elevators now," he commanded.

I did, pacing as the floor indicators pinged and elevators whizzed by me. Then one elevator stopped and my heart halted along with it. *Koa* walked out, pulling me into it and with a disapproving *Manu* standing beside us, *Koa* shut the door. He pressed the emergency button and practically swallowed my face with the force of his kisses. We tore at each other's mouths with lips

and tongues.

"Enough. You said one kiss." *Manu* forcibly separated us.

"That *was* one kiss." *Koa* had a sulky look on his face.

"No, that was a tonsillectomy," *Manu* responded.

"Fuck, you are so hot, *Manalo*. I'm gonna make *Wladimir Petrenko* pay for keeping me away from you." *Koa* pulled me to him again.

"Jesus." *Manu* opened the elevator door, pushing me out again.

I floated on a cloud all night, having dinner with Raul at the Studio Café. I didn't care what I ate. We ordered club sandwiches with fries. All I could think about was the kiss in the elevator and I let Raul ramble about how he was missing his new bride, *Maluhia*. Raul told me how she had carried Kimo and *Lopaka's* twin babies.

Though I already knew this, I let him talk.

"When I met her, she had her own twins, *Keli'i* and *Kamaha* and she was pregnant with Kimo's twins. And still, I fell in love with her." He showed me photos of the boys and I realized they had been at the house when I went there for lunch. Raul called them his kids and they called him constantly on the phone during our talk.

"I want a baby with her badly, but the boys need me." He took yet another call from the twins

who had evidently discovered the redial button on their mother's cell phone. "*Maluhia* thinks we should wait at least a year, especially since she seems to make nothing but twins."

He grinned at me. "Did you see the baby twins? Didn't she make gorgeous babies for Kimo and *Lopaka*?"

"Oh, yes, she did. Not to be...rude, but did she have a hard time giving up those babies?"

He laughed. "Oh, no. That was her gift to them. She and *Lopaka* were separated most of their lives. They didn't even know about each other. Discovering him, finding a safe haven with him and Kimo...giving them the gift of life was a precious thing for her. We're the babies' godparents." Raul looked at me. "I never even thought about them as being her children. She didn't even have sex with Kimo. It was all...insemination. And besides, we see the kids all the time. We live right there on the property."

"You do?" I asked, surprised.

"Oh, you didn't know? They built us the most incredible house for a wedding present. Right on this bluff, on our own acreage...just spectacular. I have to say, Kimo and *Lopaka* are tremendous people. Oh by the way, I am going to be on stage for the weigh in tomorrow, but *Lopaka* said you should keep the seat beside you empty."

"Okay," I said, mystified by this strange

request.

The weigh in took place in the Grand Garden Arena, right in the middle of the boxing ring, at eleven a.m. the next day. It was a huge *card*, meaning a huge line-up of fights, twelve in all, and the place became increasingly packed as the two heavyweights came out for their weigh-in.

Koa went first. He arrived with the crew I'd been feeding for a month and he was bedecked in floral *leis* and a *pandanus* crown. He took everything off, dropped his long sweat pants and was wearing tiny white underpants he would never wear in life but which accentuated every last asset on that manly body.

Those pants were so small and so tight, it looked like he had a tree trunk packed into them. One wrong move and his dangly bits wouldn't be contained for very long. I knew exactly what lay underneath those tiny, tighty whities and I found myself smiling as people gasped when he took to the scales.

"*Akua Guerrero!* The Ghost Warrior!" Ring announcer, Michael Buffer, who stood near the scales, intoned into a microphone. I had never been to a weigh-in that was so huge. It was like fight night was here already.

Per *Lopaka's* request, I kept the seat beside me vacant, which was not easy with people

demanding the seat. Next thing I knew, Kimo was sitting beside me. I gaped at him. Where had he come from? He had a strange heat emanating from him and people were starting to notice him. I saw *Koa* visibly relax when Kimo materialized. He never spoke to me, he just stared straight ahead.

I knew what I was seeing now was a part of Kimo. His magical, transporting side. I had heard from somebody that Kimo could do this, but had never seen it. He smiled as *Koa* raised his hands in victory on the scales. I was close enough to hear Keith Kizer, executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, announce his weight as 235 pounds.

Michael Buffer made the official announcement and I applauded along with everyone else, because this had been *Koa's* target weight. He stepped off the scales, took the drink from *Manu's* hands, not his trainer's, and I watched the scowl form on *Smoke's* face.

Then Kimo vanished from his seat.

I stared straight ahead, afraid somebody would start asking me questions. But then there was a roar in the room as *Petrenko* took to the scales. He was bigger, beefier, hairier and uglier if that was at all possible, since I'd last seen him.

Steroids. It had to be. The man titties were a big give away. I wondered if he would be forced to do a drug test if he won. He looked solid and scary,

but *Koa* looked completely unfazed.

He was looking at *Petrenko* and the hatred in his eyes was palpable.

"Two hundred and sixty nine pounds," announced Keith Kizer.

Michael Buffer repeated this for the world at large. My God, the Russian was over thirty pounds heavier than *Koa*, but *Koa* was still staring at him with deep loathing.

Petrenko spat at *Koa's* feet and we almost had a fight on our hands right there.

"*Guerrero's* really pissed," I heard somebody say.

"Yeah well, let's hope he can keep it up," I heard somebody else say and followed it up with a nasty laugh.

Chapter Eight

I slept badly that night. It didn't help that *Maluhia* called all night long and that Raul was rotating shifts with another of his brothers standing guard outside *Koa's* room. Somebody had sent a pair of hookers to his room one time, pizza on another occasion, and the third time somebody knocked and left a noose on the floor outside his door.

The hotel security had moved him each time to a different room.

"Are you his lover?" Raul asked me when he came back at five a.m.

"Yes." I saw no point in lying. *Manu* knew all about us.

"Oh man, he went nuts when he found out we're sharing a room. He wants to rip my dick off. I told him my wife wouldn't appreciate him breaking her playthings." He lay on his bed, throwing an arm across his eyes. "He's very stressed out. I never saw a guy so tight in my life."

There was a pause."

"What?" I prompted.

"My dad says *Koa* has horrible nightmares...screaming about some woman trying to kill him."

"Really?" My thoughts flew to Hardtack and her ferocious beating of *Koa*. I lay awake, miserable about not being able to do anything to help *Koa*.

At nine o'clock, a half-dead Raul returned to the now fifth room *Koa* had been moved to.

"Pack your gear," he told me. "I'll take it with me. If he sees I've got your stuff and he can have you tonight, maybe he'll calm down a bit."

I let him take everything after I showered, changed and brushed my teeth.

My cell phone rang and I heard my man's voice.

"Mmm...I have your stuff," he crooned. "I have your scent on me now. Thank you."

"You're welcome."

"I miss you."

"I miss you too. I'm so proud of you."

He blew a kiss in my ear and hung up.

At two o'clock, I finally picked up my photo credential and I was given a special wrist band to wear to *Koa's* dressing room after the fight.

"I would hide that wristband until you need it," Raul whispered. "You'll get pestered to sell it all

night.”

At the arena, I found the media types wolfing down a disgusting volume of junk food. I picked up a bottle of water and an ice cream out of an odd, kidney-shaped freezer and I went through security, scrutinized by one pair of avid eyes after another, and finally found my way to the main floor and to my seat, about six rows from the front, behind the TV commentators from HBO.

Former heavyweight champion George Foreman, who was going to be an on-air ‘color’ commentator, kept readjusting his bow tie and Jim Lampley, the HBO boxing reporter, sat ringside staring into a hand mirror, plucking out his nose hairs right in front of us.

“That’s disgusting,” said the guy next to me, who turned out to be a reporter from the *Honolulu Advertiser*. *Hawaii* being a small place, was remarkably well represented. My place name said *Manalo Kapanui, Honolulu Fighting Academy*.

“Oh you guys do a great job,” he said.

I had no idea what he was talking about and just said, “Thanks.” It was a long, long afternoon, with the arena mostly empty and many media seats left barren. During the afternoon, more reporters showed up and left laptops on their designated spaces, vanishing to the media room. I left my seat a few times and loaded up on hot dogs, pretzels and coffee and then at eight o’clock,

something crackled in the atmosphere.

The TV coverage was beginning.

Massive overhead monitors came to life, showing us what the worldwide viewing audience was seeing. The quality of the ring card girls improved dramatically. Up until now they were obvious hookers and strippers. On big screens behind us, we saw fighter photos, vital statistics, punch stats, *Koa* walking through the underground tunnel to the arena. He gave a peace sign to the cameras. The crowd went crazy.

Petrenko arrived next and finally at eight fifteen, the main under card was ready to start. The fighters walked into the ring, a young woman sang the Star Spangled Banner and we all stood in glorious silence, applauding her for not murdering that outrageously difficult but beautiful song.

It was the only time anybody in the media row applauded, as it was against the rules for them to show favoritism for any fighter. I'd have to sit on my hands then, once *Koa* stepped into the ring.

"LLLLLLLLleet's get ready to RUMBLE!" Michael Buffer shouted and the crowd went berserk as the main supporting fight began. It was a heavyweight match and it was a great, rousing start to the main event.

I was surprised to be so close to the ring and not be able to hear anything the HBO guys were

saying. I kept turning around to watch playbacks on the big screens between rounds and found that every other person in the arena was doing the exact same thing.

Koa and *Petrenko* were taped in their respective dressing rooms getting ready. We watched them getting their hands wrapped by their corner men and signed by state officials. We watched them warming up, hitting mitts, shadow boxing and then finally, it was the moment we'd all been waiting for.

The crowd was screaming as the theme song for *Hawaii Five-O* blared through the arena. On the overhead screen, I saw *Koa* enter through the tunnel, a black, hooded velvet robe hiding his face as he was escorted by *hula* dancers, gourd drummers and his massive entourage.

They entered the ring and he bounced around, the back of his long robe reading in bold red writing:

AKUA
GHOSTWARRIOR

Smoke got the ring robe off and *Koa* started the pacing that guys all hopped-up do in the ring. I saw his numerous *leis* and I was sorry I hadn't sent him one now, but I'd been afraid of doing anything to get me ejected from the premises.

Petrenko did the Prima Donna thing and made *Koa* wait. And wait. And wait.

Making a fighter wait is an old trick but the oldest ones, unfortunately, work. It not only messes with a fighter's head but cools his body temperature down and the one thing you do not want is a fighter to fight cold.

The tactic backfired here because *Koa* kept dancing, the *hula* Girls and drummers entertaining the crowd and suddenly, *Petrenko* was ready.

He sent a young Russian girl into the ring to belt out a musical number. It had a beat to it, but unfortunately, *Koa* was imitating her, making fun of her goofy, half-crouched stance and the crowd screamed with laughter, even the Russians, who had suddenly invaded the media rows in huge numbers. Security guards had checked our credentials, our photo ID repeatedly throughout the day, now, with so many guys cramming into seats, they were back and a number of wannabes were evicted from the media rows.

Petrenko came into the ring and the young singer gave way to *Who Let The Dogs Out*. That evened the score a little. It's a rousing song for a fight and we were all, indeed, now ready to rumble.

Koa looked magnificent in his black shorts, black boots and black and white mouth guard. *Petrenko* looked weird, yet terrifying in long blue

shorts and knee high white socks and blue boots.

They met in the middle of the ring to receive last minute instructions, Michael Buffer's microphoned arm looped through the referee's arm so we could hear him talking.

"Keep your punches clean, above the belt. I want a good clean, solid fight. Touch 'em up."

Smoke was working at *Koa's* shoulder muscles, keeping him loose, *Petrenko's* trainer just stood there. He had further to reach to get to his fighter's shoulders.

Koa was holding his gloved hand out, but *Petrenko* was acting like a petulant teenager.

"I said touch 'em UP!" the ref bawled and *Petrenko's* touch was more like a big punch. *Koa* blew him a kiss, sending the big Russian into a rage.

The ref had a rough time holding back *Petrenko* who almost got himself disqualified before the fight even started. As the ref and a couple of officials cornered *Petrenko*, *Koa*, wicked man that he was, prowled the ropes, imitating the Russian girl singer again, making the crowd roar with laughter.

Then, it was on. The bell went for the first round and it was an ugly, but beautiful fight from the outset. *Koa* immediately went southpaw, which surprised everybody. A frustrated *Petrenko* had clearly been expecting a different tactic and

floundered, missing every counter shot, catching everything *Koa* threw at him.

He was working *Petrenko* to the body. It wasn't a hard choice – his head was too high, but he was shooting at the ribs and every punch hurt *Petrenko*, because he simply could not block them.

Round one to *Koa*. There was a buzz in the arena, particularly in my section about *Koa's* southpaw tactics.

"He'll just make *Petrenko* madder," somebody said.

"I dunno. *Petrenko's* already mad and he ain't landing shit," came another voice.

Between rounds, *Koa* stood in his corner, rather than sit. It's not a practice I recommend to fighters. I believe those sixty seconds of rest are essential, but he had trained that way and he was ready to jump back in.

"Seconds out," the ref shouted and we were back for round two.

This time, *Koa* went regular, then switched within thirty seconds to southpaw, crouching so that *Petrenko* was swinging and missing. It was thrilling to watch the angles *Koa* was hitting him from, his hand and foot speed confusing the champion who looked flat footed and Neanderthal.

Every time *Koa* was in front of him and he pumped that jab, *Koa* would vanish. It was

beautiful boxing and now the crowd was getting a taste of the Ghost Warrior and why he was known as a spoiler of styles. You could not fight your own style with him. He took it away from you. *Petrenko* lunged at him, connected with a body shot, but got a sharp right hand to the bridge of his nose at the corner of his left eye. In his corner during the break, the Russian was sniffing.

"His nose is broken," I said to nobody in particular and the guy next to me nudged me.

"I was just thinking the same thing. This is some fight, eh?"

It sure was. The third round was devastating for *Petrenko* whose nose dripped blood all over him and *Koa*. *Petrenko's* blue shorts were turning purple and *Koa* was relentless in his attack. He kept intense pressure on his opponent, the man who was the reigning and defending champion. *Petrenko* was starting to cover up in a shell-like posture, in a vain attempt to block punches to his face.

There's a beautiful expression in boxing, when a fighter is taking every single shot aimed at him. And *Petrenko* personified it. *For every punch Koa threw, Patrenko caught a hundred.* He didn't look like he wanted more, but his corner was screaming at him to fight.

In the fourth, *Koa* nailed him with a left hook which grazed *Petrenko's* jaw but made him so mad

he reached out and hit *Koa* right in the nuts.

It was a flagrantly bad foul that cost him a point and had *Koa* on his knees, breathing heavily. *My guys*, I thought. *You just hit my guys!*

Fighters are given five full minutes to recuperate from low blows, and I tell 'em take all the time you need, but *Koa* was angrier than I had ever seen him. He got up within two minutes and I could tell he was in pain, but he indicated he was ready.

He shot out a jab which distracted the Russian, who missed the colossal right cross that immediately followed square on the chin, sending him ass first to the canvas.

Petrenko started to his feet only to fall forward again, head through the ropes, dangling like a broken marionette, with the ref giving him a ten count.

The fight was over.

Koa was the new heavyweight champion of the world!

Chapter Nine

So many people jumped into the ring, it was instant chaos. *Koa* had won and he snatched *Petrenko's* world championship belt out of one of his corner men's hands, raising it high for the fans to see. *Petrenko*, from what little I could see in the ring, was loaded onto a stretcher. The scene on the overhead monitors was as crazy as the ringside action.

Most of the media stampeded out of the arena to the special room designated for the post-fight press conference.

Since the horrible death of Leavander Johnson two years before, the Nevada State Athletic Commission abolished the insensitive practice of letting the fighters, particularly the vanquished ones, be grilled by the media ringside.

Johnson, the International Boxing Federation 130 pound champion, lost his title in a sustained, brutal beating at the hands of Jesus Chavez in a lopsided eleven round battle, stopped by the

referee on a technical knockout.

He appeared to be okay and was taken ringside to talk to the major boxing media. Within minutes, unbelievably, the entire left side of his face suddenly collapsed. He was unable to focus or speak anymore. Dragging his left leg, he tried to walk to his dressing room, but fell to the ground.

Leavander Johnson died four days later, never regaining consciousness.

I knew *Petrenko* would be spared the indignity of the press conference since he had been knocked out. But I also knew that *Koa* had sustained, at best, a couple of punches, so he would be in that post fight *presser* as soon as he was able to manage it.

On screen, I saw him being interviewed for the TV coverage, but I couldn't hear what he was saying.

Raul ran to me. "Come with me to his dressing room."

I gathered my things and followed him through the tunnel. I could hear *Koa* behind me and the entire entourage was excited. He caught my eye, gave me a thumbs up, the championship belt still slung over his shoulder.

A couple of the *hula* dancers were clinging to him, looking up at him adoringly. We all went to the dressing room, but *Manu* and *Smoke* kept most of the people out. The two *hula* girls were

ushered into the more private of the two rooms allocated to *Koa* and he went in with them, shutting the door.

Oh, no, he wouldn't.

But oh, yes. He did.

The sounds of obvious fucking came from that room.

I leaned over to *Manu*. I was calm for some reason. It was an odd, almost surreal experience. It was as if some giant unseen machine slowed my senses down, stopped me from acting like a jerk. It was also strange, since *Koa* had just broken me. I could see the stricken look on people's faces. Their sorrow. One guy was biting his lip, trying not to laugh. It was one of the sparring partners. A man I'd treated like family. I just wanted to go home; I needed to extricate myself from the embarrassing mistake I'd made in coming here in the first place.

"Can you let me into his room so I can get my things?" I asked in a low voice.

Manu looked distressed. "He'll flip out."

"Please, *Manu*." He took pity on me in my true anguish. We left the dressing room and he turned to me, trying to get me to change my mind. "It's all for show." He was obviously worried. "I...I don't know what he'll do if he finds you gone."

Even from out here, we could hear the two women were squealing. It was too much, having to stay here and listen to it.

“He won’t even know I’m gone, *Manu*. He’s got the press conference after this. He’s heavyweight champion of the world. He doesn’t need me anymore.”

“Jesus.” *Manu* closed his eyes. “I’m sorry...I’m sorry he is capable of such...cruelty.”

“Me too.” I followed him out, to the long concourse, eyes downcast as we passed a parade of people anxious for a glimpse of the champ, who in my mind had just become a chump.

I had to get home, and the thought was suddenly, deeply depressing. I didn’t speak to *Manu*, nor he to me as I picked up my bag from the room I’d never set foot in until this moment.

“You don’t want to think about it?”

“What’s to think about?” I stared at the lights of the back lot of the MGM Grand. By day, the view I knew was ugly. By night, the lights transformed it, giving it mystery, magic and illusion. It was all one big lie. “I want to thank you for your generosity, you’ve been very kind.”

Manu nodded, mute. He was a good man, a kind man, and he had no words for me, other than thank you and goodbye.

As I shook his hand, he clasped mine with a firm grip. “He does love you. He just doesn’t know how.”

I nodded stiffly. That was the story of my life. “Thanks again.” I left him alone with the keycard

to the room I'd shared with Raul, the glow of lights, his empathetic sadness for me and the rapid promise of what *Koa's* stardom would mean for him. I had to fight my way through the throngs of people mindlessly jamming their life savings into the endless banks of poker machines.

Somebody was having good luck at craps and I glanced over and saw that it was the Russian kid Michael had knocked out *lo*, so long ago in the chess boxing match. I wondered if he was still hanging out with *Petrenko*, or if he'd just come, like everybody else to the biggest fight in the smallest boxing city in the world.

Outside the MGM, a long line of people waited for taxis. People stared at the fight credential around my neck and I ripped it off with one hand, stuffing it down the zippered compartment of my suitcase.

"I heard the *Hawaiian* guy won the fight," the guy in front of me was saying to the woman next to him. "Too bad he's probably gonna lose it on the rematch."

Rematch.

Koa had done me a favor. I did not want to be in his life for that. I saw him then, on the big overhead screens above the check-in desk and people stopped what they were doing, applauding him. He was dressed in an elegant black suit, white shirt, wearing sunglasses to shield his

imaginary swollen, bruised eyes. I turned my face away as he grinned in a shit-eating way, and I counted the people ahead of me in line. Three. I glanced back at the screen.

Koa was standing at a dais, a bank of microphones in front of him and he was answering questions, looking cocky as he spoke. I couldn't hear his answers, just saw the laughter on people's faces. There was a small group of people clustered around him on the dais—his trainer, *Smoke*, *Manu*, *Raul* and a woman. I shook my head. It was *Hardtack*, the female fighter from the gym. The woman who'd had him beaten up.

"You going to the airport?" the guy ahead of me was asking.

"Yes." I watched *Koa* talking to *Manu* now, covering the microphone nearest him with his hand. *Manu* was shaking his head and I saw *Koa* turn back to the cameras, one finger rubbing the inside of his collar. What was that about?

"You can share with us," the man ahead of me said.

"Great." I saw *Koa* laugh as the cameras threw to a woman in the press conference asking him a question. He pushed his sunglasses further up the bridge of his nose, the knuckles on his right hand looking damaged and bruised.

"Here we go," said the guy in front and I followed him and the woman he was with into the

taxi.

“Nice to get my shoes off.” She wiggled her toes on the floor. “Ah, bliss.” We stopped at a long set of lights and I wished we could get going. I was anxious to be home, back to my island, back to solitude. I glanced to my left and was stunned to see a Seven-Eleven store with a bank of poker machines lined along the inside window. Every single machine that I could see had some glazed-eyed person popping change into it.

At McCarren Airport, just a few blocks from the casino, I paid the driver and got out, feeling disoriented and shaky. More TVs. More *Koa*. I stared at him, wondering what he was saying, when he held up his hands flashing peace signs.

Peace to you too, bro. I wondered what he would do next and I saw Hardtack throwing herself at him. No need to wonder anymore. I knew exactly what he’d be doing next. I moved forward, past the last-chance poker machines and with renewed determination, I stepped up to the *Hawaiian Airlines* counter.

“Is there any chance I can change my ticket for a flight tonight?”

“Well...let’s see. Nope. Our last flight for the day is leaving in ten minutes, but we’re heading to San Francisco, not Los Angeles. You’re on the flight for tomorrow.”

“I need to get out of here tonight. I don’t care

where I have to go.”

Next thing I knew I was being paged over the loud speakers: Attention please, Manny...Mano...Manna...o...Kappy..lani...”

Nobody outside of *Hawaii* ever got my name right. “Please come to the information desk.”

“Isn’t that’s you?” the ground hostess asked me.

“Please,” I whispered. “I just had a bad breakup with somebody. I really, really, really need to get home.”

Something in my voice must have convinced her to help me. “I’ll get you home. I might have to send you on a bit of a wild goose chase, but I’ll get you there.”

“Thank you.” I freaked when I saw *Koa* walking through the doors and marching straight toward me.

I dropped to the floor.

He hadn’t seen me. He walked straight past me, *Manu* and *Raul* in tow, and I stood up again.

“You okay?” the stewardess asked me.

“Yes, fine. Just dropped my contact lens.” It shocked me how easily I came up with that lie. *Koa’s* head swiveled from side to side like *Robo Cop*, looking for me, anger radiating from him in waves I could feel, even from this distance.

It was agony to see him, it would be agony to argue with him, but the woman at the counter was

taking her sweet time organizing my ticket. She tapped her keyboard with one long manicured finger.

"Think you can get to gate six in four minutes?" She handed me my boarding pass.

"Watch me." I snatched it from her hands as *Koa* turned on instinct and saw me. Damn! He ran toward me, letting out a long yell that sounded like a howl and everybody stopped and stared as I bolted, realizing I was going the wrong way and turned, heading the right way as he gained ground.

Shit! Shit! Shit!

He and *Manu* were almost on me and I slipped around an old couple taking a long walk down the departure gates, then I collided with yet another security checkpoint.

Oh, double shit.

Koa and the others surrounded me. "I just fought the fight of my life and you're gonna make me *chase* you?" He was incredulous and I saw blood streaming out of his nose.

His hand went up to it and he looked at the long red streak on his fingers in shock. The blood wouldn't stop. Oh, no. He collapsed on the ground and I was torn between turning my back on him and bending down to take care of him. Like a moron, I chose the latter and as I knelt beside him, *Manu's* fingers closed around my

wrist.

“We need to get an ambulance.”

The Green Valley Hospital was a short drive and we were met there by Dr. Lewis, one of the ringside physicians who apparently urged *Koa* to go to the hospital for a check-up because the NSAC had become panicky following Leavander Johnson’s death.

I was now in possession of the pink insurance form the Commission inspectors had authorized for *Koa* and he was wheeled into the emergency room. His injuries were not as bad as they could have been for such a tough sport.

“Frankly, we see worse injuries in NFL,” the emergency room doctor said. *Koa* had a broken nose, fractured left cheekbone, broken left hand, a ruptured membrane in his nose that had caused the bleeding, two cracked ribs and numerous contusions.

“How did all that happen?” I asked *Manu*. “It didn’t look like he took a beating at all.”

Manu looked really troubled. “Maybe it was the sparring, but he never said anything. I’m telling you, something’s been going on with him the last couple of weeks.”

The doctors told us that *Koa* was peeing blood, had injured his right kidney and his liver, and he screamed if you even touched his hair. He’d been

running on sheer adrenaline since the fight had finished, and finally his body caught up with him.

If this was how the winner looked, I hated to think about what the fight had done to *Petrenko*. The worst injury was *Koa's* broken right hand, an automatic one hundred and eighty day Commission suspension. Six months. Even if I could get Kimo to work his magic on *Koa*, he would be bound by boxing regulations to follow the rules. Six months would give him time to heal, but I knew he would be railing about lost time and lost opportunities.

With time out of the gym, he would virtually have to rebuild himself all over again.

I was allowed to visit him and he smiled through the pain. "Did I give you a scare?" His voice was groggy.

"Yeah, there aren't too many guys who fall at my feet, you know."

He smiled and his eyes closed. I stayed by his bed all night and told the others to go and get some rest. They'd had a rough couple of days. In the morning, *Koa* was released and we flew straight home to *Hawaii*. He slumped in his first class seat, sulking because his hand was in a cast. He hadn't envisioned himself returning home like this. He wanted to step off the plane like Rock Hudson, tall, tan and gorgeous, a radiant toothy-white smile, wanted and loved by men and

women alike.

“They won’t think I’m a champion.”

“You’re being ridiculous. You took and gave your beating like a man. You beat a bigger man. You are the heavyweight champion of the world, *Koa*.”

We arrived on a warm afternoon in *Honolulu* to a carnival-like atmosphere of *hula* girls, music and the media. He had so many beautiful, fresh flower *leis* around his neck from his fans that you could barely see his face.

Manu handed him the championship belt and *Koa* held his head and his belt high, but I could see he was exhausted. He posed for photos, smiled with babies, gave funny quotes and his eyes picked me out in the crowd. I could read every word in them. *Help me*.

“We need to get him home,” I told *Manu*.

“Understood.” He picked up his cell phone. I was not surprised when a black SUV rolled up and *Manu* and Raul bundled him into it. *Koa* turned around, looking for me, but *Manu* was in control. “We need to get you to Kimo. You can talk to *Manalo* later.”

Once again, I was cut out of the picture. I walked over to long term parking, retrieved my car and drove home. Despite my absence, my garden was flourishing. I got into my bed, the covers high over my head. I refused to open my

eyes to anything, even the strange sensation I had again of drumming and chanting, of somebody else being in the house.

I awoke around six in the morning and took a long run in the mountains, showered and made coffee. I went out to the garden and examined all my plants, planning a new attack on the German ivy that would find its way back to my place within days. I tore at pieces of it and then, shucking off my shirt, filled two large garbage bags with the ivy. With each savage hack of my machete, I imagined it was *Koa's* body I was hitting. I was not only depressed about *Koa*, I was depressed that I was depressed. I took a break to find the biggest mug I had, filled it with more coffee and went back outside again.

It was doing my head the world of good to do something physical and positive. I had to fight the urge to run back to bed. At nine o'clock, I was back at the store, first one in, opening up as a young mainland couple pounced on me, looking for tropical plants for their first *Hawaiian* home. I often liked to tell people I am there for every phase of people's lives. We provide *leis*, plants, tree saplings. I navigate them through graduations, weddings, receptions and finally, funerals.

"Hey, how was Vegas, baby?" *Loki* asked, sauntering in just minutes after me. He was

closely followed by his favorite goat, Simon, the most destructive animal I'd ever met.

"Fine."

"How's *Koa* doing?"

"I'm not sure. He had some bad injuries, but the hospital let us bring him home on condition he got follow-up care."

Loki looked stunned. "I didn't think *Petrenko* hit him with much."

"I didn't either."

My brother gave me a long look, but I focused on a pile of paperwork and he thought better of asking me anymore questions. Simon the goat had started work on a plastic watering can and my brother grimaces.

"Sorry."

"That's the least of my problems."

An hour later, I got a phone call. "Hello, *Manalo*?" It was *Lopaka*.

"How are you?"

"Fine, thanks, but we're wondering how *Koa* is."

I was so shocked I couldn't speak. "Isn't he with you?"

"With me?" *Lopaka's* voice sounded faint.

"*Manu* took him from the airport straight to you. I was not allowed to accompany him," I realizing my voice sound wounded.

"We...we are out of town. We haven't been in

touch with *Manu*."

"I see." I didn't really, but the problem wasn't mine anymore. "Well, I would suggest you call *Manu*, I don't have any information for you." I wanted badly to hang up but I could hear *Lopaka* talking to somebody in the background. I knew it had to be *Kimo*.

"What are you doing?" *Lopaka* asked me.

"I'm working."

"You're at the store?"

"Yes."

"We'll be in touch." He ended the call.

Back inside the store, I found myself feeling completely out of sorts. I cleaned shelves, went berserk restacking seed packets and felt the appraising glances of my staff.

"*Aloha*," said a voice and I looked up to see an older *Hawaiian* man with a thatch of white hair staring at me. "Are you *Manalo*?"

"Yes, I am."

The man gave me a glorious smile. "My name is *Sammy*...I am married to *Lopaka's Tutu*. I was just talking to *Lopaka*. You'd better come home with me. *Koa's* kicking up quite a fuss that *Manu* took him home without you. Are you ready? Can you leave right now?"

"*Sammy*, I don't think I can. I don't think I can be with him anymore."

He glanced out the door. "I don't think...I can't

go back without you. If he doesn't behave, Kimo says I have to throw him out. And he does need help."

"But..."

"Whatever your problems, let him apologize. Please."

Why was this so important to Sammy? "How are we getting there?" I asked, suddenly fearful.

"By car." Sammy looked at me like I'd lost my last marble. "The slow way," he whispered when he realized I was in a state of panic now. We left the store and drove, as he promised, the slow way.

"*Lopaka's* plenty pissed at me." Sammy was driving like an old woman whose foot couldn't reach the gas pedal. "We tried not to call him and Kimo and bother him with all this. They got sneaky and called you. I'm glad actually, because now mebbe *Koa* will fly right."

Suddenly I wanted him to speed up. I missed *Koa* terribly, even if he was a cheating ass.

"Step on it, grandpa."

"He's going to be okay."

"I'm glad to hear it."

Sammy floored the pedal. "Sheesh, gay or straight...love ain't easy." We were speeding now, but Sammy's tone remained steady.

"Where did Kimo and *Lopaka* go?"

Sammy's smile had a sadness to it. "*Mau*i. They have a beautiful place there. He wanted to spend

some time alone with *Lopaka* and the kids now the show's finished...you know, unwind. It's killing my wife, though. She misses them terribly. Especially *Lopaka*."

In that moment, Sammy's own suffering was evident. "So...ah...if you don't mind, having your man around a few days is a wonderful distraction for her. I hope you're not in a hurry to go on that trip."

"No." Again with the mysterious trip.

I sat back in Sammy's comfortable seat and wondered what kind of mood *Koa* would be in when I reached him. I thought about Kimo and *Lopaka* and the profound love they had for one another. This was what I wanted with *Koa*. I didn't know if he was capable of coming out of the shadows to embrace a life with me or any man.

"Here we are." Sammy hunched his shoulders, muttered something and a path opened up, once again swallowing itself up as we progressed along the hill to the Wilder estate. No babies and toddlers made for a quiet arrival.

We parked and for a moment, Sammy sat, keys in hand. "Man, I miss those little rugrats real bad. Every day I'm away from the chil'un...is getting tougher. But don't tell my wife I said that."

I found *Tutu* in the kitchen and she rushed over to greet me. She didn't look very happy, but she was preparing a huge tray of food. "*Koa's* out

back, he's sitting up. His ribs are much better."

Thanking her, I slipped outside and turned to steal a look at her. Her beautiful old face had crumpled with tears and my heart went out to her.

"Hi!" I greeted *Koa*, who was moving plastic cups around on the table, like a cranky two year old.

"There's nothing to drink." His scowl almost made me laugh, but I was afraid I'd get booted off the property. I retreated to the kitchen and *Tutu* hastily mopped at her tears.

"You okay?" I asked and the poor lady burst into tears again. I rushed to hug her.

"I miss them so much!" she howled into my chest.

"What's going on? Where's my drink?" *Koa* was in the kitchen, scowling.

"Are you talking to me or *Tutu*?" The old lady wiped at her face with her apron. He quickly left the kitchen.

"Don't tell Sammy," she hiccupped and I went to get her a glass of water. "No. I want some 'awa. I want to get hammered."

We giggled like coconspirators and I slopped the evil amber liquid, homemade *Hawaiian* booze, into two glasses.

"Mmm." She was clearly better after a single shot.

"This is good, *Tutu*. Smooth, tasty." Normally

'*awa* tasted horrible.

"I make it good." She filled another glass almost to the brim. "Give this to Mr. Snarky Pants outside. Tell him lunch is almost ready."

Mr. Snarky Pants. She had *Koa's* number all right.

"What's that?" he barked.

"Drink it."

"It looks like booze."

"Drink it or I'll drink it myself."

"They took my championship belt off me, *Manalo*."

I thought a moment. "But *Koa*, it wasn't yours. It belongs to *Petrenko*. They had to send it back to him. They'll send you your version soon enough."

"But I liked having it. I liked that proof that I am heavyweight champion of the world."

"Well, you can always watch the fight on tape."

"They don't have a TV here." He was getting moodier by the second.

"Have a little drink."

"I love it when you boss me around." He sipped dutifully and a peacefulness came over him that lasted throughout lunch. He ate everything *Tutu* gave him, then he was tired and she settled him on a *pandanus* mat in the living room. He went instantly to sleep.

Taking advantage of the quiet, *Tutu* showed me around the glorious property. It was ten acres of

mountaintop lushness. Stretching over four cliffs, its height and location ensured privacy. A small private dock held a boat and canoe moored at the base of the cliff closest to the house, they were difficult to navigate, she assured me because Kimo and Sammy “gave it one big whammy.”

The *hula* school was closed now until January and the air hummed with the smell of jasmine and the busywork of bees and other insects in the massive, well tended gardens.

“My granddaughter *Maluhia* lives over there.” *Tutu* pointed to a house on another ridge. “She gave Kimo and *Lopaka* the baby twins and they gave her and Raul the land and the house they are on.”

“Did she also mother baby Kimo?” I asked, hoping I wasn’t prying.

“No, his mother is a girl called Nicky. Kimo...well, let’s just say, she has a wife and Kimo agreed, well...*Lopaka* gave permission for Kimo to give her the baby, but she can’t take care of him. Her wife is one big pain in da neck, so Kimo and *Lopaka* have baby Kimo and he doesn’t want da mama now. To him, *Lopaka* is his mama.”

“Does she see him?”

Her expression was fierce. “No. He’s our baby now.”

I slipped my arm around her shoulder. “I didn’t mean to upset you, *Tutu*.”

She sighed. "Dat Nicky was s'pose to come for baby Kimo's birthday and she no show and *Lopaka* cry and cry. My Kimo loves my boy so much, I never see him so upset. And you know what, Kimo puts one big whammy on the place and you no can fo' find it unless you are told to be here."

I noticed she slipped increasingly into local-speak the more distressed she became.

"An' you know, everybody loves it. Parents of little chill'uns feel safe, *Lopaka* and me, we love it, *Maluhia*...everybody loves it. Here, the family is safe, protected. And it is *da kine*...it is good."

I smiled at her. "You're an unusual family."

She laughed then. "Yeah, we one big, happy bunch of weirdoes." Her happy expression faltered. "*Awe*, I miss my *Lopaka*."

Later in the evening, after a mostly sullen day spent feeling sorry for himself, *Koa* submitted to being packed in hot coals and *ti*-leaves and accepted another glass of *'awa*.

"You want to stay in the living room with him, on da sofa dere? Or you want to stay in one bedroom?" *Tutu* asked me.

"I want to be near *Koa*."

He lay there, eyes closed, not saying a word as *Tutu* and I made up a bed for me.

"You no can have hanky panky tonight. Mebbe tomorrow. He just fillin' sorry for himself." She patted my arm as she handed me a clean towel

and a pair of Kimo's long board shorts to sleep in. "I wash your clothes like new for tomorrow."

I took a long shower, put on Kimo's shorts and padded out to the living room. I could hear *Koa's* even breathing and decided he was probably sleeping. Looking at the beautiful head of thick hair, I missed him. It had been an emotionally exhausting few days, and soon I was drifting to sleep, glad to simply be near him. I was so happy to have him to myself even under these circumstances, just the two of us.

"You're very far away from me." He wrestled me back to consciousness. "Are you ever going to...want me again?"

I opened my eyes. In the light of the starry night sky not camouflaged by any window treatments, I saw that he was staring straight up towards the ceiling, not even looking at me.

"Of course I want you, why do you think I'm here? Why do you think I followed you half way across the country?"

"You still want me, even after what I did?"

"Yes," I said and despised myself for loving him so much.

He started to cry then, a horrible sound because I knew he must be feeling tremendous pain to allow me to see him so grief-stricken. I hesitated before moving over to him, afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing and sending him into a

hateful spiral again. I picked up my pillow and lay close to him.

“Are you afraid of getting something?” His head moved toward me for the first time all day.

“No, I’m afraid of you biting my head off for no reason.”

He grew quiet. “I feel very guilty about the way I’ve been acting.” He suddenly laughed. “I never threw a pot of soup at somebody before.”

“So happy you get a kick out of your own mental illness.” I punched venomously at my pillow. It was uncomfortable lying on the floor.

“Come closer.” His words were soft, not a command. I inched a little closer.

I was lying about a foot away from him now and the nearness of him without pillows, people...anything else barricading him from me left me breathing heavily. I realized I wasn’t the only one.

“Can’t...can’t you touch me, *Manalo*?”

“No.”

“You can touch my face.”

I scooted closer and my face was an inch from his. “Will you fucking kiss me before I kill myself?” he asked, and when I put my mouth on his, I felt his lips tremble.

“Don’t,” I whispered into his mouth. “Don’t be upset. I’m here.”

“I’m so sorry. I was such an ass in the dressing

room with those two girls.”

“Will you do that again?”

An anguished cry tore through him from some place deep inside.

I pressed my lips to his face, allowing myself to explore his aching, and the desire he had for me still. He matched me kisses for kisses, leaning up to me, reaching for me with his tongue and teeth.

“Don’t stop, *Manalo*. I need you.” We kissed for a long time and I saw the leaves and smoldering coals on his body heaving around the crotch area. “I’m going to come,” he groaned.

“You are?” I was stunned.

“Christ baby, I want you so much, give me your tongue.”

I leaned forward and I heard his gasp as he came, his mouth sucking on mine, his tears staining my cheeks, igniting a frenzy in me.

“Oh, *Koa*.” My hands flew to his face. He kept his mouth on mine, his tongue plunging down my throat, as the heat from the coals on his body and the fire we were making between us set off a blazing trail straight to my cock. *Koa* sucked hard on my tongue until I came. I collapsed beside him.

“That never happened to me before,” I gasped. “I never came from just kissing a man.”

“Neither have I. And you wonder why the fuck I’m scared of you.”

I shuffled around, trying to get comfortable. I

hadn't come in my pants since I was a teenager. I remembered the night. A date with a girl. The dry humping, the wet result. But this...this was a first for me.

When I turned from him, *Koa* whimpered. "If you move away from me, I swear to God, I'll get out of all this shit and hunt you down."

We slept nose to nose and I felt his warm, ragged breath on my face.

"How's it going?" *Lopaka's* voice woke me when I stumbled to the phone in the early hours of the morning.

"Fine." I looked back to see *Koa* still trussed up like a *kalua* pig about to be popped into an *imu*, an underground oven.

"Is he getting better?"

"Yes, he is."

A pause. "How is everyone else?"

"*Tutu's* a wreck." My voice dropped to a whisper.

"She...is?"

"She cries all day. She really misses you, *Lopaka*."

He got quiet.

"Oh, *Lopaka*...I didn't mean to upset you."

"No, no. You made me very happy. She used to go years without speaking to me and I really miss her, *Manalo*." I heard him talking to *Kimo*,

assuring him he was okay. "Kimo wants to see *Koa*. I have to go kiss my husband now. We'll be in touch."

I was getting used to the way he would suddenly hang up the phone.

"Was that *Lopaka*?" *Koa* said.

"Yeah."

"You told him *Tutu* misses him?"

"You think I did the wrong thing?"

"Hell no. If you hadn't, I would have. Come here, you big softie." I crawled along the floor beside him and he lifted his face for kisses.

"How are you feeling?"

"Like I can't wait to fuck my man." For the first time in weeks, I got a lovely smile out of him.

Tutu bustled into the kitchen, making a wonderful breakfast of eggs, poached salmon, *taro* pancakes, asparagus spears and coffee. The front door opened and *Lopaka's* twin sister *Maluhia* came in, two small boys whirling around her legs. I'd seen them on my previous visit.

"This is my granddaughter *Maluhia*, she's *Lopaka's* twin sister," *Tutu* said.

"We've met," I grinned.

"And these darling boys are *Kamaha* and *Keli'i*."

Keli'i had *Lopaka's* face and *Kamaha* was coughing.

"I thought Kimo fixed his asthma." Sammy

frowned, picking off cold pieces of coal and *ti* leaves from *Koa's* still prone body.

"He doesn't have asthma anymore...except when he's upset." *Maluhia* watched the boys chasing each other out the back door. "They really miss *Kimo* and *Lopaka*. I think it's giving *Raul* an inferiority complex."

I saw the look *Sammy* gave his wife.

"It's the children," *Tutu* said kindly. "They love baby *Kimo*, you know, and the baby twins."

"*Kamaha* cried last night." *Maluhia* picked up a cup of coffee and wandered out to keep an eye on her sons.

Koa sat up and *Sammy* poked and prodded him. He said he was pleased with *Koa's* progress and said, after he got a *whammy* from *Kimo* later in the day, he could probably sleep without the coals and *ti* leaves that night.

"*Kimo's* coming home?" *Koa* asked.

"No. I'm gonna take you by boat to *Maui* to see him, then once he gives the okay, you and *Manalo* are free to go on your little vacation."

I saw the sadness leaking out of *Tutu's* eyes.

"Yes, where are we going, anyway?" I asked *Koa*.

"None of your business. Just make some calls, get your business in order. I'm planning on kidnapping you for two weeks."

Two weeks! "What about clothes? I don't have

anything with me.”

“You won’t need clothes. Anything we need, we can buy. Besides, I was kinda hoping to have you mostly naked.”

I laughed and *Tutu* shook her head. “Just like my *Lopaka* and *Kimo*. *Kimo* hates for *Lopaka* to wear clothes.” Her eyes teared up again and then the phone rang.

“*Aloha*.” A pause, then her face lit into sunlight. “*Lopaka*! I was just talking about you.” She listened for a minute and I saw tears pooling once again. “You miss me...really? Of course I can come with *Sammy*. You want us to stay? Really?” She was dancing around the room, the portable phone in her hands. “I’m so happy!” She suddenly lowered her voice. “*Kamaha*’s coughing. *Maluhia* said he cried last night.”

We all covered our ears as she screamed, “*Maluhia*!”

As *Maluhia* returned to the back door, *Tutu* said, “I’m gonna go spend a few days with my *Lopaka* and *Kimo*. You be okay if we take da twins with us?”

Maluhia’s face took on a dreamy look. “Me and *Raul* can get down to some baby-making practice.”

“That’s all I ever hear in this house, baby-making.” *Sammy*’s tone was jovial. “You happy now, old girl?”

"Happy? I'm gonna see my babies again. *Lopaka* wants some *poi*. What else should I bring?"

"Nothing. He just wants you." She ignored Sammy, hurrying around the kitchen. "Oh! I know. I can take some *kulolo* to them. You know how much my Kimo loves my coconut pudding."

"I like it too and you never make it for me," Sammy huffed.

"That's a lie," *Tutu* sniffed. "I make it for you plenty."

"No. You make me eat...*asparagus*."

"That's because Kimo says it's good for sexy time. Make you wanna do the *huli-huli* with me more."

"Really?" *Koa* asked. "Asparagus is an aphrodisiac?" We both reached for the asparagus and Sammy grinned. "I think we gonna need more of da green stuff, baby."

"You think my *Lopaka* would like me to take some to him?"

"Those two never stop fucking," Sammy muttered. "I don't think they need it." He looked at the asparagus again. "You know, now that I think about it, there's worse things I could be eating."

I laughed and *Koa's* fingers reached for mine under the table.

Chapter Ten

We set sail a few hours later in a beautiful big boat that Kimo and *Lopaka* had bought from somebody in *Maui*, and evidently they used it to travel the islands. She was *Hina*, named for the *Hawaiian* Goddess, considered the mother of the moon and the ocean. And she was a beauty.

Tutu handed me a water cooler. "This is filled with bottles of breast milk for the babies. Can you put it in the galley for me, please?"

"Kimo and *Lopaka* had their honeymoon on this boat," Sammy said as we piled on board, me, *Koa*, *Tutu*, the twins and a mountain of food we were taking, typical of islanders, who never go anywhere empty-handed, to our family across the ocean.

Tutu had prepared snack boxes for all of us and *Koa* and the kids dived into theirs immediately, despite our big breakfast.

"We had our honeymoon on this boat, too," *Tutu* grinned. "They gave us such a pretty

wedding.”

“Mama and Dada had their honeymoon on the boat, too.” *Keli'i* stuck a grape in my mouth.

“Yes, they did.” *Tutu* frowned as *Kamaha* coughed.

“I tried everything, it’s not medicinal,” *Sammy* mumbled. “He’s got love sickness.”

Kamaha scooted over to *Koa*. “You wanna trade?”

“What do you want to trade?” *Koa* slipped his arm around the little boy who peered into his snack box.

“Mmm...I want your green apple and you can have one of my chicken legs.”

“Oh, good deal.”

“Wanna trade?” *Keli'i* asked me.

“Sure.” I felt *Koa's* gaze on me as I opened my snack box and *Keli'i* and I negotiated our deal.

“You can’t have my *poi*,” *Keli'i* said. “I never trade out *Tutu's poi*.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

He chose my green apple. Monkey see, monkey do.

Hugging the little boy to me, I watched him bite into the apple we’d picked together that morning. What a wonderful, organic life these children had. They were well loved, well fed, well educated and fearless. It was a beautiful thing.

“How long before we see *Kimo* and ‘*paka*?”

Kamaha asked *Tutu*.

“Not long now, darlings. Come here and I tell you a story while we watch Sammy do all the work.” The boys giggled, racing over to jump into her arms.

Koa moved beside me, his thigh grazing mine as we left all signs of life, the last bit of *Oahu* slipping behind us. I could feel the heat radiating from him and I knew he badly wanted to fuck. I caught *Tutu's* eye and she smiled. *Koa* and I slipped below deck.

“Where are they going?” *Kamaha* asked *Tutu*.

“They’ll be back.” I could hear laughter as she pointed out a sea bird sitting on the top mast. “He thinks he da captain!”

No, I had the captain in my firm sights, his gorgeous ass in my hands as he opened doors, looking grim as we hunted out a cabin big enough, nice enough to satisfy him.

“Oh, yeah, this’ll work.” He peered out of a porthole that looked over the ocean gently gliding underneath us. “I need your cock baby. You haven’t fucked me in weeks.”

We got on the bed and I kissed him. He started to eat my face like I was about to go some place and I pushed him back on the bed. Lust took over the anguish in his eyes. I knew he was starved and I aimed to give him an eight-course meal. I undid his shorts and slid them down his smooth, taut

skin that housed those powerful, muscular thighs. And there were the pants from his weigh-in.

I let out an involuntary cry.

He chuckled. "I saw the way you were looking at me when I was on the scales." His fingers ruffled my hair. "I kept these for you."

My tongue went straight to the cock tip that was leaving a damp spot on those tiny white underpants. I licked all the way along his rigid pole.

"This is an emergency, *Manalo*. Get them off and start fucking me. Now."

"I need to suck your cock first." He got testy as my mouth tried to swallow up his engorged cock through the fabric of his pants.

"Oh, sweet Jesus, baby, fuck me. Please. I need your dick in me. I gotta have that dick." He pushed my head away, started pulling down the pants, but I kept them on one leg and told him I wanted to suck his ass.

"Why won't you fuck me? Don't you want me anymore?"

"Are you crazy?" I silenced him with kisses. It worked for a few seconds, but then the hysteria returned.

"I never meant to be so horrible to you...and I...and I never meant to fuck those girls...I'm sorry."

"If those girls are ever mentioned again, I'll

swim to shore if I have to." I kissed him. "Can't I get you ready for my cock?"

"I am ready, I'm in agony I'm so ready. You're fucking killing me with this foreplay shit." As soon as I got between his legs, he grabbed my cock, guiding me to his ass hole. Just the sight of my cock and his ass together again was the most beautiful thing in the world.

"*Koa*, I'm not going to hurt you? I mean...your injuries."

"No," he gasped. "I'm almost like new. Hurry."

"I wish we had a mirror. Does it look as hot as it feels?"

"Oh, baby." I shook with the need to fuck him now. I plunged into him with savage strokes.

"Oh yeah, fuck me." His face took on a look of raw, primitive need. "Christ, I dream of this." He clutched my back, my ass, my shoulders, screaming for me to fuck him. I felt his cock stiffening between our bodies and grabbed it, wanting to make him come with me. *Koa* kept up a chant, "Oh yeah, oh yeah, oh yeah," as we came together in a crushing wave of orgasms that left us both wanting more.

"Keep those pants on." I kissed the Adam's apple in his gulping throat.

"You're not finished with them yet?" He licked my lips.

"Not even started yet."

"Keep your cock in me as long as you can, okay? I want to fuck you the second we're alone on shore."

"Where are you taking me, anyway?" I asked.

"Home."

"Home?"

"To the house my mother left me." His hands ran up and down my arms. "I don't know if I can wait until we get to *Lanai*."

"*Lanai*? You're taking me to *Lanai*? I've never been there."

Koa grinned at me. "That'll be a first for both of us then. I've never taken somebody I love back to my mother's house." My cock slipped out of him and he let out a ragged sigh. "I want to spend the rest of my life with you. I'll do anything you say. I'll tell the world I'm your man, I'll do anything. Just tell me what you want."

"You...love me?" I grinned.

"Shit yeah."

I liked the feeling. I wanted to believe him, to trust him. This was the *Koa* I loved.

"You don't need to do anything except promise me you'll never fuck around on me again. Especially with a woman."

"I thought that wasn't going to be mentioned again."

"Not once I get a promise from you."

"I promise. Now I need a promise from you."

“What’s that?” I asked, trying to get up except that I was landlocked by those massive legs of his.

“That you’ll be faithful to me, too.”

“I have been, since the second I saw you.”

He pulled my head to his, in a long, passionate kiss.

We arrived at the *Ma’alea* wharf late afternoon and I saw a black SUV parked by the shore as *Koa* and *Sammy* wedged the boat into its slip between two other vessels.

Keli’i and *Kamaha* started to shout with joy. *Kimo* and *Lopaka* were walking down the wharf toward us, each carrying a baby, Little *Kimo* between them, holding their hands.

Tutu scrambled off that boat and dropped to her knees as Little *Kimo* laughed and ran to her, throwing himself in her arms. He handed her a beautiful *ti lei* which she immediately put around her neck. He laughed when she gave him more kisses.

We strode toward the little group and *Keli’i* and *Kamaha* hid behind *Sammy’s* legs, suddenly shy.

When *Tutu* stood up to take hold of the giggling baby twins, *Kimo* fixed *Kamaha* with a loving gaze.

“*Kamaha*. Come here, darling.” The boy hesitated for only a fraction of a second and ran right to him, sobbing as *Kimo* bent down and

scooped him up like a feather off the ground. The little boy clung tightly to him.

"Me, too, me, too!" *Keli'i* reached over from *Lopaka's* arms. *Kimo* reached over and kissed his little face.

"Darling, give me a tiny moment with *Kamaha*, okay?" He walked ahead for a second, rubbing his finger along the sole of *Kamaha's* foot.

"What's he doing?" *Koa* asked *Lopaka*.

"Giving him a healing. The foot is the most valuable source for energy flow. That is breast milk in the cooler you have there, isn't it?"

"It sure is."

He looked relieved. "We're almost out."

Koa kissed me as we all walked toward the street. "I love what they have, but I couldn't do this...have babies with you. I'm too selfish. I need you all to myself."

"You've got me."

He hugged me to him. "Good."

I could hardly believe we were in *Maui*. The vibe was so peaceful, so serene, you could feel it instantly.

"Can you believe I've never been to *Maui*?" *Koa's* hand was on my ass.

"How long can you stay?" *Lopaka* asked *Koa*.

"Well, I'd like to leave in the morning."

"Perfect, we can have a wonderful dinner tonight." *Lopaka* sidled over to *Tutu*, who was

clucking over the baby twins she and Sammy were holding.

A tug at my shorts. I looked down to see Little Kimo and he reached up, climbing into my arms.

Lopaka held his *Tutu's* hand with his, *Keli'i's* face serene as he remained in *Lopaka's* other arm.

"You want to swap?" Kimo asked him.

"Not yet," *Keli'i* begged. "I miss *Mypaka* so much."

Kimo looked very emotional, watching his large family walking in the sun.

"Is this your SUV?" I asked as Little Kimo reached for his daddy who easily held two boys in his arms.

"No, it isn't. Where are the babies?" Kimo asked.

"*Tutu* has them, she's not giving them up for anything," *Koa* laughed. "This isn't yours? It sure looks like something you'd drive."

Kimo grinned. "We walked here."

"Walked?" *Tutu* asked. "But it's miles from here."

"No, we have a secret short cut. Through a cave."

"A cave! I love caves!" *Keli'i's* face was alight as, with a flick of his wrist, Kimo opened up a huge space in a rock at the edge of the beach.

I tried not to look awestruck as we walked through a cavernous hole that seemed to close up

behind us. We walked for quite a while, *Koa* taking Little Kimo into his arms for a while. And then suddenly, we saw light.

"Marvy!" *Tutu* said, looking ecstatic as we poured out onto the bottom of a mountain road.

"We're home!" shrieked the twins, grabbing Little Kimo from *Koa*. Arm in arm, *Lopaka* and Kimo watched as the three boys cantered up the hill, chasing and laughing at each other.

"Cool trick that cave," Sammy observed, the baby girl in his arms giggling and cooing.

Tutu had her hand on *Lopaka's* flat, washboard belly. "Hasn't your man knocked you up yet?"

He shook his head. "Not for lack of trying."

"I don't plan to stop trying." Kimo gathered *Lopaka* tightly to his side.

"If anyone can do it, knock his man up, you can Kimo." Sammy's voice had a cheerful boom to it. "Your caves are getting bigger and better. We didn't have to crawl *once* to get through that one."

"Thank you." Kimo looked happy. "I'm quite...proud of it myself."

Koa stared at Kimo in wonderment. Kimo was oblivious. He was staring into *Lopaka's* eyes and it didn't surprise me that, when we finally arrived at their glorious mountaintop home, the two men disappeared for a while.

"*Lopaka!*" *Tutu* shouted after she and Sammy deemed they'd had enough *sexy time*. He came

into the kitchen, wrapping a *pireau* around his waist and I saw, through an open door, Kimo sprawled on his back in a huge bed. His long hair was out and the kids were now all jumping on him, laughing.

“Look at the goodies I brought you.” *Tutu* nudged *Lopaka* who hugged her, dipping his fingers in the *poi*.

“Oh, I’ve missed your cooking, *Tutu*. Thank you for keeping an eye on our cubs. My kids don’t know the meaning of the word naptime. That’s the first afternoon nooky my husband’s had in days. Oooh...I’ve got a little surprise. We caught some lobsters and shrimp this morning.”

“Lobsters! Marvy. Sammy loves lobsters.”

The three boys yanked Kimo out of bed, *Lopaka* hurrying to the bedroom to give him a pair of shorts.

“We need a lock on that door,” Kimo laughed as the boys clung to him. “What do you kids climb on when I’m not around?” He started to tickle them all. They screamed and squealed and he chased them around the house.

“We’re never leaving them again.” *Lopaka*’s expression was woebegone. “It almost killed me and Kimo not to see them.”

“Why did you do it?” Sammy said. “You almost killed your grandma too.”

“We tried to give Raul some space to bond with

the boys. I wish we hadn't listened to him."

"This was Raul's idea?" *Tutu's* eyes flashed anger. "No wonder *Maluhia's* so upset with him."

"She wasn't upset with him. She wants to make more babies," *Sammy* chuckled.

"A woman can be just like a man," *Tutu* huffed. "She can be mad and still want sexy time. Best sexy when you're angry."

"Like making fire." *Lopaka* whispered, watching *Kimo* longingly as he ran around outside with three little monkeys hanging off his long frame. "Lord, I love that man, *Tutu*."

"I know you do, baby. Here, taste the *kulolo*. Very fresh."

Kimo came back into the kitchen. "I lost the kids."

"What do you mean you lost them?" *Tutu* was around the kitchen counter and about to dart outside when she heard the giggles. *Kimo* turned around, pretending to look outside. All three boys were hanging like bats off *Kimo's* massive back, covering their mouths, trying so hard not to laugh.

"Do you see them?" *Kimo* turned back to us again.

"No, I don't see them." *Koa* accepted a fine looking cocktail from *Lopaka*. "You see them, *Manalo*?"

"Nope. You see them, *Sammy*?"

"I don't see them, no. Although that is a rather

handsome foot you've started growing out the side of your neck there, Kimo."

"Foot? Where?" Kimo grabbed it and as the owner of it shrieked, he kissed and tickled it. Three little boys squealed with laughter and off they went, running again.

They tried to run out the back door, but with a flick of his wrist, all three were stymied by an invisible wall.

Kimo grinned. "Dinner first, then we run around like lunatics."

All three boys groaned.

"We're having chocolate fondue," *Lopaka* said.

The kids were ecstatic.

"How come nobody in this family's fat?" *Koa* asked.

"Loads and loads of sexy time," Kimo mumbled. "Okay kids, who wants to help me with the barbecue?"

"Me! Me!"

"Take a cocktail, darling," *Lopaka* smiled. "I made it especially for you."

"What is it?"

"A screaming orgasm."

"You always give me *plenty* of those, my love."

Koa and I laughed and for the first time since his training ordeal began, I felt us both starting to relax.

Dinner was the best meal I had ever had with *Koa*. It was such a luxury to be with this...demi-god and not be discussing boxing, that I relished every second. *Lopaka*, *Tutu* and I outdid ourselves in the kitchen cooking a huge piece of *ono*, dressing the fresh fish with a mountain of herbs.

We had teriyaki chicken, rice, macaroni salad, carrot and pineapple salad, *poi*, and *Kimo*, *Koa* and the kids did a great job barbecuing vegetables, crabs, shrimp and then we split several lobsters, dipping them in melted butter.

Lopaka placed a huge dish of asparagus on the table and I watched all the men attack it with gusto.

"Darling," *Lopaka* said to *Kamaha*. "Kimo gave you a healing, can you have some greens for me, please?"

"Okay. I feel sooo good."

"I need some greens too," *Keli'i* said.

"Me too, mama," Little *Kimo* nodded.

Behind the kids' backs, *Tutu* and *Lopaka* high-fived each other.

"Now this is a family feast," *Koa* grinned.

Sammy went into town and bought provisions for the next few days and there was a jubilant air to everything. The children never stopped laughing and were so well behaved, I was amazed. The baby twins succumbed to slumber first, but Little *Kimo* tried valiantly to keep up

with everything his older cousins did, finally falling asleep in *Lopaka's* arms, chocolate and marshmallow smeared over his cute little face.

"I'm tired too, *Mybaka*," *Keli'i* said, immediately seconded by *Kamaha*. He took the boys off to bed. Kimo kept his eyes on his man's retreating ass until he was out of sight.

"*Tutu*, is it possible that I can love him more and more every day?"

"Of course it is. He one *ono*, delicious, fine man, baby. Is there anymore of that Bailey's Irish Cream? That is one *da kine* drink."

Kimo laughed and went to the kitchen to get her one. He brought us all fresh rounds, splashed over ice.

When *Lopaka* returned to the table, he brought fresh coffee and clean cups and we talked until the sky was a blanket of stars so bright and so near, it almost broke my heart.

"This is magnificent," I said. "I'd forgotten how pure the night sky is in *Maui*."

"I know," *Lopaka* said. "We love it too."

We talked about *Koa's* fight and what he would do during his enforced suspension.

"I plan on spending it with *Manalo*, if he can put up with me." *Koa* gave me his sexiest grin.

We fell into bed late, in one of the guest rooms of the lovely, sprawling house. Horny as we were, exhaustion overcame us and we slept in one

another's arms. Very early in the morning, it started to rain.

"I want to fuck you outside in the rain, I want to taste it on your skin," *Koa* whispered.

"You're such a sensual man, *Koa*." I could feel our cocks hardening for one another.

"Not in bed. I want you outside. You can fuck me in bed for the rest of our lives."

We stole outside the mountaintop home made of wood and glass overlooking the bluff that was in the middle of a wild storm.

"Look baby," he whispered to me. "Look at the brocken."

"What's a brocken?"

"A perfect rainbow. A complete circle. Look at it, over there." His arms were around me and his cock nestled at my ass as his hands went down to my own cock, hardening again at his touch. He ran with me to the outer edge of the property, ringed with lava boulders, then sat against one, pulling me down on top of him. "Put me inside you. Show me how much you've missed your cock."

"Can I suck it?" I asked, as rain pelted down on us.

"No. I need to feed it to your ass. Come on baby, face away from me, so we can both watch the storm."

I got my legs on either side of him and he

gripped my waist. I lowered myself onto that unforgiving baton of his. I wasn't like him, I liked the foreplay, the preparation. But as I reached back and held onto that big lava boulder supporting him, I felt him enter me and the fires of need, of insecurity and misery, stopped sending fearful messages to my brain.

He licked the raindrops from my neck. "Oh yeah, oh baby, work it." His hands held my hips to him. I rode him like I'd taken him on a dare, like he was the bucking bronco and I had just eight seconds. He loved the way I was whipping around on him until he wanted to come and wanted me right where he wanted me.

"Oh baby, Oh *Manalo*." The bubble of joy that rose from him exploded in me and I saw stars as the rain softened its dance on my upturned face, *Koa's* insistent hand jerking on my cock, urging me to fulfillment.

Through a far window, I watched as Kimo took *Lopaka*. His strong arms were clear in the first rays of tropical sunshine. Lying between *Lopaka's* open legs, I watched as Kimo, his body rising and falling, also fucked his man with the same urgency *Koa* had for me.

"Do you see them?" *Koa* said in my ear.

"Uh-huh. Think they know we can see them?"

"No, baby, they've been at it for hours. I could hear them and it was such a turn on, I had to fuck

you.”

I turned my face and he kissed me, long and deep as I sat there, impaled on him.

“You know something?” he whispered.

“What, baby?”

“It’s so fucking unfair.”

“What is?”

He stroked my arms and face as rain fell in a soft flutter on our skin. “The way he and I fuck the men we love and we can’t knock ‘em up. Shit, that sucks. I know I couldn’t love you more if I tried. All that baby batter I put inside you should get us at least one kid, shouldn’t it?”

“I suggest we adopt their attitude.”

“What attitude is that?” He was smiling now.

I could hear Kimo and *Lopaka’s* ecstatic cries now and I saw *Lopaka’s* legs wind around Kimo’s. “We do what they’re doing. We keep trying.”

Koa pushed me to the ground on my knees, so that my impaled ass hung in the morning air and he did just that.

“You don’t *seriously* think we’re letting you leave yet?” *Lopaka* grinned as we walked into the kitchen, the kids greeting us like we were rock stars. “We’ve got macadamia nut pancakes with passion fruit syrup. Sausages and eggs and fresh guavas from our own trees. Then we have to climb the volcano. The boys are anxious to visit with

Goddess *Pele*."

Koa and I looked at each other and shrugged. Actually, spending more time with the family was a wonderful idea. *Koa* was more relaxed and more and more loving as the hours slipped by. The tension, the terror after the fight fell off him like a shed skin and I was all for going with the flow. Besides, we were on *Hawaiian Time*, which meant, *anytime*.

Kimo grabbed *Koa's* foot and did the *healing* thing on him. "How did you get all those injuries?" he asked *Koa* who shrugged it off. Kimo was thrilled with how well *Koa's* hand had healed. No signs of injury anymore.

"Well, you're doing great, but your cheekbone still has some red rays coming from it. Did you bash your face into a wall or something?"

"Yeah. A six foot six wall named *Wladimir Petrenko*," *Koa* joked, but Kimo looked worried. He seemed to want to say something but food was on their air and *Koa* is all about food.

After a hearty breakfast, Kimo lent us warm clothing for the climb up *Haleakala* Volcano.

"Why do we need rainwear and sweaters? It's hot outside," *Koa* grumbled. But I knew enough about *Haleakala* to know the dormant crater was freezing the higher you drove up its slopes. The Wilders had a sensational SUV that had four rows of seats. The back two went to the five kids and

Tutu. Sammy, *Koa* and I sat in the second row and Kimo and *Lopaka* were in front.

It was about a forty minute drive, during which we played songs, played guessing games and as we began the long ascent, the day grew increasingly dismal, and yet the Volcano Goddess *Pele* gave us show-stopping rainbows the higher we went. We took a detour into a nature reserve and Baby *Pele* woke up, grinning at me.

“She knows were going to see her geese,” Kimo laughed. “We’re going to visit the *Nene Pele*, Goddess *Pele*’s sacred fire geese.”

We all piled out and I was anxious to see the geese that had been caught and kept in isolation to breed when their numbers dwindled to a hundred and they were on the verge of extinction.

It was so cold, our teeth chattered as two park rangers came outside. They greeted the Wilders like movie stars, which they are really, in the islands. Except their art is *hula*, not movies. I had no idea they contributed a lot of money to the facility and that Kimo and Sammy were actively involved in finding cures for a mysterious virus that was killing off the goslings.

We were all allowed to pet and hold the geese being prepared for freedom. I had never seen *Koa* so deeply affected. He sat cross-legged on the ground and a fluffy blue blanket was put into his lap as a goose was handed to him. Her black eyes

took his measure and she put her head against his heart.

"She's so soft. How could we have let them be hunted to near extinction?" Tears rolled down his cheeks.

Kimo was fantastic with the children, showing them how to hold the goslings, and *Koa* stroked the magnificent feathers of the goose in his custody.

Lopaka said, "Feel her foot."

"Wow," *Koa* grinned. "She doesn't have the webbed feet other geese have...it's rough and dry."

Kimo nodded. "Long ago, the *nene* migrated here from Canada. They became fire birds. They have adapted to life on the slopes of the volcano." He looked at the rangers. "How has the antibiotic bug butter been working?"

"Sensational," one of them said. "We're looking forward to another batch."

Kimo grinned. "We just happen to have some with us." We spent a good hour with the birds and, with reluctance, left them to take a walk down the trail Kimo had pre-selected. We all walked in hushed silence as we approached the quiet and eerie desolation trail that looks like a desert and approached the land of many colors, *Pele's Paint Pot*.

"Wow."

Koa and I stood in silent awe, admiring the specter of silver-gold lunar surface crested with magnificent magenta peaks, pink valleys and deep red crevices. *Kimo* and *Lopaka* had us all hold hands as *Kimo* and *Sammy* chanted from the *Kumulipo*, the chant of creation. It left goose bumps on my skin, *chicken skin* we call it in the islands, to hear the words never written down, but passed down via oral tradition from *kahuna* to *kahuna*.

A flap of wings and a large *nene* flew overhead.

"He's taking our messages of love to *Pele*," *Kimo* said and we walked back in silent joy, knowing *Pele* had appreciated and welcomed our *aloha*.

We were heading back down the mountain when *Kamaha* started shouting, "Daddy *Kimo*! Daddy *Kimo*!"

"Yes, darling?"

"Daddy *Kimo*, the sun's following us!"

It was hard to tear ourselves away from those adorable children, but two days later, *Kimo* and *Lopaka* generously took us into *Lahaina* so we could stock up on clothing and food that *Koa* insisted we wouldn't find in *Lanai*. We set sail for *Maui* in the early afternoon, *Lopaka* and *Kimo* at the helm in the engine room. It was so nice of them to take us. They laughed, knowing they would take

advantage of being alone out at sea to drop anchor and have their way with each other before heading home to *Maui* again.

There was a companionable silence between the four of us as *Lopaka* kissed and hugged his man and I, mine.

"I can't believe you were married to a woman once," *Koa* said and *Kimo* laughed.

"Believe me, I wasn't like this with her."

"You weren't?"

"No, sir. I was the loneliest guy in the world when I met *Lopaka*."

"Was it hard coming out and telling people you were gay?"

Kimo shot him a look. "You're thinking about yourself? If you should come out?"

"Yeah."

"I tried living in the shadows. For me, it was much better to say *I love this man* and marry him. Loneliness makes you strong. Love makes you free."

Lopaka kissed him.

"Shit," *Kimo* groaned. "How can I want you so damned much all the damned time?"

"It's my cologne," *Lopaka* said, and the four of us laughed.

"*Kimo*, I'm curious, *Maluhia* is beautiful. She looks just like *Lopaka* but she's a woman. Were you ever even slightly attracted to her?" *Koa* asked.

I couldn't believe he'd even asked the question.

Kimo balked. "God, no." he glanced at Lopaka. "She was horrified in the beginning when she realized her brother was gay. I think she loves us a great deal now, but there was never...not for *one* second. I admit, I thought straight away of the baby potential, but I never considered having sex with her."

Lopaka put his hand on Kimo's crotch, right on the thing that apparently gave him so much happiness, and Kimo laughed.

Koa gave me a big, warm kiss and led me up to the deck. "Think you can stand to be alone with me on a small island?"

"I'll do my best."

His laughter rang across the choppy ocean waves.

What happened next was a shock. We had no idea we were under attack until the moment we reached the deck, the speed boat pulling up beside us. Three people emerged with guns pointing right at us.

"Get your hands up!" This from a woman.

"Kimo!" *Koa* shouted and he was on deck in seconds.

"What the fuck..." Kimo looked at the three invaders throwing a rope over the *Hina's* rails as the first guy prepared to get on board.

"We can do this the hard way or the easy way."

Kimo's voice was cold, yet a heat, a powerful, burning heat emanated from his body. "Get off my boat now and nobody gets hurt. If you proceed, I will permanently injure all of you."

"You're nothing but a bunch of queers," the woman leered. The look on Kimo's face was terrible.

"What's going on?" *Lopaka* asked as the first guy kept moving, one foot on the *Hina*.

"Sea pirates," Kimo muttered. "I didn't think we'd need protection from fuckin' pirates."

"You got it under control?" *Lopaka* asked.

Kimo smirked. Suddenly, he was over on the other boat, his arm around the woman's neck. She was gagging.

"Apologize and I will leave you unharmed."

"Queers!" All of a sudden, she was writhing around on the deck. Kimo had her gun and pointed it at the first guy. "Step back or I promise you will be in more pain than your little whore here."

The first guy whipped around, the second guy lunging at Kimo, who disappeared and materialized in front of the first guy again.

He pointed the gun at the first guy's head. "Trying to steal a man's boat is just plain rude, don't you think, *Koa*?"

"Very rude." *Koa* was putting me behind him in a surreptitious way, ready for a fight. *This cannot*

be happening.

A fourth guy appeared on the deck of the other boat as the woman's screams turned to anguished, pitiful howls.

"Oh, look at this, fourth pirate's got an eye patch," Kimo laughed. "You really got a bad eye or is that...decoration?"

I couldn't believe how flippant he was being. It was so hot on that boat, even the bad guys were sweating.

"What the hell did you do to her?" Guy number four screamed at Kimo.

"Oh...I made her feel...*queer*. Now, answer my question. You got a bad eye under the patch?"

"Yes," the guy hissed, on his knees now, looking at the woman gasping and shrieking on the deck.

"Oh, too bad." Kimo flicked his wrist, sending a fireball to the good eye and two more at the other two guys who screamed. Guy Number One tried to step off our boat.

"Too late!" *Koa* kicked him right in the solar plexus, sending him over the top of his boat, crashing into the water.

The occupants of the other vessel scrambled to get away from him. Their motor stopped running and the guy with the patch was swatting at his previously good eye.

"Fuck! I can't see!"

"I can't either," moaned another voice.

"Where the fuck did they go?" Blinded, his hand stretched out as if in darkness, in a futile way. "You had to call them queers!" he screamed at the woman.

"They can't see us," *Koa* whispered. "How'd you do that? Man, if I had your skills, nobody could touch me."

"Thanks," *Kimo* nodded. To the occupants of the other boat, he said, "I will radio the coast guard and give them your position. If you tell them exactly what happened, that you tried to steal from us and assault us, your injuries will heal within an hour of your confession. If not, by midnight, you will all be experiencing unendurable pain. *Aloha.*"

Koa and I just gaped at him as he turned to us. "Now...where was I? Oh yes, *Lopaka*?"

"I'm here."

"Get that lovely ass back downstairs."

Lopaka giggled. "Am I really sick, because you just turned me on so much, baby."

Kimo's eyes glowed. "That's my job, baby." They disappeared below deck. *Kimo*, like *Koa*, apparently, when he wanted his man, operated on one speed. Ravenous.

"That was something else," *Koa* said as the boat settled back on course.

"You were amazing. Loved that kick," I said.

"Yeah? I did it for you."

"Was that because your hand hurts?"

"My hand?" he looked surprised. "Baby, I'm like one hundred per cent healed. What the hell do you think Kimo did to that woman?"

"No idea, but she deserved it."

We were silent for a moment. "You know what's really spooky? Most people don't have a Kimo lookin' out for them," *Koa* said. "Most other people...men, women, children...they just...disappear. Their boats get stolen and nobody ever hears from them again."

That frightening encounter was behind me the moment I caught my first glimpse of *Lanai* City. We cut the engine on the approach to the *Manaele* Boat harbor, used to bring passengers to one of the two hotels on the island. I felt a tremendous ripple of excitement. They might only have been two, but both the *Lodge at Koele* and the *Manele Bay* hotels were extremely lavish waterfront properties that I knew catered to rich people in search of small island privacy.

All I knew about *Lanai* was that it used to be the center of the Dole Pineapple production. Pineapple had ceased, like sugar cane before it, to be a profitable crop for export. Dole had shut down its operations, and most of the people who lived on the island and worked for the company had been absorbed into the now slowly expanding

hotel industry on *Lanai*.

Koa's parents, I was just learning, had been Dole employees and he grew up on the island. His heart was pounding as we stood close to one another, and *Lopaka's* excited smile caught mine as my eyes drank in the colorful houses I could see ahead.

"Sure you can't stay?" *Koa* asked the Wilders, who hugged us and wished us a wonderful, romantic vacation.

"We'll pick you up in two weeks right here," Kimo said.

"Listen..." *Koa* glanced at me and I nodded, I had a feeling he was about to invite them to visit. "Why don't you come a few days before, bring all the midgets with you. We'll have fun. We have plenty of room at the house. It's huge. It'll just be me and *Manalo* rattling around in it. I think the kids would love it."

Lopaka's face lit up. "Really? Oh we'd love that. We've never brought the kids here."

Kimo agreed. "I want them to see the *Garden of the Gods*. We'll stay in touch by phone, but count us in. A couple of days here would be fantastic for the kids. We'll leave *Tutu* and *Sammy* in *Maui* and pick them up on the way back to *Oahu*."

"No, no, bring them too," *Koa* grinned. "I'm gonna be missing her *poi* real bad by then."

The four of us laughed.

“Make the most of your romantic vacation. You know how time flies when you’re having fun.” Kimo grabbed *Lopaka* and they went back to their kids, to their own romance, and at last, I had *Koa* all to myself.

“This is a little nerve wracking for me.” *Koa* squared his shoulders as we walked along the sand toward the *Manele Bay* Hotel, clutching our food and clothing purchases.

“Why?”

“I had some bad times on this island. I need to let ‘em go, as Don Ho would say, if I’m going to have a life with you.”

My heart swelled at his words, but I also felt anguish for whatever he had been through.

“I haven’t been here for a while. I came once after my mother died, but I haven’t done much with it.” He stopped. “Maybe this wasn’t a good idea. Maybe we should stay at a hotel.”

“*Koa*, all I’ve been thinking about is how I want to be alone with you. This you. Not the tyrant you. Please don’t take that away from me.”

He dropped the small suitcase with our commingled possessions and put his arms around me. “That’s why I wanted to bring you here. I wanted to win...I wanted to *earn* the right to bring you here and be alone with you.” He picked up the suitcase again.

“That was a sweet thing to say to me, *Koa*.”

Stolen Magic

He kissed me. "Come on, *Manalo*. Come see my *Lanai*."

Chapter Eleven

Ganai has a reputation for being dry and not particularly beautiful, but I fell in love with it the second we walked up to his house on *Kapiha'a* Place. I hadn't given much thought to what I expected from his family home, but was charmed by the pretty *paniolo*, cowboy-style pale green house with red trim and wrap-around *lanai*. An old Woody station wagon waited out front and *Koa's* hand ran lovingly over the side panels.

"This is my baby."

I was so shocked he left it out in the open and that it looked freshly washed.

"Oh, no. I get Gerry, my old neighbor, to come over and start her up and he washed her for me when I told him we were coming. This here darlin' is the only woman you will have to share me with. Her name is Jemima, because she always looks tastier than pancakes to me."

I laughed and the front door to the neighbor's house opened. *Koa* released my hand, waving to

the old Asian man coming toward us in a spry slippah-shuffle.

"Man, you did us proud," he grinned. "Where's your belt?"

"I don't have it yet. The one I held after the fight belongs to the other guy. I'm still waiting for mine."

"Still, you're champion of the world." The old guy rocked on his heels. "Folks here sure are proud of you."

"Thank you, Gerry. I want you to meet my friend *Manalo*. He's going to be staying with me a while."

"Good to know you, *Manalo*." Gerry shook my hand with a firm grip. "Where's the girl you brought here last time, *Koa*? She was a looker."

"She's not around anymore."

I tried not to feel hurt that *Koa* had told me he'd never brought anybody he loved here before. Maybe he meant he'd never brought another *man* he loved here.

"That's my boy *Koa*, breaker of women's hearts," Gerry laughed.

"I'm not that bad." *Koa* looked embarrassed.

"Yes, you are. If I looked like you, if I had your world championship, I'd chew 'em up and spit 'em out, too. That last one though, man, you hit the jackpot there."

"I can't even remember her."

"She was Miss America, *Koa*. You can't forget Miss America."

Koa looked at me, a spooked expression in his eyes. Maybe he could tell I was wondering how long it would take to swim back to *Maui*.

"Still, plenty of your other conquests around," Gerry gloated.

Great. Just what I need.

"Well, we'll be seeing you." *Koa* walked up the dark red stairs leading to his front door, unlocked it, letting me into the house. I smelled lemon furniture polish and knew somebody had spruced the place up for him. Then the phone started ringing.

"This is nuts," he said after the third congratulatory invitation to dinner, drinks and...more.

I stood in the hallway, leaning against the wall, alone with the ghosts of his past, listening to *Koa* chit-chat with one woman after another. For two hours, he fielded dozens of calls and even did a couple of phone interviews with boxing reporters who were anxious for a word with the champ. He begged off from seeing all of the women who kept calling, it was true, but this was supposed to be our relaxing vacation.

If Miss America called, I would be a sitting duck. *Stop the holiday. I want to get off.* The phone rang again and I inched toward the door as he got

into a violent argument with some woman called *Alina*, who insisted on seeing him that night.

"No, don't come over! Oh...all right. Just one drink..."

I quietly unlocked the door and was about to step into freedom when he dropped the phone.

"You're *running away from me*? Are you insane?"

"No, I'm going to get some air."

"You're leaving me!"

I stared at the perfectly manicured street with the pretty houses, all painted different colors. He had an image to protect and a reputation to uphold.

"I think I should leave. I had no idea...you know..."

"What, that I used to fuck women? You knew that! What, a few phone calls and you want to *bail*? Is that how it's gonna be with us?"

"I can't go through what happened in Las Vegas. You, fucking women right in front of me." I felt...defeated, unable to cope with this crap rising to the top all the time with us.

"You said that was never going to be mentioned again."

"That was before I heard about Miss America."

"I don't want Miss America. I want you." He pulled me back inside, a desperate look on his face. "I'll unplug the fucking phone, okay?"

Nobody has the cell phone number. If you like, we'll just use yours. I don't care. I want to be with you. Nobody else."

He tried to rip the phone line out of the wall jack.

"Don't do that. We might need it in an emergency."

"All right, *Manalo*, but I'm unplugging the line from the back of the phone. I can't guarantee somebody won't show up at the door, but if they do, they'll get an eyeful, that's for sure." He pulled me to him, with an urgency that took my breath away. "I used to be somebody else. You have to be patient with me. I'm coming out of the shadows and it's hard. But if I come out and you're not there waiting for me, you will destroy me." He pushed me against the wall. Boy, could he manipulate me. His cock hardened against my belly and, of course, I couldn't resist him.

"Miss America never made me feel like this. She never made me want to fuck her all day long."

I found my fingers grabbing at the fly of his shorts.

"Take out your cock, baby. Touch it, feel how bad it wants to make you feel good."

Man, could he play with my head and my heart. His hands moved down to rip the Velcro snaps on my borrowed shorts and we fell to the floor. If any of those marauding women did show

up, we would have given them an eyeful all right.
Live. Nude. Men.

We made love right there in the hallway of his mother's house, *Koa* moving in and out of me with such an unhurried, unforced rhythm of grace that when we came together, it took my breath away. He lay on top of me, covering my body with his in a possessive, thrilling way, and he told me that slow love was the way of *Lanai*. "We don't hurry here, ever." He also told me having sex in that spot, right in the doorway of his parents' home, was a first for him.

"I took a couple beatings here from my step dad, but I never fucked anyone here before."

"He beat you?"

"Frequently."

It disturbed me to hear that. He was looking around, as if seeing the house for the first time. "You told me you were close to your parents."

"Good PR, baby. I took my mother's beatings for her for six years until I got boxing lessons after he broke my jaw and a couple ribs."

"Oh, *Koa*."

He was lying beside me, one hand running a straight line up and down my body as he gazed at me. "I never think about it until I come here. Right now, I want to think about fucking you, not fighting with you." He yanked me to my feet and, hand in hand, we went through the house.

It was huge. Room after room, filled with a surprising amount of furniture. Some of it was Victorian, some of it Japanese modern, some of it was classic *Hawaiiana*.

There were surprisingly valuable Don Blandings etchings on the walls, monkey pod and *koa* wood chairs and tables, *tiki* statues from the fifties, *hula* girl lampshades...somehow it all gave a very *Hawaiian* feel to the place.

"My mother raided every yard sale on *Lanai* for twenty years," he said. "We'll never run out of furniture. She bought from yard sales because there are no furniture stores here. What you see is my mother's fear of winding up with nothing." He paused. "I guess that's another thing I inherited from her."

I put my arms around him and he let me hold him. I could hear his heart beating and I realized he was very upset.

"*Manalo*, I left her here. I chased my old man out of here, but I left her. I wanted an education, and I disappointed her when I went into boxing. But I think, in the end, she was proud of me."

The memories started pouring out. I wanted him to release the bad stuff so we could make room for the good. In a bedroom on the top floor, overlooking the backyard with a massive *plumeria* tree whose branches reached the upper *lanai* outside the double-French doors, I found his

collection of trophies and minor championship belts. There were two sets of bunk beds he said his mother bought from people moving back to England several years ago.

"They bought a café, couldn't make a go of it."

"This room is perfect for the boys, *Koa*. They'll go gaga over it."

"You think?" He got excited then.

"I was thinking this room down the hall would be good for *Kimo* and *Lopaka*." He opened the door to a massive room decorated in Victorian furnishings. It boasted a huge, king-sized sleigh bed topped with a beautiful red and white *Hawaiian* quilt in the *Pele* motif. It was an abstract pattern of a *nene* goose. I could picture a tall vase of red *heliconia* and torch ginger.

"It's perfect." I ran my hand over the quilt, truly a work of art. *Hawaiian* quilts, like those of the Amish, are very prized by collectors. In a small room next door was an old wooden baby's crib. This would work well for the baby twins.

"How about this one for us?" He threw open the door to a room opposite, which was large and not as heavily decorated. In fact, it was more Japanese than anything.

"This was my room the last few years I lived here." His voice was quiet. I knew he wanted to share this room with me badly. I could picture us spending hours in this bedroom, making love with

the sound of the ocean waves outside the windows.

“Yes, I think this is us, *Koa*.” He immediately pushed me onto the bed, kissing me.

“Thank you for bringing me here.”

“Mm...I don’t think I want to leave this room, but we should put the groceries away.”

“Probably we should.” We ran downstairs, put the food away. He kept out a papaya, which he sliced with fresh lime juice, and we went back to our bedroom.

What he didn’t know was that I had kept two ice cubes, purloined from the freezer. I had them wrapped in some cloth and as we got to our room, I crawled between his open legs, stroking his strong, muscular thighs. This was the first time in weeks I was getting to enjoy a leisurely romp with him and I felt his sigh rumble from deep within.

“God, baby, you always make me feel like Superman.” His cock hardened and twitched as my mouth hurried to claim it.

“You *are* Superman.” I took myself away from him for a brief second. He jerked his cock back into my mouth, but each time I felt him getting close to orgasm, I licked his balls, his ass, his perfect thighs again, until he was in an agony of unshed desire and he grabbed his dick, waving it in my face.

I took the cock head slowly and gently into my

mouth and worked his shaft with increasing force. I knew he was about to go nuts, so I took the ice cubes that had been dripping in my hand and placed them right on his balls.

He came with such relentless fury, the cold adding a literal shock, and therefore extra intensity, to his sexual release. *Koa* shouted gibberish as he buttered my throat and mouth with the love potion I adored. I stroked his chest and belly. Man, I wanted to fuck him.

"Gimme that cock. Now," he said when he could finally speak.

We woke up some time later to the sound of someone hammering on the front door.

"Your heart is racing." Groggily, I removed myself from his body. I'd fallen asleep on top of him and he became hysterical when I tried to move.

"Don't leave me."

"I'm not going anywhere." I was aware now of the encroaching darkness.

Whoever was at the door gave up. A soft wind blew through the open windows from the ocean.

"There's a really cool place I want to take you for dinner," *Koa* said.

We showered together and dressed quickly in jeans and T-shirts, then walked a couple of blocks from the house to Eighth Street. On the corner was

a sunny yellow house with blue trim, lit up with lights and a festive atmosphere.

The sign read, "*Pele's Other Garden: Deli and Bistro.*"

I grinned. "How nice that Kimo's baby girl has a restaurant named after her."

Koa laughed. "I know, right? We have to bring them here. They will love it. The menu is like a deli at lunch and a bit more elegant at night, but it's always *ono grinds*." He couldn't wait to get me inside, even rushing over to one of the oceanfront tables. Half the restaurant looked over Dole Park, but *Koa* knew exactly where he wanted to sit.

"Hey champ!" A tall, good looking man with receding dark hair came over and he and *Koa* hugged each other.

"*Koa!*" A lovely, warm blonde woman hugged him and he introduced them as Mark and Barbara. "They're the owners and they're very happily married and—" his voice dropped. "They're in the Witness Protection program."

"Honestly." Barbara, slapped his arm. "He started the joke and now everyone does it. Somebody will believe you one of these days. Congratulations on winning the fight. I saw *Wladimir Petrenko* crying on TV last night. Is it true he's filing a protest?"

"A protest?" *Koa* looked stunned. "Over what?" She shrugged. "He claims the fight was fixed."

This was news to both of us. He had been in touch with Smoke and *Manu*, but nobody had mentioned it. We looked at each other and shrugged.

"We're very hungry and I'm hoping beyond hope that you have bowtie and butterflies on the menu still," *Koa* said.

"Of course we do."

Koa looked at me.

"You order whatever you think's best," I said. "But I'd like some beer with mine."

"Beer sounds good to me, too. Okay, we'll have the bruschetta to start with, one big Organic *Lanai* Greens with the grilled chicken, two bowties and put aside some Tiramisu for us will you, please?"

Barbara took the order and hastened to the kitchen. *Koa* looked at me in that hungry way of his. I knew he wanted to reach across the table and touch me. I knew he wanted to badly, but he just couldn't.

When Mark came out with two tall, *Kona Lavaman* red lagers, we toasted each other and, as our glasses touched, his fingers grazed mine. I knew that as soon as we'd consumed the last bite of food, we'd be back in bed, tearing each other's clothes off.

From the start of the meal to the end, *Koa* was sheer pleasure. He wanted so much for me to enjoy this restaurant and its food (and I did), and

worried over the tiniest details.

“They get all their greens from a woman right here on *Lanai*. They’re almost as good as yours.” That made me smile. “Even their tomatoes are organic.” By the time dessert came, I couldn’t wait to get home and be alone with him.

What I hadn’t counted on was *Koa’s* female conquests waiting at the door, wine bottle in hand, but there they were. Two of them. And they were gorgeous.

“Miss America?” I asked as we stood across the road, and one of them gave him a finger wave.

“Her two sisters.”

“You fucked all three of them?”

“I didn’t know you then.” His gaze moseyed back to them. “I sure regret it now.” He didn’t look happy to see them, and as we walked through the front gate, they ran to him, covering his face with kisses.

Standing by awkwardly, I watched him kiss their cheeks, but they grabbed his face and gave him determined lip smackers. My romantic night after the perfect, seductive meal was not going at all the way I’d hoped.

“Who’s this?” one of the girls asked as if I were the interloper.

The girls were exotic island beauties and I knew they’d chosen their clothing and makeup with care. Everything about them, however, screamed

fake. Or maybe I was just feeling uncharitable.

"This is *Manalo*, my friend from *Oahu*. He's staying with me awhile."

"Here?" one of them, the one with huge, botoxed lips asked him.

"Yes, of course. Where else would he be staying?"

"At a hotel."

He laughed, but it wasn't a merry laugh. It was a harsh sound and the women looked at him imploringly. He relented. "Well, come in and have a drink. Just one."

In the house, the women dropped their shoes inside the door, sashaying down the hall as if they owned the joint. In the kitchen, he hunted out wine glasses and I could tell he was enjoying their attention.

The one with the especially large titties was jutting them in his face. He licked his lips as his eyes had no place to go but straight down her décolleté.

Oh, brother.

He fumbled with the bottle opener until one of them took it from him. They had their hands all over him and I took over, opening the wine and pouring it into the glasses.

"We missed you so much." They rubbed against him. I couldn't stay here and watch this.

"You okay?" he asked me.

"Sure. I'm fine." He didn't making a move to extricate himself from their clutches.

I'd seen this movie before. A couple times, actually. I really didn't need a rerun. I was wondering how best to split, when he handed me a glass.

"Manalo, come on, let's make a toast."

"To what?" the girls squealed, standing between us again.

The only thing in the house I really didn't want to part with was *Koa*. I didn't want anything other than to go home. Ten p.m. Last flights to *Maui* would be out already. Where could I stay that he wouldn't find me? Hard to hide on an island with just two hotels.

I could just hide out until morning. He'd be too busy with his beach bunnies to come looking for me. I just had to get through the night.

In a calm voice, I said, "Will you excuse me?"

"Yes," one of them snapped. "Take your time. Lots and lots of time."

I beat a path up the stairs and to the room where our rumped bed stood testimony to the fact that I hadn't imagined it all. I had been real.

In that moment it had been real. Just a moment in time.

"What are you doing?"

I realized I was sitting on the bed, staring into space and *Koa* was standing in the doorway

looking at me. "Come downstairs babe. They'll be gone in a little while."

"No, I don't believe I will. I think I'd prefer to stay up here." *Why did I come up here? I should have walked out the door.*

He gave me a blank, angry look and he was gone.

Too bad. It has to end this way.

At the top of the stairs I heard them move into the living room. The girls were squealing like nine year olds and I was about to head down the stairs when *Koa* appeared. Boy, he did move like a ghost.

"What's that you've got?" He gestured toward the plastic bag in my hand.

"Some books I bought in *Maui*."

He nodded. "Books. And where are you taking them?"

"Downstairs."

He arched a brow in my direction. "So you're going with them downstairs to...?"

"The back *lanai* to read, if that's okay with you."

"No. I want you to come and talk to my friends."

"I don't want to come and talk to your friends."

"You're being very childish."

"Oh, *I'm* being childish." I was aware the girls had stopped giggling. They were listening to every word. "Just leave me alone. Go talk to your

friends and let me read my books. Okay?"

"Yeah. I'm gonna let you go outside and fucking run out on me again. How many times do we have to do this?"

"They're listening."

"I don't give a fuck. You are not leaving this house."

"Oh yes. I'm leaving." This time he wasn't going to hunt me down. This time he was going to know it was over. We were through. I was tired of Show and Tell.

One of the girls poked her head out of the living room door. "Everything okay?"

"You stay out of this!" he shouted at her.

"God, *Koa*. Just go and be with them. We'll talk later. Okay?"

"No. We'll talk right now." He flew up the stairs, lunging at me, taking me down hard to the steps. He was kneeling over me breathing heavily as he started undressing me. I twisted my body away from his hands, trying to get away from him.

"You want them to see who I am? You fucking asked for it, bitch." He fought off my attempts to get away from him. His hands kept my wrists imprisoned in his grip, his mouth on mine, his crotch grinding against me.

One of the girls came out and gasped. I saw their shock as *Koa* and I humped each other like

lustly teenagers on those stairs. The other girl came out and they stood there. "You didn't wait for us," she pouted.

Koa tore his mouth away from me. "I don't share him with anybody. Get the fuck out of here. NOW!"

The girls ran screaming, picking up and dropping their shoes and *Koa* waved and shouted in a cheery voice, "Bye, ladies!" as they took off into the night. His hands clawed at me as I tried crawling away from him, but he was too strong and I was so hopelessly in love with him, it didn't take much power for him to overcome my resistance.

"You just outed me." There was a playful smile on his face as he lay on me, pinning me to the top of the stairs.

"No. I didn't..."

"All things considered, I hope you have one spectacular fuck in mind. I am now officially the gayest guy in *Lanai*."

"Yeah, you are, aren't you?" I gently kissed his eyelids.

"I told you I was never going to cheat on you again. I told you I wasn't going anywhere. What the fuck is it going to take for you to trust me? I am not Michael. I am not leaving you for any goddamned reason."

"Don't...don't talk about him."

"You own me, you idiot." He ripped at the button on my jeans, pushing them down my legs.

"Somebody's happy to see me." He kissed the head of my cock, forcing my legs apart, and the bag of books fell from my hand, crashing to the floor below as he entered me with a savage yell I am sure they heard all over the island.

We came so fast it took our breath away.

"Wait in the bedroom for me," I told him. He seemed uncertain, but I assured him we were okay. Stepping over strewn books, I went to the kitchen. I melted some of the chocolate we'd brought from *Maui*, took it off the stove and put it into the biggest coffee cup I could find, stirring it with some cream. When I felt I had the right consistency, I took it up to the bedroom. I walked in and found my man lying on the bed, fondling his cock in a lazy way. Lazy, but effective, because he had a huge hard-on and an even bigger grin.

"What have you got there?"

I grabbed a blanket out of the closet, threw it on the floor and told him to join me. Thinking with that huge dick of his, he would have followed me anywhere. He got to the blanket, desire and intrigue aflame in his eyes.

"You have me where you want me." He knelt beside me.

"Not quite." I leaned in and gave him a nice, long, wet kiss. "Get ready to do some push ups."

"Push ups?" He didn't look pleased.

"Chocolate push ups. Each time you go down, put that beautiful cock into the chocolate. It'll feel really good."

"Then what?"

"Your bitch here gets to lick it all off."

He laughed and quickly hunched over the cup. "I feel a bit...silly." His cock hit that hot liquid. He gasped. The sensation felt incredible, I knew, because Michael had made me do it more than once.

"Keep fucking, baby."

Soon, his beautiful dick and balls were coated and I couldn't keep my hands off him any longer. As he kept doing pushups, I ran my tongue over his shoulder and down his side.

He grasped my head, watching as I licked the chocolate off him.

"Mmm...I love dinner at home," I moaned, licking and sucking him until he pushed me away. He didn't last long, however and when he came, there was chocolate all over both of us.

"Gimme some of that." He snatched the cup from the floor, scooped out some with his fingers, then made a beeline for my nipples.

"Oh...Oh God, *Koa*." He suckled first one, then the other nipple. It sent a spasm of quicksilver right through me.

"Open your legs," he commanded, and I could

only obey as my ghost warrior took me with surprising tenderness, giving me his chocolate-coated fingers to savor. His lips found the hammering pulse in my throat. “*Manalo*,” he whispered. “That’s my favorite song in the world.”

Chapter Twelve

Koa's frightening nightmares began that night. He woke up shaking and screaming, clutching his head. Nothing he said made sense. I nursed him through the night, using cold compresses, putting him into a bath, making him tea. Each time he fell asleep, it would start again. I wanted to take him to the hospital. He said it was only a nightmare.

In the morning, he was fine, so I shrugged it off. We explored the island, racing home to explore each other's bodies obsessively. His old neighbor was watching us from the window as we pulled up in the Woody. I waved, but he shrank away.

"Had word got around that *Koa* was gay?"

Koa laughed when I mentioned it. "He's an old snoop. He wants to keep it that way."

We hated being away from the bedroom and spent a lot of time in bed wrapped around each other—when we weren't having constant, wild sex.

With really only a handful of restaurants on the island, I quickly discovered people had their favorites and stuck to them. Ours was *Pele's* and we frequently saw the same people there over and over. I got a kick out of talking to locals and tourists who were addicted to the menu and, like us, preferred to keep our loyalty to the owners of *Pele's*.

Then each night, the nightmares started.

"It's the fight," *Koa* gasped. "I get this way after a fight."

I wasn't so certain, but during the day we had so much fun, I could almost forget about them.

"You like it here," *Koa* said one morning.

"Are you kidding? I love it here."

"Think you could make this our second home?"

"Yes, but..." I wanted to talk about the nightmares.

"I want you to plant vegetables, herbs, anything you want in the back garden. This is your home now."

We cleared out some overgrown roses and vines and found lemons, oranges and mangoes poking over the back fence. As it got closer to *Kimo* and *Lopaka's* visit, *Koa* proved to be a throwback to his mama's ways. He hated all the linens in the closets and fretted about having nice sheets on all the beds when the family came to stay in a few days.

On Saturday morning, we went in his Woody to every single yard sale on the island. It was something else, this yard sale frenzy. We stopped outside the *Manele Bay* Hotel and bought two brand new sets of King sized bed sheets a honeymooning couple had been given.

“I wanted a cappuccino maker,” she whined.

“What else you got?” *Koa* asked her.

“We got two dozen glasses and a horrible set of stone dishware.”

Of course, we loved it all and then, when she showed us a fluffy champagne colored throw that must have been very expensive, we knew we had to get it for the baby twins. We needed crib sheets and sheets for the three boys and for *Tutu* and *Sammy*. We found some crib sheets, new in the package at another yard sale. Pink gingham. I figured *Pele's* brother would just have to live with them.

“What we have now is fine,” I assured *Koa*. “If we soak the sheets in the cupboard in lemon juice and lavender, they’ll be fine for the boys.”

“No. I want them to have fun sheets. Maybe we’ll find something at International Food and Clothing.” We jumped into the Woody and, like men on a mission, we invaded what was essentially an old-fashioned general store, packed to the rafters with just about everything. We found two sets of sheets for single beds and three dozen

pikake candles.

"I guess two sheet sets are better than nothing," *Koa* griped.

"There's one more set of sheets for *keiki*, children," the helpful assistant told us. She blew dust off what was evidently an old set. "It's *Spiderman*. Any good to you?"

"The kids are gonna fight over these," I grinned, pawing through the bargain bins. I found some cool toys and a *Tom and Jerry* video.

"Hey, let's have a treasure hunt for them," *Koa* said. I thought it was a wonderful idea. On our way home, we stopped at *Pele's Other Garden* for lunch and we couldn't wait to go home and start getting things organized for our visitors.

"How's life in the Witness Protection program?" I asked Barbara when she came over with menus.

"Don't you start." She slapped my arm playfully.

"What do you want, babe?" *Koa's* hand stroked mine across the table.

If Barbara was shocked, she didn't show it.

"Pizza."

Koa nodded. "We'll get the large cheese and sausage pizza and the organic greens. And we'll get a number eleven sandwich. Do I get a pickle?"

"You get two, because I like *Manalo*," Barbara smiled. "You want beers with that?"

We nodded eagerly and *Koa* shook his head when she walked away.

“All the time I’ve been coming here, I never got an extra pickle. I walk in with you and I get the royal treatment.”

I grinned. “Stick with me kid, you might get three next time.”

The look from his eyes to my heart almost had me dragging him down the street to our house before the food could even get to our table. When we got home, we were surprised to find the entire Wilder clan waiting for us.

“We missed you,” the kids sang in unison, racing into our arms for hugs.

“I know we’re early...” *Lopaka* glanced at Kimo and I knew he’d pushed the unexpected arrival.

Kimo was staring at the house as *Koa* played with the boys on the front lawn. “Terrible things happened in this house. We need to bless it immediately.”

“He’s been having very bad nightmares,” I whispered to Kimo.

“Yes, I know.”

That surprised me, but we all hung out outside as Kimo and Sammy did their thing. None of the kids seemed to think it was weird that they had to stay outside until the blessing ritual was completed. Maybe they were used to it.

“Oh, Kimo did you see the babies’ crib?”

Lopaka asked when we went inside. *Tutu* and *Sammy* loved their room and after we unloaded the massive amount of groceries they'd thoughtfully brought, *Lopaka* looked at me.

"Now, show us your island."

With the kids piled into the back of the station wagon island-style, we took the family to our favorite beach, Shipwrecked Beach, because we knew they would find washed-up treasures galore. And they did. It was not a swimming beach, but a treasure hunter's paradise and we were early enough that all three boys found sea glass balls from fishing boats that had washed ashore overnight.

Prized by locals and Ebay sellers alike, the children were ecstatic they could keep them.

"Stoked!" *Kamaha* grinned, like a little surfer dude. The shells they found they were not allowed to keep, but they played with them, held them to their ears and commented on each one. Even *Little Kimo* had traveled the islands enough to know these were different shells than the ones from their home in *Oahu*.

"Look," *Keli'i* pointed straight ahead. "*Mypaka*, isn't that *Molokai* over there?"

We all praised his brilliance. Shipwrecked Beach has the most spectacular view of that once desolate island, designated the death place for *Hawaii's* unfortunate lepers.

"I think it's time for *Hulope*, for a swim and some snorkeling," *Koa* shouted and the kids ran back to the car.

Spinner dolphins playing in the pristine, clear-water cove entranced everybody when we arrived. A family dozing on the sand graciously lent us their rented kayaks, paddles and life vests and we took the kids out onto the water.

After a few hours, everybody was hungry.

"I want to take them to *Pele's* for dinner," *Koa* whispered to me.

"We'd better book," I said.

"Good thinking babe. See, there's lots of reasons I need you."

I caught *Lopaka's* sweet smile and I thought, *I hope we are all friends forever*. We drove over to *Pele's* and the family got a kick out of the name of the restaurant.

Barbara and Mark were sweet and friendly to our extended family, even though we made a lot of work for them. *Koa* introduced everybody, then mentioned Mark and Barbara being in Witness Protection and *Kimo* just laughed.

"He spoiled my joke, babe," *Koa* pouted to me.

I shrugged. "Don't worry. You have plenty of others."

Tutu and the kids picked out pizzas for us to eat and the boys were allowed to watch them being baked in the wood fire oven. We had so much fun

at dinner that we couldn't wait to get back to the house and have the treasure hunt.

"Oh," *Kamaha* grinned. "We did that already. We went on a treasure hunt."

"You did?" I asked. "And what did you find?"

"Some cool things under your bed." The boys all giggled.

'Man, I never thought you'd look there. You kids are good!"

"And you know what else we found?" *Kamaha* asked.

"I can't imagine."

"Somebody's teeth in a box in our closet."

"That's where they are! I hid those from my granddad years ago as a joke." *Koa* said. "I never could remember where I put 'em."

The entire table broke up laughing.

Back at the house, the kids wanted to watch *Tom and Jerry*, but *Koa* and I suggested board games and Twister and promised them cartoons and popcorn later.

Koa was totally immersed in the children and forgot about me. *Kimo* however, a very attentive man, was constantly around *Lopaka*. As *Lopaka*, *Tutu* and I made the beds, *Kimo* came to get himself a kiss.

"You two have an amazing sex life," I told *Lopaka*. "It's like...supersonic."

He burst into merry laughter. "Honey, I run

that man's hormones like a finely tuned instrument."

"You do? How?"

He and *Tutu* traded glances. Back in the kitchen, he opened a long folded sheaf of rice paper.

"Dandelion greens?" I asked.

"Close. They're *ko'oko'olau*. I use one blossom...one blossom *only*, of *noni*. I blend them and cook them for him every day."

"And what do they do?"

"They give him an eternally hard cock. And a raging appetite for me. I like to think that would be there anyway, but I like to keep things motoring along..." He grinned. "You want *Koa* ravenous for you or just a bit hungry?"

"Oh...ravenous."

He picked out long strands of the greens. "Don't say I didn't warn you. Now make sure you mix them in thoroughly. I use a lot of lemon juice, a tiny bit of oil and tons of ginger. If you have to, feed him by hand, but get them into him."

"And it really works?"

"Hell yeah, it works. My husband climbs the walls for me after he's had one of my salads. You can cook them, but raw...raw makes my husband a raving sexual lunatic."

We bit our lips in an effort not to laugh out loud and he chopped up the slightly pink *noni*

blossoms, sprinkling it over the top of three portions of greens, one for us, one for them and one for Sammy and *Tutu*.

"What's going on?" Kimo was standing behind us, a bleak, furious look on his face.

My God, he thought I was flirting with *Lopaka*.

I was a dead man.

"Oh, honey, don't spoil our surprise," *Lopaka* said, and I saw sparks of amber flicker in Kimo's eyes.

"What surprise?"

Lopaka just looked at him.

Kimo stared back. Suddenly he smiled, but the smoldering anger was still there. "What are you two up to?"

Lopaka turned around and gave him a kiss that would have curled my toes. Kimo pulled *Lopaka* to him, dragging him out of the kitchen. I made a mental note to stay on Kimo's good side and took the salad into the dining room.

"But we ate already," *Koa* murmured. Still, he ate everything I put on his plate, but the greens weren't getting the workout they needed. Kimo had been watching me, to see if I was even glancing at *Lopaka*, who doted on him throughout the impromptu meal. I was so focused on *Koa*, that I felt the shift in Kimo's energy, like somebody had turned the oven off. He'd given up being angry with me.

I picked up some greens, having watched *Lopaka* feed Kimo often enough. Though he was surprised, *Koa* took them from my fingers. By the time he was finished, *Koa* was antsy.

The kids, however, hadn't forgotten our promise that they could watch their video.

"Can we watch...puhleeez?" they wheedled.

"They don't have TV at home," Kimo said. "We don't encourage it, but since we're on vacation..."

Koa got excited, plugging in the TV in the living room, and he found some other old video tapes.

"Look what I found. *Top Cat*."

"I love *Top Cat*," Kimo said. We popped some corn and watched the tape twice, Kimo laughing so hard, tears were running down his cheeks.

Tom and Jerry was up next and the kids loved that, too.

"Bed time," Kimo said around nine o'clock, and the kids all clung to him as he put them to bed in their room, singing softly to them.

"Leave the fucking dishes," *Koa* snarled. "I'm out of my mind here."

Tutu looked at me, smothering a grin. She'd seen this reaction before. Her husband was calling for her and she sprinted down the hall.

Koa dragged me down the hallway. In our bedroom, he ripped my clothes off, a look of fire in his eyes. I could hear Kimo and *Lopaka* going at it across the hall from us.

I was naked on my back before I even knew it, and as *Koa* gave me a righteous fucking, I found myself smiling. I had to get my hands on more of those greens. *Koa* kept up a blistering pace, like he couldn't get enough of me. He came twice and when he realized I hadn't come at all, he lowered his mouth to me.

"I'm on fire. Baby, I don't know what's wrong with me." His hot mouth swallowed my cock and I felt the way he put his whole body into pleasuring me.

"You are perfect, *Koa*. Just perfect." I got no sleep that night. We took turns fucking each other, and just when I thought his fires were out, he'd be raring to go again. I laughed out loud, thinking I had the secret to keeping him insanely happy. I felt him entering me again in the cold, dark hours of the early morning, then heard his sharp intake of breath.

"*Manalo*, I love you." His hand reached between our slippery bodies so that I would come with him, just as we liked it, as we always liked it, and as night passed the baton to the morning, we got no sleep, but we were on a high when the sun rose.

"I want to go to God's Garden," *Kamaha* said over breakfast, *Lopaka* settling down to feed Little Kimo a bottle.

"We'll go today for sure," I said, and *Kamaha*

ran off happily to play with *Keli'i* and Sammy.

Little Kimo was such a boy, but there was part of him that was still a baby. Despite his extremely healthy appetite for food, he still craved his mother's milk. *Lopaka* always made sure he had a bottle in the morning.

"*Maluhia* expresses milk for the twins and she gives me a little extra for Kimo." He held the toddler on his lap. Little Kimo's eyes drifted closed.

"He just wants to feel like he's still my baby," *Lopaka* whispered. "He always will be."

As Kimo was feeding *Kama*, *Koa* was handling *Pele* duties.

"I think she needs a diaper change," *Koa* said when the baby started to fuss, and he surprised us all by going upstairs to change her.

"How was last night?" *Lopaka* asked me as soon as he was gone.

"Unbelievable. Yours?"

He nodded. "Beautiful."

"Kimo's never twigged to the greens?"

"A man needs some secrets," *Lopaka* winked.

We got the kids ready for our outing and Kimo started working on *Koa's* foot. *Koa* reacted when he saw me walk in.

"The man who makes my heart jump." His arms went around me. "I don't know what you did to me last night, but whatever it was, it was

amazing.”

“Nice try. What’s going on *Koa*? What secrets are you keeping from your man?” Kimo’s finger was pressed into a point in the middle of *Koa*’s foot.

“No secrets.” *Koa* seemed nervous. “I just...I’m worried about this hearing in Nevada.”

“Have you called Smoke?” I asked him.

Koa blew out a breath as Kimo worked the foot. “Honey, my boxing life is a world away. I don’t even want to *think* about it right now. I’m having too much fun.”

Kimo stared at him a moment, then looked at me. “Your turn.” He brushed *Koa*’s foot off his lap.

Koa took off, apparently pleased not to be subjected to any more internal investigations.

Kimo put my left foot on his thigh and I felt a surge of heat race through me.

“Wow. “Kimo, does this exhaust you, doing this?”

He smiled and shook his head. “It did until I met *Lopaka*.” His eyes went up and I saw the warmth in them as *Lopaka* walked across the room with Little Kimo on his hip and kissed him.

“Daddy!” the toddler shrieked, and Kimo kissed him, too. Little Kimo from *Lopaka*’s arms and ran out the back door to find his cousins.

I started to feel a little nauseous. I wanted to pull my foot away. Memories of the woman in the

gym, the girls in the dressing room, *Koa* throwing things at me...the soup, the horrible words...I started to sob.

Kimo put his hand on my shoulder. "Go with it, let it out. You'll feel better. You can't keep it in."

But I was embarrassed and ashamed. I felt so exposed, so raw, and *Tutu* came rushing over, enveloping me in her arms.

"You have to be strong," Kimo said quietly. "You have to understand you're the power base in your marriage. He might seem to be the strong one, but it's you. It all starts with you."

He pressed a point in my foot and the pain that tore through me was intense and very physical. "Almost done. You have to forgive him. You have to forget."

"Easy for you to say. You have the perfect marriage. You know *Lopaka* would never cheat on you."

"Yes, I know that, but I still fear losing him. Look how I reacted yesterday when I saw you talking to him in the kitchen. I am so in love with that man...."

It took a strong man to admit he had insecurities, that's for sure.

"Don't you see he's *my* power base?" Kimo asked. "*Koa* needs you. You are the *Lopaka* in this marriage and he is Kimo. You make it possible for him to go and do what he does for a living. *Lopaka*

makes it possible for me to do what I do in the world. I recognize that now, but it took me a long time.”

He kept working on my foot and my tears subsided.

“You didn’t always know he was your...axis?” I asked.

“No, but he knew it. He...” Kimo’s eyes became emotional. “You’ve seen our *hula* show. You think it’s a coincidence I have him spinning from an invisible cord from the sky to the depths of hell to rescue me? That’s what he did, you know. I think you rescued *Koa* too, although you still have some fires to put out.”

What does he mean by that? Before I could probe him further, he pushed my foot off his lap. “Okay, *Tutu*, you can quit hugging him now.”

“No, Kimo. I like it.”

“I think I’m jealous.” Kimo made the old lady cackle.

We went to the *Garden of the Gods* and ignored all the signs saying four wheel drives only. We parked in a turnout and walked along the red, red dirt with boulders strewn everywhere.

“It’s Mars!” *Kamaha* breathed. The place was as spectacular as *Koa* and Kimo assured us all it was.

“It does feel like we’re walking on Mars,” *Lopaka* agreed. We were all wearing hats, the sun beating down on us in this desolate, yet deeply

spiritual place.

"These boulders are no accident," Kimo said. "Some say the gods emptied out their gardens and this was the result, but this was once a meeting place for *kahuna* from all over the islands. A place where all the gods and goddesses were openly worshipped. Until *they* came."

"They? You mean the missionaries?" *Kamaha* asked.

"Yes," Sammy sighed. "You know what my mother always said about the missionaries? They came to the islands to do good. And they did very well."

We all laughed, breaking up the somber mood.

Lopaka looked at *Keli'i*. "Darling, you see that island over there to the left? You know what island that is?"

Keli'i nodded. "It's *Oahu*. It's home." He put his hand into *Lopaka's*.

"Very good," Kimo grinned. "You are so smart!"

"I know," *Keli'i* shrugged, making everybody laugh.

Later that night, Kimo tucked the kids into bed and *Tutu*, *Lopaka* and I made some mini dessert bites of *kulolo*, coconut pie, for our men. *Lopaka* pushed a tiny, tiny purple leaf into my mouth and whispered that I should put it under my tongue.

"This will make your semen taste like honey. I eat it every day. Kimo goes crazy when he sucks me. And this..." he popped a small yellow pod into my mouth.

"Chew this quickly, then go and kiss your man, put your tongue in his mouth and see what happens."

Tutu and I went and kissed our men. *Koa* was distracted, rifling through movies, but as soon as my tongue entered his mouth, he went insane and immediately wanted to fuck me.

Tutu and Sammy fled to their room and *Koa* and I ran to ours. He took me in the open doorway so fast, I was still trying to kick the door shut as his cock pushed its way into me.

"Oh man, oh shit...what the hell is wrong with me?" He fucked me fast, and yet with so much warmth, that when he grabbed my cock, I beat him to a monster orgasm.

"Wow." I had to find out what the hell that leaf was. On shaky legs, we went back downstairs and found *Lopaka* in a long pair of white pants, Kimo in a pair of black ones. The way *Lopaka* was kissing Kimo, I sensed Kimo was getting that same power-packed tonguing I'd given my man.

Koa, being ignorant to the volatile cocktail now circulating through Kimo's system said, "I want you to watch my favorite movie."

"A movie?" Kimo looked doubtful and I saw

the relief on *Lopaka's* face. "I only tried watching a movie with *Lopaka* one time."

"What happened?" *Koa* asked.

"We were at the movie theater and he was a very naughty boy. He put his hand down my pants, and then he put his mouth on me and we had to go home."

"You went home? Why?" *Koa* asked.

"It was either that or fuck him in the aisle of the movie theater."

"You haven't tried since?"

"Nope," *Kimo* grinned. "If he can keep his hands to himself, we'll be fine." *Lopaka* moved his hands away from *Kimo*. "Oh no, you don't. I like you being a naughty boy." He pulled *Lopaka* to him.

Me, I was stunned that *Kimo* wasn't going ape shit. Maybe he was a little more used to the magic stuff and it took a little longer to work on him.

"What are we watching?" I asked *Koa*, who nestled with me on the other sofa.

"*Gladiator*."

"That's the movie we went to see!" *Kimo* looked ecstatic. "Baby, we finally get to see that thing."

Things went well until, in one of the opening scenes, *Russell Crowe* arrives on his massive estate to find his wife and children brutally murdered. He stands before their hanging bodies,

their feet dangling above his desolate face. Up until that moment, Kimo had been happily gnawing through his popcorn.

“What? He went away and didn’t put any protections on his property?”

Lopaka smiled at him. “He’s not a *kahuna*, darling.”

But Kimo’s distress was acute. “Oh, right. This is a revenge movie, right? He’s gonna destroy the people that murdered his family?”

Koa gave him a sidelong look. “Er...not exactly.”

Kimo just stared at him.

“It’s an epic movie. He fights lions and —”

“*Lions*? Why would he fight lions? They didn’t murder his family.” Kimo’s facial expression was furious. “This is a *stupid* movie. *Lopaka*, if I came home and found you and our babies murdered...why...I...I just wouldn’t want to live anymore, that’s all.”

Lopaka took his husband’s face in his hands and gave him a long, gentle kiss. “It’s a movie, darling. It’s not real.”

“I *couldn’t* live without you, *Lopaka*.” This time when they kissed, the room turned very hot. The two men were exchanging such heated kisses, I didn’t know where to look.

Okay, Lopaka’s Lethal Little Love Leaf has finally hit its mark.

Koa and I glanced at each other, then at the TV, then back to the two men mauling each other on the sofa.

Kimo was undoing the drawstring to *Lopaka's* long white pants. He peered inside. "Mmmm...is that for me?"

Lopaka gave us a quick glance, and said in a shy voice, "Yes."

Kimo's face moved down to nuzzle past *Lopaka's* belly, making him jump. His huge, hard cock was poking out of the pants and Kimo's mouth was just a few inches away from it.

"Is this for me?" Kimo whispered, rubbed the cock against his chin and cheeks and lips. "Is this all mine?" "It's yours." *Lopaka's* eyes glowed and Kimo slid the pants down further as his tongue came out and swiveled over the head of *Lopaka's* stiff prick. *Lopaka* was squirming now, watching his cock being devoured. It was the most erotic thing I had ever seen in my life.

Koa and I didn't even pretend to be watching the movie now. Our eyes were on the show right in front of us. He suddenly lunged for me, unzipping my pants, tugging them down in an effort to get at me. My eyes were on *Lopaka's* huge dick. I don't know why I was surprised it was so big. Kimo was evidently in love with it, moaning as he took it down his throat.

I gasped as *Koa's* mouth snatched at my own cock and suddenly Kimo stopped, looking over at us. *Lopaka* went crazy, trying to get Kimo's attention back on him. Kimo came off *Lopaka's* cock and said to *Koa*, "Get him hard."

Koa went into a frenzy on me and Kimo's mouth went back to work on his husband. As I watched, *Lopaka's* fingers were reaching down to Kimo's pants. Kimo kept his mouth on *Lopaka* as his pants came off and I watched his naked back, his glorious, muscled body completely naked now. Kimo got on his knees and picked *Lopaka* up and flipped him upside down so that his knees were on Kimo's shoulders and *Lopaka's* head went straight down to Kimo's cock.

Kimo groaned as he held *Lopaka* to him, locked in their sizzling belly dance.

Koa had me good and hard now, but he said, "Kimo, I'm not that athletic. I don't think I can hold him like that." He glanced at me. "I just got all better hon, I don't want to break everything in the act of fucking you."

I couldn't help laughing.

Kimo meanwhile sported a wicked grin had *Lopaka* moving around, trying to get that hot mouth back on him. Kimo kissed the head of his man's cock and looked at us.

"I don't know about you, but I'm ready to fuck my man."

"Oh...no, I haven't sucked his cock yet." I scrambled for *Koa's* pants.

"We'll wait." Kimo rubbed his face all over *Lopaka's* cock again.

He turned *Lopaka* back around, climbing between his legs and they watched as I sucked *Koa's* beautiful, smooth cock into my hungry mouth.

Koa laughed and Kimo, lying on top of *Lopaka*, turned him over and started licking and kissing his back.

"Oh man...I want that," *Koa* said.

"What?" I took my mouth off him.

"My name tattooed right on your ass, the way *Lopaka* has Kimo tattooed on his."

"You got it."

Koa's full attention was on me. "I...do?"

"If you want it, I'll do it."

"Look what Kimo has on his cock." *Lopaka* proudly brandished the most massive cock I'd ever seen, even bigger than *Koa's*, with LOPAKA tattooed down the length of it.

"Oh...That is HOT."

"If you do it, be warned, you'll never want to stop fucking him," Kimo grinned. "You guys nearly ready? I can't wait much longer."

"Give me a minute, I want to get him ready." *Koa's* mouth went straight to my ass and a second later, I looked over to see *Lopaka* writhing around

on the floor as Kimo tongued him, too.

Koa was focused on me, *Kimo* on *Lopaka*, who opened his hazy eyes and panted, "Please, I need *Kimo* inside me."

"Do it," I urged *Kimo*, who hovered over *Lopaka's* spread legs.

"Whose cock is this?" *Kimo* growled.

"Mine!" *Lopaka's* legs beat at *Kimo's* thighs, trying to get that tree trunk inside him.

"Whose babies does it make?" *Kimo* asked, his voice thick with heated lust.

"Mine!" shrieked *Lopaka* as *Kimo* plunged into him. I heard *Lopaka* sigh, as if with a mixture of relief and pleasure, as *Kimo* began to slowly fuck him.

Koa matched his pace as he entered me. *Kimo* must have been driving *Lopaka* wild, judging by the sensations I felt. He took his time and fucked *Lopaka* slower than *Koa* ever fucked me, but the weird thing was, the whole combined effect of the mirror beside us, the slow, determined pace *Koa* was now fucking me with, and the increasingly high heat in the room sent me into a tailspin. I came so hard, *Koa* right there with me. But although I knew *Kimo* was coming, he kept a grip on *Lopaka's* cock, urging him to wait.

"Don't come baby, don't come darling." When his own passion subsided, *Koa* and I lay in a wet pool, his body stuck to mine as we watched *Kimo*

slowly pull out of *Lopaka*.

"No, no," *Lopaka* moaned.

"Honey, I want to suck your cock." Kimo stroked damp hair out of his eyes. He leaned down and kissed him, every muscle of that sinewy, hard body rippling. He moved his hands under *Lopaka's* ass, and holding his man wife to him, Kimo got to his knees, *Lopaka* still impaled on that cock, his head resting on the floor.

"Use your feet baby," Kimo commanded in a warm, soft tone, and I watched as, whimpering, *Lopaka's* feet pushed his body up Kimo's torso. His cock was right in Kimo's face as he placed his feet on Kimo's shoulders, his hands balancing on the floor behind him. With a wicked grin, Kimo went right to work on *Lopaka's* cock.

"Oh...oh..." *Lopaka's* face registered total bliss as Kimo moved up and down on his cock. *Lopaka* worked Kimo's cock with his agile ass.

"Oh, fuck." Kimo momentarily came off *Lopaka's* cock before claiming it again. *Lopaka* started to come and *Koa* and I watched as Kimo held *Lopaka's* hips to him. When *Lopaka* stopped bucking and moving, Kimo said, "Your come tastes like honey."

I saw *Lopaka* surreptitiously swallow a yellow pod. My God, I realized. All that sexual frenzy and Kimo hadn't even been slipped a mickey.

Ten seconds later, *Lopaka* lowered his bottom

onto Kimo's lap and leaned up for a kiss.

Suddenly, Kimo's face looked lust-ridden again. He maneuvered *Lopaka* onto his back, and with *Lopaka's* legs firmly planted over his shoulders, Kimo started plowing into him again.

He looked over at *Koa*. "C'mon...man, give it to him."

Koa looked at me, and in spite of the two vigorous workouts he'd already given me, I felt him growing hard again.

The four of us laughed as we found ourselves in a space race. We all wanted to take our partners into orbit. Kimo and *Lopaka* beat us with seconds to spare.

Koa held my face in his slippery hands as he came inside me, and I pulled on my own cock to join him on that magic carpet ride.

Chapter Thirteen

“If I give you a wedding ring, and if I ask Kimo to give us a marriage blessing today, is that enough for you? I don’t want a big fancy wedding, but I do want to be your husband.”

These were the words *Koa* woke me with the next morning.

“Yes, but I want you to have a ring, too.”

“That’ll have to wait. There’s no place here to buy a ring. I want you to have my mother’s wedding ring. It was supposed to be for my wife. So officially, you’re my wife. Will you marry me?”

“Yes.” He pushed the gold band he was holding onto my left hand.

“It’s tight,” I laughed.

“We can have it fixed when we get back home.”

There was an urgency in his demeanor that I found endearing. “It’s not too tight is it?”

Unfortunately, it was. My finger was turning purple. With reluctance, and with some difficulty, he pulled it off and put it on my pinkie finger.

"Come on." He tugged me out of bed. "Let's go find Kimo."

We found the Wilders in the kitchen making breakfast.

"I'm cooking pancakes," Kimo grinned. "*Lopaka* rarely lets me in the kitchen because I make a mess, but the results are worth it, even if I do say so myself."

He stared at my hand. *Lopaka* sensed the shift in energy and turned around too.

"We want to be married. Nothing spectacular. I want an old-fashioned *Hawaiian kahuna* blessing. Can you give it to us?" *Koa* asked. Kimo looked at the ring. "Of course I can. But shouldn't we make it a little bigger? It should be on the third finger."

Without waiting for a response, he pulled it off my hand and held it. The heat radiating from him was practically radioactive.

"Okay, now, try." The ring glowed like molten metal yet strangely, did not burn me as he told *Koa* to put it on my finger.

"A *kahuna's* blessing is binding. That's how marriage was done in the old days." Kimo held *Koa's* hand over mine as the ring cooled, and *Koa* kissed me. Kimo completed the blessing and the kids watched and applauded when Kimo stopped chanting.

"I love wedding breakfasts!" *Lopaka* hugged us both. "Kids, go find me more papaya from the tree

out back. You want sausage?"

We wanted everything.

"Thank you." *Koa* looked very happy. With the kids running around the garden, *Lopaka* took the chance to speak. "We had the most fantastic night last night and we want a rematch...isn't that what you call it in boxing?"

"Oh, yes," *Koa* nodded. "We loved it, too. Any time you want. It was a beautiful night."

Grinning over our hot, sexy secret, we all got busy getting breakfast on the table.

"I love you." *Koa* kissed me and I knew, in that moment, he truly did.

Koa and I felt very warm and close to *Kimo* and *Lopaka* after that incredible night.

"It was the most insane, most beautiful experience I've ever had," *Koa* told me. We all kept exchanging secretive smiles and I couldn't wait to try it all out again when *Koa* and I were alone in bed in the early hours of the morning.

"If everybody fucked like that, there'd be no divorce," *Koa* said. "Look how long they've been together and they have kids and everything...but they're still burning up for each other."

I gave him a kiss that I hoped would also give him something to think about.

It was tough leaving *Lanai* and going back to civilization, but *Koa* and I were keen to start our

new lives of wedded bliss. I couldn't wait to buy him a wedding ring and I couldn't wait to go home to our little mountain and start planting the herbs and flowers *Lopaka* and *Tutu* had given me.

Koa and I fell into bed the second we arrived. The bed sheets had a musty smell since we'd been gone so long but, we couldn't wait to change them. I needed that cock of his and he wanted my mouth on it.

We undressed quickly, my tongue running up his thighs. He sighed, his legs instantly opening as his long, thick cock started to harden for me.

"Look what you did." He held it out to me. He loved when I licked the head of his cock and went back to his legs and butt, returning for another taste of his sweet meat. I adored sucking his cock and he knew it. With my hands wedged between his thighs, fluttering between his ass and his perineum, I worked my tongue and lips up and down his shaft, until his pubic hairs tickled my nose. I felt his cock start to throb and his fingers pulled at my head.

"God, you give me head better than any woman." He held me steady as he started to flood my throat. I pulled back, anxious to taste his come on my lips and tongue, and after all the herbs and plant roots I'd smuggled into his diet, he, too, tasted like honey. He'd lost the bitter, almost sour taste I'd become accustomed to. He tasted so

wonderful I couldn't wait to get him hard again.

"You're insatiable, *Manalo*. I love it."

We settled into such a happy, ecstatic state, that it was almost like we were on a constant high. A day after we returned, *Koa* was back in the store with me, working by my side. We did everything together and I felt even my brother *Loki* was finally approving my choice in a mate.

A week after our return, I found the ring I wanted to give *Koa*. Almost miraculously, *Kimo*, *Lopaka* and Little *Kimo* showed up at my store, and in front of *Loki*, *Kala* and *Keo*, *Kimo* gave us another blessing.

"Let's celebrate," *Kimo* said. "Come to our house for lunch."

We all looked at each other, and for the first time ever, in the history of our businesses, apart from Christmas, Thanksgiving and...Michael's funeral, both my brother and I closed up shop.

I couldn't wait to see what *Kala*, *Loki* and *Keo* thought of the travel arrangements to *Kimo's* property, but as we followed the Wilders, the road to their house was already opened. *Koa* reached across the seat to take my hand. We were thinking the same thing. We were special to *Kimo* and *Lopaka*. They didn't show off their special magic to everybody.

As we swung into those beautiful big gates and wonderland opened up, my brother was, of

course, transfixed by the Wilders' property.

School was breaking for lunch and after *Kamaha* and *Keli'i* ran to greet us, hugging and kissing us, *Koa* and I marveled over the baby twins crawling everywhere. Then all the school kids, about forty all together, put on impromptu *hula* dances, drumming and chanting and singing for us, their most enthusiastic audience.

"You couldn't have given me a better wedding," I told *Koa*, who kept his arm around me as the children sang *The Queen's Prayer*.

Written over one hundred years ago when her Majesty, our Queen *Lili'uokalani* was imprisoned, it is a hauntingly beautiful song and I was grateful that our children still honored her and her heartfelt wish for acceptance and peace for all *Hawaiian* people, regardless of their skin color. We ate like kings and queens. Fresh *Hawaiian* bread with *ahi* tuna, chicken and home grown greens, salads, rice, platters of fruit and *haupia*, coconut pudding. It was a fantastic feast.

Koa and *Kimo* did an impromptu war dance for the kids that had everybody laughing and then *Kimo*, *Lopaka* and *Tutu* showed us around the property when school went back into the afternoon session. We got to the pig corral and a tiny piglet was lying on the ground panting.

"Daddy," Little *Kimo* wailed, running into the corral, tears streaming from his eyes. He picked

up the clearly dying piglet. "Daddy, fix." The piglet seemed to be taking his last dying gasps, but before Kimo could take the piglet, the baby started stroking its foot in the manner he'd watched his father do many, many times.

None of us spoke. As the piglet's eyes opened and he gave a little squeak, jerking back to life and wriggly, pent-up energy, Sammy came up on us and Kimo grabbed the piglet out of his son's hands.

"What's going on?" Sammy asked.

"Just visiting the pigs." Kimo put the piglet on the ground and as it ran around in joyous circles, Sammy frowned. "One of the guys told me the little one wasn't doing so well, but I see you beat me to it." With a big smile, he took off again.

Kimo looked at us all, petrified. I'd never seen anything resembling fear on this man's face. "Please, *please*, don't tell anyone what you just saw. If they know the baby has this power to heal, they'll take him away from us and he's not ready for that. He needs us and we need him."

Tutu's face was grave. "You don't think Sammy would turn him in, do you? The final approval must come from the maternal grandmother and that is me. I would *never* approve it."

"Darling," Kimo took her hand. "Sammy's an elder. He might not have a choice. We just need more time...to get certain things in place."

“What things?” She was clearly upset that Kimo didn’t trust Sammy. “I would never let ‘em take that baby...*any* of our babies away from you and *Lopaka*.”

“*Tutu*, as much as it anguishes me to say this, you are technically speaking and in every other way, baby Kimo’s maternal grandmother, actually, great grandmother, but legally you are not.”

She gasped. Clearly, she had forgotten this.

“We need to get full legal custody of the baby, and we will.” Kimo’s voice was low. “I have prayed on it and I will continue to pray, but until we have it, darling, *please*, protect our son.”

“Of course I will.” She was angry. “He’s my baby. I don’t care *what* the law says.”

Lopaka was holding the toddler in his arms now.

“I don’t understand. Who would take him away from you?” *Koa* asked.

“The *kupuna*, the elders.” Kimo’s face was grim. “I was taken from my parents when I was three.”

“I would never have allowed it,” *Tutu* sniffed.

Kimo gave her a gentle smile. “I know. That’s why we love you. I vowed to *Lopaka* they would never take our children from us. I never want them to know terror and abandonment, to go through what I went through. I want our children to have knowledge and power, but I want them to know love, too. It will make them stronger, more

compassionate healers.”

“You have our word,” *Koa* said. “I can’t...can’t believe they would take your babies from you. My God...baby *Kimo*. No, no...it can’t happen.”

Kimo asked for *Loki*, *Keo*, *Kala*, *Koa*, *Tutu* and me to give him and *Lopaka* our hands.

It was an emotional moment. *Kimo* said a quick prayer.

“Any time you need us, anything you need. You tell us, *Koa* and I will be there,” I said.

“Me too,” *Loki* said.

“Thank you.” *Kimo*’s eyes were on *Lopaka* who was showing a nesting ground bird to baby *Kimo* now. “He has a huge gift.” Pride invade his face now. “It’s started showing itself in the last few days. He brought a sick bird back from the dead. And a fish. *Tutu* was cleaning it at the time.” He grinned suddenly. “We’re going to have to watch him.”

Koa and I returned to our lives and the weeks slipped by, then two months had gone and suddenly Thanksgiving was upon us.

That was when things subtly changed between us.

It all started innocently enough.

Kimo and *Lopaka* invited us to spend Thanksgiving with them and we were delighted to receive their invitation.

“Stay until Monday,” *Lopaka* said. “That’s Baby Kimo’s second birthday. We want to spend time with you, take the boat out with the kids. Maybe sail over to *Molokini* and snorkel.”

The idea of spending a few days with them—they told us the children missed us and in truth, we missed them too—fired up our imagination. We might get another one of those hot nights with that crazy, sexy couple.

Though we had never touched them and they never touched us, the experience we’d shared with them still fueled our sexual fantasies, and we both hoped and wished for a possible rematch.

The other rematch hovered like an unseen force over our lives. The World Boxing Corporation, *Koa’s* sanctioning body was unhappy that he was out of commission for another four months, but they couldn’t challenge a medical suspension. During his brief stay at the hospital in Nevada, he’d had blood work done and he tested clean, which I knew he would. No evidence of performance-enhancing drugs, so they couldn’t drop him as their champion. Still, they were asking for a ridiculous amount of money to issue him his own championship belt, a whopping three hundred thousand dollars.

He didn’t have it, not after all the money he’d paid out for his initial sanctioning fees, to his trainer, to Uncle Sam and some past bad debts.

Petrenko's attempts to have him disqualified also came to nothing, which was a blessing. So my hero was a champion without a belt.

Koa was ordered to visit the *Hawaii* State Athletic Commission doctor who checked him over, pleased with his clean x rays.

The medical papers were stamped, ready to be returned to the Nevada Commission which would lift the medical suspension in four more months.

"You have remarkable recuperative powers," the doctor told *Koa*. "Not a hint of trouble on that hand. You can get back in the gym, but no sparring. No landing the right hand. You can throw it, but no connecting with *anything*. Okay?"

Koa was pleased with his results. It was a rare trip back into *Waikiki* and for us and we topped it off with an early dinner at *Hoku's*.

The next morning, he was back in our garage gym shadow boxing.

"I need to get back in shape if I'm going to be eating all that turkey," *Koa* said. We were excited about our visit with the Wilders, but very early on Thursday morning as I packed a large, festive basket with toys for the children and a couple of bottles of champagne for our hosts, I couldn't find *Koa* anywhere.

His bedroom door—the room he no longer used except occasionally I would find him in there, he said, meditating—was closed. I pounded

on it and for some bizarre reason, hesitated before I opened it. The strange smell I'd detected before, when *Koa* had left for Las Vegas, was coming out of it. Then, as now, everything was pushed to one side of the room and there was a cold, dead feel to it.

And he was nowhere to be found. We had to leave and I began frantically searching for him. After circling the outside of the house, I packed up the car and walked back inside to find him coming out of his bedroom. He had a strange look on his face. I wanted to ask him where he'd been, what he'd been doing, but was stunned silent by what he said.

"Babe, I'm sorry, I was meditating and fell asleep. Are you ready?"

I knew this was a blatant lie. He hadn't been in that bedroom when I went looking for him. I felt very apprehensive about that room and, in that moment, I felt relieved we'd be away from it for a few days. I didn't say anything, did not want to question him and risk spoiling our upcoming weekend. Little did I know then it would be our last weekend of unspoiled happiness for a very long time.

Koa was very quiet on the drive up to *Kimo* and *Lopaka's*. He looked exhausted and fell into a heavy, yet restless sleep beside me. True, we made

love constantly, but since we did little else but eat, fuck and sleep, he had no reason to be so utterly spent. He seemed distressed at one point and jumped, and I pulled over to calm him. His eyes opened and his face relaxed when he saw me.

"Thank God," he whispered, and I was astonished to see the terror in his eyes. "Thank God...it was a dream." He was burning up. I opened a bottle of water and he drank deeply from it, then flung the empty bottle into the backseat, fastening his eyes on my crotch. "Now I want this." He proceeded to unzip my fly right on the side of the road, not caring that his head kept bumping the steering wheel in his haste to get my cock out of my pants.

It almost hurt he suckled on me with such...*deprivation*. I didn't say anything, just tried to relax into it until I heard his deep sigh around the base of my cock as he realized I was hard, responding to his tongue and his touch, and he teased me to a thrilling orgasm right there with traffic blasting past us.

"That's known as a sixty eight, baby." He swallowed every last drop and licked his lips with the satisfaction of a job well done. "You owe me one and I plan to collect all goddamned weekend long."

We kissed and I found myself laughing into his mouth as my cell phone rang.

“How far away are you?” *Lopaka’s* voice came over loud and clear.

“Right there.”

“Come on in.”

Koa kept his hand on my cock in a possessive way as we plunged into the sudden opening to our right, which, of course, closed up behind us as we veered up the steep hill. A smile spread across his face as we neared the property.

“S’pose I better let you pack your pistol away.”

“Yeah, s’pose you better.” I fumbled to rearrange myself and close up the zipper. He kept his hand on my leg.

“If we do end up playing with them again, they can look at your love gun all they want but they are not allowed to touch it.”

“Of course not, *Koa*. Nobody else can.”

He sighed happily as the Wilders’ gate swung open and we narrowly avoided colliding with another car pulling forward just ahead of us. *Kimo*, *Lopaka* and the kids were waiting, the kids shrieking with joy as the occupants of both cars piled out. I recognized *Kimo’s* parents, who greeted us warmly and kissed the kids who threw themselves into our arms right after their grandparents.

Kimo and *Lopaka* stood by watching, laughing as *Keli’i*, *Kamaha* and Little *Kimo* tore around greeting everyone. Little *Kimo* was pawing

through my picnic basket and he extracted a plush-toy pig.

“My *pua’a*, my pig.”

Koa and I laughed, but his parents tried to make him put it back.

“It’s for him,” *Koa* said. “We also got him this.” He pulled out a massive lion with a facial expression just like big *Kimo*’s.

“Daddy!” Little *Kimo* hugged the lion to him. “Look, mama.” He held it up to *Lopaka*.

“It does look like daddy,” *Lopaka* said with that merry laugh of his. “Look, *Kimo*. It’s *you*. You’re the lion king.”

Kimo gave a roar that made the kids squeal with joy and his husband swoon.

“We want to give *Keli’i* and *Kamaha* their presents,” I said, and the boys fell on the pick up sticks, puzzles and games we’d brought them.

“You are so sweet,” *Lopaka* said. “You shouldn’t have done that.”

“It’s our pleasure. And look what *Koa* found.” I held up two new DVDs of *Tom and Jerry* and the three boys went crazy.

“They can watch it at our house,” said *Maluhia*, who was walking down the path from her house. “We have a TV and a DVD player and the boys have been begging us for more *Tom and Jerry*. Thank you so much.”

She hugged us both, then oohed and aahed

over the champagne. "Let's open a bottle now. We just made a big batch of fresh peach nectar. We can blend them."

Lopaka led the way to the main house, threading one arm through his mother-in-law's, the other held possessively by his husband.

In the kitchen, *Lopaka* got me alone. "We...we were hoping to arrange some private time, just the four of us. It won't be tonight, too much family around, but I'm hoping, if you and *Koa* are open to it...tomorrow night?"

"We're raring to go."

Lopaka smiled. "I have something *really*...special in mind. Details to come. Here, take this leaf." He pressed something in a small piece of paper into my hand. "But don't give it to *Koa* now. He'll rape you at the dinner table. Give it to him a half hour before you want to fuck him. He'll go mad. The later you can hold off, the better because the effect will last twenty four hours, and by the time we have our little fun tomorrow night, you and I will blow our men's minds completely."

I grinned. "*Lopaka*, I think I love you."

He laughed and turned to take baby *Pele* out of *Tutu's* arms.

"I hope you were setting up another hot night for us." *Koa* sidled up to me. I could feel his hardening cock against my back.

"Baby, you know I am."

"Kimo says they've put us in a private bungalow up the hill. Think I can talk you into coming up there for a little man-on-man action before lunch?"

"Sure."

Lopaka passed around glasses of champagne and peach juice and the assembled adults toasted one another's good health. I knew everybody except the male couple who'd just arrived. They were introduced as *Aloha* and Johnny, the Wilders' friends and immediate neighbors. The boys climbed all over them and they good naturedly let themselves be used as human jungle gyms.

"Hey Champ," said the one named *Aloha*. He had a strong British accent. "Fantastic fight, what a knockout! How's the hand?"

"Perfect, thanks to Kimo," *Koa* sighed. "I'm still not allowed to fight for another two months, but thank God my man doesn't require punches to get him to lie down."

Everybody laughed and *Tutu* handed around a platter of massive shrimp covered in toasted coconut.

"Please, *Tutu*." Little Kimo held both his stuffed toys in one arm, reaching up with the other for a shrimp. *Koa* gave him a lift and the toddler's eyes blazed as he scanned the shrimp. He took one, giving *Tutu* a kiss. "*Mahalo*."

Koa set him down again and the baby toddled

off to sit on his great grandpa Sammy's lap.

"Your kid is freakin' adorable," *Aloha* sighed. "I never wanted kids 'til I started hanging out with you guys."

"I feel the same way," *Koa* said. "Look at *Kamaha*, how he takes care of *Keli'i*. It's the sweetest thing. As for this baby girl..."

He reached a finger over to her apple cheeks as she nestled in her other grandma's arms, and baby *Pele* laughed.

"She's a flirt," *Kimo* laughed. "She's a total charmer, isn't she?"

"You going to have more?" *Aloha* asked.

"No, three's plenty. I'd love more, but..." he eyed *Lopaka* in that possessive way of his, as *Lopaka* handed out tumblers of juice to the kids and refilled our glasses with champagne.

"What?" He smiled when he caught *Kimo's* gaze on him.

"I'm just thinking about how I can't wait to attack you when I get you alone again."

Lopaka blushed. "That makes two of us, darling."

"Do you two ever fight?" *Aloha* asked.

"No," came the collective response.

Lopaka turned to *Tutu*. "Do you mind helping me with the turkey?"

"I'll help you," *Kimo* said.

"You just want to molest the chef," *Aloha*

laughed.

Kimo rubbed his hands together. "One of the perks of the job."

Thanksgiving with Kimo and *Lopaka* was absolutely beautiful. The enormous rustic wooden table outside, set for thirty, was magnificent. *Lopaka* and *Tutu* and the kids had decorated it with winter mountain apples, nuts, fall leaves, shimmering pumpkin-scented candles the kids had made in class, and the delicious touch of *Pele plumeria* blossoms tossed across the table, giving it that extra tropical, spicy punch.

"Oh, this is lovely," Kimo said when the kids dragged him outside to see the end result. We all took our seats and I was pleased to see *Keli'i* and *Kamaha* with *Maluhia*, Ramon and Ramon's parents. *Manu* waved to me and then tiny blonde Katie from the bookstore arrived with two hot *Hawaiian* guys and her baby in a swing.

"Hey *Manalo*." It was her husband, *Kahanu*. He set the swing up near the table, the baby asleep, one pink-socked foot poking from her blanket.

I felt *Koa's* jealous glance and quickly introduced them. "*Kahanu* is Katie's husband and he's a big, big fan of yours."

"And this is *Nohea*." Katie introduced us as *Kahanu* held out a chair for her. *Nohea* sat on her other side, the three of them exchanging blissful

smiles.

Koa and I traded glances. *What's going on there?*

Kimo said a beautiful prayer of Thanksgiving. "I want everybody to say what they're thankful for. I'll start." He looked at *Tutu*. "I'm thankful for you, because without you, I wouldn't have my husband. And without *Lopaka*, not one person would be sitting here right now."

"That's true." Katie raised her glass.

Lopaka looked overcome with emotion. He said he was thankful for Kimo. "Thank you for my life."

We all took turns and when we were done, I think everybody was watery-eyed. I felt loved and cherished when *Koa* said he was thankful for me.

"Before we start eating, there's something I'd like to say to *Lopaka*," Kimo announced, producing a red velvet covered box. He put it on the table in front of him.

"What's this?"

Tutu and Sammy were smiling.

"Open it." *Maluhia* stood behind her twin, her hands on his shoulders.

There were five rings, the likes of which I had never seen. They were woven gold rings, absolutely exquisite in detail. *Lopaka's* mouth remained open.

"These rings are made of temple gold," Kimo said. "As you know, my great, great grandfather

was *Kahekili*, the last king of *Maui*. The only earthly treasure he left, and which I inherited, was some of his gold. Nothing else like it exists in the world. I had all of it made into rings."

He got down on one knee. "*Lopaka*, if you had to do it all again, would you still marry me?"

"Oh, my God. Of course I would. Kimo, please get off the ground." The two men kissed and Kimo put one of the rings on *Lopaka's* finger.

"Now put this one on me," he whispered. *Lopaka* slipped a ring on Kimo's already full wedding finger.

"Who are these for?" Katie voiced everyone's thoughts.

"This one is for *Tutu*," Kimo smiled.

"For me?" She looked astonished. Sammy reached over, putting it on *Tutu's* finger.

"This one is for Sammy," Kimo said.

"I'll put it on him," *Tutu* said. "Look honey, doesn't it feel good?"

Sammy was speechless, just staring at the ring.

"And this one is for *Maluhia*, for giving us our twins." Kimo handed the box to Ramon who looked at the remaining ring.

"I don't think I have ever seen anything like this." He put the ring on *Maluhia's* finger.

"That is exquisite." *Koa* grabbed her hand. "I have never heard of temple gold."

Kimo looked at *Lopaka*. "The rest of the

gold...there's enough to be made into rings for our children, so that when they get married, they too will have their earthly treasure."

"They already have that," Katie said. "They have you two for parents."

"Hear, hear!" We all raising our glasses and Kimo said, "I'm starved."

Tutu, *Lopaka* and *Maluhia* rolled out the incredible array of food and we all groaned with anticipation.

Baby Kimo sat between his fathers, the twin babies in joint seats beside *Lopaka*. Kimo took turns feeding the three children *poi* from his fingers and then he fed *Lopaka*, somehow making it seem highly erotic.

"I always feel like I'm having the sexiest meals alive in this house," Kimo's mother said.

"Do you have temple gold, too?" *Koa* asked her. I wished he hadn't. He seemed obsessed with those rings.

"Oh, yes. I have a little. I wanted Kimo to have his share, and of course he made it into rings. I am so happy they came out so beautifully." She looked at *Lopaka*. "I will get such pleasure out of seeing you wear our family's gold. If not for you, I wouldn't have the relationship I have with my son or my beautiful grandchildren."

"Will everybody quit saying goopy things and making me cry?" *Tutu* honked her nose into her

napkin. "I don't like salty turkey."

"I like it," *Koa* said. "You can't pass it down to me, *Tutu*."

The old lady cackled.

Lopaka took the babies over to his parents-in-law. Their faces lit up as the babies giggled in their arms. "Who's ready for dessert?"

"Wait 'til you see this." *Kimo's* face was ablaze. "I wait all year for this dessert."

"Me too," *Keli'i* said.

"I said to Johnny last night, if he doesn't make that dessert, I'm gonna bawl." *Aloha* screwed his face up, making the kids laugh.

Lopaka, *Tutu* and *Maluhia* returned with trays filled with perfectly shaped pumpkins. I could smell burnt sugar, and as they quickly placed a pumpkin in front of each of us, I could see the lids had been cut off and replaced.

"Okay, everybody, lids up. Happy Thanksgiving." *Lopaka* laughed as *Kimo* yanked him down beside him.

I lifted the pumpkin lid and saw the most perfect, incredible crust of brown, bubbling sugar and the smell from everybody's plates had us all sniffing and moaning.

"It's pumpkin crème brulee," *Kimo* said. "And you can thank me for this, because if I had made *Lopaka* stay in bed this morning, you'd all be eating canned fruit right now."

"Oh, I think I just fell in love." Katie cracked the surface with her spoon, digging into the rich, creamy mixture. "I want the recipe."

"I'll give it to you," *Lopaka* promised.

"*Tutu*, I love your necklace," Katie said. "Where did you get it?"

"Oh, my *Lopaka* made it for me."

"Of course he did," Katie feigned exasperation. "Is there anything *Lopaka* can't do?"

Everybody laughed. For the first time during the meal, nobody spoke. The cr me was the most incredible thing I'd ever eaten in my life. Smooth, buttery, creamy and sweet, it was also nutty and spicy. Kimo finished, looking around. I noticed all the kids putting protective arms around their pumpkins.

"Geez," he frowned. "Even the baby's got me figured out."

"Small bite, daddy," Baby Kimo, his face smeared now, held up his spoon to his father.

"No, this is what I want." He grabbed his son, kissing his little face.

"Me, too, me, too!" the twins raced to him, finding open arms waiting for them.

Chapter Fourteen

“It was later that night that *Lopaka* beckoned me to the kitchen. We were immediately joined by Kimo’s mother, *Tutu* and Katie. “Now,” he said, handing us all little trays with morsels of chicken and slices of fruit.

“Wrap a piece of chicken around your leaf. Make your husband eat it. It’s just a bite, so he’ll do it, even if he’s full. Give him this glass of champagne. The leaf is very bitter and the champagne helps. It’s the only thing that disguises the disgusting taste. Sip it together. You may want to find some place private. He’ll go mental in half an hour and he’ll rip your pants off.”

“Really?” I asked.

“Trust me.”

The women all giggled in a conspiratorial way.

“Now, one more thing. Forty minutes after you give him the chicken, give him a blow job to...uh...fruition. That way you’ll get the effects, too. Everyone, that is, except Katie. Katie, feed this

to *Nohea*. Get the champagne into him and then get him to suck *Kahanu* off and watch the fireworks.

"Katie, since you have two men to service, you can have sloppy seconds and you'll still feel the effects, but suck *Kahanu's* cock to fruition, not *Nohea's*, so you get a more diluted dose. You're still breast feeding."

"What about *Maluhia*?" she asked sulkily.

"She's not partaking. She's going to be babysitting for us all tomorrow night."

I was trying to absorb the fact that Katie was involved with both *Nohea* and *Kahanu*.

"This intensifies in twenty four hours and you'll give new meaning to the expression *rock his world*." *Lopaka* grinned and we all hugged each other. "Go get 'em."

He sidled off with a tray laden with a pumpkin brulee he'd saved for *Kimo*, the chicken and a glass of champagne.

Katie wandered to her bedroom and I glimpsed her two men sitting up in bed waiting for her. She closed the door on their soft laughter.

"They're a threesome, *Kimo* just told me," *Koa* whispered as I joined him on the sofa. "She married *Kahanu* but they're all in the marriage. That's kinda hot, don't you think?"

"Yeah." I hoped he wasn't getting any ideas. I tried popping the chicken in his mouth.

"I'm full."

"Please, for me."

He reluctantly chewed it and I followed up with the champagne.

"That chicken tasted really weird, babe."

I held the champagne to his mouth.

He was staring at the closed door to Kimo and *Lopaka's* room.

I laughed. "That's not happening tonight, darling. Tomorrow night, *Lopaka* and I have something spectacular planned."

His eyes shone. "You do? What?"

"Now that would be spoiling your surprise, wouldn't it?"

"Spectacular, huh?"

"Absolutely." I mentally crossed my fingers. He relaxed against me as I sipped at our shared glass. Four other people in the house had just slipped their men *Mickeys* and were also eagerly awaiting the sexy results. I bit my lip, trying not to think about Sammy and *Tutu* rolling around in the heat of passion together.

"You're hogging the champagne, *Manalo*."

I quickly pressed the glass to his lips. His warm brown eyes glued to me as he lifted his mouth away, pressed it over mine and opened, sending the champagne into my mouth. We kissed for several minutes and I heard nothing but quiet in the house and the slap of waves against the rocks

far below us in the dark night.

"I adore kissing you." *Koa* came off my mouth, swallowing the last of the champagne. "I always wanted to neck with a guy on the sofa of my parents' house." His face instantly darkened, remembering bad times.

"Let's pretend right now. We'll pretend they're asleep and I've sneaked in to see you and I can't keep my hands off you."

"You have to *pretend* you can't keep your hands off me?"

"I'm pretending to pretend," I scowled. "Don't spoil the game."

"Babe, I'm not a big one for fantasy...you know that. I love to fuck you, and I love the way you fuck me. But pretending I'm in my parents' house is really crossing a line. I can't fucking indulge in that kinda crap. I ..."

I silenced him with a kiss that had some bad intentions in it. "Was there a guy you wanted to make it with in school?"

"Billy *Manaka*."

"Pretend I'm Billy. Tell me all the things you want me to do to you."

"No, it's ridiculous."

I rubbed my hand up and down his strong thigh. God, I wanted him. I hated when he got uptight, which he only did whenever he brought up the subject of his parents.

Something came over his face. I swear I glimpsed a small purple flame sparking in his eye. He gasped. "I can't...do..." *Koa's* head dropped for a second as if he'd been punched from within.

"Can't what, sweetie?"

He licked his lips, his head lolling from side to side.

"What is it?" I asked, anxious now. I had no idea what to expect from *Lopaka's* little leaf and *Koa* was acting very strange.

"I...I want to fuck you so badly." His gaze swept over me. "I'm sorry about some of the crap I say to you. I'm sorry that sometimes I push you away." He pulled me to him. "Kiss me," he said into my mouth. "But be quiet, I don't want to wake my parents."

We kissed hungrily, his eyes intense as he watched me tongue my way down his body. I took off his shirt, his trousers and then focused on his cock, still sheathed in his jockey shorts. It wasn't the tiny whities he knew I was obsessed with, but his cock was straining for me and I checked my watch. I had to stall for six minutes before I could allow him to come in my mouth.

I took my time, swabbing the head of his cock through his underpants, then impatient to get my mouth on him, he hoisted himself up, yanking the pants to his ankles. I got my face between his legs and he stroked my head.

“Babe, I don’t think I can do this...I need to be alone with you. I really need to fuck you...”

I heard gasps and shrieks coming from the three adult bedrooms.

“What the fuck.” He tried to sit up. I kept myself between his spread legs, his rigid cock dancing in front of my face.

“I am a man and I need to suck your cock. You better let me have what’s mine or else.” I checked my watch. Four minutes. I instantly impaled his hot ass on my willful tongue. *Koa’s* eyes lost focus as I went to town on him, making him jerk with each sip I took from him. I worked hard at making his ass feel loved and adored and when I rolled my tongue up and down his whole ass, up to his cock, slobbering over the base, he started to sob.

“Suck the tip...Jesus...suck the head of my cock before I explode.”

Twenty seconds. I kept up a humming sound in my throat, knowing it would send his spirit and body soaring, and I let my mouth close, finally as his cock twitched violently, sending his hot juices into my throat. Whatever was in him, whatever this jolt of joy was, it was now in me.

Koa came in an earth-shattering orgasm and I heard *Kimo* shout, “*Lopaka!*” as he too, came in the bedroom down the hall.

“Take me home and fuck me.” *Koa* picked up his clothes and ran to our bungalow.

All night long, *Koa* was insatiable for me. He licked me from head to toe, describing how my skin tasted and how much he wanted me, his mouth constantly on me. When he was inside me, he told me he could *feel* my heart beating, that he could feel how good he was making me feel. There was nothing frenzied about the way he made love to me, yet he never stopped fucking me. It was as if he was trace memorizing every inch of me. In the wee hours of the morning, he laid back on the bed, spent, his arms stretched out, Christ-like as he looked at me and begged me to fuck him.

It was a wonderful, long, lavish fuck and he kissed and licked my face and neck. "Don't rush, I want this to feel good for you."

"*Koa*, I have to come, I can't wait." His ass tightened around my cock and I went into orbit, my breath catching on a million hungry stars.

We were in bed past our usual time, mauling each other with a sense of urgent, never-ceasing desire. Each time we tried to get up, some new body part intrigued us and we'd end up sucking on each other's fingers, face or toes until one of us came again in a strong wave that felt like a riptide.

"What did you do to me?" *Koa* pressed against my back, his cock rigid at my spine. "I never want to get out of this bed."

I don't know how much later it was that the kids bashed on our door and announced breakfast.

Koa and I put on board shorts and T-shirts, making our way to the main house. The sky seemed incredibly blue and I became hyper-aware of every leaf, flower and blade of grass, equally aware that *Koa* seemed to be experiencing it, too.

"How beautiful is that?" He pointed to a mother and baby ladybug on a leaf.

Everything is beautiful, the words sang in my head.

Koa stopped and gently took my face in his hands. "Good morning, magnificent man. Whatever the fuck you did to me last night, I'm still on a goddamned high."

I grinned, in spite of myself.

"Ah-ha! You did do something to me." He slipped his arm around me, stuck his hand down my shorts and was fondling my bare ass underneath as we arrived at the huge table in the backyard.

All the men sat in their chairs, looking happy and very, very spacey. There wasn't much conversation. *Everything is beautiful*, we were all too busy thinking. *Nohea* and *Kahanu* came out, Katie wedged between them. She didn't seem especially happy, but then she'd been banned from the full effects of the leaf and wasn't on cloud cuckoo cuckoo land, like the rest of us.

"My wife turned me into a sex maniac," Sammy announced to no-one in particular, then

everyone started talking at once.

“What did they do to us?” *Nohea* asked. “I can’t keep my hands off him.”

The only one who wasn’t in fits was *Kimo*. He was smiling to himself, watching the whales play in the distance, baby *Kamapua’a* in his arms, suckling happily on his bottle.

“*Lopaka*,” *Kimo* said softly, yet somehow his husband must have heard him because he came out of the house quickly. “Darling, you want to bring *Pele* out?”

“I already fed her. You want me to burp *Kama*?”

“No, I want a kiss. Very badly. I can burp our son.”

Lopaka gave him a beatific smile and a kiss as *Kimo* put the baby over his shoulder. *Lopaka* went back to the kitchen as *Kimo* stroked his tiny son’s back.

“What did they do to us?” *Kimo*’s father asked, pouring coffee.

“They showered us with love,” *Kimo* said.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Let me put it to you this way, we’re all in for one hell of a ride tonight. I suggest you take a nap today and plan not to get any sleep later on.”

“But what was it? What did they do to us?” *Sammy* asked. “I mean...I went *all night*.”

We all started laughing.

"It was *kefi*," Kimo said.

"*Kefi*?" *Koa* repeated. "What's that when it's at home?"

"A small tiny leaf that bonds you to the person you love, that makes you feel nothing but good things. It puts a rather...spectacular bridge from the soul to the body so that it must...express itself. Some call it the love leaf. *Lopaka* and I...we call it the *tongue of fire*."

"It'll get stronger before the day is over and believe me, you'll be happy you are a man in love."

"Is that why I want to hug and kiss everyone and everything?" *Kahanu* asked.

"Yes," Kimo laughed.

"You knew *Lopaka* was giving it to you?"

"No, not at first. I never know when he's going to surprise me." He smiled a small, secretive smile.

Dang, and *Lopaka* thought he had some secrets.

"It only grows for two days a year. We discovered it in our garden last year and really enjoyed ourselves. It's best fresh. I guess my beautiful man thought he would share the love. I just checked and this year's leaves are all gone."

"You gave it to me?" *Koa* nudged me. I nodded. I guess I had no secrets, either.

We were all silent.

"Does that mean we have to wait until next

year for seconds?" *Koa* finally asked.

"I'm afraid so." *Kimo's* finger stroked his son's small face. "But look at it this way, we all have something to look forward to right here, same time next year."

"And there's still tonight." *Sammy* looked ecstatic. "*Kefi*, huh?"

Katie and her men and *Ramon's* large family left after lunch, the rest of us retiring to our beds.

"I love the idea of a nap," *Koa* wrapped himself around me. We woke up late and there was a knock at the door.

Disoriented, I called out, "Come in."

Lopaka poked his head around the door. "We've got lobsters and other lovely things for dinner. Come and eat now, then you and I are taking our husbands on a magical mystery tour."

In the beautifully lit gardens with tiki torches and *Hawaiian* music piping out from the house, we all ate at the big table, all the children eager to go to *Maluhia's* to watch DVDs.

Baby *Kimo* was holding his toy pig with one hand, eating buttered lobster with the nimble fingers of his right hand in a practiced way.

"Want me to watch the babies for you now?" *Maluhia* asked *Lopaka* in a low voice.

She went home with all the children, *Lopaka* and *Kimo* following with the baby twins in their arms,

and then they were back.

"*Tutu*," you have the house to yourself," Kimo grinned. "Get busy."

She lunged at her husband and the four of us walked outside.

"The babies will be okay, won't they?" *Lopaka* fretted.

"Do you trust me?" Kimo asked him.

"You know I do."

"I have so many protections on our babies, all five of those precious children, nothing will happen to them, *Lopaka*. I promise you."

"Kimo, I trust you. It's just that...I have something really special planned but I don't want to seem...selfish."

"Be selfish. Be my lover. Come on, fearless man, show me how much you love me." Kimo gave him a smoldering kiss and as the moon rose high above us, I felt a crackle of heat ripple through me.

"Fuck, it's started," Kimo said.

"Wow...it *is* a tongue of fire," I said. "I feel like I could come without *Koa* even touching me."

Koa's face glowed. "I feel...amazing."

"Let's go," *Lopaka* took Kimo's hand as we climbed down the stairs from the property, to a small boat moored at the last stone step.

"Where are we going, darling?" Kimo asked.

"You think I showered you with love? I'm gonna shower you with stars and rainbows, too."

Kimo grunted as *Lopaka* gave him a long kiss.

Koa turned to me and we kissed.

"Oh baby," Kimo sighed. "I could fuck you right here."

"Wait," *Lopaka* said, even as Kimo was pulling his shorts off him. "Wait, darling. It will be stronger if you hold on." But Kimo couldn't. *Koa* held the boat steady as Kimo got on top of *Lopaka* and opened his legs, tearing into him with the sort of savage lust given credit to the ancient maenads of Greek myth.

Koa threw himself on me and ripped my shorts down and I heard *Lopaka's* cries as he beat me to a roaring orgasm on the floor of that small boat. Water slapped at us over the edges as we rocked away, their feverish exchange of kisses and words of love echoing in our heads.

"Oh, look, Kimo, a shooting star," *Lopaka* panted and we all closed our eyes, making wishes.

"Amazing we didn't capsize," Kimo laughed. "Which way, darling?" He kept *Lopaka* between his naked thighs.

"Straight." *Lopaka* nestled against Kimo's chest and belly.

"How many kids do you think you'd have if you were able to knock up *Lopaka*?" *Koa* asked, as he gathered me to him and paddled in unison with Kimo.

"Not enough," Kimo said, and I knew he was

telling the truth.

Silence dropped over our merriment as we moved forward in the silky, dark-milk water. Each of us was absorbed with the one we loved and with the sensation that had been building up all day of being absolutely aware of everything around us, the breath of every living creature.

“This way, darling.” *Lopaka* sounded content. Kimo and *Koa* paddled, the only sounds in the world coming from our boat. We came to a new, dark stretch of beach. The sand was black—volcanic sand. Above us stood the tallest, most imposing cliffs I had ever seen and I saw Kimo’s head go up as he took in the majestic sight.

“Through here, darling.” I glimpsed *Lopaka’s* bare back through Kimo’s fast moving arms. We glided slowly through an underground cavern and I loved that *Koa’s* arm went protectively to hold my head to his chest.

“I’ll row,” Kimo said softly, and *Koa* gave up the oar, giving me both his arms.

Waterfalls pounded over our heads and we came to a spring. Kimo wedged the front of the boat between two rocks which seemed made for that specific purpose. They held the boat as the two men got out, holding each other’s engorged cocks.

We followed them and my hand shot to *Koa’s* raging hard-on. I was dying to fuck, dying to just

get wherever we were going so I could have my fill of him again. *Lopaka* led the way, Kimo wrapped around him from behind. Their bodies merged perfectly; they'd been made for each other.

"We'll take the lower pool, you take the top one," *Lopaka* said, and I saw Kimo's hands reaching for his cock again.

We watched for a moment as Kimo lay in the pool. "Oh man, I've been dying to come back here for a year. *Lopaka*, I want you to fuck me this time, baby."

Lopaka got between his legs. I could see Kimo's massive cock piercing the surface of the rock pool, his legs in a half sitting position as *Lopaka* took Kimo's hair out of its ponytail. The two men gobbled at each other's mouths to make up for the famine endured in the twenty-minute boat ride.

"We have five minutes." *Lopaka* took his mouth off Kimo's for a brief second. "Five minutes before the next wave."

We watched *Lopaka* sucking Kimo's cock, an expression of sheer desire on Kimo's face, his back arching to give *Lopaka* better access to his baby maker and *Koa* got into our pool, on his back now, knees apart like Kimo, holding his hand out to me.

Their mingled cries of passion set us off. "Come and fuck me, *Manalo*."

I got between *Koa's* legs in that dark pool of

surprisingly warm water. "It fits our bodies perfectly." And then I started to feel it. That heat. The intense sound of everything around us.

"Oh my God," he moaned. "I can hear your heart beating."

I heard the sound of night birds and the distant patter of water. I felt the pool vibrate.

"Get your cock into him now!" Kimo shouted, giving his mouth immediately back to *Lopaka*. I saw Kimo's head go back as *Lopaka* entered him in one delicious strike and *Koa* was snatching at me, anxious for his turn at the wheel. I was inside him when I felt the flames start in the pit of my belly. Hundreds of eyes watched us, urging me to feed my man, to make him come, and he was thrashing around under me, the way he always does when I am inside him and he's desperate to come.

I saw him in an angelic light, a celestial being of many colors and prisms of light. The effect was so staggering...so utterly breathtaking, I thanked God for letting me have this man. It was as if I could see right through him to his beating heart. Entranced, I watched his soul leave his body and float over to mine. They danced and soared together and I felt a wonderful, warm, white light fill me. The waterfall came like a volcanic explosion over us, our bodies reclaiming our higher selves. I looked above our heads as the wall of water passed over the rock pools, shattering,

splintering in a million glorious shafts of colors I had never seen before and I heard the sound of voices in the water, and I made my beautiful baby cry as he started to come and I saw...heard thousands of angelic voices. The rainfall was laughter...laughter from heaven, and *Koa* urged me to come, to come with him, to make the angels happy.

"Can't you see them?" he cried.

And I could, water angels everywhere, God's ocean chorus flew down from the top of that tall cliff and I watched the water drops fall on *Koa's* honeyed skin as we came together in a magnificent rush, the colors in my head turning deep purple and gold at the edges and I felt *Koa's* tearful face come up to mine as he begged me to keep fucking him.

He pulled himself up at some point in this ongoing dance and pulled my cock out of him, still weeping as he lay me back in the pool and fucked me like it was our last day on earth.

Lopaka was sitting on top of *Kimo's* lap, the two men licking and kissing each other's faces as *Kimo's* hands pushed *Lopaka's* lean body down onto his cock.

"Kimo, Kimo...oh, I love you so much!"

Koa lowered himself onto me harder, deeper. "You look so beautiful impaled on my cock," he whispered. "More beautiful than Billy *Manaka*

ever would have. This cock belongs to you, *Manalo*." His hot words made me come as hard as his knowledgeable fucking did. He always knew what to say and do to get me absolutely senseless.

Lopaka slumped against Kimo's neck and the two men were laughing and crying while Kimo stroked *Lopaka's* back, telling him how much he loved him.

"We made the angels happy, baby, we showed them our love."

It took us a long time to recuperate; Kimo and *Lopaka* happy to be alone in their pool, *Koa* and I dazzled and delirious in ours. We went home in the very early hours of the morning. The four of us had looked at each other after that spectacular fuck and just smiled. We had no words. Words were not necessary. Words would have broken the spell.

We reached the stairs at the base of their mountain home and Kimo took his shorts out of the boat, rummaging through the pockets. He produced a black eye patch, which he put on and some rope, using it to bind *Lopaka's* hands and feet.

Lopaka sighed in a deeply contented way. "I love getting fucked by my pirate."

Kimo looked at us. "This is one of our favorite fantasies. I kidnap my virgin boy slave here and take him up to my room."

"Then what?" I asked, smiling.

"I make him my cock whore."

"Mm...I think he already is, but have fun."

"We will. *Lopaka*," he scolded. "Your cock is so hard I can't throw you over my shoulder."

"Carry me, Kimo." We watched them climbing the stairs.

"Promise me that, when we're married as long as they are, we're still gonna be that insatiable for each other, *Manalo*."

We slept late, glued to one another, allowing the morning to wash over us until the smell of baked chicken roused us. We ate and swam and played with the kids. I loved watching Kimo play with Baby *Pele* and Little Kimo, feeding them home made peach puree with a spoon.

"I'm going to wake up *Kama*," *Lopaka* said. "That boy could sleep all day. He's just like Kimo. Loves snuggling in bed."

The phone rang. Kimo ignored it. I remembered then that he never answered the phone.

"Want me to get it?"

"Please."

"Hello, *Lopaka*?"

"I'm—"

Kimo shook his head at me, so I stopped speaking.

The female voice said, "It's Nicky."

"Nicky," I said and Kimo's spoon hovered in

mid-air.

“What does she want?” he whispered.

“How are things?” I didn’t want to come right out and ask her what she wanted.

“You sound weird.” Before I could respond, she said, “Look, since you ask, things are good. Better than good. *Kaiona* and I found a property we want to buy. An old hotel in *Kauai*. It’s the chance of a lifetime, but it’s going to take a lot of money.” She paused, evidently used to *Lopaka* repeating everything to Kimo.

“I know you want full legal custody of Little Kimo, and I am willing to give up all my maternal rights if you and Kimo give me the money I need.”

My God. I realized now she was Little Kimo’s birth mother. I repeated everything to Kimo, and *Koa*, seeing the shock and emotion on my face, got up and put his arms around me from behind. Baby Kimo, oblivious to the tension, sat on his father’s lap, waiting for more sweet potatoes.

“How much does she want?” Kimo’s gaze was on his children.

“One million dollars.”

“Done. She needs to meet us at my attorney’s office first thing in the morning. Ten a.m. She is to be prepared to sign all the papers and she will have her money. Tell her, this is the last payment she will be receiving from us. And she will sign a document stating that fact.”

I repeated all of this to Nicky.

"We'll be there. I know where the office is." *I bet you do*, I thought. *You've probably been extorting money from the Wilders for two years.* She ended the call without a goodbye.

"Thank you," Kimo said.

Lopaka and *Tutu* turned up. "What is it?" *Lopaka* instantly looked anxious.

"Come here." Kimo put Baby Kimo into *Tutu's* arms and *Lopaka* onto his lap. He reached under *Lopaka's* feet, stroking them.

"Whatever it is, just tell me."

"Nicky is giving us full legal custody and signing away her maternal rights."

"Are you serious? He'll be legally ours?"

"Yes." Kimo kissed him with great tenderness.

"When do we sign the papers?" *Tutu* asked.

"First thing in the morning. There's just one problem...well, not a problem," Kimo paused. "She wants a million dollars."

"I don't care what she wants, let her have all our money," *Lopaka* insisted.

"Darling, I feel the same way, but it will deplete our accounts, and..."

"Oh." *Lopaka* understood now. "You mean we'll have to extend our show?"

"A million dollars?" Sammy, who'd been quiet up until now, shook his head. "You've given her too much already."

"I'm gonna be Baby's maternal great grandma *officially*." Tutu looked jazzed, kissing the giggling toddler as he ran off to play.

Kimo glanced at me. "Did Nicky ask to speak to the baby, to wish him a happy birthday?"

"No, not once."

He kissed *Lopaka's* shoulder. "She's going to sign a piece of paper saying she can never ask us for money again. I know we're both exhausted and I know we both love every precious drop of time we spend with our children, but what if...what if I could get the same money for us to do the show only three nights a week?"

"Can you do that?" *Lopaka* looked at him in wonderment.

"That's a fantastic idea," Sammy said.

"Friday and Saturday nights and Sunday matinees only. That way we have our weekdays free for the school and we can leave Friday right after school, wherever we have to be, *Maui, Kauai*, wherever. We take the kids with us and we're back first thing Monday."

"I love it!" *Lopaka* said. "*Tutu* can come with us..."

"Oh no," Sammy said. "I'm not playing caretaker. Wherever my girl goes, I go."

"We'll play caretaker," I said.

Koa jumped in. "That's a wonderful idea. We love your place. We'll get to see the kids that way

and look after things while you're gone."

"You'd do that for us?" *Lopaka* asked.

Kimo nuzzled *Lopaka's* throat. It was an erotic, yet very affectionate gesture. "Nobody can take him away from us now. Happy birthday, darling."

"Hey, it *is* somebody's birthday," *Lopaka* laughed. "Where is my baby *Mowgli*?"

"*Mowgli...Mowgli*. Wait, the kid from *The Jungle Book*? That's funny," Kimo said. "I can see that."

"Do you have *The Jungle Book*?" *Koa* asked.

"Nope," Kimo laughed.

"Then you will the next time we see you."

Chapter Fifteen

We were sad to leave, but it was as though I sensed something coming, even if I was unaware of what it was. We both wanted to linger with the family, who encouraged us to stay, but with school back in full force, we felt we were in the way and headed home.

“Promise me you’ll spend Christmas with us,” *Lopaka* said. With hugs for everyone, *Koa* and I went back to our lives on our own mountain with full bellies and overflowing hearts.

“I love those people,” *Koa* said as we drove away. “I want to come back very soon, babe. I don’t want to miss too much of seeing the twins growing. Even in four days, they blossomed right in front of our eyes.”

“It’s all that love, *Koa*.” His fingers reached for mine and we drove all the way home thinking of the night we became part of a volcanic waterfall.

We spent a lovely day in the garden, reacquainting ourselves with our fruit and

flowers, running in the hills, then running amok in the bedroom. He even surprised me by waking me up after a long nap together, freshly showered, wearing those tiny white pants. He was lucky I didn't rip them off him.

"Honey, don't tear them." He laughed as I took them down his long, muscular thighs. "I need them, they're my ace in the hole, you know."

"You need an ace in the hole?"

"Sure. All men do. Some wives want roses. Some want chocolates, some want jewelry. I love that mine just wants me in these pants." He pinned me to the bed, his tone turning serious. "*Manalo*, have I done enough to deserve you? I'm not rich. Most of what I made in the fight went to paying off debts. All I have is me."

"All I want is you." I wanted to get back to work on the body I craved.

"I don't know if I want kids. The more I see how much love the Wilders have for theirs, the more I think I could handle it."

"You can just be my hung house husband."

He laughed, finally letting me touch him before I went out of my mind. As usual, our lovemaking was feverish and very intense, so it was surprising when I woke up hours later in the dark, and *Koa* wasn't in our bed. He always stayed in bed with me now that he wasn't in serious training. His white pants were on the floor, but the clothes he'd

worn during the day were missing.

I got up in the dark, it was seven o'clock at night. I padded through the house, an ominous feeling in the pit of my stomach. The door to that second bedroom was closed and I knocked. Not a sound could be heard. The door seemed to be unlocked. I turned the handle and opened it, absurdly fearful, feeling *Koa* would be angry that I was coming in here. Nothing. He wasn't there.

He wasn't anywhere. He wasn't outside and both our vehicles were still there. Where could he have gone?

I went to the kitchen and poured myself some wine. I was going to start making dinner but had no idea where he was or how long he would be. Suddenly, he was in the kitchen, acting weird and jumpy. He was covered in dirt.

"Hey," he said. "What are you doing up?"

"I woke up and you weren't there."

"Oh, I was taking a run."

I knew that was a lie. He came over and hugged me briefly, smelling of the strange odor in his bedroom.

"Babe, I'm gonna take a shower." When he turned and walked toward the bathroom, I saw long, bloody slashes in the back of his shirt.

"What happened?" I gasped, reaching out a hand to him.

He stopped. "What do you mean?"

"Your back. You've been attacked. You're bleeding."

"A wild pig." For the first time he looked furious. "Quit picking on me, okay?"

"Okay...I wasn't picking on you. I love you. You're bleeding."

"I'm FINE!" he screamed at me. His breath was bad and I took a step back.

"You want some dinner?"

"No. I want you to quit mommying me. I need some space." He slammed into his bedroom, came out with a bag and took off in his car.

Stunned by his weird behavior, I ate alone, reading a book I'd put off for weeks. I couldn't get my brain past page three. I called Kimo and *Lopaka* and got their voicemail. I left them a message thanking them for a wonderful holiday weekend, then went to bed.

Maybe we had been spending too much time together. I tried to reason out his moments of insanity. Maybe I was imagining things. Maybe a pig did get him. In the cold moonlight, I lay in our bed and thought, what if it wasn't a pig? What then?

What do you think is going on? I tossed and turned, unable to sleep and just when I did, he was back. I heard the engine cut outside, the glare of car lights hurting my eyes and I waited...for what? I had no idea what mood he'd be in.

And then he was in our room, sitting on the edge of the bed.

"*Manalo*, I'm sorry." I sat up and tried to hold him, but he moved away. "I'm gonna take a shower. I...just wanted to apologize."

"Okay."

"Don't go to sleep, okay?"

I nodded and waited for him to come to bed. He took a long time to shower and then he was coming into bed, the sight of that beautiful body hardening my cock and quickening my heart. There was a moment when I heard a strange sound. I saw the panic flood his face, the next thought then seemed to be that he'd imagined it. He got into bed and I felt his coldness, the shaking as he held me. Something had scared him badly. Very badly.

"I love you very much, *Manalo*. So much, it hurts."

"Baby, I love you too." I hate to see him hurt and in so much inexplicable torment.

"Will you always love me? No matter what?"

"Of course." I felt some warmth come back into his body when suddenly the sound came back.

"Arrggh!" *Koa* almost jumped out of his skin.

"Baby! What is it? What is that?"

A loud explosion of sound....of drums. My God, the neighbors would kill us even though the nearest one was not exactly close. The sound of a

thousand drums seemed to be in our house, a deafening pounding of drums, of marching feet; I could see fire coming from torches, people outside chanting. It was a horrible sound.

My God, I thought, it's a death march.

Koa ran around the room naked, screaming. "You've got to hide me. You've got to help me." The house shook and I felt it was on fire. The people had us surrounded and we clung to one another.

"What's happening?" I was terrified. The very house shook and rocked as if it would come off its foundations. The windows and door to our room thrummed from the vibration of noise. But the chanting and drumming bypassed our room completely and as quickly as the cacophony started, it stopped again.

In the stone silence, we waited and then we both let out our breaths.

"Koa, what the hell is going on?"

"Oh my God...I don't know."

"Are they...real?" But I knew they were spirits. And he had done something to infuriate them.

"Koa, what did you do?"

"Lie with me. I'll take care of it tomorrow. I made a foolish mistake. I will fix things, I promise. Just hold me now. I need you."

And I did, trying to hush the boom of his racing heart. We lay together, neither of us speaking, and

as night turned to dawn, he got out of bed.

"I'll be back. I love you. I just have to make things right."

"Can I come with you?"

"No." The look on his face was bleak. I stood in the doorway of our room, watching him go into the second bedroom.

A few minutes later, he came back and he seemed more like himself.

"I need you, *Manalo*."

"You've got me." We didn't make love, we just lay entwined. He was really frightened and so was I. I had no idea what he'd done, but I knew he was in trouble. When I woke up to a beautiful morning, at first blush, I was convinced it had all been a terrible dream, that there had been no haunting...no chanting. No drums. I stretched out in our bed, but he wasn't with me. Our bedroom door was open, the door to his room closed. I knocked and tried to open it. A foul odor came out of it.

On the floor were scratch marks and blood. *Koa* was gone.

Chapter Sixteen

For two long, agonizing days, I waited and hoped. I ignored the mounting phone messages from work and calls from friends and family wondering where I was. I knew something very bad had happened to *Koa* and I even called the local police who said I could not file a police report on a missing person for another twenty four hours.

“People disappear all the time because they want to,” the unhelpful desk sergeant told me. Except that I knew with a certainty I could not explain that my lover, my *husband* had not chosen to disappear. He had been taken.

How could I ever explain that I believed he was somewhere, on some other plane, inside this house? I also wondered, however, how I could explain, when I did file that report, that I felt somehow he’d disturbed ancient souls at rest. That, sometimes at night, very weird things happened in my house.

No. Whatever he'd done, I wanted to help *Koa*. I just didn't know how.

On the third night without him, I called Kimo and *Lopaka* and left another message. "We're in trouble. I'm so sorry to do this to you, but we need help. Please, please call me."

I lay in bed, hoping he would come back home. That he would have rectified whatever wrong he had done and we could move forward again. All that mattered was getting *Koa* back.

Still, I had almost convinced myself he'd *done a runner* when, in the middle of the night, the awful drumming, the ceaseless, deafening chanting started and I heard above it all, *Koa's* voice.

"Help me! Help me!"

His pain ripped through me. I felt him, heard him...I could smell him. I just couldn't see him. And then the madness stopped and I was on the floor, crying. On my wrist were two long scratch marks. Something...somebody had touched me. Grabbed at me. *Koa*.

I went to work the next day, feeling like a miserable wreck.

"Have you eaten?" *Kala* asked me. I felt like a fool when I couldn't remember. Alone in my office, there was a stack of messages and I began the laborious process of returning calls.

"Would you like some coffee?" *Kala* asked, bringing me a cup. It was the nicest thing anyone

had done for me in days and when I started to cry, she put her arms around me. "What's going on, *Manalo*?"

I shook my head. "Is it *Koa*? Is he okay? I read on the Internet he was supposed to be at a hearing in Las Vegas at the Nevada State Athletic Commission yesterday and he never showed up. Is he okay?"

Startled, I told her I had no idea he was supposed to be at any hearing.

"They're questioning his win in the fight."

"But that was resolved," I squawked.

"Well, *Petrenko's* un-resolving it. He's saying *Koa* fought dirty. Don't you two read the papers?" She fired up my dormant lap top and I quickly scanned the boxing websites which were filled with scuttlebutt on *Koa's* supposed dirty tactics.

He hadn't shown up at the hearing, but according to unnamed sources, since he lived in *Hawaii* and had been injured, it wasn't entirely surprising that he had failed to show up for the hearing. Still, one website said, "It is considered unethical and strange that he wouldn't."

"I don't even think he knows about this hearing," I said. Now I had even more reason to be concerned. I needed to talk to *Manu*. I went home, went through *Koa's* belongings, relieved when I found his cell phone, and put a call through to the number attributed to *Manu*.

Then I left another message for Kimo and *Lopaka*.

By the end of the day, I was traumatized that nobody was calling me back. I didn't know what to do to help *Koa* professionally. Did I need to get him a lawyer? What about Smoke? I tried calling him but his wife was the one who called me back saying he was in St. Petersburg, Florida at a training camp for Evander Holyfield and would be unable to represent *Koa* in Nevada. *Great*, I thought, *just great*. Smoke had a new lease on his professional life now that he'd trained *Koa* to world championship victory, but now that *Koa* needed him, Smoke was just that...*smoke*.

I researched all the by-laws of the Nevada State Athletic Commission and I was not allowed to represent *Koa* in the hearing since I was not a part of his team. Neither was *Manu* allowed to do it, though I was convinced it was *Manu's* work that had given *Koa* the edge. He was self-represented so there wasn't even a manager who could help us.

That night, I lay in bed with all of this on my mind when the deafening noise started again. I was attacked. This time, I heard *Koa* stronger, louder. He was in great pain, terrified. But now he was screaming at whoever was lunging at me.

"Leave him alone! This has nothing to do with him!"

I could almost time the bizarre, nocturnal visits to the minute. It was over each night after six minutes, a very long time when you're petrified and under an unseen attack. In the morning, there were scratches on my face and arms and on my back. I didn't know what to do. I wanted to get out of the house, but was afraid to leave in case *Koa* had no way of coming back to me.

And then, mercifully, Kimo and *Lopaka* sent Sammy to see me. He came to the store late the next day and he took a long look at me.

"Got someplace we can talk?" I hurried around the counter and he went outside.

"*Tutu's* boys are in *Kauai* with the children," he said. It took me a few seconds to realize he was talking about Kimo and *Lopaka*. "They are very hard to reach, no phone access. This morning, they got your messages and were very concerned and called me. They won't be home until the weekend."

The weekend. Another four days. My God. Could *Koa* last that long?

"What the hell happened to you? You look terrible."

I told him what I could. "This is going to sound weird, but *Koa* is in bad trouble, Sammy. He...did something...took something. I don't know what, but it must be powerful and it's connected to my house." I told him about the drumming, the

chanting, the nocturnal visits, the attacks, *Koa* and the bedroom, and then I told him about *Koa* screaming at me for help.

"Oh." He pulled at his bottom lip. "*Manalo*, this is very bad. We have to figure out who is punishing him."

"Can you help us?"

"Us? You plan to stick with him?"

"Yes." I swallowed my fear.

"Good. Because at the end of the day, love is his greatest ally. I will come to your house tonight, but I will come with help. Let's see what we can do."

"God bless you, Sammy."

"Don't bless me yet, until we know what we are dealing with."

Sammy came to the house at seven o'clock, accompanied by a small Japanese woman he introduced as an *odaisan*, a priest. A tall man, introduced to me as Father Mason, a Catholic priest, made me start thinking we were in poltergeist territory, and then the fourth member of the group walked in, a short, powerful Filipino man. I was told he was a *fatsetta*, his country's variation of a priest.

All four tried to enter the bedroom with me, but the door stayed closed.

"That's weird." I was able to open it myself

when I tried. I saw their exchanged glances. The stench from the room as we entered it was unbelievable. The room was freezing. Our breaths frosted as we spoke.

"Is this where it started?" Sammy asked me. On my nod, all four priests huddled in my room with me as we waited for the evil nightly procession. I feared it wouldn't happen, since I'd brought four powerful spiritual elders into the house, but only I was shocked when the madness started.

Koa was screaming for me.

"Tell him you love him!" Sammy implored as the lights, the sound were deafening.

"I LOVE YOU, KOA!" I screamed as loud as I could.

"My God, he's in chains." Sammy stared at my bedroom door.

"You saw him?" I gasped.

"Yes, you didn't see him?"

"I only hear him and feel him."

"He was surrounded by wild dogs. He's...what the hell did he steal, *Manalo*?"

"I have no idea." I sat slumped on my bed and the *fatsetta*, *odaisan* and the Catholic priests spoke all at once.

"This is not a curse of my people," the *odaisan* said and fled, apparently relieved this was not her jurisdiction.

"I've seen hauntings before, but this takes the

cake." The Catholic priest left with the *fatsetta*, leaving the fourth, the staunch and loyal *kahuna* of my own islands, sitting with me.

"What now?" I asked Sammy.

"We bring in the heavy artillery. How long has that room been cold?"

"First time I've noticed it."

"The spiritual force is growing stronger. They've come for whatever he took. He didn't give it back, I'm certain of that, or the room would be sealed. Maybe he took more than one thing." He lapsed into silence. "I need to pray on this."

"What do I do?"

"I hate to tell you to stay here, but I think you must. For *Koa's* sake. I will bring help tomorrow. But we'll work first thing in the morning. Now get some sleep."

"Don't make me laugh, Sammy."

His hand went to my shoulder. The next thing I knew, it was morning and I was snoring my ass off, fully clothed. There was intense light in the room. Sunlight. No. Something else. Three people were in my room with flashlights, despite the fact it was day.

"Sammy!"

"I come bearing gifts." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"Kimo!" I ran to hug him and *Lopaka*. They held me tightly and I could see *Lopaka* was upset.

"My God, you brought *Tutu*? Who's looking after the babies?"

"They're at home with my parents. We flew back this morning. Everybody's worried about you," Kimo said. "Now, show me what you've got us into."

We went into the bedroom, the door opening easily, and Kimo stood, observing everything. It was cold all right, and smelly, but he seemed impervious.

"The portal is there." He pointed to a spot right above the piled up possessions.

That surprised me. I assumed it would be on the opposite wall.

"No. He was trying to keep the spirit away...it's a very strong entity that lured *Koa* to the other side." His hands ran along the walls and then stopped. "How much do you know about the girl *Koa* was screwing around with...you know, the one who had him beaten up?"

"I know nothing about her." I was surprised by the question. "Except that she's a female boxing champion and she goes by the name *Hardtack*."

"So, he may have stolen something of hers...out of revenge for the attack."

"Well, it's possible." I thought a moment. "He said he took something and I saw him leave with a bag. He returned and came in here. But whatever it was, it happened in here. I know it sounds

crazy, but that's the truth of it."

Lopaka glanced at me. "Did you find *Koa* disappearing at odd times?"

"Exactly!"

"How did he explain these...absences?"

"He lied. He'd say he was meditating..." I remembered the time he came back with scratches on his back. I told them everything I could remember. "And then he said everything would be okay...except he still seemed frightened. Whatever is going on this room was happening before we moved in here."

That piqued *Kimo's* interest. I told him about how I'd first come to see the house and this had been the baby's bedroom. I told him the child's belongings had also been pushed against the wall.

"His mother said the strangest thing to me. She asked me if I had children and seemed relieved when I said I didn't. She said I shouldn't move in if I had any."

"We need to speak to them," *Kimo* said.

"I have no idea how to get in touch with them. I have a forwarding address to mail rent checks. That's all."

"That's easy. We know a wonderful seer whose gift is numbers. We just need the name and address. She'll do the rest." *Kimo* glanced at *Lopaka*. "Darling, I'll let you handle that."

Before *Lopaka* could even start dialing, *Kimo's*

hand with all his wedding rings suddenly zapped, as if by electric shock. His hand flew off the wall, sparks of fire shooting from it.

We all jumped back.

"A temple," Kimo said. "I'm wearing temple gold. All temple gold is magic. This doorway, this portal recognizes the source. *My God*. This is the entrance to an ancient temple. Please don't tell me *Koa* stole from a temple." He turned to Sammy. "Is it possible we have two different things going on here? I am feeling..." He looked down at the floor.

Smoke was whispering around his feet.

"We're on burial ground." *Lopaka's* hand was at his throat.

"That explains the drumming and chanting...Night Marchers!" Sammy snapped his fingers, then looked at me in a frightened way. "When all this is over, this room, if not this house, will need to be demolished. The spirits of the earth are angry."

I nodded, miserable now. "*Koa's* been going in and out of this portal, hasn't he?" Nobody responded because it was a rhetorical question. "How can we find out?"

"There's only one way." Kimo's hand crackled in a painful way as I saw his fingers move down the wall and a faint outline started to become apparent. His hand went over and over an archway, which creaked open. The dank smell

from it was the same horrible odor that often permeated the room “You’re going to have to go in, but not yet. I don’t know what he took and you have no bargaining tool.”

The doorway slowly sealed itself up as we all hung back. Something hit me then. I knew the smell. I’d experienced it before. Kimo’s gaze was on me, a strange look on his face.

“*Manalo*, have you had any unusual experiences with a woman? I mean...like a ghostly woman?”

“Yes, I have, as a matter of fact.”

“You need to tell me precisely what happened.”

They were all looking at me. I told them about the old woman with the bad smell. About how she always waited for me on the curve of the old *Pali* highway.

“Mmm...” Sammy said, lost in thought. “An *akua hele-loa*. A traveling spirit.”

“She’s much more than that.” Kimo’s expression was grave. “What happened when she got in the car?”

“Each time she got in the car, the engine died. And each time, she would vanish.”

“Did you ask her why she was doing this to you?”

“Eventually, yes. I was pretty freaked out.”

“Did she ask you to drive her somewhere?” Kimo asked.

“How did you know? You’re simply

incredible.”

“I think she’s the woman who’s imprisoned *Koa*. You need to take me exactly where you dropped her off. We need to go right now.” He glanced at the sealed portal. “I got a very strong message that *Koa* has been judged guilty. He hovers between life and death only out of her respect and gratitude for you.”

“Who is she?” I was trembling now.

“I’m not sure yet. But whoever the queen of this temple is, she is looking for stolen magic.”

Chapter Seventeen

We all drove to *Ka'ena*, to the point where I dropped the old woman off. I told them how the branches of forest trees had brushed my car. We drove in circles over and over and just when I'd given up hope, we found the place. We got out of Kimo's SUV, *Tutu* giving me a reassuring hug, and then we walked through the thick, wild overgrown cluster of plants and trees.

I was astonished to see the crumbled, rotting ruins of an ancient *heiau*, a temple. It was a long platform broken in sections. Covered by trees, vines and choking with weeds, I was amazed to see relatively fresh offerings left there. Though dead, the fruit and flowers and bundles of *ti* leaves were months old, perhaps. Not years. Kimo and Sammy examined the offerings without touching a thing. Kimo looked up at the sun, walked around, looked up again. He paced and I knew he was praying, for I could hear his sing-song chanting, asking *na kupuna*, his spiritual advisors, for

guidance.

"I believe these are the remains of a very old temple belonging to the Goddess *Iolani*. She was not a well-known goddess," he said at last. "She was, in the time of *Kamehameha* the Great, a revered family goddess for some *ali'i*, the nobility in this area. Like many other gods and goddesses of the time, she did not survive the great Missionary purge."

"But somebody reveres her in secret." I gestured at the offerings.

"Yes. The former occupant of your house connected with her. I just have to seek her permission to bring the correct offering back to her...temple. One of these three bundles contains the magic she seeks.

"I believe he worshipped her and sought...prosperity. *Iolani* rules the underworld, but she is known for granting blessings of material wealth. She represents money and success because she rules from the depths of the earth. What few of her devotees realize, however, is that she is the ruler of the Land of Ghosts." Kimo looked at me. "She has a special and dangerous power. She can pray people to death."

"What does she have to do with *Koa*? I never even told him about the old woman. I thought it would freak him out," I said.

"He took something of hers. But he's not the

only culprit here.”

“You’re talking about my landlord. I don’t think he’s wealthy. They fled. They couldn’t get out of that house fast enough. But if he brought the magic back here, why is this queen still doing this?”

“My guess is she wanted the magic delivered to the underworld. It’s useless here. You brought her here, but she was unable to cross over with it. I believe she lured *Koa* into her world.”

“To bring the magic back?”

“To begin with. But I believe she had other things in mind. You say the previous house occupants have a child?”

I nodded.

“She wants a child. *Koa* could give her one. He’s virile...he’s a champion, don’t forget. He can help her control the underworld. She wants her magic back and she knows she cannot trust him to come out from her realm and return with it. Just like the last occupant.”

Kimo’s words were deeply disturbing to me. *Koa* had accessed this underworld long before the trip to Las Vegas. I was beginning to wonder if this goddess, this temple queen’s magic, had helped secure his victory in the boxing match after all.

Tutu, Lopaka and I left Kimo and Sammy alone at the altar of the long forgotten goddess *Iolani*.

They came running back, Kimo holding a rancid-smelling bundle.

"This is it. She's waiting for us."

"Back at the house?" I asked.

"Yes. Don't, whatever you do, let her see your fear. She feeds on fear. It's her sustenance."

Back at the house, Kimo wanted to open up the portal again. "I'll come with you. I have asked permission to enter the Everlasting House of Fire and we can—"

"Oh, no you don't." It was the first time I had ever seen *Lopaka* directly contradict Kimo. He looked so angry that Kimo was staring at him in shock. "You can't go in there. I forbid it."

"You...*forbid* it?" Kimo's shock turned to anger. "Our friends are in trouble."

"I realize that, but your first obligation is to your family. You have three children who must come first, above and beyond anything else, including me."

Kimo blinked. "*Lopaka*...what are you saying? You are my *life*."

"She's going to want a substitute. The last family set *Koa* up as the replacement, baited him with some of the treasure...some of the magic. I'm sure of it. Something kept luring him back in there.

"If you walk in there with temple gold on your hand, all the abilities you have, the way you

look..." *Lopaka* shook his head. "Kimo, *Koa* has superhuman powers, but you have supernatural powers. Plus, you are the hottest, sexiest man alive.

"You're hung like a horse, strong as an ox, and a proven baby maker. *And*, in case you have forgotten, you are the Keeper of Secrets. Three men left alive have your knowledge and your knowledge, your power, has begun to outstrip even the other two."

Kimo just looked at him.

"*Lopaka's* right," Sammy sighed. "She'll use every trick in the book to keep one of you there, if not both of you. You'd make a fine slave and we'd have no way of getting you back."

Kimo started pacing. "Okay, so we tempt her with gifts...her magic and some earthly treasures. *Lopaka*, I hate to say it, but I think you're on to something, my love."

"You mean like gold, family heirlooms or something?" I asked.

"No." Kimo was pacing faster now. "We're talking gifts of *value*, yes, but gifts we treasure here on earth. That we value as magic. She wanted the baby from the last family. She knows *Koa* has no earthly wife and family."

"Yes, he does. He's married to me," I shot back. "You said a *kahuna's* blessing is binding."

"So I did," Kimo grinned. "Obviously, he didn't

tell her that, though. He wanted to protect you. He has been tried and sentenced...there is only one thing she can't resist."

"What's that?" I pounced on this sliver of hope.

"You have to play on her gratitude. You helped her. You took her to her ancestors. You took her to her sacred altar. Tell her she can keep *Koa* long enough to make three babies. Tell her, since you are unable to provide him babies, her three children will be the only ones this great champion ever makes. Tell her you vow never to have children together."

"Three babies? That might take...years!"

"Allow her three years and tell her you will wait in chastity for the man you love. She will love the fact you are brave enough to face her, brave enough to fight for him, but...honest and decent enough to know she has the right to keep him."

I stared at the floor. *Three years.*

"Can you do this?"

"I can do it. I love *Koa*."

"Then we prepare our gifts for a Queen." He paused. "You need to tell her you will visit her altar three times a week. You will keep it hidden, you will keep it blessed, and you will decorate it with the plants and fruits she finds sacred."

"I'll pray on that right now," Sammy said.

Kimo looked at me. "Tell her you will keep this portal hallowed and untouched until the moment

Koa is released to you. Tell her you will ensure the demolition of this house on her sacred ground, that you will deify and honor and respect her."

"But I don't own this house."

"You're going to have to buy it. We need to hurry now."

Sammy came out of his prayers and rattled off a list of herbs and plants this queen found holy.

"There is *'akala*, a relative of —"

"The raspberry. I know," I said. "What else?"

"This is perfect!" Sammy beamed. "You are a plant man with a gift for ancient flowers and herbs. Who better to honor her? She likes *'awa* and she likes *hau*, yellow hibiscus with the red heart. Oh and she likes *'awapuhi-kuahiwi*."

"Red torch ginger." I could already visualize the altar once I'd transformed it. "Green or red *ti* leaves?"

Sammy gave me a look of admiration. "Both."

"Do not be sidetracked by any roadblocks she throws your way." Kimo said as he opened up the portal again. "We will be waiting right here for you. We are with you."

"What roadblocks?"

"She will throw you illusions. Illusions of things...people you hold dear."

"Michael," I whispered.

"One more thing. I need to burn your hand." Kimo pulled me to the floor and touched the palm

of my hand to the sole of his right foot. I felt like I was being branded.

When he lifted his hand away I had a sun-like image on my palm. Once again, in Kimo's hands, I felt no pain.

"She will know you do not come unprotected. Now go. And don't stop moving until you find her." He pushed me through the portal and I stumbled along, more afraid, yet more resolute than I had ever been in my life.

I walked in darkness along a long passage way. I couldn't hear my footsteps. I couldn't hear anything. Suddenly, I was in a vast canyon. The sky was an odd gray color with orange-pink edges. I could see people all around me. Happy people.

They were crowded around a volcanic pit. There was fire and music. Kimo had told me she was the queen of the everlasting house of fire and I could see the people were eating and drinking.

And suddenly, there was my grandfather. I had been expecting Michael. But not this. My grandfather, whom I had loved dearly in life, held his arms out in greeting.

"I love you, *Manalo*, come to me, my son." It sounded like him but I knew it wasn't him. It was an illusion. I choked on my own love for him. I loved my grandpa so much, I prayed for months

after his death for one more story, one more song.

“Let me sing to you, Manalo.”

Oh, this queen was cruel all right. I pushed past the happy looking people. *Choose your illusion*, I heard a voice say. It was Kimo. He was with me. I kept my mind blank, focusing on *Koa*. On finding him and Queen *Iolani*. And there they were.

High on a raised golden platform, they were lying on a sumptuous, four poster bed. Red and gold fabrics fell from it in gossamer wisps. Servants fluttered around the golden pair as they ate fruit and drank from jewel-encrusted goblets while music played and people sang and danced.

I was shocked to see *Koa* was wearing a purple robe with gold bracelets on his arms, gold earrings in his ears...almost dressed like a...woman. He sat up and looked at me, his face registering shock.

“No...oh God baby...go back.”

“You dare to enter my house?” the Queen barked.

She somehow got the platform down to my level and she walked toward me, her own robe slipping, intentionally, I felt, to show me she was nude underneath. She looked a damned sight better here than she had the last time I’d seen her. Younger and fuller of figure, she looked almost...benevolent. Her hair was in long brown ringlets, her robes elegant, her breasts, full.

“I come with your magic, Your Highness. I am

returning it to you.”

She snatched the bundle from me.

“I apologize for my husband’s greed. For his lack of respect.”

“Husband?” her voice rang out in mocking laughter. Others joined her. *Koa* looked sick.

“He is my husband.” I held up my hand so she could see my ring. “We were married by a great *kahuna*, a keeper of secrets in my world.” I flipped my hand over and showed her Kimo’s mark. “Even in your world, his blessing is binding.”

“Married.” The Queen fixed furious eyes on *Koa*. “To a man! I have won the right to him.”

“Not permanently,” I said. “I come with a message from the tribal council. In exchange for maintaining your altar, for keeping your temple sacred, the *kahuna* say you can keep my husband for three years, until he fathers three children for you. Then he must return to earth, to me.”

She let out a scream of frustration. “I’m not returning him to you. I own him!”

“For three years, yes you do. But you must return him to me.” I remembered everything Kimo said to me. “You accepted my gift. It is a matter of honor.”

She dropped the bundle, looking pale as a pile of coins fell from the rancid cloth, rotting fruits, plants and a small, putrefied animal littered the ground as the large gold coins started multiplying

at her feet. They glinted and would have dazzled me had I not known they had destroyed my life. I'd never seen anything like it. She snapped her fingers and the bundle reformed.

The queen screamed. "You tricked me."

"Not at all. I have done nothing but honor and respect you. I drove you to your altar. I believe you remember that night. All the nights you stopped me on that road."

Koa was staring at me. The Queen's chest was heaving, but she said nothing.

"I am unable to provide my husband with children. I vow here and now we will never have any, other than the children he has with you. We will never adopt or use any other method to have our own children. You will have the only children he ever has."

She liked that, I could tell.

"I can ensure that the children of *Hawaii* once again worship your name."

"How can you ensure that?" she snapped.

"I will teach it. At the *Kahuna Nui* School." I paused. "I will keep your altar sacred and safe for your devotees. We will plant all the things you cherish. I will bring you *'awa* and *'akala*."

"You would do that for me? Why?"

"Because I love my husband and I have seen your power. I want to help." I drew in my breath. "I understand my husband violated your law, the

law of the universe. For that, he must be punished, but three years' servitude when reparations are promised and made, is the natural balance of this law."

She started pacing. "What of the portal?"

"If you wish, I will have the house demolished once he is returned to me, once he is mine again."

"I do wish. How can you ensure I will have three children?"

"By planting *kanawao* fruit around your altar."

"This fruit is ancient...how do you know about it?"

"I grow it for the great *kahuna*, Kimo Wilder, for use in magic and healing."

"Yes, yes, I know who he is. I recognize his mark, his...protection. But answer me this. You would destroy your home, a home you love, for a man who has already made love to me...countless times, a man who professes to love me beyond all others?"

"Yes."

I saw *Koa's* big smile. I knew whatever he'd done, he'd done it to survive.

"Why?" She seemed genuinely surprised.

"Because, Your Majesty, I loved somebody once...a man whose death almost killed me. I never thought I would want to live again. I never, *ever* thought I would love again. I know *Koa* and I found '*uhane nui*, great light in one another.

Whatever he did, it was in a misguided attempt to provide us with financial security."

She laughed, those around her tittering. "Please. He did it out of greed."

"I don't see it that way. I know he loves me. I *know* it. In my universe, men who can provide great wealth, men who can provide security, are held in high esteem. Men who can do it quickly, easily...or by some special, God-given power are worshipped. He crossed a line."

She looked at me. "I will grant your wish on one condition."

I hadn't been expecting this.

"You must remain chaste for the entire length of time your man whore is with me."

"There is no question of my chastity."

She looked at me. Maybe she knew then, that everything I said was true. "You do understand he's my sex slave."

"Yes."

"You may go now."

Koa and I looked at each other. I wanted to hug him badly. *Kimo* had warned me she would not approve of that. He was trying to move toward me and gold chains appeared out of nowhere, tethering him to the bed.

"Have him taken away and beaten," the Queen ordered.

Koa screamed and I watched four fearsome-

looking guards drag him away.

"That's for not telling me you were married, whore!" She shouted as I turned and left, listening to the sounds of *Koa's* torment.

Choose your illusion. She wants to upset you. She wants you to turn around. I walked away from the man I love with the sound of whip lashes making contact with his skin, of fists on bone and muscle. The agonized torture he was enduring was ringing in my ears.

I walked past all those people around the Everlasting House of Fire. They still looked happy. They had succumbed to her great power.

I had to keep walking. I had to walk through her shadowy valley of death, back to life.

I had to stay alive for *Koa*.

And for me.

"What happened?" The Wilders were waiting for me and we sealed up the portal the second I stepped back into the room again.

I told them everything.

"Excellent," Kimo said.

"This feels like it's a bad dream."

"Too bad it isn't, *Manalo*."

"How did *Koa* seem?" *Lopaka* was anxious.

"He was lying in bed with her when I arrived. She made me think he was being beaten and tortured when I left."

Lopaka looked stricken.

"I don't think so," Kimo said. "Not now he's sentenced. She's too busy making babies with him."

"He was dressed as a woman."

"Really?" Kimo seemed pleased. "He must have resisted her."

"The sooner she gets her babies, the sooner I get him back." I looked through *Koa's* belongings. I wanted to keep his things with me. Keep him close. *Three years.*

"That's not a good idea," Kimo said. "We'll need to destroy everything."

An envelope fell from one *Koa's* pockets with my name on it. Kimo grabbed it. "It's a key." He closed his eyes. "It's for the house on *Lanai*. Obviously he wants you to have it."

The portal sealed, we all scurried out of the room. "I'm going to seal this door until we return in three years and get your man back. We should come tomorrow and put a bolt on it. I would strongly urge you not to let anybody in this house in the meantime. Under no circumstances is the door even to be attempted to be opened."

I nodded and heard a strange zipping sound.

"We're taking you home with us, right after we make a small offering to Her Majesty. Tomorrow, we start the big job of consecrating her altar. But tonight, you're going to come home and rest."

In their SUV with a bag of my hastily packed belongings, Kimo said, "You can stay here Monday through Thursday. Fridays, you come home to us. You can keep her altar fresh, the house grounds tended. But you will keep strong because you're not living with the scene of the crime and the little mind games she'll want to play."

"Thank you." I felt utterly depleted from the experience of dealing with the queen, amazed how calm I had been in her presence. I pressed my thumbs to my eyes. Every bone in my face hurt.

"Time pressure, it's like the bends," Kimo said. "Don't worry, I'll fix it for you."

I knew then *Koa* had endured this pain and never said a word. He must have been in agony before and during his entire fight. Sammy reached across the seat and gave my hand a squeeze.

"There's one thing you must remember. Without *Koa's* love, you would be dead. Without that strong love between you, you would have had no bargaining position and she would have had no need to play mind games with you. In time, you will come to know she is a good and kind spirit...who responds to nurturing, not theft."

I nodded. It was something I would have to remind myself often over the coming years...

Chapter Eighteen

I was in a strange, disembodied state for the first couple of days after *Koa* was sentenced.

"He's in purgatory," *Tutu* said. "He took part of you with him. You're going to feel disoriented for a while. But you have us. We're your family now."

That week, I started free-form classes at the school on the medicinal use of plants. I mentioned the pantheon of gods and goddesses once sacred to all *Hawaiians*. I cried a lot, in secret as I toiled over the altar at *Ka'ena* and my clean-up efforts outside the house. The only things that gave me comfort were long mountain runs and the moments I spent with *Kimo*, *Lopaka* and their children who always brought me joy and unexpected laughter.

I took great pleasure from watching Little *Kimo* teach the baby twins how to somersault and how to hang onto things in order to remain upright. These moments were like jewels that continued to sparkle when I had to deal with the

really difficult issues, such as explaining *Koa's* disappearance to the outside world.

Kimo's high-powered attorney drafted a letter to the Nevada State Athletic Commission on *Koa's* behalf, saying he had been so severely injured during the training for the fight that he wished to take a long leave of absence from the sport. With no discernable cheating evident in the fight tape, he was allowed to keep his title and people whispered he would retire an undefeated champion. His belt was sent to me after much legal wrangling.

It cost me a bargain at twenty thousand dollars to get it, because the World Boxing Corporation, was shamed into it by my threat of publicity. I had no idea what *Koa* would do once he came home. I had no choice but to let the gossip continue. There was much speculation on the nature of his injuries and some people said he was dead.

He became a sort of urban myth, like Jimmy Morrison or Elvis. Sightings were reported frequently, which amused me when I was in a good mood and devastated me when I was having a particularly rough day. In my private life, only Kimo, *Lopaka*, *Tutu* and Sammy knew the truth and they became my mental and emotional support.

"Don't you think it's kind of an omen that *Koa's* nick name in boxing is the Ghost Warrior?"

Sammy asked me one day as he helped me clear up dead offerings on the altar, a few weeks after *Koa* was taken from me. His words almost unraveled me until he held up an 'ala berry, growing very large and strong on a stem next to the altar.

"Oh look," he said. "The Queen is with child."

This gave me hope. One down, two to go.

Birthdays, Christmas...special times, bad times...they all came and went. I took photos of the children so *Koa* would have a moving scrapbook of his time away from us. The children fully accepted the story that *Koa* was away and that he would come back home one day.

I kept faithful journals and the children drew pictures for him. I filled boxes with the things I was creating for him. Four months after he was taken from me, I bought the house from the owners who seemed surprised I wanted it, but charged me double what they'd paid for it.

Kimo, *Lopaka*, Sammy and I went with a surveyor to the property I now owned, armed with the land deed records and plans of the original house, and I realized I owned a vast area of land. Whilst that made me a rich man in some ways, the purchase drained my finances and I was in trouble. I had no choice but to sell my business and I signed on to manage it for two years.

My brother *Loki* thought I was crazy, grief-

stricken perhaps over *Koa's* disappearance.

I worked harder than I had as the business owner, but being the employee of the place I'd once run became impossible. On my weekends off, I bordered my property and started cultivating what was mine. I prepared plans for a new house, which *Koa* and I would build together.

It was Kimo, of course, who found the perfect spot. Between a cluster of *hau*, sandalwood and *pandanus* trees, we could see the ocean from one side, the mountains from the other. A friend of Sammy's, who was an architect, drew up the perfect plans for our new tree house. Not one tree would be destroyed in making our new home.

I started the work on laying down the foundations. I wanted Queen *Iolani* to know I was serious about each promise I'd made to her.

The Kimos, as *Koa* had once called them and we all started calling them, traveled the islands with their show and I guarded their home, feeling that each day gone was another day closer to my *Koa's* homecoming. Six months after *Koa* had gone, I accompanied them to the mainland for a weekend of shows in California.

As a special treat, we took the children to Disneyland and the first time I ever saw Kimo frightened of anything was when he saw the roller coasters.

"No," he said. He held the baby twins and the

balloons while *Lopaka* and I took baby Kimo on Peter Pan's Flight and Mr. Toad's Wild Ride, then Kimo invented some reason to leave the amusement park. Wait until I told *Koa*!

I dreamed of him the night we returned to *Oahu*. I always dreamed of him, but this time it was different. I *felt* him next to me, watching me sleep, his heart full of love for me. He missed me, I could tell, and I awoke in tears, when I realized he wasn't there.

In my bungalow on Kimo's property, I wondered how I would get through the next two and a half years. When I went to the main house, Kimo asked me if I'd felt *Koa's* presence during the night.

"How did you know?"

"He came to me. He wants you to go to *Lanai*. He said you will find a message there. We'll come with you."

Two days later, the Kimos traveled with me to *Lanai* and we went to the house. I could find no message and neither could they. Still, we were happy to be back there and the house became a monthly retreat for us. The kids said they felt *Koa* strongly there, but Kimo, I could tell, was troubled by the message he had received and our inability to find it.

He was convinced *Koa* had left something for me and it was on the third visit that I found it. I

was cleaning the blinds and I found a wedge of paper. I opened it and found four words— *I'm always with you.*

He had known.

In *Lanai*, he'd known we were on borrowed time. I showed the paper to Kimo and *Lopaka*. For me, it was my own version of earthly treasure.

It gave me the strength to go on. And to wait for him.

One year before he was due to come home, I left the plant business and the Kimos asked me to teach full-time at the school. I felt blessed to be with them and grateful for being in the last stretch of a very long, slow, one-legged race.

Chapter Nineteen

It was a very cold, rainy day filled with thunderstorms and rare cracks of thunder and hail, when *Koa* was due to be returned to me. We were at the house by midnight on the day before he was expected back. I had left a sumptuous array of offerings for the Queen *Iolani* and I expected her to uphold her end of the bargain.

Sammy, Kimo and *Lopaka* and I were tense, yet excited. *Tutu* had stayed home with the children and she was anxious for news. But even as we undid the locks on the door at one minute past midnight on that day, I felt the Queen would not return *Koa* to me.

His belongings, everything we'd left in the room was gone. The room was empty.

I knew nobody had been in here. I had done everything the Queen demanded.

It was only fair that she return my husband.

The others, too, were surprised and none of us could understand what had happened. Sammy

and I stayed in the room as Kimo and *Lopaka* visited the altar in *Ka'ena* to pray for guidance.

At five a.m. they returned and Kimo said the message he received was that we open the portal and wait.

We opened the portal and waited.

And waited.

At one minute past midday, a strange sound could be heard. Chanting, drumming, singing and a blazing sun appeared out of nowhere.

"He's coming," Kimo cried. "My God, she doesn't want to give him back!"

I saw *Koa* then, in a shimmering light, his face swimming in and out of view. I moved forward as Kimo, *Lopaka* and Sammy formed a protective circle around him, chanting, "He is our loved one, give him back!"

It took me several seconds to join them. A thousand invisible hands tried to push me away, to keep him from me, but Kimo's power was too strong and fireballs shot from his hands as Sammy and *Lopaka* held my hands. We encircled *Koa* with something more powerful than anger. We were keeping him in the circle of love. And then *Koa* was out of their clutches and he was in my arms, a heavy, slippery, solid burden. He fell to the floor at my feet and Kimo sealed the portal shut.

"What did they do to him?" *Lopaka* turned him over. The love slave had been turned into a

punching bag. His eyes were closed, his heart beat faint.

"We need to get out of this house now," Kimo said.

Running to the car, we all climbed in, *Koa* slumped against me. Kimo pressed a button and the house exploded. We drove away, parking down the road and he and *Lopaka* went back to meet the men we'd paid to douse the flames with water and fire retardant.

"There's nothing left of it," Kimo said. "Just the foundations. Tomorrow, we start on those. We will let nature take its course and allow the soil to grow what it chooses, but personally I think we should help it along with some '*Ohia lehua*. That is a flower so prolific, yet sacred to Goddess *Pele* and it won't attract attention."

It sounded good to me, especially when *Koa's* eyes flew open and he started to cough. He coughed up red dirt and twigs.

"We'll be home in two minutes," Kimo said. "We need to get him into a bath of red salt."

Tutu, Sammy and Kimo took *Koa* away from me to a special salt pool in the far corner of their property to cleanse him.

Kimo was only briefly able to work on *Koa's* body. "He's sustained a good beating. He said it happened just this morning, because he wouldn't stay with her. She had no choice, she had to return

him, but she was resistant. It bothers me that she attempted to keep him." Kimo looked at me. "He's not ready to see you yet."

My heart sank. I'd waited for three years and he didn't want to see me?

"He feels tremendous guilt...and he feels violated. Any way you cut it, he was violated for three very long years."

I understood, but it hurt me, all the same. I longed to be near him. His four words: *I'm always with you*, were no longer enough.

"Don't let her win," Kimo urged me. "Give him time."

I spent the night in the main house that night, *Koa* secluded in the bungalow, which was magically sealed. *Tutu* told me *Koa* was in the fetal position and that he was very cold, that he was having nightmares. "I've never seen anything like it. I gave him triple-strength *'awa*. He sleep like one baby. You see, tomorrow, he will want to see you."

But he didn't.

I went back to my property and cleaned up all the debris with the help of four handy men who helped me haul away the burned remains of the original house.

Late in the afternoon, Kimo, Sammy and *Lopaka* arrived. We began a ceremony of removing the spirits that had held possession over the house.

Kimo chanted and Sammy scattered *kapa* and *ki* leaves everywhere and suddenly I felt a great weight remove itself from me.

"Did you feel that energy shift?" Kimo asked me.

"I did." My eyes filling with tears.

"The curse is lifted." He muttered a prayer of thanks, then we went back home.

Kimo and Sammy went off to see *Koa*, but their long absence told me something was very wrong. I'd hoped *Koa* would run down to the house and throw himself in my arms. I'd hoped for...something.

It was nightfall when Kimo came back. He looked exhausted. He was wet. I smelled salt. He'd taken a protective bath and probably Sammy was taking one now. He embraced *Lopaka* and the children and then he turned to me.

"There's something we need to discuss."

"He doesn't want me anymore, does he?" I saw *Lopaka's* sidelong glance at Kimo.

"Not because he doesn't love you or because he is not...attracted to you. He is traumatized. I hadn't counted on this curse's...very strong hold on him. I thought he could stand up to her. He allowed her to infiltrate his mind. This was her...revenge. He is at the point of madness and I am unable to stop it."

I was stunned. "What...can I do? What can *we*

do?"

"*Koa* needs help beyond my capabilities. I am going to send for two other powerful *kahuna* to help me tonight. Between the four us, me and Sammy included, I hope to shift this...if he is to move forward, if he is to have any degree of happiness at all, he needs to forget what happened, *completely*."

"If we find he is unable to cope, I am thinking of behavior modification. To do this, it is a spiritual, not a medical procedure but the effects are the same. It is a permanent modification and cannot be reversed."

"What does it mean...for him, I mean?"

"He will be a wonderful, loving, happy person, but he will no longer have that killer instinct. He will never be a boxing champion again."

"I don't care about that. Will it affect his memory in other ways?"

Kimo shook his head. "He just will remember nothing of the last three years. He may not remember the fight at all. Right now, he is not strong enough in his mind to live with what happened. I think it will be a gift to him to forget it, to move forward, to have a rich and full life."

"What's the downside?"

"I just told you. He won't be the great boxing champion again."

"Fine by me. Why do I feel like you're not

telling me something?"

"You're going to have to live with what happened and never be able to share it with him. We can let him think he was in a coma all this time, that he has been very ill. It's the truth in some ways, but he will be fearful in a way you may not recognize as the man you love.

"I assure you this will pass, but you will need to be strong and you will need to keep being strong. He needs you more than ever now."

"We have no choice," I said, and *Lopaka* put his arms around me. "I knew you could handle this."

"Hey!" Kimo said. "Cut that out. Somebody else apart from *Koa* needs some behavior modification around here."

Lopaka laughed. "Darling, all the years we've been together and you still get jealous?"

"Yes, very."

"I do have a question," I said. "Is he still going to want me? Will our passion still be there?"

Kimo sighed. "Yes, *Manalo*."

"Then let's get rolling."

Koa resisted all efforts to help him. It shocked everybody. He said he wanted to deal with what happened in his own time, in his own way. He told Kimo to let me know we could no longer be together. He said if I did not accept this, he would leave the property.

Kimo and Sammy worried about him being out in the world alone, and of course, I agreed to let *Koa* have his freedom. I had no choice.

I was stunned by the turn of events but the Wilders just said over and over, "Give it time."

Koa moved out of the bungalow to one further away from the main house and I went back my property, where I'd started working on building my house. Some nights, I slept in my car, some nights, at *Lopaka's* insistence, I went back and slept in the main house.

Days slipped into weeks and I worked feverishly to finish the house I'd hoped to build with *Koa*.

His car was still parked on my land and it felt weird to see it there. One afternoon, I drove back from teaching and I was at the top of the crest, when I saw *Koa* walking around my property. I got out of the car and watched him.

It must have been the first time he'd been here since we'd demolished the house. I saw him walking around what had once been the home we'd shared. He had a strange expression on his face. Then he was looking at the new house and walked over to it. I was proud of that beautiful place. He went in, but didn't stay long. I saw him go to his car and I got back in mine. As I drove towards my house, I saw a tow-truck pulling away, *Koa's* car hitched to the back of it.

So this was how we said goodbye.

I felt *Koa* distancing himself further and further from me. We encountered each other one morning at *Kimo's*. He did not seem pleased at all to see me. He glared at the wedding ring on my hand, then turned and walked back to his bungalow.

"He hates me," I told *Lopaka*.

"No, he hates himself."

But I felt the hatred seeping from *Koa* and was not surprised when he moved out that day.

"He's a handful, that one," *Tutu* said. I got the impression he'd left everybody feeling drained, thoroughly depleted. And I resolved to be upbeat and happy.

Until the night I was supposed to go there for dinner and *Lopaka* called me.

"I never in a million years would ever uninvite you here. We're your family, but *Koa* is here. He wants to come in. He has somebody with him."

"Oh," I said. My God. He'd found somebody else.

"It's a woman. That fighter girl from the gym."

And then the line went dead.

Koa and the girl boxer were never mentioned to me again and the next time I saw the *Kimos*, I felt a strange wall between us. I was glad school vacation was coming up. I had one more week left and in that time I finished the house and made

some decisions about my life.

Packing my few belongings— I'd pared down considerably after setting fire to my own home—I tossed them all away. I wrote a will leaving the house to Kimo and *Lopaka* with a note apologizing for not saying goodbye in person. I put it in my mailbox, stamped and addressed to their attorney. I called Sammy and asked if anything ever happened to me, would he take over visiting the altar in *Ka'ena*.

"What do you mean, if anything happens to you?"

"There are no guarantees in life. Do you give me your word you will go there at least once a week?"

"Yeah, sure."

I drove out to *Ka'ena* the last day of school. I left without saying goodbye to anybody. I just couldn't face it. I went to the altar and cleaned it, leaving a fresh *lei* of *ti* and fresh raspberries for the goddess. I told her Sammy would be by to look after her at least once a week

"Be nice to him," I said. "Nicer than you were to me."

I left my car where it was, parked near some trees. I left the keys under the driver's seat with a note for Sammy, telling him the car now belonged to him and *Tutu*. I walked beyond the clump of overgrown forest trees, in search of the ocean.

In *Hawaii*, those of us who learned of how things were, of times that were governed by Spirit, have learned of the *Jumping Off Place*.

It is a place in *Ka'ena*, high on a cliff. They say it is the one spot where the living can jump off and painlessly join the dead. I hoped this was true and not a lie.

For I'd chosen that afternoon to be the day I jumped, the day I walked the rainbow and I was no longer one of the living.

Chapter Twenty

Man, it was high. And it was windy. I hesitated, not because I was afraid, but because I wasn't sure if I was supposed to wait for some special sign, some particular time of day. Was I supposed to see a rainbow?

"What do you think you're doing?"

My heart stopped. I knew that voice, though it had been denied me so long now. I turned around. It was Michael.

I started to cry.

He stood there looking beautiful and sad.

"Don't do this. You don't want to do this."

"If we can be together, I do."

"No." I saw his anguish then. "It's not your time."

"Is there a special time of day I'm supposed to do this? Or am I supposed to just jump?" The water looked choppy below me. It was a long way down. Even if I didn't walk the rainbow and I couldn't be with my ancestors, the pain I felt every

single day would just go away.

"You can't do this."

"Why do you care? You left me."

"It wasn't my choice. Sometimes...the soul has no choice. There is a separation of will. You have to go back. He needs you. He loves you."

"He doesn't love me. I loved both of you. Look where it got me." My mad laugh rang out across the water.

"The man I loved would never do this."

"The man you loved died a long time ago," I screamed.

"You waited all this time for him and now you've got him you're going to jump?"

"I don't have him."

"Of course you do. She's coming. You must not jump."

And with that nonsensical statement, he vanished. I wanted to jump and was truly about to, except for the smell. She was here. *Iolani*, Queen of the Underworld. She walked toward me in her beautiful form and I stared at her. She was beside me now, staring at the waves.

"Was it worth it, *Manalo*?"

I couldn't follow her line of questioning. I no longer wanted to play games.

"Was he worth everything you have been through? All the loss, all the hardship?"

"Yes," I said, because it was the truth.

She looked surprised. "You really do love him. Why?"

"He's the man I love. Was he worth it? Yes. I brought him back to life. It was in my power to help him. He chose not to be with me. I kept my word and honored you. And yes, I love him." I blew out my breath. "And now I am very tired of life. I don't know why you're here. I left a message for you that Sammy will look after your altar."

She laughed, but it was a creepy sound. "I don't want Sammy to look after it. I want you to look after it."

"But I'm not going to be here anymore. You didn't keep your word."

"You need to go home."

I looked across the horizon.

"Not that home. Not now. You'll get to be with your ancestors some day. Go home now."

But when I turned to argue with her, she was gone. I sat down on the edge of that cliff for a long, long time. I watched the sun set and watched night come. I lay on the edge of creation and wondered why I hadn't jumped. Because Michael told me not to? Because the Queen told me not to?

It was early morning when I started walking back to my car. I stumbled a couple of times in the darkness, wondering over and over why I had lost the urge to jump, but I still wasn't sure I wasn't going to at some point.

Back at the altar clearing, I was dismayed to see my car was gone.

It was a long way back to town. I walked along the edge of the old *Pali* Road and crossed over when I saw a car moving in a haphazard way past me. It was better if I walked against traffic. Boy, I was a mess. One minute I wanted to die, the next I did not. No, I told myself. I just didn't want to get mangled by a drunk driver.

The car screeched to a halt ahead of me, reversing in a crazy way back to where I stood. It slammed to a stop, a window lowered. This could not be happening.

It was *Tutu*, behind the wheel of my car.

Well, she *had* been behind the wheel. She got so excited to see me she got out of the car and it kept moving. We both watched it reverse giddily back down the highway and veer off the shoulder, slamming into a tree.

"Oops," she said. Then, "Don't expect an apology from me. You gave that car to me." She pulled a cell phone out of her pocket. "I found him, he's here. He just crashed his car."

I arched a brow in her direction.

"Where are you?" I heard a man's voice.

"Near the turn off for the altar".

Ten seconds later, Sammy, Kimo and *Lopaka* roared to a stop beside us.

Lopaka was over to me, tears streaming down

his face. Kimo looked distraught.

"Are you okay?" *Lopaka* asked me. "Why didn't you talk to me? I'm so upset I don't know what to say."

Sammy's voice was amused, but loud. "Come on, woman," he was saying. "You honestly expect me to believe he did this? I know your driving. This is something only you could do.

"Humph!" *Tutu* said.

Kimo put his arm around me and that was the last thing I remembered.

"He's awake."

I opened my eyes. Oh, hell. I was still alive. I was lying on the sofa in the Wilders' living room. I'd spent enough nights on it to remember.

Kimo was beside me. "You feeling better?"

"I guess." I wasn't really, but...

"Mmm, I should turn you into a toad, just for lying to me."

"Would you do that? I'd like to be a toad. They don't have any worries...toads. Just catching food...right?"

"If you say so," Kimo laughed.

Three little faces appeared close to mine. Little Kimo, *Pele* and *Kama*.

"You want pancakes?" *Pele* asked me.

"Sure, honey." My voice felt croaky and weak.

"Mama!" *Pele* sang out, deafening me

permanently. “*Manalo* wants pancakes.”

I felt a strange sensation up my left arm. Kimo was doing something to me. I heard a voice. Oh God, it was *Koa*.

“He has no idea what happened last night,” Kimo said quickly. “He doesn’t know about the altar. You are never to tell him about it. He just knows his curse got lifted. He...I’ll let him explain.”

Kimo left me alone then and I felt *Koa* looking down on me, so I pretended to be asleep.

“Hey, wakey, wakey.” Three pairs of little hands were pulling me off the sofa. I laughed as *Pele* dragged me to the seat beside hers.

“You want coffee?” *Koa* asked me. He was sitting opposite me, the electricity palpable. God, did he have to look so gorgeous?

“Thanks.” I could not making eye contact with him. I had no idea what was going on. I felt his gaze on my face and I could hardly breathe.

“Let me see if your mama needs help,” I said to *Pele*.

“No, everything’s under control.” *Lopaka* came out with an enormous platter of pancakes. “Dig in, everybody.”

I couldn’t remember the last time I’d eaten. *Koa* forked two pancakes and put them on my plate. “Have some sausage.” I didn’t like him scrutinizing me. I pushed some food around with

my fork, but he kept watching me until I moved the fork to my mouth.

"You haven't touched your coffee, *Manalo*."

"Leave him alone *Koa*, you're awfully bossy today," *Tutu* said, and I glanced around the table to see all the adults worrying about us, while the kids worried about their pancakes.

I didn't know where to look. *Koa* just kept staring at me and I had no idea why he was doing this. Yesterday I was deader than dirt to him.

"*Manalo*," *Pele* said. "Are you going to go swimming with me today?"

"And me!"

"Me too!"

"Sure," I told the kids and they all screamed with joy.

"Can I have your pancakes?" *Pele* asked me.

"Sure," I said.

"No, *Pele*," *Lopaka* said. "Let *Manalo* finish his breakfast in peace."

"But mama, he said I could have them!"

"Here, have this one," *Tutu* gave her one from her stack.

"Please eat something," *Koa* said, *sotto voce* and I frowned. What was going on with him? Why did he care what I did, all of a sudden? I felt strange, as though I'd lost all sense of time. My head was spinning.

"*Manalo*?" *Koa* ran around the table as I fell

back and I felt his arms around me. He carried me inside. And then the world went black.

Koa's face was hovering over me. "You have to forgive me."

I tossed and turned, trying to get away from him. I wanted him to leave me alone. I just wanted to sleep.

"Let him get some rest," I heard *Tutu* say.

"I'm not leaving him."

"Then don't. But if you're not nice to him, you'll be dealing with me."

"Okay, *Tutu*. I'll look after him. I promise." I felt him lying down beside me. He nestled closer to me.

"Is that really you?" I asked.

"It's me baby."

"Where are we?"

"In the bungalow. The one we used to sleep in." He pulled me to him. Spooning against me, I felt his breath on my neck and I thought it had to be the most lovely feeling in the world.

"I'm never letting you go," he said.

Next thing I knew, it was deep night and *Lopaka* and *Kimo* were bringing in trays of food.

"How are you feeling?" *Kimo* asked me.

"Much better," I said, realizing *Koa* was right beside me. It hadn't been a dream.

He was real.

"You look much better. Both of you. Did you get a chance to talk?"

"No," *Koa* said, sounding miserable. "I think you should tell him."

"That female boxer...she put some bad *mojo* on *Koa*, and the Queen was trying to keep her hold on him because of it."

"What kind of *mojo*?" I asked.

"A stupid love spell. Can you believe it? After she had him beaten up. You two have been subjected to a lot of evil. That was why *Koa* couldn't be with you, only he didn't say so. He tried to lift the curse himself, big dummy. If he had talked to us in the beginning and told us everything, all this crap would have gone away much sooner."

"But it's done now, baby," *Koa* said. "I can't believe you destroyed the house. You got rid of it. And the new house...it's beautiful. But why is it empty?"

"I didn't want to live in it without you."

"Is that true?" *Koa* looked very emotional. "I want to be there with you. I miss you...I miss *us*."

I didn't say anything.

"Have some soup," *Lopaka* said. They stayed and ate with us, the kids piling into the room to join us.

"I love all the scrapbooks you made for me," *Koa* said. "I read everything."

“Good.” *Could we ever pick up the pieces again?*

Koa and I ate the chicken and sweet potatoes and the asparagus. We’d been through so much and it all felt like it happened so long ago. The food, though, was really good. Each bite tasted better than the last.

“You really are the best cook I know,” I said to *Lopaka*.

“Here. Eat this.” *Koa* pushed a small piece of chicken into my mouth.

“That’s disgusting.” I almost spat it out.

“Drink this champagne with it.”

I gulped, but the weird taste still lingered.

“You feel better?” *Koa* asked, anxious again.

“Daddy, can we go for a swim?” *Kama* asked. With *Koa* and *Manalo*?”

“Yes, let’s go for a swim,” I said. “I don’t know what happened to me today, but I feel better now.”

“Are you sure you want to do that?” *Koa* looked so unhappy.

“I never break promises to these kids...what did I do with all my clothes?”

“You can have a pair of my shorts,” *Lopaka* said and I followed him into the main house.

Outside, we all skipped down the stairs down the side of the mountain into the rock pools below. The kids laughed and splashed and *Koa* was pretending to be a shark when the strange feeling

hit me.

Slow smiles spread on the faces of Kimo, *Lopaka* and *Koa*. Then I remembered.

The weird tasting chicken. *Koa* had slipped me a *Mickey*. He'd given me *kefi*, the tongue of fire.

"It's not supposed to be working yet," Kimo muttered. "That's really fast."

"Honey, I think three and a half years is a long time to wait for your husband to make love to you, don't you?" *Lopaka* asked.

"Yeah," Kimo grinned.

"I need to be...alone with you," I told *Koa*.

He grabbed my hand and we ran up the stairs. I didn't wait...I couldn't wait until we got to the bungalow. I was all over him, laughing and crying at the same time.

"Why did you do this to me?" I asked him.

"I'm a desperate man. I need all the help I can get." He picked me up and carried me to the bungalow. He shut the door behind us and we got on the bed.

"*Lopaka* says I'm supposed to suck you off first, before anything."

His head went down between my legs. "You always been this big, or have I just been denied you too long?"

"Shut up and suck me, *Koa*." When his mouth made contact with me, I couldn't stand it. He licked my cock for the longest time, until I leaked

all over his hand, leaving him wet and sticky.

"Oh, I've missed this," he crooned. It had been so long, too long, and I thought my heart would break. "I wanted to be here alone with you, kissing you, touching you when you started feeling this." He moved up to my face. He gave me a kiss that went on forever and with reluctance, he moved away from me. We both knew he had to suck me so he could get the full effects of the *kefi*, too.

His tongue moved over my cock head and he sucked with a ferocity that took the breath out of me. When I came in his mouth, I thought my heart would never stop pounding until it ripped its way out of my chest.

"Shhh..." He raised his mouth and putting kisses on my chest. "I'm here now, baby. I'm home...I'm with you." I reached my hand to his cock. It twitched and I was glad to see it was still big and beautiful and very, very hard.

"You gave her three children with this?"

"Yes." He looked pained.

"What are their names?"

"I have no idea. I never saw them. I wasn't her lover. I was her *slave*." He looked so upset and I didn't mean to do that. We just had never talked, not once since he'd come back.

"Can we just...forget it happened? I will spend the rest of my life making things up to you if you

just let me forget about her...let me forget what I did."

"Okay."

"I didn't fuck the female boxer. I lured her here to make her lift the hex. That's another bad story."

"Tell me."

He grinned. "She had a voodoo doll. Cheap, but effective. Kimo and I destroyed it. It's done now. I promise you." He took my hand away from his throbbing cock. He needed to fuck me and he moved between my open legs, entering me slowly.

It was tight and it hurt, but I didn't care. I wanted his babies in me.

"Nobody...nobody feels like this," he sighed. "Oh, I'm *home*...inside *you*." He looked into my eyes. "I can see the purple fire of the leaf. I missed you so much, I love you so much. This is going to help us forget."

"*Koa*, please tell me this isn't a dream."

"It's not a dream, baby. I belong to you...we're together...the falcon and his fire...I learned that's who we are, *Manalo*...whole and never to be parted again."

And then he made love to me, showing me he meant each and every word, over and over again.

Hawaiian Glossary

A Word about the Hawaiian Language:

There are 12 letters in the Hawaiian alphabet: the five vowels: a, e, i, o, u and the following consonants: k, l, m, n, p, v and w.

Until western missionaries arrived in the islands, there was no written Hawaiian language. The early missionaries worked at creating a written language. Though many Hawaiian words are long, they are actually pronounced as written - but here is a rule of thumb:

A is pronounced like a in 'father'

E is pronounced like e in obey or fete

I is pronounced like i in marine or pique

O is pronounced like o in rose or vote

U is pronounced like u in rule

Ukulele for example is pronounced Ooo-ku-lay-lee

W in the middle of a word is often pronounced like a V

Vowel combinations:

Ai together are pronounced like aye

Ae together are pronounced ah-ay

Au and **Ao** sound the same: ow

Ou together are pronounced oo

Words *

Hawaiian Glossary

A'a (ah-ah): a lava stone

Ala'e (Aha-la-ay): Mud hen

Ali'i (ah-lee-ee): Royalty

Aloha (Ah-low-ha): Love, a greeting, hello, good
bye

Aloha Aina (Ah-low-ha eye-na): Love for the land

Aumakua (Ow-mah-koo-wa): Family guardian
spirits

Awa (Ah-wah): Piper methysticum, also known as
kava. A non-addictive drink used by the *kahuna*
ceremoniously, it induces a euphoric state

Da kine (Dah-kyne): A local island expression
word frequently used for good, also, means 'like,
you know'

Ha (Hah): breath

Hale (Hah-lay): House

Hana (Hah-na): A town in Maui, also means work

Hanai (Hun-aye): Adoption, literally and
figuratively

Haole (How-lay): Foreigner

Hau 'oli la hanau (How oh-lee lah-hun-ow):
Happy birthday

Heiau (Hay-yow): Temple of the Hawaiian islands

Honu (Ho-noo): Turtle

Ho'oponopono (Ho-oh-pon-no-pon-no): To make
things right, family process for resolving problems

Hui (Hoo-ee): group

Hawaiian Glossary

Hula: dance, a sacred dance

Huna: secret, to conceal

I'ao (Yow): Sacred mountain in Maui

Ike (Eee-kay): Spiritual knowledge, power

Iki (Ee-kee): Little

Ipo (Ee-po): Sweetheart

Ipu (Ee-poo) gourd

Ka: Exclamation of surprise: Ka!

Kahu (Kah-hoo) Guardian, caretaker

Kahuna (Kah-hoo-na):

Kai (ky): sea water

Kalakaua (Kah-la-kow-wa): Last Hawaiian King, also the major thoroughfare in Honolulu

Kamapua'a (Kah-ma-poo-ah-ah): Revered Pig God, lover of Goddess Pele

Kamehameha (Kah-may-ha-may-ha): Dynasty of Hawaiian kings

Kamohoali'i (Kah-mo-ho-ah-lee-ee): Shark God, brother of Pele

Kanaka (Kah-nah-ka): Local, islander

Kane (Kah-nay): Man

Kapu (Kah-poo): sacred, forbidden, taboo

Koa (Ko-wah): Native hardwood, also means brave

Kokua (Ko-koo-wa): Help

Kukui (Koo-koo-ee): candlenut tree, also means light

Hawaiian Glossary

Kumu (Koo-moo): Teacher, source

Kupua (Koo-poo-ah): Spirit being

Kupuna (Koo-poo-nah): ancestors

Lahaina (Lah-high-na): Capital city of Maui, old whaling town

Lanai (Lah-ny): Hawaiian island, also verandah

Lani (Lah-nee): Sky, heavenly

Lehua (Lay-hoo-wa): Flower of the Ohi'a tree, sacred to Goddess Pele

Lei (Lay): garland

Lili'uokalani (Lily-oo-oh-kah-lah-nee): Last Queen of the Hawaiian Islands

Lolo (low-low): Crazy

Lomilomi (Low-me low-me): Massage

Lono (Lon-oh): Hawaiian deity

Lua: (Loo-wah) Ancient form of dark arts, sorcery

Luau (Loo-wow): Feast

Mahalo (Mah-ha-low): Thank you

Mahalo Nui (Mah-ha-low-noo-ee): Many thanks, big thanks

Maika'i (My-ky-ee): Good, fine. Also, a Maika'i Card is a widely used discount card for Foodland supermarkets

Maile (My-lay): A fragrant vine used for ceremonial leis

Makai (Mah-ky): Toward the sea - a typical way to give directions in Hawaii

Hawaiian Glossary

Makani (Mah-ka-nee): Wind

Makua (Mah-koo-wa): Parent

Mala'ima (Mah-lah-ma): Take care

Maluhia (Mah-loo-hee-yah): Peace

Mauka (Mow-ka): Toward the mountain - a typical way to give directions in Hawaii

Mana (Mah-na): Spiritual power, vital life force

Mele (May-lay): Song, chant

Menehune (Men-ay-hoo-nay): Hawaiian fairy folk, also an early race of people living in the Hawaiian Islands

Moi (Moh-ee): majesty, king or queen

Molokai (Moh-low-ky-ee): Hawaiian island, former leper colony

Ni'ihau (Nee-ee-how): The Forbidden Island, accessible only by invitation

Noa (No-wah): Freedom

Noho (No-ho): seat, possession by a spirit or god

Oahu (Oh-wah-hoo): Island

Ohana (Oh-hah-na): Family

Ola (Oh-la): Life, health

Olelo (Oh-lay-low): Language

Ono (Ohn-oh): Delicious, tasty, good

Pahu (Pah-hoo): Drum

Pakalolo (Pah-ka-low-low): Marijuana. Each region has its own colloquial variation such as

Hawaiian Glossary

Puna Butter, Kona Gold

Paniolo (Pan-ee-oh-lo): Cowboy (from the Portuguese language)

Pau (Pow): Finished

Pele (Pay-lay): Hawaiian Goddess of the volcanoes

Pilikia (Pee-lee-kee-a): Trouble

Pohaku (Po-ha-koo): Stone

Poi (Poy): A paste made of ground taro root

Pomaika'i (Poh-my-ka-ee): Blessed, fortunate

Pomaika'i au (Poh-my-ka-ee ow): Blessed am I

Pono (Po-no): Right, order

Pu'a'a (Poo-ah-ah): Pig

Pue'o (Poo-ay-oh) Hawaiian owl

Pule (Poo-lay): Prayer

Tapa (Tah-pa): bark cloth made from the mulberry tree

Taro (Ta-row): The most important food source for the Hawaiian people. This root crop is the basis for poi.

Ti (Tee): A plant of the lily family. Its leaves are used in ritual

Uhane (Oo-hay-nay): Spirit

Unihipili (Oo-nee-ee-pee-lee): Spirit of the deceased, often residing in the bones

Wa'a (Wah-ah): Canoe

Hawaiian Glossary

Wahine (Wah-hee-nay): Woman

Wai (Wy): Fresh water

Waikiki (Wy-kee-kee): Capital city of Oahu

Wehiwehi (Vay-hee-vay-hee): Fish goddess

***Please note; all of these words appear in A.J. Llewellyn's books, though not in every story.**

About the Author

A. J. Llewellyn lives in California, but dreams of living in Hawaii. Frequent trips to all the islands, bags of Kona coffee in his fridge and a healthy collection of Hawaiian records keep this writer refueled. A. J. loves male/male erotica, has a passion for all animals (especially the dog, the cat and the turtle). A. J. believes that love is a song best sung out loud.

A. J.'s website is located at:

<http://www.ajllewellyn.com>

A. J. can be reached at this email:

AJ@AJLlewellyn.com

Visit his myspace page at:

www.myspace.com/ajllewellyn