

BEYOND THE REEF

By

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DEDICATION

To Tina Haveman because she understands the need for Vegemite and to Madame Pele, Goddess of the Volcanoes.

CHAPTER ONE

My mother always told me to accept every invitation that came my way, to put myself *out there* because the man of my dreams wasn't going to just show up at my door. Except she was wrong. That's *exactly* what happened. Well, not exactly. Actually, he turned up naked, in my shower.

Now, I'm a single and, frankly, beyond desperate gay man who at the age of thirty has been rejected by e-harmony and a few gay dating sites—for indeterminate reasons—so normally a naked man in my immediate vicinity would be a rare and beautiful thing.

Just a whiff of interest from a man, even a smile from a passing vehicle, has me running to the nearest *Restoration Hardware* creating fantasy wedding registries, practicing putting my name and his together...*Mr. Anthony Kaven and Mr. George Clooney invite you*...

Except that I'd never seen this man before in my life.

"Hello, Tony darling," he was saying.

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Who are you? How did you get here? What are you doing with my loofah? These would have been logical queries, but my brain refused to work. Instead, I felt bewildered. Who was this guy? A ghost? A figment of my imagination? A deranged lunatic? Knowing my luck with guys lately, yep, definitely, probably, door number three.

But I am getting ahead of myself here. I must start at the beginning, which is when I was born. No, no...it really all began just twelve hours before the naked man was doing rude things with my favorite body shampoo.

* * * *

My big Hollywood Break was a disaster from the moment I set foot on *Hawaiian* soil. I flew into *Kahului, Maui,* on a warm October afternoon looking forward to my first day on the set of *Lava Mama,* a big action movie. I'd been hired to work as the Personal Assistant or PA of movie star Rufus Roscoe.

I had a big crush on him.

A pretty cool-looking dude with tattoos and long shorts and a blue tooth parked over his right ear, found me among the throng of tourists getting their official *lei* greetings. He knew who I was simply because I wasn't wearing one.

"Tony Kaven?" When I nodded, he shook my

hand. "I'm *Keoni,* the set driver, production coordinator, you name it. I'm gonna take you to the set." He looked me up and down, but not in a sexual way. I almost felt like he was measuring me for a coffin. "Dude, he's gonna chew you up and spit you out. Sure you wanna do this?"

"What do you mean?"

A pretty blonde haired girl, sobbing into a tissue, rushed past us to join the crush of passengers waiting to board a plane at the next gate. *Keoni* inclined his head toward her. "That's his last assistant. She's a wreck, poor thing."

"What...why did she quit?" I was very nervous now.

"She didn't quit. He fired her. He fires everybody. You're the sixth assistant in three days."

I gulped. "Really?" We walked out into the warm, tropical air. I could practically hear music and could almost feel the sway of *hula* skirts against my skin. I was in *Hawaii*, I was in Paradise! I caught *Keoni's* pitying glance and my heart sank. That's what I got for posting my resume on a site called Monster.com.

"We won't have time to drop your gear off back at the estate. We're all staying there, at a place called Spartan Reef-"

Spartan reef! How romantic!

"Yeah, it's a small upcountry village called

Kapukaulaua Point. That's its traditional name, though the guidebooks that know about it, since it's really off the beaten path, refer to it as *Nahiku* Landing. The estate we're staying at used to belong to George Harrison."

George Harrison! My god! I love the Beatles. All you need is love! "How wonderful," I prattled aloud.

"No, it damned well isn't. That actor—" he threw me a disgusted look. "Your new boss, Rufus Roscoe, nabbed the best house and we all get the cabins."

"A cabin! How...tribal! How...exotic."

"No, it isn't." *Keoni* threw my things into the back of the Jeep Cherokee he had left in a red zone, a parking patrol officer glowering at us. "The locals hate us and weird fans keep tramping all over the property, knocking on our doors, peeping through the windows and leaving us scary gifts. They're all looking for Rufus. Anyway...I'll take you later. We've lost a lot of shooting time and things are very tense on the set."

"You've lost time because of him? Is he that bad?" I asked.

Keoni shot me a glance. "No, not Rufus. We're having some problems with Madame *Pele*, the Goddess of the Volcanoes."

"How many assistants has *she* fired?"

Keoni gave me a long look, then suddenly laughed. "We want to land a helicopter on the top of the volcano and so far she's done some pretty far out things to dissuade us. Rain, thunder, lightning...you name it. We got a *kahuna*...you know, a priest, to come and do a blessing. He's been a couple of times. He says he doesn't think she'll ever change her mind."

"And what happens if she doesn't?"

Keoni looked worried. "Let me put it this way. I hope they don't decide to ignore the *kahuna's* warning and go ahead and shoot. I got enough problems. A curse from *Pele* I do not need."

We veered down *Haleakala* Highway and I felt a tingle of excitement. *Haleakala*! I'd read so much about the dormant volcano high up on the slopes of *Maui's* vast upcountry region. On both sides of the highway were fields of crops—wheat? Pineapples?

"Sugar cane," *Keoni* told me. "It's about the only crop we still export. These here are privately owned fields. Most of the big pineapple producers like Doles, have stopped production in the islands."

I sighed, feeling myself unwind as the sight of endless, open, wonderful *space*. I was drinking in every scrap of scenery. I'd read about the Goddess *Pele* and how it had once been her home. I'd read all the myths and legends associated with her. I

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had never been to *Hawaii*, but felt a deep connection with it. I was finally here!

Not only was I enthralled to be in the land of so much legend and mystery, but all my other gay male friends were convinced I'd find love here. *Hawaiian* men apparently love a little meat on the bones of their loved ones. I wouldn't call myself overweight or anything, but I was not skeletal either, which was practically mandatory in Hollywood. I was ready for some hot male lovin'. I glanced over at *Keoni* who was definitely sexy and then I saw his wedding ring. Married.

"Here. You're going to need this. And if you don't want to go home on the next flight out, *believe* what you're about to read. Follow it. Tattoo it on your eyes if you have to." *Keoni* drove like a lunatic and the weird little gourd-warrior guy dangling from his rearview mirror, swung back and forth, its vacant eyes sending me a clear signal–Warning!

I looked at the piece of paper, headlined with – *Rules of the Set.*

1-Do not make eye contact with Rufus Roscoe – The Star.

2-Do not stare at The Star.

3-Do not speak to The Star unless spoken to – unlikely.

4-Do not attempt to take photos of The Star with

a camera phone. All photos and phones will be destroyed.

5-Do not approach The Star for any reason unless he approaches you first.

Oh, boy. This was going to be a barrel of laughs. My eyes glazed over as the rules got more bizarre. The list went on and on. Suddenly, we were heading high up a mountain road and the temperature dropped dramatically.

"I'll put the heater on." *Keoni* wasn't kidding. I saw mist and low-lying cloud cover ahead and oh...the most magnificent rainbow I had ever seen.

"Can we stop a moment? I want to take a photo of that," I told him, but he looked at me in a funny way.

"Where I live there are rainbows..." he started to sing. Then he stopped. *"*Take a photo now. I'll slow down. I don't want to stop. If I take any longer getting you back there, my ass will be on the line and I've got five kids to feed."

I snapped a photo and turned off my cell phone at his instructions. Not that I was going to get much reception the higher we climbed. In the volcano parking lot, a tour bus was pulling out and a couple of crew trucks were taking up most of the space. People were standing around looking worried. Trying to adopt a serious facial expression myself, it was hard work since I was reeling with the thrill of being in a *volcano parking lot*. You didn't see *that* in too many places. I was in *Hawaii*! I had a job on a movie! I followed *Keoni*, nodding a greeting at the suddenly silent guys hanging around the trucks.

"I give him two hours," I heard one of them say *sotto voce* as we passed by.

Up ahead was Jack Flynn, a big, muscular blond actor I'd seen playing bad guys in a couple of movies. He gave me a friendly smile and mouthed, *Hi*.

"Is he okay?" I asked Keoni.

"They're all fucking obnoxious," he whispered in my ear. I laughed for the first time since we'd met.

Rufus Roscoe, the handsome, sexy, wellsculpted British star of a string of hit action movies, was in the middle of a tirade on a wet, muddy slope, yelling at a little Asian woman holding a stack of shirts on hangers.

I hung back and tried not to stare or make eye contact. Hard when nothing else was happening and everybody else was standing around...staring.

"Rufus," the little Asian woman was saying. "These shirts...of course they all have blood on them. They've got fake blood stains in the same place. We've worked hard to match them in case we need to re-shoot. We have five sets of everything. I don't *have* any spares for you to keep. After we finish shooting, I can have them laundered and you're welcome to them."

"No. I want fresh fucking shirts with no fucking blood stains on them."

"But, Rufus...I can't get new shirts here on the island. You get shot in the scene. It would be very strange for your character to get shot and not bleed."

"I refuse to fucking bleed. That's for girls. I will not fucking bleed. These are Armani!"

Nobody was reacting to this ridiculous outburst. Guess they'd seen it all before. The little Asian woman chose the moment he glanced in my direction to run off like a grateful rabbit. *Holy shnikies*! Would he think I was making eye contact? I quickly looked away and I heard him say, "You there!"

I didn't even glance in his direction. He kept up with the *Hey you's* and I looked everywhere else I could until I heard him ask, "What's his fucking name? The chubby guy?"

Chubby guy? Was he referring to me?

"Tony?" Rufus was saying. "Hey you, Tony." I had no choice now, but to make eye contact. I was petrified. Glancing over at him, I saw he was beckoning me. "Yeah, you, fatso. What'sa matter with you? Why didn't you come right over the fucking second you arrived?"

"Sorry, Mr. Roscoe, I was just following instructions." I indicated my list.

He snatched the sheet of paper out of my hands, scanning it. "That's the wrong fucking list. That's for the extras. Stacy, where's the other fucking list?" He snatched a page out of a young blonde woman's hand and thrust it at me. "This is the list of instructions for *you*."

Stacy, the small, stick-thin blonde looking harried and weighed-down, had a lot of hardware attached to her person. Cell phones, walkietalkies, sound mikes for hooking onto people in the field, bulging paper files and she was glaring at me in a furious way, like I'd deliberately caused her more work.

The new list was even longer than the first. *Do not piss me off* being right at the top of requirements.

"Should I have *Keoni* drive me straight back to the airport?" I asked Rufus, which seemed to please our temperamental star.

"Let's give it another five minutes or so, shall we?"

"Aw, shit." One of the crew guys spat on the ground and I saw another man snatch a twenty dollar bill out of his hand. *Five minutes? He'd bet I would only last five minutes*?

Rufus checked his watch. "That *kahuna* guy was supposed to come back with another offering for this fire goddess of his."

"What do you suppose he's bringing this time?" A cute, dark-haired, blue eyed woman I recognized as daytime TV soap diva April Moon asked. She was not as gorgeous in person as she was on television, but I'd experienced this phenomenon before. Some people, like April, the camera just adores.

"Fuck knows." Rufus shrugged. "A virgin sacrifice?"

"Well," I joked, "I hope they're not looking for one in Los Angeles. That could take months."

Rufus Roscoe looked at me and this time, he actually laughed.

A beat up old truck pulled up beside us and an old guy I was pretty sure must be the *kahuna*, got out and, with one eye tilted toward the sky, he walked toward me and plucked at my sleeve. Invading my personal space in a very unsettling way, he stared at me. His eyes were red and bloodshot.

"I've been shock-treated mercilessly—just ask my friends—but I'll die a Christian. Do you have a Xanax?"

"No." I was taken aback. Why did strange people always pick me to talk to? It didn't matter where I was, weirdoes wanted me. The mad old man got even closer now. "People who are deemed crazy, people who are put away often have a stronger grasp of the truth. I myself am the reincarnation of William Shakespeare, Percy Bysshe Shelley and the Roman goddess Flora."

"Is that all?" I joked. Something about this guy was familiar, but I couldn't quite place him.

"Well..." he hesitated. "There's Carol Channing, too, but —"

"Carol Channing? But she's not dead is she?"

The old man's eyes spun around in his head. "Somebody must have forgotten to tell her."

Then I realized where I'd seen him. *My God, he was Larry Gold, the director!* Boy, he must be cracking up under the strain of dealing with a grouchy goddess.

Up ahead, I saw an interesting looking character in a weird get-up. This had to be the *kahuna*. He was wearing long shorts, gold lace-up roman sandals and a *Hawaiian*-style *Aloha* shirt.

"No." *Keoni* shook his head when I asked. "That's Ollie. He's the DP, you know, the director of photography and he *is* certifiable."

More certifiable than the director?

"That's the *kahuna*." *Keoni* indicated a tall, dignified looking *Hawaiian* man in jeans and a sweater. Everybody was following him up a slope and I followed everybody else. The *kahuna* got on his knees on a small, grassy embankment, put down an enormous bunch of very green bananas draped in the most beautiful purple and white orchid *lei* I had ever seen.

We gathered round to watch and I saw Ollie, the certifiable DP, standing over him. "This better work," he muttered darkly. "This fire floozie's beginning to really piss me off."

The *kahuna* looked appalled. "You betta not talk like that around *Pele*. She can get plenty mad, you know."

"Old man, get on with it," Ollie snapped. I noticed he had a copy of the script in his hand and a copy of a book entitled *How to Develop a Winning Personality*.

He had a long way to go.

So the *kahuna* got on with it, saying his prayer in *Hawaiian*. I was the only one who appeared to be mesmerized. He raised his hands to the air at the end of his lilting chant and suddenly the skies opened up, a hard rain falling down in relentless sheets on us. He looked at the director. "She no let 'em. She say no."

"Fuck her!" shrieked Rufus Roscoe and a crack of lightning just missed his foot. The *kahuna* jumped into his truck, threw the gear into reverse and was gone. Rufus Roscoe jumped behind me, cowering. "I'm valuable, you're not," he whimpered. *My hero.*

"If I die, the world will implode. If you die – "

"The world will laugh with you?" I asked and his burst of laughter turned into a girlish scream when lightning, thunder and a steady pounding of rain sent everyone running for cover.

"Stacy!" Rufus shrieked right in my ear. She came running and stood in the vicious rain with a stoic air, holding an umbrella over Rufus's head.

"Don't do that," I told him. He glared at me. He had a hand jammed into his mouth. My hand.

He let go of me. "Oh, fuck. Sorry. Why are you fucking standing there? Go get me my lunch."

Was he joking? We were in the middle of a horrendous storm on a fucking volcano! "I'm on it." I bit down the urge to call him a jerk and picked my way back toward the parking lot. I had a couple of candy bars and an unopened bottle of water in my backpack still in *Keoni's* truck. If I didn't die falling on my ass on the treacherous, slippery volcanic slope, I could impress my boss and maybe keep my job.

But I couldn't see very far ahead. I walked straight into the path of sheets and sheets of rain and I gasped at the goddess's fury. *We guys gotta learn, I guess. No means no.* The rain battered the lush green plants, trees and ferns that grew impossibly and beautifully out of the lava. I saw a tree with giant fronds and jumped under it thinking a brief respite would help.

What I found was *Keoni* in the act of fucking big, bad Jack Flynn up against the tree. He had the guy pinned, the actor's back hard against it, legs askew in his frantic desire to get *Keoni* all the way in him. Married *Keoni*, father of five! Though Jack was the much bigger man, it was *Keoni* who was in complete control, Jack's big hands pawing at *Keoni's* tight, clenching ass.

"Oh yeah...yeah...like that...oh fuck, yeah..." Jack kept moaning the same words over and over. His own massive piece of meat was bobbing along with every hard thrust from a righteous pounding he was taking from *Keoni*. Jack looked like he wanted to scream out, but was trying to keep his voice down.

"Fuck yeah," Flynn growled. "Man...I've been waiting for you to give it to me all day."

"This what you've been waiting for?" *Keoni* kissed the guy's throat. This seemed to really ignite Flynn who pawed at that strong back. *Keoni's* shoulders had tattoos of flying knives or steel grid patterns, giving him the appearance of lurking menace, lending an even more erotic feel to their wild, lusty union. He was putting some real effort into balling the big guy. "Your ass feels pretty good. I've wanted my cock back in there all day." Flynn whimpered with joy as *Keoni* withdrew all the way out, plunging back in.

"Fuck me, *Keoni*." Jack Flynn was delirious. "Oh yeah, oh yeah...there. That's it...that's good. Shit man, I'm gonna come."

"You better come." I saw *Keoni's* massive cock pull out, then shoot straight back in again. His pants were bunched around his feet and I saw his keys spilling out of a back pocket. I gingerly knelt and tried to extract them and came face to face with a small red bird huddled under a leaf for shelter.

He freaked out and took off, the noise startling the two lovers.

"What was that?" Flynn hissed and I jumped around the tree so they wouldn't see me.

"Nothing. Just the rain."

"Then don't stop fucking me. Your cock is amazing," Flynn moaned. *Keoni* kept up his rhythmic pace, I could tell by the way Flynn kept banging up against the tree and I stood very still, the rain battering me now that I had no more protection. I was afraid to move in case I disturbed them. Everything inside me and out swished. Water dripped down my neck.

The two men reached the high point of their frenzied bliss in a low-voiced, ecstatic way and I took advantage of their noisiness to make my escape. I had to get a move on, find some food for Rufus, even it meant breaking open the window of *Keoni's* truck. I'd read on the internet that Rufus Roscoe was a huge Elvis Presley fan and I'd bought a pair of blue suede shoes I couldn't afford. Thank God I wasn't wearing them. Oops. I slipped, which was when I noticed that I *was* wearing them.

I stumbled blindly forward and saw a radiant, brilliant gleam of light ahead of me.

Rain slowed and softened and I could see steam rising from the lava floes. The water fell in droplets of pale rainbows...an astonishing, gorgeous thing I had never seen before. The colors fusing in one giant raindrop, which fell slowly into my outstretched hand. The colors were now clear and intense. I wanted to hang on to each shaft of warm light as long as I could, but I cannot hold a raindrop.

It landed softly and its colors shattered.

"Bring me love," I whispered, wishing on that rainbow in my hand. "*Please*." My head swam with images of men on white horses, of Ivanhoe, a knight proven in battle. I refused to think about the colossal lapses in judgment my relationships usually turn out to be.

For a second, it seemed the rainbows of water glowed just a little bit brighter. I held my breath. All of this natural majesty was mine for the next four months, if I could only stop myself from pissing off my boss.

And then she appeared out of nowhere and I

held my breath. An old woman with a long dress, flowers in her hair, was walking toward me. I'd read enough *Hawaiian* mythology to know who she was. "Madame *Pele*," I breathed.

Chapter Two

"Don't be ridiculous. I'm Annie. I'm Craft Services. Don't look at me like that. You're not gonna cry are you?" She looked anxious. "I've got food." Then she muttered, "They always think I'm *Pele.*"

"You have food? And you say you're not a goddess?" I helped her carry two huge bags full of food back to the others as the rain suddenly stopped. "What does Rufus Roscoe like to eat?" I asked her.

"Oh, him...he likes this. Here." She handed me a soggy bag that read *Maui Tacos*. "He's lucky I didn't spit on his food." She nudged me. "I'm gonna go set up in the parking lot. Take this to him. And this is his favorite soda." Steam rose off me as I moved toward Rufus who was busy bawling out somebody else when I arrived.

He looked shocked when I handed him the food and drink. "Where did you find *Maui Tacos* up here? Man, the burritos are still warm." I just

gave him a smug smile and allowed a small bubble of hope to swell in my heart. He took a sip of his soda and stared down at my shoes. "Man, that is an ugly-ass pair of shoes. Why'd you wear blue suede in the rain?"

"It wasn't raining when I put them on. I bought them because I read you're an Elvis fan."

He frowned. "I hate Elvis."

"Not according to the Internet Movie Database."

"What else does the Internet Movie Database say about me?"

That you are a colossal jerk. "That you are a total chick magnet."

Rufus Roscoe looked at me, his chest puffed out. "That I am, my friend. That, I am."

Despite the fact he was a jerk, he was hot. There had to be something wrong with me being attracted to such a mean guy.

Annie's food hit the spot. Everybody felt better, especially when there was a break in the rain. The crew even forgot to grumble as Larry, our director, galvanized them into action.

"All right everybody, we're gonna take our chances and bring down the chopper." Larry was looking a little more chipper. Somebody must have slipped him some drugs.

"Are you mad?" This from *Keoni* as overhead, the chopper whirled and whipped up things

making it hard to breathe and see

A sudden thrust of thunder, then lightning directed right on the chopper's tail and the pilot took off. We all watched, stunned. *Pele* was chasing him!

And then the rain came back.

Larry went mad, jumping up and down like a kid over a broken toy. "I'll kill her, I'll kill her!"

In the distance, the chopper whined and thunder cracked. *Not if she kills us first*.

"Why can't we shoot someplace else?" I asked and a hundred pair of accusatory eyes turned on me.

"Like where?" Rufus sneered.

I have no idea why he did it, but *Keoni* saved me. "Great idea. The Surfing Goat Dairy is close. Let's try."

"The Surfing Goat Dairy? Are you kidding me?" Rufus was laughing now. "There's actually a place called the Surfing Goat Dairy?"

Not only was there such a place, but as we careened back down the slopes of freezing, miserable *Haleakala*, the fog lifted, a liquid sunshine hailed us and *Keoni*, who was at the wheel again, glanced at me.

"No surprise to me that it's stopped raining. Madame *Pele* is saying good riddance." He twisted the jeep through coconut groves and citrus orchards as the caravan of crew trucks followed. "Oy," Rufus shouted from the backseat. "Slow down."

The rain had kicked up the mingled, heady fragrance of all that fruit and *Keoni* saw I was the only one appreciating his home.

"This part of *Maui* is safe harbor for rich dissenters, dreamers, exiles, outlaws—and over at the mobile home park, crazies—who are all a lot more run of the mill than they care to admit," he told me. "But it's a pretty cool place."

Everybody looked out of the windows at the rain-drenched, lush mountains and the manyhued goats grazing, oblivious to the weather.

We jumped out of the vehicles and invaded the gift shop, the crew shamelessly sucking up cheese samples and draining the coffee pots.

"Over my dead body," the owner of the Surfing Goat Dairy was shouting. "These goats are like my children. You'll scare the crap out of them filming here!"

"We'll pay you ten grand," Larry said desperately. "In cash."

"Up front," said the goat man, holding out his hand.

We got our shot and had to close the circus for the rest of the day. The rain kept coming in heavy swatches, making it hard going and *Keoni* drove me, April Moon, Rufus Roscoe and the spunky Asian costumer I found out was named *Tuyen*— say Twin—back to George Harrison's estate. I longed to shower and dress in dry clothes.

I found an instant new best friend in *Tuyen* who was ecstatic when I offered to help assist her with shopping and running errands for Roscoe. I wasn't stupid. The more useful I was to Rufus Roscoe and the people who took care of him, the less likely he would be to send me packing.

"You'd really do that?" she asked, immediately handing me a list of things she needed me to get first thing in the morning. *"Keoni* can take you. We have to have all this stuff. It's all on hold. You're a doll." I scanned the page fast. There were three clothing stores holding multiple shirts, shoes and jeans that had to be changed often thanks to his physical stunts.

Tuyen had written strict instructions for examining the lining of two jackets. Heck, I didn't know I know a galloon from a garter stitch, but I didn't tell her that. There were packages of tea and vitamins and bottles she wanted of a special red dye from a place called the Dragon's Den in *Makawao* for our star. I'd drive to Mars and buy him Martian pixie dust if it kept me gainfully employed.

"Here it is." *Keoni* paused dramatically on a small, narrow road at *Kapukaulaua*, a rocky bluff overlooking the Pacific. "This is prime big-surf territory," he told me.

At Marker Twenty Five, we veered off the main road, which forked in two directions. One headed to *Hana*, which I had read about and was dying to see. We headed upcountry. It was absolutely breathtakingly beautiful. Uninterrupted views just below us of dolphins playing in the churning surf. Though cold and wet, it had miraculously stopped raining and everybody's mood seemed cheerful as we went through the big gates at the edge of the property. We all jumped out. Stacy, she of the clipboards and endless hardware, came over to me.

"Your cabin is down this track." She pointed in a random way. "You have an hour to freshen up, then it's drinks in the main house. The rain is a pain. They get three hundred inches a year of it here." Again, she pointed in a vague manner toward the top of the hill. Her voice dropped. "But hang in there. You're doing great."

"Thank you, Stacy." I took my belongings out of the back of the jeep, and by the time I was trudging down the path to my cabin, everybody had vanished. Finding the cabin I was assigned became a new nightmare.

Four cabins side by side. Which one was mine? I opened the first door. *Holy shnikies*! Evidently, the cast and crew had paired off the instant they'd arrived on the set three days ago. I found April Moon in bed, getting quite a workout from a young, muscular, tattooed guy. Ooops, Keoni.

"Sorry, *Keoni*," I muttered.

"No problems, *brah.*" He grinned, never stopping his aggressive assault on April Moon who scrunched up her face, wailing like a banshee. I closed their door quickly.

Cabin number two was a real chamber of horrors—the DP, Ollie was servicing Larry Gold, our mad-eyed director. Ollie was on his knees, naked except for those ridiculous gold lace-up sandals. And Rufus thought my shoes were stupid? I shut the door and moved to the next cabin.

A watermelon on the doorstep had a note attached to it, *Take Me to Your Eater*. Oooookay...I was afraid to knock on this door. Afraid of what I'd find and then Stacy was walking toward me. "Sorry. I should have said...ah, I see you found it already. It's casual tonight. Don't get dressed up, okay?" She gave me a wave she must have copied from Queen Elizabeth and moved off to the last cabin. Okay, I was home. I took off my shoes, not only because they were soaked, but because a tiled sign at door instructed me not to wear shoes inside the house. I picked up the melon and walked inside.

It was beautiful. Wooden floorboards, pure *Hawaiiana* furniture, there was a real, wood-burning fireplace and a large, open-plan expanse

of living room and sitting room and kitchen with a fantastic basket of welcoming goodies—chocolate macadamias, macadamia cookies, *Maui* potato chips, *Kona* coffee, a folder with some instructions and local restaurant menus and a new bar of coconut soap.

The bathroom and bedroom were in a loft above me. I felt happier than I had in a long time. I set up my laptop on the desk to the right of the entrance, overlooking the ocean, and to my left, *Haleakala* Volcano. Rain patted the window and I plugged in the laptop, took a quick shower and changed into jeans and a shirt.

When I came back downstairs, the computer screen was black. I hit the enter key and it powered up, one word illuminated in electric blue–*LAPU*. It scrolled across the screen a few times, then the computer shut down. *LAPU*. What did it mean? I grabbed my trusty *Hawaiian For Dummies* and read the one word guaranteed to send a shiver or ten down my spine. *Ghost*.

Okay, so now I was spooked. I turned on the computer again and this time it came on without a hitch. I had a phone line, but there was only one phone in the cabin, in the kitchen and its proximity in a very odd, high place, meant that if I wanted to go online and check my email, I'd have to stand on the counter top and perch the laptop on top of the fridge. Oh well, I'd find an internet café in the morning.

I made some coffee and picked up the phone. The instruction manual said that all local calls were free. Anything to other *Hawaiian* islands or long distance required a calling card. There was a geriatric, museum piece-style answering machine attached to the phone. Good. I could receive messages. I was nervous. The call I had to make was local, but it might have been long distance. I wanted to call my mother. The woman who left me and my dad sixteen years ago, when I was fourteen, for some guy she met on the internet. In fact, I think my mom, one of the first subscribers to America Online, started the epidemic of echeating.

We had stayed in touch and it seemed she wasn't happy, no not happy at all. But she was living in *Maui* and she was one of the ten thousand reasons I wanted to come here.

Hope blew a hole in my heart. I got her voicemail message. It was always a jolt to hear my mother's greeting of, "*Aloha, Keo* and *Luka* aren't here right now..." I sighed. *Luka*. Her name was Ruth, which was *Luka* in *Hawaiian*. He was Joseph Cohen, who left his family for my mother, but here in the islands, he was cool, swingin' tropical *Keo*.

Leaving a message with my cabin number, I was going to do some work on the computer, but

it was dead again except for that word that kept scrolling across the screen. It left me feeling very unsettled.

LAPU.

I quickly left the cabin to find Rufus's house. I told myself it was because I did not want to be late. In the distance, I spotted *Keoni* and followed him, hurtling down a well-worn path of strategically-placed stone slabs from my house toward Rufus's roomier, much more posh dwelling.

It started raining hard as I picked my way in drop dead darkness. I arrived at the edge, a toe's breadth away from falling thousands of feet into the roiling surf below. *I ain't afraid of no coast*.

Backing up, I maneuvered my way through mud and the endless wind chimes some ancient pothead—sorry, George—had hung overhead from low-lying tree branches many moons ago. I was greeted by a blast of Vivaldi on the stereo.

I wanted to rip out one of the massive decorative bamboo stalks growing in the living room and vault myself back to my cabin. A tall, handsome man in a tuxedo was simultaneously trying to shake off an elderly man spilling champagne all over the checkered hallway tiles – and rescuing me with an umbrella.

"She said casual," I gasped, glancing down at my drenched, *shrinking* linen shirt.

"I'm the butler," he snapped, finally declawing the old man from his arm. He regained his composure swiftly. "Would you like some champagne?"

"Sure." The place was jumping, a full staff of catering types handing around trays of food. I snatched a glass of champagne and went off to find somebody I knew.

Jack Flynn was lounging against a wall, glowering at *Keoni*, who was whispering something to a giggling April Moon.

Fortified by a few sips of champagne, I approached Jack. "We should hang out some time."

"Do I look like a chaser to you?" He walked off.

I drained my glass in one long, mortified gulp. *A chaser.*

"There you are." Stacy was snatching at my sleeve. "Rufus is sulking because he doesn't like the outfit *Tuyen* picked for him. You've been unanimously voted the best one to convince him to wear it."

Thanks a lot.

She shoved me toward a set of stairs. I didn't have to look very hard to find him. I just followed the noise of shoe-throwing and screaming.

"What is it?"

"It's just me, Mr. Roscoe, your assistant, Tony

Kaven."

"Oh, Buddah. Come in."

I pasted a confident smile on my face as I shook like a child's Jell-O mold and took tentative steps inside his room, which had a weird looking bed.

"Fucking ridiculous, isn't it?" Rufus asked me. "It's a Sussman nail bed, the latest thing. I am covered in fucking wounds for fuck's sake."

Indeed, his bare feet were covered in band-aids and he looked miserable. *Tuyen*, the object of his ire, scurried out the door now that there was a fresh victim to replace her.

"I'll get you a new bed first thing in the morning." I hoped I wasn't lying.

"Good. And don't let *Tuyen* try and tell you we're on a tight budget."

"No, sir, I won't."

He was looking at himself in a mirror, admiring how good he looked in his jeans and shirt. Boy did that mean-tempered asshole look hot.

"Thanks," he said when I told him. He sat on the edge on his bed. "Take a seat." I tried to avoid those bizarre, mini-steak knives adorning the bed. He put on a sock, took it off, sniffed it and transferred it to the other foot. "You know, it isn't fucking easy being me. There's a lot of pressure in being a star, of being *on*. People expect you to be like one giant fucking light bulb. Do I look like a fucking light switch to you? I have no idea what the fuck I'm doing half the time."

Man, we're bonding! I nodded in a sympathetic way.

"I lose more fucking jobs to Brad fucking Pitt. And he gets all the hot chicks. Crazy, but hot. See, he doesn't fucking know what he's doing either."

"You know," I told him. "The first *Hawaiians* traveled here from Polynesia thousands of years ago in canoes led by blind navigators."

"What the fuck does that mean?"

"They found dry land by feeling the ocean. Don't you think that's amazing?"

He gingerly slipped black Converses onto his maimed feet. "So what you're saying is that none of us knows where we're fucking going or what the fuck we're doing? We're all stumbling blind, just sort of *feeling* the fucking ocean?"

"Yes." I was recovering quickly from shock. I hadn't really been saying that. I'd just been trying to make conversation, but now I was starting to sound like a smart, philosophical assistant and I liked it.

He was examining his fingernails in a critical way. "Dolphins never shit in front of each other. Did you fucking know that?" I shook my head. "They're very fucking private about that. On the rare occasions they do, it's considered an honor, which is supposed to be reciprocated."

I wasn't sure where he was going with that

particular piece of wisdom and didn't think I really wanted to find out. "Your fans will be waiting. I noticed a couple of hot chicks down there."

"Really?" That perked him up. "Real hot, slutty types?"

"Straight out of Central Casting."

"And if they're dumber than fucking shit, this could be my lucky night."

"I have a feeling it will be, sir." I couldn't wait to get back to my cabin and cruise the gay dating websites. I wanted to get lucky, too. All my friends told me chubby guys did well in *Hawaii*, not that I *am* chubby, but I'm never going to fit into a fluorescent tube anytime soon.

Whenever I thought about my crappy sex life, I tended to plunge into a severe depression. Being a bottom boy is damned hard, man. You'd think it's be easy finding a man to fuck you, but in my experience, it's easier finding other bottoms or married men who want blow jobs while their wives are at the hairdresser or whatever. I hadn't had decent sex in...years.

Downstairs, Vivaldi gave way to the Flaming Lips and Rufus left me to go chase the hot chicks. I went over to where *Keoni* and a couple of others were chomping on burgers. *Keoni* smiled at me, handing me a beer and I stood beside them, loading up a turkey burger with lettuce and tomatoes. It was really good.

Ollie, the DP, was sitting in a big armchair reading a book with the subheading of *How to Throttle Your Inner Child*. Beside him, was a bookshelf filled with old *Hawaiian* books. I went over and looked at the impressive titles.

"You know, I'm worried about becoming a writer."

I glanced at the source of this stupid statement. Stacy. Was she flirting with *Keoni*?

"You see, I read in a consumer report that books cause more injuries and death each year than lifting weights or trampolines."

"Trampolines?" Keoni echoed.

"Yes, there's broken toes caused by dropped books, injured backs caused by bending over to pick them up, then of course, there is a new allergen they've discovered in book dust and in the lungs of librarians worldwide."

Keoni and I exchanged looks.

"There's also a fungi in some old books which causes dangerous hallucinations."

Keoni just stared at her. I moved on, wondering how soon I could blow this popsicle stand.

"You leaving?" he asked me, an inch away from my ear. I guess I was. "I'll pick you up at your door at seven a.m. Hope I won't be disturbing...anything."

What an odd thing to say. Well, maybe I would

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get lucky, but the way my computer was acting up, and great...as I arrived at the cabin...the electricity was now on the fritz. I heard the shouts of anger coming from the main house. We'd all lost our power.

But that was the least of my problems. Somebody had gotten a nice fire going in the fireplace. And, God help me, somebody, a man was in my shower. I knew it was a man because he was singing *Singing in the Rain*.

God, somebody had taken over my cabin. I was about to leave when I voice called out, "Tony, honey, is that you?"

CHAPTER THREE

And there he was. *Naked*. Drop dead gorgeous. *Naked*. In my shower.

"You're not real," I blurted.

"Of course I'm real." I couldn't take my gaze off him. He had dark skin, very dark, like many early *Hawaiians*. He had long, straight black hair, but most astonishingly, he had piercing blue eyes, like two lapis lazuli stones set in that perfect face. He must have been six feet tall, a big, muscular body and a huge, perfect cock, that semi-erect, I could see was uncut. My lifelong fantasy had always been to have sex with an uncut man. My gaze shifted back to those incongruous eyes set against his dark, dark skin. He was magnificent.

He was smiling at me now. "You put your order in. It's not like takeout. You can't cancel the order."

What was he talking about?

"You don't understand?" He looked impatient. "The *kapuna*, the ancestors. They listen, you know. But you must be careful what you wish for when you're tapping the source."

I didn't think he was one to cast stones about tapping the sauce. Was he high?

The naked man smiled. "Tony, faith is not being sure where you're going, but going anyway. You gotta roll with the punches, but lead with your heart, yeah?"

He wore a small, secretive smile on his face as the rain patter softened on the roof and he left the shower, leaving the water running. "We have a saying. Let your love be like the misty rain, coming softly, but flooding the river. I think, my little rain man, you are ready for this. One big *ono* delicious voyage!"

As if fueled by my shocked face, he stepped forward, dropped a wet kiss on my open mouth and walked straight past me.

I turned off the taps, now thoroughly drenched.

The naked man went down the stairs.

Down the stairs I went, following him like a drunken conger eel. We wound our way into the living room, where he was already depositing his wet ass straight onto my lovely sofa.

"Honey." He threw one leg over the other. "We got any tea?"

I closed my eyes. This was some terrible joke. For a moment, I even thought Rufus Roscoe had planted him there. Yeah, drive the assistant completely crazy so that he flips out and bolts from the movie without you looking like a bigger asshole than you already do.

"*Tea*?" I didn't know what else to say.

He winked at me, enjoying his little game. I wandered into the kitchen just to buy some time, but he was lounging against the fridge when I got there.

"Arrgh! How did you get in here?"

I ran for the door, but he was already there.

"Why are you doing this to me?"

"Doing what to you exactly? I'd like to get down to some serious lovemaking, but so far you're not exactly going along with the program. You don't want much in a man, do you? Just total perfection. You prayed for me, Tony. Why can't you accept the unseen, the invisible is as powerful as that which is visible?"

Was this a trick question? Had I somehow smoked some *wacky tobaccy* and not even known it? I didn't even know how to respond to this guy, but he was brushing at some imaginary thing on his powerful, muscular, *naked* thigh and I jerked my mind back to the issue at hand.

Just how did this guy get in my shower?

"You spoke to the ancients. They do...occasionally listen, you know." He smiled, enjoying some private joke. Were there hidden cameras in this joint? Were the cast and crew of *Lava Mama* having a whole heap of fun at my expense?

As I scanned the walls and ceiling for hardware, he sighed.

"You have three choices, Tony. Get on the internet and find nothing. Go next door and keep getting insulted for being chubby, or get royally fucked right now. By me. I'm very good at it. You...made me that way."

I felt faint. "I...made you that way?"

He looked at me blankly. "Didn't you pray for me on *Haleakala*?"

I gaped at him, a lump forming in my throat. In my whole life, I'd never had a single prayer answered. Was this real? Or was there some cruel prank at play here?

"Pranks are for kids." The naked man's fingers were at the waistband of my jeans. "And I'm not a kid." There was sexual fire and something else between us...I was too confused to say exactly what. "I really want you. Tony, I..." Our eyes connected as his skin met mine. I hadn't had another man touch me in so long I was ready to leap out of my own body.

We attacked each other's mouths. The stranger's kisses were long, deep and very intense. We held onto each other, our cocks hardening and then his fingers were unbuttoning my pants. He got to his knees, and I held my stomach in, hoping my not-so-washboard tummy wouldn't put him off in any way. I was so self conscious, but the delicious hottie in my kitchen was intent on my cock. At first he just felt it, touching it, as if with astonishment, dropping kisses here and there. I looked down, helpless with a mixture of lust and surprise. He kept stroking it, telling me how beautiful it was and I felt nothing but a fresh surge of desire seeing a beautiful guy drooling over my cock.

"I can't wait anymore," he muttered. "I have to taste you." He took the head of my cock into his mouth and I let out a scream.

"Yeeeeessss!"

He took his mouth off me again.

"Noooooo!"

He picked me up and carried me, taking me to the living room, depositing me on the floor in front of the fireplace. He took his time taking everything off me and I couldn't keep my eyes off that rigid cock, those hands or that mouth. He kissed me everywhere, letting his fingers run over my body, and I found myself thinking, *thank God I use body lotion.* It was like a religion with me.

His fingers teased my nipples, my balls, my cock, my toes, my lips, my cock...on and on, back and forth. I jokingly thought to myself, *he missed a spot over my left elbow*, and suddenly his mouth was there. He lowered himself onto my body and

we felt each other naked for the first time.

There was a lot of gasping and moaning.

"What's your name?" I asked him, buzzed from the feelings he was giving me.

"Frank."

"Frank. I like that."

He leaned into my ear. "Frank Truelove. And I have missed you."

Before I could even ask him what he meant by that, his mouth was on mine again and he picked up the pace of his lovemaking. He gave me a small, wicked smile as he parted my legs and dropped his face between them.

I nearly screamed when his tongue began sucking and licking at my ass hole. I felt my legs widen, I was humping his beautiful face and then he was licking my cock again.

"Please...please...let me have you." I was begging him to fuck me and he was shaking his head.

"Not yet, darling." He took my cock back in his mouth. Man, he was beautiful. He drove me wild, taking his time tasting me, testing how long he could suck me, how long he could run his fingers along my belly before I was ready to come.

Over and over again, he brought me close, but no cigar. Finally, his eyes focused on me for one brief moment and, next thing I knew, he was on top of me and I was holding his cock. "I gotta have you." Frank's blue eyes seemed green in the light of the fire and I was begging him to fuck me, the way Jack Flynn begged *Keoni* for it. Frank's face turned tender as he let me take control of him.

There was a small moment where I worried about what would happen once I'd been fucked again. I'd gone so long without sex and I did fine without it. What would I be like once I'd experienced it again? Would I be humping everything in sight?

He leaned forward and I felt his finger ease into me and he was massaging my prostate. Oh no, not *that*. If anything was going to have me shooting like a fire hose, it was that. And then he took his finger out of me.

Eyes blazing, he muttered, "Oh, baby." Me, the guy who was always lecturing my female friends about not practicing safe sex, wanted that hot cock breeding me, bare backing me. I did not want him covered up. His cock moved into me, a look of disbelief crossing his face. He felt like heaven and hell in my ass. I hadn't been near a man in so long, the pain was excruciating, yet I wanted him so badly, I begged him for every inch. I wanted more of him in me. I wanted all of it.

He fucked me very slowly and I knew neither of us could last, but he heaved himself up, looking down at his cock disappearing into me. He looked back up at me whispering, "Aren't we perfect together?"

And then we were coming, Frank inside me, me all over the two of us.

When our passions subsided, he grunted. "I'm gonna fuck you all night, baby. I hope you're all caught up on your beauty sleep."

He carried me up to bed and did not stop making love to me all night. Between kisses and licks, he asked me questions, demanding answers. Why was I in *Hawaii*? What was my relationship like with my dad? My mother? Why was I still single?

Why was I still single? It wasn't by choice, that's for sure. I was hardly able to form a coherent reply to any of his questions. His cock drove into me relentlessly and I responded over and over again to its insistent pounding.

I was on my hands and knees at one point, my head spinning from the nonstop sensations he was providing and he was teasing me, putting the head of his cock in, taking it out, tonguing me, giving me the head again, when all I wanted was to get fucked. I turned to him.

"If you're gonna fuck me, Frank, fuck me like you mean it, you goddamned tease."

He laughed, slamming right into me until his balls slapped my thighs. "This what you want, baby?" And he gave it to me good and hard until I cried out. I didn't care who heard me in which cabin. This was the most amazing sex I'd ever had in my life.

Frank grabbed my cock from underneath, his fingers tightening on me. I didn't think I could come again, but my ass kept backing up to him, meeting his every thrust and I screamed out when he said he was going to come.

I felt his cock sending hot streams into me. My head dropped to the floor as I came with him. I felt him throbbing, unleashing his ardor inside me. I felt sorry for women. All my female friends told me they never really felt their men coming inside them. With men, it's different. You feel everything...there is nothing like it.

We fell to the bed, Frank still planted in me, both of us reluctant to separate. He kissed my neck and throat, his hand moving in a big, slow circle from my diaphragm to my belly.

"Do you believe in love?" he asked me.

I was barely awake. "Sure I do."

"But do you trust love, Tony?"

"Um...I want to." Why was he asking all these questions?

"Sleep, baby," he murmured, over and over until, heavy-lidded, I was simply unable to keep my eyes open. I felt him pull out of me, heard his sigh.

"Don't be a dream, please," I whispered.

"I'm not." I felt his cheek resting against mine, Frank curled around me from behind and it was the most wonderful feeling in the world.

CHAPTER FOUR

I awoke early, the unadorned window of the loft leaching in pale gray morning light. I might have thought the previous night had been a lovely, glowing dream had my ass not been hurting like hell. And if the shower hadn't been running.

A smile coming immediately to my lips, I was surprised to find the bathroom empty, steam swirling like mad. Frank must be downstairs, I decided. What's with this guy leaving the shower running, anyway, I wondered. I slipped into the warm, wet cubicle, gave myself a good scrub and turning the taps off, I padded downstairs with a towel around my waist.

My heart, stomach and cock gave a little lurch at the sight of him. He was naked, at the stove, cooking and I paused to watch him. God, he was gorgeous.

Turning, he grinned at me. "Lose the towel, baby, I want to see you."

I hesitated and he gave me a wonderful smile. I

stared at his eyes. They looked purple in the early morning light.

"Please, Anthony."

Shrugging, I dropped the towel on the stairs. I had nothing to hide from him anymore, that's for sure. I came up on him, my arms going around him as he lifted the frying pan off the stove.

"You feel so good," I whispered.

"So do you." His voice sounded husky. "You hungry?"

"Yes." My hand moved to his hard chest and I kissed his back. "Where did you come from, Frank?"

"From your heart," he replied as I felt his own heart beating against the palm of my hand. I wished I could reach inside his chest and kiss it. My cock got instantly hard.

He doled out eggs, smoked salmon, a scoop of rice each and I was delighted to find he'd managed to figure out how to work the coffee percolator.

"How long are you going to stay with me?"

"I don't know." His tone was sharp. There was something about Frank that required truth from me, yet he himself gave away nothing. In fact, he got downright touchy if you tried to pinpoint anything related to him. "You can let go of me, hon. I'm not running away."

Instantly dropping my hands, I watched him

pushing himself away from me. We sat at the small table for two by the rain-slashed windows as a soft patter kept up a nice rhythm on the roof. "Don't you love the rain?" he asked me happily. I stared at the clock on the DVD-VCR combo unit.

Three a.m. *Three a.m.*! I had to get up and work in a few hours.

He chatted about clouds and constellations and how Scorpio was his favorite. "I am going to take you out for a canoe ride tomorrow." He paused to sip his coffee. *Tomorrow! He was making plans to see me again!* "It's a wonderful constellation for navigating." He paused again, closing his eyes. "I love the taste of these fresh herbs in the eggs."

I felt guilty for shoveling food down my jaw the way I was, but I'd been starving for love and now I'd found something close to it, I couldn't stop eating. What was wrong with me? "It's all wonderful, Frank," I mumbled. "Thank you."

He laughed then. "Please don't think I was being hard on you in the kitchen, baby, but the truth is, I don't know how long we have...but where I come from, living in the moment is the only place I know how to be. When you are living in the moment, everything is *pono*, good. There is no fear."

For him maybe, but so far in my life, I hadn't had much *pono*.

He dropped his fork onto his plate with a

clatter. "Life has been hard for you, Anthony." He was all over me. We rolled around the floor like teenagers and his head went between my legs. He took my cock in his mouth again and my hands stroked his back, his thighs, any part of him I could touch.

He did not suck me quickly, but seemed to be taking sheer enjoyment out of having me in his mouth.

I tried to touch his cock, but he wouldn't let me. His breath came in shallow bursts. "I've met you in high places, Anthony. I've waited so long for this."

When he put his mouth back on me, I went to pieces, flooding his face with the most intense orgasm I had ever experienced in my life.

* * * *

I woke up at six thirty and I knew he was gone. I could feel it. I turned over and checked, disappointment swamping my senses. My next fear was that I had imagined the whole beautiful night I'd spent with him, but believe me, when you've gone without sex as long as I have, the tell tale signs of well...all the things that let you know you've been fucked to the eyeballs were there. And then I was smiling. And that for me, was a rare and beautiful thing.

Ten seconds later, reality set in...that old Bob Seeger song tortured me, *we have tonight, who needs tomorrow*...I did! That's who! One night was not enough. Now I was mad. *The goddamned ancestors. Didn't they have better things to do than listen to my whiny stupidity*?

How could they send a starving man a slice of beef, then take it away after one bite? Calm down, I kept telling myself. Maybe he'll come back. Kicking off the bedding, I couldn't remember having come up here. Last thing I remembered was falling asleep on the sofa, Frank covering my body with his. I padded to the bathroom. The shower was running again, but I did not want to wash him off me. I didn't want to wash away what was real, what was possibly imagined. I wanted to hug it to me. I so badly wanted to hug him. I was afraid to shower and lose him, like a snake shedding its skin. I turned off the taps and I checked the time.

Five fifty-five a.m. The house felt cold and lonely without him and again I felt stupid. It had been a beautiful experience and, as I looked out the window, I thanked the rainbow in the distance. That's who Frank was to me. Rainbow Man. In a better mood now, I cleaned my teeth, ran a comb through my hair, put on some clean threads and sturdy walking shoes.

I was ready for anything.

Keoni knocked on my door precisely at six fifteen and we were bouncy-toed, grinning at each other. I was thinking a cup of coffee would be really good when a traveling mug materialized in my hand.

"That coffee smells good." *Keoni* glanced down at it.

"Here." I handed him mine, still on a peace-keeping mission.

"Thanks, *brah.*" A second cup appeared in my hand, but *Keoni* was too busy sipping at his drink to notice. "Hey, just the way I like it. Milk, two sugars."

Thank you, Frank. The feeling of a hand stroking my butt made me giggle.

"Somebody got lucky," *Keoni* observed as we made our way to the jeep.

"I never kiss and tell."

Keoni grinned. "Neither do I."

I sipped at my coffee. Damn. That Frank was something else. My coffee was exactly the way *I* liked it. Milk, no sugar. Sure, I should have been frightened, but I was giddy with this unexpected magic. All of it, in the sheets and out of them.

In the jeep, I glanced into the rearview mirror and Frank was sitting there smiling at me. I turned around, but he wasn't there. I looked in the mirror again. Nothing.

Keoni was whistling as we left the property and

headed back into town along the curved, soaked and cake-like mountain road that looked like it was ready to fall off in great big chocolate chunks into the ocean.

"Geez." It was the first time I had seen *Keoni* even remotely unnerved. I hadn't realized quite how far away from civilization we were out at Beatle George's property, but I drank in all the scenery I could as we drove. I probably wouldn't have much chance to sight see with this job, if I kept it. I kept quiet until we got to *Lahaina*, the old whaling center of *Maui* and its state capital. I absorbed it all, the tropical foliage in people's yards, stunning, flower-laden *plumeria* trees lining the tiny, immaculate streets. Beautiful, huge wood-frame houses perched behind picket fences reminded me I wasn't in Los Angeles anymore.

Tall ship masts dotted the beautiful harbor that *Keoni* told me hadn't changed much since the early trading boom. It was quaint and pretty, but the names of the streets were funny. Flood, Drown, Prison...we wound down to Front Street and I was happy to see so many stores. I was dying to walk around and discover something...gorgeous to take home with me.

Keoni handed me a credit card. "This is *Tuyen's* wardrobe department card. Keep all the receipts. She is like a bear with cubs over this thing and you'll have to explain anything she sees as being

even slightly personal. You have to go to these three shops. *Hilo* Hattie, Banana Republic and Hugo Boss."

I was still having trouble absorbing the news that anybody would want to shop at the latter two stores in *Hawaii*. Anyway, he handed me a throwaway map with three stores circled on it. "I hate shopping. I'll wait here for you." *Keoni* handed me a cell phone. "I meant to give this to you yesterday. It's for Rufus so he has direct contact with you at all times. Congratulations on getting this far. Try not to screw it up today. I can give you forty-five minutes, then we have to drive to *Makawao*."

He leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes. I was dismissed.

Now I didn't know my way around *Lahaina* since this was my first time here, but I learned quickly. What I learned was this. The map *Keoni* had given me was old. As in useless.

I got all turned around and frustrated, but found *Hilo* Hatti within minutes. I was presented with a shell *lei* and *Aloha* greeting to which I responded with *Mahalo*, thank you. Then I was presented with a blank stare when I mentioned *Tuyen's* required items, but these were found, giving me minutes to hit the next two stores. I arrived back at the jeep feeling like I might have a heart attack. "Ready, *brah*?" *Keoni's* eyes opened before I'd even laid a hand on the door. He was one *spooky* guy, all right. We threaded our way upcountry toward *Haleakala* and the town of *Makawao*—say Mack-a-wow. One look at the funky main street and I think that's when I knew I'd found the home of my heart, the place of my dreams. *Makawao*.

"Ahh...you are *Hawaiian* at heart," *Keoni's* voice was soft. "For you to resonate with *Makawao* is very special, *brah*. This town was built by the plantation workers and the *paniolo*, the cowboys. It is *Maui* at its best. It's an artists' colony now and very much a local place. People of the land still live here. I knew there was something about you, *brah*."

We parked on a small street outside a church, one of the oldest in the islands. "That's all volcanic rock at the base there." *Keoni* pointed out many other things worth seeing and I dreaded the moment we drove away from it. I was surprised he was coming with me since he hated shopping.

"Brah, this place, I love." We sauntered down Baldwin Avenue toward Makawao, and he told me the name meant edge of the forest. He also told me during the Great Mahele of 1848, the single most catastrophic thing ever done to the Hawaiian people when their King, Kamehameha III deeded land to foreigners, leaving almost all his native subjects homeless, but they did give one hundred native families large plots of land.

It was called the Homestead Act and, since it was undeveloped land without an ocean view, the foreigners who sought after prime real estate weren't terribly interested in the forest lands. The descendants of the original families still lived here and worked the land, but it was their undying *aloha* that gave the place its tremendous feeling of *mana*, of great spiritual power.

"You can feel it, eh?" *Keoni's* eyes were brimming with unshed tears. "This feeling...in your heart. This is the real *Hawaii*." I absorbed this as we walked into the Dragon's Den, a delightful Asian apothecary store. The guy sitting behind the counter was reading something in Japanese, but he looked like a ganja-smoking redneck. How cool and interesting this upcountry enclave was, I decided. We had to go to Ikea next to buy Rufus a new bed, but as we walked along *Makawao* Avenue, I was shocked to see a familiar face having coffee at a curbside table at a place called Casanova. Another familiar face was laughing right next to her.

It was my dear, darling mother and my own personal Rainbow Man.

"Hello, Tony." My mother hadn't changed much. A few gray hairs at the roots, the same shifty expression, the same crappy taste in fashion. She was wearing a lime green *Aloha* pant suit that had probably never been in fashion and hideous, horrible lime green Crocs on her big feet.

Born to a Greek family, she had indoctrinated me in the womb to be afraid of everything, especially happiness, because it could be cursed away from you if you announced its presence in your life. I had a sudden flash memory of being spat upon often by her as a child if somebody praised my looks or personality. Spitting was the Greek way of protecting you from the *evil eye*. I spent half my childhood drenched, the other half bone dry once she left me and my dad. Hmph. And now I had a man who seemed born of the rain. Was there a connection?

She allowed me to kiss her cheek. Yep, she hadn't changed much. She still wore the same perfume, *Je Reviens*. I shall return. How apt.

"I called you this morning and your lovely boyfriend answered the phone. He insisted I meet him for coffee."

"You live here in *Makawao*?" I asked her.

"Oh." She waved her hand in an airy way. "Close by."

Oh my God, she didn't want me to know where she lived?

"Anyway, he has just been telling me all about how you two met."

"How we met?" What had he been telling her? I stared at him. *He was real*. He was here and he was in jeans and a shirt, more gorgeous than I'd even remembered. I thought about the intensity of our all-night lovemaking and felt my cheeks flame.

"Yes, all about how you ran into each other on *Haleakala* in the middle of a rainstorm. How romantic!" For a moment, my mother's gaze slid over to him. "How did *you* get a guy like this?" Her blurted words didn't hurt me. She'd been like this my whole life. It's like your feet getting calloused or something, but Frank was frowning at her.

"That's not very nice, *Luka*. Tony's the most wonderful man I ever met. And the best lover." He nudged her. "I bet he gets his insatiable appetite for cock from you, eh?"

My mother shrugged. "Yeah, I have to admit, Tony, his father and I...we're all very similar. We love to screw."

I was mortified. *My insatiable appetite for cock...our whole family loves to screw...Oh*, *my God*!

A burst of laughter from *Keoni* reminded me he was standing there, listening to all of this.

"Who's this?" My mother lassoed her gaze on *Keoni* and I introduced everybody.

"You're *Keoni*?" My mother's eyes had shifted to circling shark status. "My, I've heard so much about you. What a tiger you are! Grrrr!"

I now wanted to die from embarrassment, but *Keoni* was laughing.

"You like older women?" My mother's chest seemed to suddenly inflate right under the guy's chin and I was wishing I had a pin, but *Keoni* was staring down her cleavage.

He licked his lips. "I like all women, Luka."

"Well, how *marvelous*. Have you had breakfast?" She didn't wait for a response. She just yanked him over the small white picket fence separating the café from the street, swiped a chair from another table without asking and proceeded to monopolize him.

"Why aren't all your tattoos filled in?" she asked in a scolding tone. My mother is not a tall woman, but her strong personality makes her appear so. She criticized my dad and me constantly when I was a kid. I decided long ago it's because she lacks other things to say. Once she left, it felt awful being abandoned by my mother of all people, but my dad and I practiced nothing but kindness toward one another after that. I think he still loved her, but I think he gave up on Happily Ever After a long time ago.

Damn. Had his disappointment in love rubbed off on me? I glanced at Frank and found his warm gaze on my face.

It startled me. *"Keoni* and I have to go buy a bed for my new boss — *"*

Frank cut me off. "You haven't had any breakfast. Come and have a quick bite and you

won't be so grumpy, Anthony."

"I'm not grumpy."

"Yes, you are," they all chorused.

Frank found me a chair and ordered food for everybody. I have to say, he had good taste. I had an omelet—my second one that morning—with *Kula* spinach cooked in butter and pine nuts that was so divine, we ordered an extra side of it and split it four ways.

"Baby, we're going to have dinner with your mom and stepdad tonight." Frank was looking at me and I started to sweat. I hadn't seen Joe Cohen for years. I did not want to see Joe Cohen again. *Ever*. And I would never call that wife-stealing creep *Keo*. Ever. Never, never, never.

But Frank's mouth was on mine now and the mental merry go round stopped. "Okay." Just the thought of *we*, the idea of being with Frank under any circumstances, made me smile. "I look forward to seeing *Keo* again."

My mother stopped giggling and carrying on with *Keoni* and, for a moment, looked shocked. For the first time I realized, she was nervous about me seeing Creep Cohen, too. She'd probably agreed to dinner thinking *I* would never go through with it.

"You won't recognize him with his clothes on," Frank murmured and my mother looked like she'd been spanked.

"What did you say?" Keoni asked, coming out

of his lusty haze.

"Tony's mother took him to a nudist camp with his stepfather one summer." Frank shook his head.

How did he know all this? I hadn't told him the story!

Keoni looked at her, seeing her in a new light. "That's...bizarre."

My mother got huffy. "Boy oh boy, he's still going on about that? Tony, you need to let go of things, *aghapi mou*, my dear."

Let go of things? To say the year of my fifteenth summer was the worst vacation I'd ever had in my life would be a gross understatement. For two weeks, I was subjected to the worst naked bodies on record, whilst juggling my own pathetic stretch toward puberty and my emerging awareness that I was gay.

Meal times were the worst because I was forced to sit and stare at my mother's swinging tits and her new husband's twig and giggle-berries.

"Poor Tony could hardly wait to get to his room each night. It was the only time he could put on some clothes," Frank was saying.

Keoni laughed, my mother looked pissed and then my cell phone, the Rufus Phone, was vibrating.

"Oh, you're not one of those phone-toting weirdoes are you?" my mother fumed.

"It's work," Keoni whispered. "His boss."

"Where the fucking fuck are you?"

"I've done your shopping, Mr. Roscoe, and I'm on my way to get your new bed from Ikea."

"How long are you going to be?" he whined. "Oy...'ang about. I fucking *love* Ikea, me. You can bring me back a big block of that fucking Swedish fucking chocolate, too. You know what, fucking make it three, but don't fucking tell anyone. I don't want to share."

"Anything else?"

"No. But keep your fucking cell phone on in case I change my mind." I heard him screaming at someone, thank God it wasn't me. "April, the fish taco does not show! For fuck's sake, take it easy." He hung up and *Keoni* looked at me.

I gave him a meaningful look. "We have to go."

"Who's your boss?" My mother asked.

Frank picked up the check, but *Keoni* snatched it out of his hands. "No. Tony's got the company credit card. He can pay for it."

"No, I can't. *Tuyen* will kill me. You said so yourself."

"I'll take care of it." Frank's tone was firm. He leaned in and kissed me when I thanked him.

"Who's your boss?" My mother asked again.

"Rufus Roscoe." Frank handed his credit card and the meal check to the harried waitress running by with a mountain of dishes.

My head was spinning. Okay. This guy

materialized in my shower. He fucks like a walking wet dream, he materializes and disappears into thin air. *And he has a credit card.*

"See you at home, sexy." He gave me a sweet kiss, slipping me some tongue. Man, as if I wasn't already in a perpetual state of arousal. "And you tell that boss of yours that you're spoken for."

"Rufus Roscoe! Oh God. He's so hot." My mother imitated fanning herself. "I'm coming with you. I *have* to meet him."

"No, not today. It's my second day on the job and I've lasted longer than any other assistant so far, isn't that right, *Keoni*?"

But he had his index finger and his face buried in my mother's cleavage again.

"It will be okay." Frank's voice was low, his smile reassuring. "I promise."

But I didn't want to take my mother to work with me. I never even wanted to take her to school for *Show and Tell* when I was a kid. She was in her weird, *Daktari* phase back then, wearing diaphanous zebra and leopard print dresses and pant suits that had people staring at her. That was because everything was see-through and she often *forgot* to wear bras and underpants.

Then there was the time she baked chocolate cupcakes for my classmates and ran out of cooking chocolate and used chocolate laxatives in the mix. Everybody, including the teacher, spent days in the bathroom and I spent three consecutive Saturdays in detention.

Let go, Tony.

Frank pulled me to my feet, drew my head to his and kissed me. It was a very nice, long kiss and I wanted so much to ask him more, find out *something* about this man who was unwrapping the icicles around my heart, one by one.

"Want to come with us?" I didn't want to leave him.

"I have things to do, but we'll...pick up where we left off tonight." His smile was disarming and went from my brain straight to my cock. I trailed *Keoni* and my mother all the way back up Baldwin Avenue, love-drunk.

"How *did* you get a guy like that?" *Keoni* asked me as he unlocked the backdoor for me.

"Dude...you would never believe me."

He looked like he was about to argue, but my cell phone was ringing again.

"Rufus."

"Have you fucking found me a good bed yet?"

"I'm looking at them now, Mr. Roscoe. You want king size, right?"

Keoni winked at me through the rearview mirror.

"Of course king fucking size. You think I'm a fucking *midget* or something?"

"No, sir. I think we need the best bed money

can buy and so far I have not found anything I consider even remotely satisfactory, but I will. I'm a man on a mission."

He sniffed. "Well, okay. Fucking hurry up, will ya?"

"Yes, sir." I disconnected the call.

Keoni turned around and looked at me." If we go back with chocolate for him and none for anybody else, the crew will kill you."

"Good to know. I'll just batter my eyelids at *Tuyen* and maybe she won't notice all the extra charges on the credit card."

"Oh, she'll notice all right." There was a small, sinister edge to *Keoni's* smile. We were outside a candy store now and I excused myself.

"I just need a minute," I told my mother and *Keoni*.

"But we're going to buy Swedish chocolate!" *Keoni* looked at his watch.

"Please," I implored him and he shrugged, waiting outside with the sort of aggrieved air my father used to wear when my mother took forever at the beauty parlor. My mother was all over him and his good humor seemed to get a second wind. I nipped into the store and bought a package of cotton candy. I'd noticed the display in the window and it had given me ideas.

Frank hadn't given me a chance to show him I had a few tricks up my sleeve, too. Tonight, I

would wow him. I would, yes I would.

Back at the jeep, we stowed the new purchases in the car and headed to Ikea in the town of *Kahului*.

"Keoni." He turned and looked at me. "I feel like I've been a little insensitive. I'm sure the islands could have lived without an Ikea, right?"

"No problem. I can live with places to buy inexpensive furniture. I would be happy if Tiffany's burned down though. Who comes to paradise to buy jewelry? Damned *haole*." He glanced guiltily at me. *Haole* meant foreigners, tourists. *Haole* meant me.

Keoni initially resisted the idea of buying Ikea chocolate when everybody knew that *Maui* chocolate was the most *ono* chocolate in the world.

But Ikea chocolate was also very cheap and he was soon buying coffee, too. I was afraid I'd totally corrupted him.

He and my mother acted like idiots and I was checking on shipping availability when I saw them sneaking off to the ladies' toilet. *Unbelievable*.

"Feel like an early nooner?" A voice in my ear made me jump.

"Frank!"

He had somehow materialized beside me and I suddenly didn't care if it took them until the next ice age to get that bed up to our estate.

"Yeah." My voice was hoarse, even to my own

ears. My swift and desperate urge for him was mirrored in Frank's eyes. He touched my elbow, got me in the men's room and told me to stand, hands on the wall, facing away from him.

"You missed your cock?" he asked, his mouth at my ear. I could hardly breathe. I'd never fucked publicly before, ever, but his breath was hot, his fingers insistently tugging my pants down around my ankles. I heard him unzip his jeans and then his hands were on my ass. "You are all I think about."

He plunged into me so fast and so deeply I almost came on the spot.

"Don't you dare come yet. You will come with me, do you understand?" His mouth was at my other ear now and he was licking and kissing my throat and neck. There was no lock on the door. It opened and swiftly shut again and the terror of discovery only heightened the experience. We came together with an intensity that rocked me since I hardly knew this man, but already he was filling my world.

But he knew me. His hand was on my belly, holding me close to him. "Anthony," he murmured. "Baby, you don't know what you're doing to me."

We cleaned up quickly and he vanished. As I walked back onto the shop floor, *Keoni* was waiting for me.

"Well, well, well...you two boys are something else..." he frowned. "Where's Frank?"

"Had to go."

"But after I walked in and caught you, I kept vigil so nobody else would disturb you. I never even saw him walk out."

I shrugged. I was used to Frank's little...oddities. This was a dream, a beautiful dream. "He had to fly..." I giggled. I was afraid I'd wake up and find it was all one long, amazing dream.

My mother was wearing a smug expression and *Keoni* lost interest in the subject of Frank. She had her hand on his ass and she was squeezing. It was too much for me. I had no idea what was so special about her, but guys adored her.

Keoni had just bonked my mother. My married mother. And he was a married bisexual.

As we left with our slip of paper guaranteeing afternoon delivery of a king-size sleigh bed, I noticed for the first time the gargantuan mall across the street.

"It's ugly," I squawked. "What's it doing here?"

He shrugged. "It's not so bad...except all the *Hawaiian* businesses have been edged out over the years. Used to be a Liberty House in there. They were beautiful stores. *Hawaiian* department stores with beautiful fabrics. You could always tell a Liberty print." He looked very sad. "They were all

bought out by Macy's a few years ago..."

Trying to inject some joy back into our excursion, I hunted for a diversion. "Is there anything wonderful we should see in *Kahului*?"

He smiled then. "No. A wild bird refuge...the beaches are pretty crappy." His gaze was back on the mall again. He seemed deep in thought.

"They've named it the *Ka'ahumanu* Mall after the first queen?" I asked.

"Yeah, as if that makes it all right."

"Damned haole."

He threw back his head and laughed.

And then my Rufus Phone was ringing. Only the screaming voice on the other end was *Tuyen*. "What the fuck have you been buying with my credit card, Tony?"

CHAPTER FIVE

Tuyen greeted us with the news that poor Stacy had been fired, for reasons obscure and probably *fabricated*, according to *Tuyen*.

"She's been replaced by Mena, which is a recipe for disaster."

"Why's that?" I'd barely had time to register Mena, a slim, dark-haired local girl who had been floating around the set in an aimless way since my arrival.

"She's from the local union," *Tuyen* said in a tone that sounded as if this should explain everything. I already knew it was a legal requirement of all movies shot on location that one crew member per department had to be hired locally.

"Our crew has a combined unit for hair and makeup and the local union saw fit to send out Mena." *Tuyen's* spiky heels kept puncturing holes into the lash green fields of the Surfing Goat Dairy and I slipped my arm around her to keep her stable.

"So, what was wrong with her makeup?"

"First day on the set, she makes everybody look like extras from a freaking George A. Romero horror movie. You should have seen Rufus. He looked like a ghoul. Turns out she does make up at a funeral home. She does dead people, Tony. Nobody knew what the hell to do with her."

"So what's she been doing for the past couple weeks?" I asked *Tuyen* as we picked our way carefully toward the set.

"Babysitting Rufus's cock and apparently not doing a very good job of it. That is one crankyassed man." She moved past me as I broke into laughter and I walked ahead of my mother and *Keoni* as Rufus Roscoe approached me.

"Who the fuck is that?" He was looking over my shoulder.

"That's my mother. And be nice, she is a huge fan."

"I'm always fucking nice to my fans. I just treat everybody else like shit." He brushed me aside so hard I almost fell off the mountain, but *Keoni* steadied me and we turned ourselves into folk heroes by distributing giant blocks of chocolate and bags of warm *malasadas*, Portuguese no-hole donuts to everybody.

Our charmless director of photography Ollie, was slouched in a chair reading yet another self

help book, *The Four Hour Work Week*.

Then I heard his voice. Frank was right beside me. "Ollie?"

Ollie glowered over the top of the book. "Yes?"

"Ollie Uthorn?" On Ollie's nod, Frank started rhapsodizing. "I'm such a fan. I loved your documentary on Lodz."

"Lodz?" Ollie's bottom lip quivered. "But that was never seen outside of Poland."

"Really? Still? It amazes me you haven't won awards for that, you know, like the Oscar. I mean, your expose on prison conditions..." He stopped, aware that everybody was staring at him. "Sorry," Frank grinned. "I'm gushing."

Ollie's face glistened with tears. "You've just made me the happiest man alive."

"Fuck me," Rufus breathed. "I've never seen Ollie smile before." He glanced at me. "Gruesome, innit?" He stuffed a huge square of chocolate into his mouth. But Frank wasn't finished yet.

Rufus was the best actor ever, better even than Brad Pitt, April Moon the best actress in the history of movies, *Tuyen's* costumes on *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* were *inspired*, our director Larry Gold had *vision* and a *unique clarity* to his choices. Jack Flynn was circling like a gay vulture and I felt a sexual current ripple between him and Frank.

"Nice to meet you," Frank shook his hand. He

turned to me. "Babe, I'll get your mom home and I'll see you later."

"Oh nooooo," Ollie practically threw him into his own director's chair. "You must stay and watch. We love visitors."

Since when? So far, everybody who'd come near the set had been threatened with death by shooting and complicated lawsuits. Frank and my mom were treated like royalty and I hated the predatory way Jack Flynn eyed Frank, who remained cheerful and friendly as our insecure troops kept swinging by for fresh adulation. Boy, oh boy.

The only person who wasn't so thrilled was *Keoni*, who up until now had been controlling things with his cock. I did notice him slipping away with Jack at one point, but when Jack returned to shoot a small scene with Rufus, his attention was riveted on Frank.

I was so busy helping *Tuyen* handling both a fractious April and Rufus, I didn't notice it at first, but Frank and Jack were getting awfully chummy. Aside from my own pathetic jealousy rising to the surface, it was causing friction with Rufus. He was throwing shoes, socks, pants, shirts, even brand new packs of Calvins around, giving me and *Tuyen* fits.

"I can't cope with two divas today." She clutched her head. "April is trying product placement with her wardrobe. I'm *sick* to death of her and now Rufus is acting up. Next thing you know it'll start raining again and we'll lose another day!" Her bottom lip wobbled and I took control of the situation.

"What do you mean by product placement exactly?"

"She keeps trying to slip these...ludicrous pieces of designer wear into her wardrobe. I'm not stupid. I happen to know the designer paid her a lot of money to wear his clothes on the shoot. She did the same thing on the last movie I did with her."

With both our lead actors screaming for attention, I made an executive decision. "Let me handle April, you take the other diva. If he gets out of hand, I'll come and rescue you."

Tuyen looked at me. "I think I love you." She handed me the top April was supposed to be wearing in the next scene and I walked bravely into battle with our female lead.

April Moon was winding herself up for a full scale meltdown by the time I'd climbed the four steps into her Waggoneer trailer. For those who don't know, former *The Carol Burnett Show* comedy actor Lyle Waggoner created these on-set homes away from home and made a fortune selling off his company. April's Waggoneer was decorated in a headache-inducing shade of *Pepto* *Bismol* pink. Everything in her quarters was stitched, embroidered with the words Princess, Diva and She Who Must Be Obeyed.

A rack of evening wear by a very famous, *avant* garde designer took up quite a bit of space. The actress glared at me. "She won't let me wear this top and I won't set foot out this door unless I'm wearing it."

I squeezed beside her on the sofa, picking up the lacy, sequined black number. *Tuyen* was right. *Ludicrous*. I had to pick my words very carefully with her because this was a woman who'd come straight from years on a lavish soap opera where the women tumbled from one thousand thread count sheets into couture gowns at the crack of dawn.

"It's lovely, April, but you know, I'm thinking it's a tad...over the top for a scene where you're supposed to be out feeding your horses."

"I don't see why..."

"This top here, by the way, not only will enhance your beautiful body, but I guarantee, every man is gonna be staring at *you* and every girl is going to wanna be you."

She watched at me in that vacuous way people who make their livings in front of the camera sometimes get. "Really?"

"Absolutely."

"But I can't," she whispered. "I have a big

problem. Don't tell *Tuyen*, but I'm getting paid quarter of a million dollars to wear these outfits. I simply have to get them into the movie."

Quarter of a million? Our little soap actress wasn't as dumb as she looked.

"I've already spent the money," she blurted.

"April, I'll think of something," I promised rashly. "In the meantime, put this on and let's party. You rock in this movie, girlfriend."

"I...do?" She sniffled. "Well, if you think so..." She picked up the white stretchy number and pulled a face.

"Oy...where's my fucking assistant? Hey, fatso! What *is* that guy's name anyway?" I could hear Rufus screaming from the trailer next door.

"He's calling for you." April was all business now, ripping off her robe and putting on the stretchy top. "I do look good, don't I?"

"Fabulous." I bolted from the trailer over to Rufus who had finished turning *Tuyen* into a quivering pulp and was now bent on insulting me.

"I have no idea who you fucking think you are, but you're here to work for me, not to be out there socializing."

"You look fantastic." I was learning—fast—that compliments derailed Rufus's dirty mouth more than standing up to him or even agreeing with him that I'm an incompetent idiot. "Wow...you look really hot, Mr. Roscoe." Out of his window, I could see Frank, *Keoni* and Jack yucking it up and I wanted to strangle Jack.

Tuyen, coward that she was, crept quietly out of the wardrobe trailer to puff furtively on an *American Spirit* cigarette to calm her nerves.

Rufus frowned at me. "How would you fucking know? You have the crappiest taste in shoes."

I laughed. For some reason it struck me hilarious that he said this when I bought the damned shoes thinking *he* would like them. "Let me take a look at the other outfit," I suggested and Rufus meekly put it on. "I like them both, what can I say, you're a clothes horse."

"Let me ask Frank what he thinks of this outfit," he huffed. "You are *so* fucking gay. I want a second opinion." If he thought he was insulting me, he wasn't. I took childish pleasure in tearing Frank away from Jack.

"You look amazing," Frank announced as if he'd been handling wardrobe chores for years. "Those Dockers make your package look really huge." I just about died when he said that, but Rufus was eyeing himself in the mirror in a gloating way.

Outside, our two stars behaved themselves long enough to get the tiny scene shot, but I noticed Frank cocked one eye toward the sky. An invisible dam opened up, dropping a blanket-thick shower over us. Frank was ecstatic, but everybody else shrieked and ran for cover, the director screaming about his ruined shot.

* * * *

Frank wasn't there when I got home. I peeled off my wet clothes and stepped into a hot shower. It soothed my nerves after a long, horrible day during which I'd been accused of stealing Rufus's last chocolate bar - I didn't - and even causing the rain - wrong again - and when Frank suddenly disappeared, it was *my* fault that my mother, who didn't have his er, extra terrestrial skills, was still there being a general nuisance.

Keoni was commandeered to drive her home and she left, tearing herself away from Rufusogling reluctantly, though by that stage, he was fresh out of politeness and he'd taken to abusing her verbally the way he did everybody else.

"What a character," she giggled, kissing my cheek as I walked her to the car to make sure she actually left the set. I soaped up under the hot spray remembering the way she'd whispered, "Let's take a rain check on dinner, yeah?"

Fine by me. I rinsed off, dried, found some fresh dry clothes and heard the rain pounding my roof. I turned on the TV. Snow. No computer either. My electricity faltered, then died completely. Just as I was reaching for the candles and matches, I was surprised when my cell phone rang. It was *Keoni*.

"Hey, *brah*, a bunch of us are going into *Lahaina* to grab some eats, couple of beers. You in?"

"Sure." I had nothing better to do than sit in darkness, waiting for the rain to smash through my roof. "Jack wants to know if Frank's coming."

"No," I ground out, wanting to scream. "He's busy tonight." Doing what, I couldn't imagine. But the blast of a car horn told me *Keoni* was outside the door and I made a run for it.

Rufus, *Keoni*, Jack, *Tuyen* and April were squeezed into the jeep.

"Where's Mena?" I asked, catching *Keoni's* warning glance too late.

"I fired her." Rufus looked smug. "She brought me cold coffee. Can you fucking believe that?"

"No...no I can't." I hadn't formed any sort of attachment to Mena, yet I still felt bad for her. I reminded myself not to get too relaxed with Ruthless Rufus and we drove toward *Lahaina* in silence. *Keoni* got us off that precarious mountain intact and was given a spontaneous round of applause. Everybody was in a good mood when we arrived in the happy-hippy atmosphere of Front Street in *Lahaina*.

The rain miraculously stopped. I followed the others from the parking lot at the Cannery across the street to their apparently favorite place, the

AJ Llewellyn

Aloha Mixed Plate. An outdoor restaurant, it was a hopping joint right next door to the best *luau* on the islands, the *Old Lahaina Luau*. The drum beat and flickering tiki torches filtering across the wooden fence to us, not to mention the gorgeous view of the ocean, made for a simply stunning experience.

I could not believe the prices of the dinner plates. *Plate Lunch*, a *Hawaiian* specialty, is eaten day or night and consists of your choice of meat plus two scoops of rice and one scoop of macaroni. Priced at a very low five dollar average, we ordered tons of dishes and beers for everybody. We watched the two waitresses keep up an amazing pace handling the entire place alone as they ran to a window with their jotted orders, collected food and drinks from two guys in what appeared to be a makeshift kitchen, all with genuine looking smiles on their faces.

Then the real fun began. I almost groaned. *Oh no. Karaoke.* Some guy called Singapore Sam took up a microphone and invited people to perform. April and *Tuyen*, who were at odds on the set, ran up to the little wooden stage and started things going in a rousing way with quite an...exotic rendition of *Fever*. The two women were all over each other as they sang and Rufus leaned over to me.

"Is that the hottest thing you ever saw?"

I signaled the waitress for another beer. "I'm not drunk enough to answer that question," I replied, earning a blast of ecstatic British laughter and a slap on the back that dislodged a bone or two. Boy, did I miss Frank.

Trying my best to fit in, I was exhausted and a little bored as the evening wore on. I designated myself the sober driver and it was very late, around two a.m., when we started the drive back to *Kapukaulaua*, but *Keoni* refused to let me drive.

After a very frightening twenty minute jaunt in the jeep, I ripped the keys out of the ignition the second we stopped at a red light.

"I'm commandeering this vehicle," I told Keoni.

"Why are you doing that? You can't do that!"

"You're drunk."

The people behind us were honking their horn so I flipped on the hazard lights and, with a lot of cursing, they veered around us.

"I'm not drunk. I'm..."

"You're pissed as a fart," Rufus shrieked from the backseat.

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are," I yelled back at *Keoni*. "You're driving on the wrong side of the road!"

The only problem with taking the wheel was that I couldn't drive a stick, so Rufus took over and, with April draped all over him from behind, he drove us to the Grand *Wailea* Hotel. It was grand all right, absolutely majestic and... enormous.

I'd never seen anything this gaudy except in Las Vegas. Rufus managed to get *Tuyen* to pony up the credit card and booked three Deluxe Ocean Guestrooms. I shuddered to think how much this was going to set back the production in terms of cost, but as he handed me a room key card, I took the hint, leaving the others to sort out their domestic arrangements and a sherpa escorted me half way across the island to my quarters in the *Molokini* wing.

It was absolutely wonderful. I took a look at my new digs, gnashing my teeth that I'd be back to reality with no lights etc. etc. the next morning. I checked my watch. Correction, in just a few hours. My room was about a thousand square feet, poised right over the ocean. Great, expensive island décor, telephones that worked, lights that worked and a TV that had...*snow*.

How bizarre. I tossed the remote to the floor and fell asleep fully clothed, woken by the sensation of something cold dripping on my leg. My body screamed for sleep, but I forced my eyes open and in a dreamless fog. I found Frank gazing down at me. My mouth refused to work. My tongue seemed glued to my teeth so I just reached for him. He was wet through, I assumed from the relentless rain, but his hard, hot body and lingering kisses, not to mention that splendid cock that always seemed to be ready for action, soon got me all warmed up.

I glanced at the clock. Three a.m. "Don't you ever operate on a normal time schedule?"

Frank just covered me with kisses in response. I felt him laughing my name when my mouth claimed his cock, even as my brain shrieked, *rest!* Frank was having none of it. He got up at one point, excusing himself and I could smell coffee brewing at the mini bar in my room.

"Tuyen will freak out if we put more money on the credit card," I mumbled. He just laughed and came back to bed with a cup of coffee and a cup of crushed ice.

He took a sip of coffee, opened my legs and went straight down on my ass hole.

"What are you doing?" The sensation of the hot liquid, alternating with the crushed ice in the second cup made me delirious. He let me come in his hand and licked every last drop of me, giving me a radiant smile.

"I think your ass misses me, baby." He plunged his now rampant cock into me and I wrapped my legs around his waist. Oh yeah, my ass had missed him all right.

"You're so tight." He took long, deep strokes in and out of me, keeping his mouth on mine, his tongue roaming my face as he came long and hard inside me.

We didn't wake up until the sun hit us full in the face. I checked my watch. Ten a.m. We were supposed to be on the set by six thirty.

I was totally screwed. Frank turned over in bed as I frantically started checking on the others via cell phone. *Keoni* and *Tuyen* were just getting up.

"Rufus bunked with April," *Keoni* told me. "No idea where Jack went. Last time I saw him, he was heading to the Volcano Bar."

I don't know why that worried me, Jack was not my concern. Rufus was however, and he'd placed a block on his phone and neither *Keoni* nor I could rouse him.

Frank rolled over, watching me. "You worry too much, darling. Mind if I sleep in?" He blew a kiss in my general direction.

"Is that Frank?" *Keoni* asked. "I'm a little surprised. I thought saw him with Jack last night."

"You saw Frank with Jack last night?" I squawked this aloud, but the man who'd kept me awake all night with the most intense sex I'd ever had in my life did not react. I felt a tightness take hold in my belly. He was *my* rainbow man, not anybody else's. Okay, so we hadn't discussed commitment or exclusivity or anything like that, but geez, I didn't like the idea of sharing Frank with anybody, especially Jack.

Keoni told me to be in the lobby in ten minutes.

I took a quick shower, throwing the same clothes back on and I came out, not particularly surprised to find Frank gone. What did surprise me was the old stuff stirring up within me. Unpleasant, godawful feelings of inadequacy and hurt. Being in love...or infatuated, or whatever I was, was both a blessing and a curse. I hated this part of it, the insecurity. Not that I had time to ponder this. I now had five minutes to get to the lobby and it was miles and miles away.

I beat everybody there and, as the others joined me, *Tuyen's* face whitened in terror. "I must have been smashed," she kept saying. "They just swiped the card for four thousand dollars." She couldn't blame me for that one.

When *Keoni* checked his cell phone, he learned we'd be having a late start due to the director's emergency meeting with the studio executive who'd arrived unexpectedly from the mainland that morning.

"That puts me in a good mood." He snapped his phone shut. "That means we can have breakfast." We all stood by the amazing water feature of cascading waterfalls and slides now filled with screaming children and we tossed coins over who should rouse Rufus and April.

They emerged seconds later, with Frank and Jack in tow. I noticed a sort of...intimacy between Jack and Frank and I knew something had transpired between them. You could just feel it. I'd spent half my life reading the currents between adults to assess the good and bad times to make my presence known. I felt the empathetic gazes from the two women and I was mortified. This was public humiliation worse than my mother's most embarrassing incidents. At the end of the day, I had to work with all of these people.

"I'm not having bloody breakfast with a bunch of fucking kids screaming in my fuckin' ear hole," Rufus said in lieu of a greeting.

"Fine. Let's go to Stella Blues Café then," *Keoni* said.

Not so fine with me. I felt Frank's gaze on my face. I knew I had to give him up, even though I could still feel the effects of having him inside me. Yes, I craved him, but I'd gotten over worse. When your mother walks out on you when you're a kid, it prepares you for some pretty harsh life lessons. Self preservation becomes paramount.

Unfortunately for me, Frank had found the door to my heart buried at the bottom of the ocean. On the one hand, he'd opened it, which was probably a good thing. On the other hand, he'd left it wide open and I couldn't slam it shut again.

Chapter Six

Frank didn't accompany us to breakfast, which was a relief to me. He didn't come because there simply wasn't room in the jeep for him, so Jack offered to go with him. I glimpsed *Keoni's* sympathetic smile, but busied myself keying in Rufus's latest ridiculous requests on my Iphone, ignoring the whole exchange.

"I have no idea how Brad Pitt lives with all those fucking children. They'd give me a giant headache, me." Rufus scratched at the early morning stubble on his chin as we drove back toward civilization on South *Kihei* Road and my mood brightened once we found an empty table at Stella's and I'd ordered half a papaya and sweet *Maui* bread French toast. *Kua Ana,* my favorite *Hawaiian* band from the mainland was playing over the sound system, giving a breezy, buoyant energy to the morning crowd, a mix of locals and tourists.

I was jolted from this small moment of

pleasure when Frank and Jack walked toward us. *Oh, no.*

"I love the French toast here." Frank gave us his best, most disarming smile. He tried to maneuver a seat beside me, but Rufus was busy barking continuous instructions to me, between bites of whatever April kept shoveling into his mouth and he wouldn't be dislodged.

"Fucking sit down over there." Rufus waved his hand at the other side of the table. "Okay, now I need some new deodorant..." Yeah, this was vital stuff. On my other side, Tuyen was also making out a shopping list for me. We scarfed down our food and Frank, still desperately trying to make eye contact with me, had hardly gotten to touch his food when the rest of us had to go to the set.

"Don't worry, I won't abandon you. It's my day off anyway." Jack patted his shoulder, but Frank came over to me. I brushed his hand off my arm. He looked like I'd slapped him.

"Just leave him alone, he'll get over it," I heard *Keoni* say to him.

Yeah, right. What did he know? I didn't miss a step however, keeping pace with Keoni who was very distracted. "We'll drop the others off and head back down here to take care of your list." He eyed the pages in my hand. "I'd really appreciate it if you didn't mention to my wife that I bunked with...you know..." he inclined his head toward the chirpy *Tuyen* who was in very high spirits since her night of...*whatever*.

"Your wife? When would I be speaking to her?" *Keoni* looked at me. "She's Annie, the craft service woman." The woman I thought was Goddess *Pele*. I stared at *Keoni* trying to picture the two of them together. She was at least twenty years his senior.

"And...ah...should she ask, where were you last night?"

"Bunking with you."

"Keoni, forgive me for being nosey, but where does Annie sleep? I mean, I never see her around our property."

"Oh, she stays home with our kids."

I didn't know what to say to that. Memories of my mother shouting about how burdened motherhood made her feel, made me feel very bad for Annie. My mother's married life had been heaven in comparison with this arrangement. But I didn't say that. I kept quiet.

We dropped *Tuyen*, April and Rufus at the Surfing Goat Dairy and *Keoni* and I were about to head back to *Lahaina* when a huge commotion stopped us in our tracks. Half a dozen guys in black suits, looking like something out of a British gangster movie were prowling the set.

The suits swarmed Rufus, who was in a belligerent mood. "Crap," he muttered, spitting a

wad of something disgusting into the grass that a stray goat promptly ate. "Time to cast my fucking pearls before the fucking swine, Tony."

I was so shocked that he remembered my name, I was stumped for a witty retort. April looped her arm through his and rushed forward to toss a few of her own pearls into the fray.

"Let's get out of here." *Keoni* held up *Tuyen's* illtreated credit card and we climbed back into the jeep.

I put my head back, jolted back to reality by a sharp rap at my window. Rufus.

"Oy, matey...lookit. April...is she fucking wonderful or what?"

Not sure he was actually expecting a response, I said nothing, waiting for his instructions, but he glared at me.

"Wonderful, yes," I muttered.

"I want to get her something...sparkly. Go to Tiffany Jewelers. I saw a Tiffany somewhere..." he scrunched his face in concentration.

"Don't worry, I know where it is."

"Get her something nice."

"How nice?"

"*Very* nice. Hey, she told me she wants to be a writer. Maybe one of those pens on a rope thingies." He tossed me a black American Express card. I'd never seen one in person before, only in the pages of uppity magazines.

Keoni and I waited until we'd rounded the first corner before we started laughing.

"A pen on a rope. Can you imagine?" I wiped my eyes from laughing so hard, tears had fallen down my cheeks.

"You should get it just to make her mad at him." *Keoni's* glance was half hopeful, half dare. Yeah, right, like I wanted Rufus's new squeeze mad at Rufus who in turn would drop a bomb on me.

"Keoni, you just want her lusting after you again."

"Dude, she is kinda hot...even if she does shave her pubes."

"You don't like that?" I was intrigued now.

"It's not natural," he complained. "It's like making love to a nine year old girl. She gets her whole body waxed. Even her arm hair."

"That sounds painful." I changed topics. "Where should we start?"

"Lahaina. Get some zees. I'll wake you when we get there." It felt like ten seconds later that he nudged me. "Hey, princess, we're here." I took my endless lists, the credit cards, made sure my phone was in my pocket and locked the passenger door. *Keoni* was snoring before I'd even sauntered toward the clothing stores. I systematically worked through the list, feeling utterly wrecked from lack of sleep, trying not to think about Frank.

At one point, I felt overwhelmed when I couldn't find the right shoes for Rufus and was about to give up when Frank materialized beside me.

"Hi there." He looked fresh and crisp and full of life. I wanted to deck him. "Got a minute?"

It didn't really surprise me that he popped up. I was getting used to his peculiarities. I just didn't particularly like them much anymore.

"Boy, you're really mad at me."

I made a pretense of scanning the list though I knew the remaining items by heart. I could hardly focus on the page, my eyes were so busy brimming with tears. *Ack*! Could I possibly be more pathetic?

"Tony." His voice was so soft, it was as though it managed to touch me somewhere deep inside. "I never meant to embarrass you. I never meant to cause you...humiliation. I miscalculated badly. For that I am truly sorry."

I nodded. "Fine. I still have things to buy. I've got to get on with this." I turned my face, swatted surreptitiously at my tears, impatient with myself, even more furious with him now.

"You don't understand. Nothing happened with Jack. I...talked to him for a while. That's all. The guy was really depressed. But I know how it looked. And I never meant...I never dreamed everybody would be thinking I fooled around on you. I can't bear for anyone to think that. Least of all you."

I stumbled around the corner into *Hilo* Hattie. A stout middle-aged clerk in a red *holoku* dress pounced on me with a shell *lei*, slipping it around my neck. I smelled alcohol on her breath as her face neared mine and heard Frank's faint *Mahalo* as she draped one on him, too. I fanned through a stack of gaudy *Aloha* shirts. I felt his misery and his desire to choose the right words. I wondered what I was going to do about Rufus' shoes.

"Tony."

"What, Frank?"

"The universe is like a safe that comes with a combination. Except that the combination is inside the safe. You have to find your own special combination, Tony. Your own key."

"Yeah? And what's your key, Frank?"

"You." It was the most wonderful thing anybody ever said to me in my life. Frank leaned very close to me, his mouth tickling my ear. "You have the shoes in the Island Charm bag. Right size, right color. I'm sorry I hurt you. I *will* make it up to you."

He'd taken me by surprise, that's for sure. His swift kiss seemed to dislodge the anger, the emptiness I'd felt and I was now even more confused.

"We need to get to Tiffany's." He took my hand

in his. "Come on."

At the Tiffany store in *Kanaapali, Keoni* and I argued over the sterling silver pen on a necklace and a large link silver choker with a diamond ring dangling from it. I just knew April would love it.

"Come on, we need a good laugh," he kept saying.

"Since it's his ass on the line and not yours, he has to buy the choker," Frank insisted, sipping at the complimentary cappuccino the stuck-up sales associate made once she realized we were shopping for Rufus Roscoe. A thick, foamy mustache had formed over Frank's top lip and I wanted to kick it off. Badly.

Giving me his mouth, he let me have my way, sliding the credit card toward those greedy commission-only fingertips. "See you tonight." He gave me a quick hug and left the store, but I saw him vanish once he walked outside.

"Let's get back to Rufus." I checked my watch. "Before he has a cow."

It didn't take us long to catch up with the gang who had changed locations and were now in the parking lot of *Maui* Taco back in *Lahaina*.

April, dressed in a T-shirt, jeans and sneakers was having a hissy-fit about something. I stole a look in her direction. She was on her cell phone, raging at somebody.

"Dude, I didn't give you all those blow jobs for

nothing. I've never worn jeans in my life," she was saying. "I have sensitive skin. I don't do synthetics!"

"That's weird, considering she's plastic from the chassis up," *Tuyen* murmured in my ear as Rufus grabbed me.

"Where you been man? I've been *dying* to talk to you."

"I didn't get any messages, Mr. Roscoe." I flipped through my Iphone, ready to crush the stupid thing with the heel of my shoe.

"Tony...you're not listening to me. This was too fucking important for a fucking phone call."

"Okay. I'm here now. Is everything okay?"

"I'm fucking in love, mate."

"You...are?"

He nodded, his eyes big and spooked-looking and then his gaze moved to the immaculately wrapped Tiffany box, which he took, along with his credit card.

April was immediately by his side, gushing like a hyperactive geyser when she saw the telltale blue box.

"When did you have time?" she breathed, nuzzling him. "You're so thoughtful."

"Anything for you, baby."

I was ready to puke.

April ripped into the packaging and removed the exquisite necklace.

"It's...it's gorgeous." She held it up to the weak afternoon sunlight that was trying to push its way through the dark thunderclouds hovering in a threatening manner. "Darling, do you have a head injury?"

"No." Rufus looked taken aback. "Why?"

"I was half afraid when I told you I had dreams of being a writer that you'd give me a dreadful pen on a rope."

Rufus opened and closed his mouth and I left them to slop all over each other for a moment.

It was an odd afternoon on the set. Keoni sped executives' with the off to deal varied requirements – shopping at stores they could patronize on the mainland so I didn't see the point-while the rest of us cooled our heels, waiting for their return. The executives hadn't believed the rain story as they put it and, the second they left for lunch at a local resort, the skies opened up.

For the rest of the day, Rufus made multiple trips to his trailer to show April his...er...love at every available opportunity, I, on the other hand, helped the crew salvage drowning cameras and lights in the parking lot.

Annie, *Keoni's* wife came up to me at one point. I could tell she was nervous.

"I hate to ask you this, Tony, but were you with my *Keoni* last night?"

"Yes," I answered truthfully. "He drove us all to *Lahaina* and we had dinner -"

"Did he room with you at the Grand Wailea?"

"Yes." Boy did I hate lying to such a nice woman.

"Oh, thank you." She clutched my hand in hers. "I know he can be a bit...of a tomcat, but I know he's no chubby chaser. With you, my *Keoni* is safe."

She took off, leaving me with a lot of emotional and mental egg on my face. I had no time to give myself a good, proper beating because the crew had set up the next shot and it was my job to alert Rufus.

I had to interrupt him and April a few times whenever there was a hint of the break in the weather and I wasn't sure what was worse. Rufus being an ass, or Rufus bare-assed.

"Don't you think she's fucking wonderful?" he asked me at least twice a minute.

"Yes, I do."

His eyes narrowed. "Are you taking the piss?"

"No, of course not, Mr. Roscoe." Yes, of course I am.

"She's fucking wonderful," he moaned again, changing his shirt without a whimper. He actually said thank you and please, turning me, the makeup and wardrobe girls into quivering wrecks. It was quite frightening, seeing this bizarre transformation in him. I hoped to God April's husband never showed up on the set. Rufus would turn into Frankenstein again.

"You got any cigarettes?" *Tuyen* asked me. "Just being around those two makes me feel...sweaty."

"No. And if you find any, I want one, too."

"But you don't smoke." She took in my bleak expression. "Don't worry. I'll find us some smokes." She tore off, returning with a couple of blue *Dunhills* from one of the visiting executives from London, who'd returned to the set.

Tuyen and I sat side by side on an upturned Volcano lettuce box, puffing like preteens skipping school behind the wardrobe trailer.

"I heard Jack put the moves on Frank," she said, just when I was beginning to relax and enjoy the silence. When I didn't respond, she went on. "I guess Frank set him straight. And Jack's pissed now because *Keoni* likes me." She shrugged. "Lotta good that'll do me. Him being married and everything."

"What about you?" I was dying to ask what she'd heard about Frank and those moves Jack had put on him, but I didn't know whether I could trust *Tuyen*.

"What about me?" She inhaled deeply, exhaling big, unfeminine smoke rings in front of her face. Inside the trailer, April Moon screamed at Rufus.

"Oh...let me have that big dick, Rufus!" The

trailer rocked on its hinges and *Tuyen* and I grinned at each other.

"You got a guy back on the mainland?"

"He's a gaffer on a TV show. We have...an understanding. Don't ask, don't tell. I guess I better get back to it." She put her hand on my arm. "Frank's different though, Tony. I think he's a man of substance."

In some ways, yes, she was right. In some ways, I had no idea exactly who or what he was and the idea of him having *substance* almost made me laugh out loud.

CHAPTER SEVEN

He was waiting for me in bed when I got home and the persistent headache I'd had all day evaporated the second he touched me.

"Here, baby." His voice was husky as he pulled me into his arms, then closer, holding a cup to my lips. Hot chocolate. It was delicious, but I wanted a little somethin', somethin' and his name began with the initial F.

"I'm not going anywhere." His voice filled my heart. I could tell, despite his words he was aroused and ready for anything. There was something about two naked guys and two hard cocks that always turned me on.

"It's all your fault," I whispered. "You woke me up. You've created a monster."

Frank lay back and let me love him. I covered his sweet faces with kisses and I wanted him to come, but I wanted him to experience a different kind of high. I ripped into the package of cotton candy, placed some on the tip of my tongue and we swapped a sultry kiss, sucking the juices from each other's mouths.

Another dollop on my tongue and I went to his nipples, sucking them in one at a time until I needed to replace the cotton candy. He was rolling around on the bed as I put the cotton candy on my tongue and he saw me heading to his cock.

"Oh, Tony! That's where I need it! Oh my God, baby...oh...*Tony*." His eyes turned very dark, like ginger wine, as he watched me slather his cock with cotton candy and suck it all up with the hunger only a truly sex starved man can muster.

I tortured him, staying away from the head of his cock until there was only a tiny bit of cotton candy left and he went crazy, trying to shove it in my mouth.

"Oh yeah, take it, baby. Suck my cock..." he was panting, the rest of his words a little incoherent as I slurped on his succulent sugar stick and he came in my mouth, rewarding me with sweet, fragrant syrup. Mine, all mine.

He pulled me to him, telling me he wanted to fuck me. Man, he was still rigid. A single tear slid down his cheek as I climbed on top of him and he slipped into me. I sighed, then not letting himself come out of me, he flipped me onto my back.

Frank's fucking was not at all leisurely this time. This was hot, gay fucking, my man pouring his heart and soul into me.

"I can't share you," he moaned as he moved faster, harder, deeper into me. "We'll change it to tomorrow night with your mom."

"Wait a second...we're supposed to see her tonight?"

He managed a nod.

I put my hands on his face. "That's fine by me. Now shut up and fuck me."

* * * *

He called my mom when I let him out of bed an hour later. We arranged to call her the next night to meet and Frank and I stayed in bed, eating junk from the welcome basket. He found some *Hawaiian* bread in the fridge, toasting and buttering it, licking the butter from my chin as I ate it.

"I haven't always been a good man," he said cryptically at one point as rain danced on the roof and we decided it sounded like tin soldiers marching to a gay Christmas band.

"What does that mean?" I asked him as he bit into a macadamia chocolate and fed me the other half of it.

"There was a time when I was afraid to dream. With you, I feel anything...everything is possible. I want so much to do everything with you, Tony. I want to show you things...the things that make me happy. I want to be your true love."

"That's a beautiful thing to say, Frank."

He leaned down and kissed me. "Open your mouth. I want to taste that chocolate on your tongue."

We were interrupted by a knock at the door. Frank threw a towel around his waist and opened the door. *Keoni*.

"Orders from King Rufus's Royal Court. And he won't take no for an answer. April's cooking dinner and we're all...er...required to attend. Up in the big house."

Frank and I exchanged looks and he shrugged. "At least we can sneak out when we've had enough and just walk home."

"Right." *Home*. I grinned, feeling giddy and insanely happy.

Keoni went to round up the others and Frank and I ran back upstairs to retrieve our clothing.

He watched me rifle through my bag, which I still hadn't had a chance to unpack. He reached across the bed, extracting a book I'd been reading and I really enjoyed. "The Legend of *La'ieikawai,*" he read aloud. He looked at me. "That surprises me."

"Why?" I buttoned my shirt, watching his hands run over the Dietrich Varez woodcut print of the lovely goddess on the book's cover.

"She's not the most typical of the island

goddesses." He was watching me and I couldn't read his expression.

"I love many of them, but she's my favorite. I think because I've had so much trouble finding out anything about her. I know she's the rainbow goddess of the islands, but according to everything I've read, she was often spotted by members of the *Hawaiian* royal family in *Puna* on the Big Island. What was it called – *Paliuli*. They say there was a magical stream...a lake..."

"*Paliluli,* oh I am so happy you know our stories."

"I googled *Paliuli,*" I told him.

"You did what to it?"

I laughed. "I did an internet search."

"Ah. And?"

"Well, *Wikipedia*—that's an online encyclopedia—"

"That clearly uses a *Hawaiian* name. *Wikiwiki* means quick. So it's like a quick reference, right?"

"Exactly. And it says that *Paliuli* is the *Hawaiian* equivalent of the Garden of Eden, a mythical place, but I also read a report from the Volcano Observatory about a heavy lava flow on *Paliuli* several years ago. So, in some form or other it still exists, even though I have every *Hawaiian* travel book in existence and there's no mention of it."

Frank was excited now. "Oh yes, it still exists, but it's...what's the expression? Off the grid?

Paliuli is still there, and yes, there was a lava flow, but you should see the beautiful plants and trees growing out of it. It's an area highly protected and cherished by families, old *Hawaiian* families who have lived there for many, many years, but I promise you, one day I will take you to *Paliuli*. You can still feel the *mana*, the power there."

He paused, his face taking on a dreamy quality. "All the roads are unpaved...almost every family uses solar energy. But wait until you see the trees. There's a mango forest, two hundred years old. I've never seen anything so...lovely. And no, tour books wouldn't even know it existed." Frank's smile was serene. "The rainbows are still very intense there. Quite...magical. Perhaps the Goddess will show herself to you...Tony, I will help you see things you will never forget."

"You will?" I loved that he was talking about the future. I finished dressing and looked at him. "I personally adore you naked, but probably you should put on some clothes."

"Probably, I should." He stood up and, with a wave of his hand, appeared dressed with casual grace in jeans and a shirt. Damn, this guy had style. He took my hand. "Come on, darling. The sooner we get there, the sooner we can come home."

I was about to ask him for a kiss when he turned around and gave me one. "So you like

rainbows, huh?" He looked the happiest I'd seen him since he first materialized in my shower. "What about rain? You like the rain?"

This was a loaded question since I knew he loved it. But I had absorbed enough *Hawaiian* culture to know one thing. "Of course I do, Frank. You know what they say, no rain, no rainbows."

The rain fell in soft droplets until we reached the main house, then it came down like thousands of mini battering rams. I could hear the sound of *Hawaiian* music belting away inside. We scurried indoors and Frank's new best friend, Ollie, grabbed onto him.

"You know, when I was forced to escape Lodz with my prize documentary stapled to my watch..."

I extricated myself and went to the kitchen to see if April needed a hand. I found her actively engaged in the important chore of transferring bulk-buy spring water into Evian bottles. This was shocking to me and I was left grasping for something to say.

April shot me a look that would have smelted Teflon and stopped what she was doing to slip on a shoe with a seven inch spike heel that would make a handsome addition to America's rapidly dwindling munitions stockpile.

"I don't see why we should keep spending money like drunken sailors on food around here. Nobody can taste the difference between good water and bad, or for that matter, good wine and bad wine."

"Really, you think?" I asked, wondering if she'd swing around and puncture one of my lungs with those killer high heels.

"Tony, make yourself useful. Transfer this flagon wine into these empty bottles." She slammed a funnel onto the counter. I gazed at the empty bottles of 1961 *Latour*, the world's most exquisite wine. I just couldn't do it. My eyes shifted toward the mountain of food, most of it unrecognizable, littering the kitchen bench. I stared at a Pepto Bismol pink blob artlessly arranged on a platter in front of me. What was it with her and that horrible shade of pink?

"Tony, don't even think of picking," she warned.

I wasn't, let me tell you. I have a policy of not eating things I can't identify. "What is it?" I finally asked.

"Well, what do you think it is, you moron? It's Norwegian Surprise."

I almost laughed. She was being so unpleasant, so openly hostile, I sensed big trouble in rainy little paradise. Frank walked into the room, putting is hand on the small of my back in a comforting, proprietary way. I loved it.

"Ah, Norwegian Surprise." He smiled at April,

who gave him an appreciative look.

"Oy, where's my bird?" I traded amused glances with Frank as Rufus entered the kitchen smelling strongly of *Brut* aftershave. It was so strong, my eyes watered as Rufus reached up his arms to smother April in a big hug. I noticed his eyes fixed on the pink blob as she tittered in his arms.

"Honestly, honey, how am I supposed to surprise you if you keep coming in here?" She sent him into the living room to make sure everybody was at the dinner table. I helped her carry the platter to the table's center. She headed back to the kitchen after much kissing and cooing with Rufus.

"All right, I give up, what is that pink thing?" he whispered to me.

"Norwegian Surprise."

"More like a bloody shock," he whispered back, plastering a merry smile on his face the second she and Frank came in with the wine.

"You start, darling." April's voice sounded loud and artificial. She was trying to impress her man while silly laughter interrupted her Martha Stewart moment. I was shocked to see *Tuyen* openly flirting with *Keoni* in front of a granitefaced Annie.

Jack Flynn also looked unhappy. He glanced at Annie and the two struck up a strange conversation about poisonous plants of Hawaii. "Women first," Rufus insisted, handing a large soup ladle to Annie who looked at the blob.

"What is it?"

"Norwegian Surprise, of course," Rufus said in a huffy tone.

"No, it wouldn't be right." She jabbed a chubby, ring-bedecked finger at *Tuyen*. "You start."

"No!" April stamped her foot. "I want Rufus to start."

He seemed to pale under his carefullymaintained three day growth. He took the ladle between two fingers as if it had developed jaws that might clamp down on his hand and plopped a blob on his plate. We all leaned forward. There were bones sticking out of the congealed mess.

Rufus reluctantly picked up a spoon and looked at us all in an imploring way.

"That's it, darling. Tell them all how good it is." April eyed him in a maniacal way.

Frank's fingers reached for mine under the table and squeezed. I squeezed right back.

"God, it looks disgusting," Ollie finally spat. Thankfully somebody at the table had no sense of social niceties.

Rufus' spoon hovered over the mystery meal on his plate. He was clearly petrified to come in for a landing.

"It's not disgusting, it's wonderful," April

fumed.

"I want some meat, woman." Ollie banged his fist on the table. "What is that thing when it's got four legs and a tail?"

"That, my friend, is the surprise. It wouldn't be a surprise if I gave away the secret ingredients now, would it?" She reached to the sideboard for a bottle of wine. The second her back was turned, Rufus dipped his spoon into the blob, took it out again and when she looked back at him, he was pretending to chew and swallow.

"Tell them it's wonderful," April insisted and Rufus nodded, rubbing his stomach like he was thoroughly enjoying his imaginary mouthful.

"You didn't even eat it!" Ollie cackled. "He's pretending!"

April's eyes narrowed. "Is that so?"

"No, no," Rufus protested, shooting Ollie a death ray stare. "It's wonderful, baby." He plunged the spoon in and took a real mouthful this time. As long as I live, I will never forget the look on his face.

"What is it?" April was anxious. "Too much cayenne? I did spill the container in there, but I thought I got it all."

Rufus's face turned beet red and nobody could contain their laughter now.

"Something sharp," he gasped. Frank moved behind him, gave him a rough bear hug and a long, spindly bone popped out of Rufus's mouth and fell on the table.

"What the fuck is it?" Rufus rasped, reaching for a glass of wine.

"Oh, it's from the *Fugu*." April wrapped a tendril of her curled hair around her index finger in an absent minded way.

"Isn't that poisonous blowfish?" Rufus's eyes were frightened orbs

"It's only poisonous if you use its organs at certain times of the year." She was furious now, especially since Annie and *Keoni* were laughing so hard, tears were falling down their faces. April glared at them. "I am assured the fish is safe."

"I'm not assured. One wrong move and it's guaranteed to fucking shut down your fucking central nervous system faster than an all day *Hannah Montana* marathon," Rufus huffed.

"Well!" April slopped a glass of wine in front of Rufus who snatched it up and took a long gulp, before spitting it out, spraying all of us with what smelled like vinegar.

"April, what in the fuck is this fucking wine?"

"It's a *Latour*." She pointed to the label.

"That is not a fucking *Latour*. *Latour* is fucking wonderful. This tastes like fucking vinegar." Rufus hunted around for a glass of water. Frank thoughtfully slid his own glass toward him.

"It is vinegar." Ollie's lips curled as he put his

wineglass back down on the table.

"Don't be ridiculous. You must have lost your taste buds being imprisoned all those years." April picked up the bottle and sniffed. "Oh, you might be right. I think I put red wine vinegar in there by mistake."

Rufus clutched his throat and another bone shot out of his mouth, across the table, landing on top of the pink blob.

"Oh, so that's the Norwegian Surprise," I murmured, making every person at the table, except April, laugh hysterically.

CHAPTER EIGHT

We won't forget this night in a hurry," Frank chuckled, tightening his hold on me. We talked in whispers since we were lying on a porch swing on the *lanai* at the back of our cabin. Up until now, it had rained too relentlessly to make use of the great outdoors. We'd hardly had a chance to explore and now, though it was chilly, the clouds covering the sky like an old winter coat, I was toasty warm. I settled in deeper on my gorgeous man's chest, loving the way I was wrapped in Frank's legs and arms under the duvet from our bed.

The swing rocked back and forth in a slow, rhythmic pattern as Frank told me the story of *Lai'eikawai*, goddess of the rainbows. I'd read the Varez book, a simplified version of the massive tome written down by S.N. *Hale'ole*, to whom the story was told in oral form by various *kupuna*, elders, in 1860. Until the early 1800s, there had been no written form of the *Hawaiian* language. All that changed with the arrival of the first Christian missionaries, but *Hale'ole* wrote the story in *Hawaiian*.

In 1917, Martha Beckwith translated the Rainbow Goddess's story from the *Hawaiian* language and *The Hawaiian Romance of La'ieikawai* was born. Her enormous book contained the *Hawaiian* language version on the left side of each page, the English version on the right. I'd managed to find a copy on Ebay for a ridiculously high sum of money and was dismayed when it arrived, beautifully packaged, to find it amazingly dense and difficult to read.

It read like poetry, but I couldn't follow the story. I found the short, heavily illustrated Varez version at a *Hawaiian* festival on the mainland a few weeks before I flew to *Hawaii* and was excited to finally understand the story's meaning.

"Some people compare her to the Celtic legend of the Lady of the Lake," Frank mused. "Lai'eikawai's story is a sad one. I mean, first her father doesn't want her because she's a girl and then when her mother hides her and her twin sister, they are separated for fear of harm coming to them. She's raised in secrecy and used and abused, by not one man but two, finally finds her husband, Ka'onohiokala, the eyeball of the sun, who cheats on her with her own twin!"

We were silent for a moment. "Her husband

was stripped of his heavenly privileges, right?" I asked. "After his deception was discovered?"

"Right. He was banished to earth to live as a *lapu*, a ghost."

I shivered. *Lapu*. The word that kept scrolling across my laptop screen the first day I arrived. In addition to being rendered a *lapu*, I remembered reading that *Ka'onohiokala* had been sentenced to a lifetime of dining on moths.

"Are you cold, sweetheart?" Frank's embrace got a little friskier and I forgot all about ghosts and broken hearts. I concentrated on rainbows and a growing shaft of goodness between Frank's thighs. "You sure you want to make love out here?" His voice grew husky. "People might see us."

"We have a blanket over us."

"That's true. But I had an idea...something we might try." He stood up and took me by the hand. "How ready are you to try some real magic?"

"We're naked, Frank." We were walking down toward the ocean. I barely walked around naked in my house on my own especially if there was a mirror involved, let alone in public.

"Yes, I know. So, are you ready?"

"Ready for what?"

We climbed down for several minutes and my inhibitions left me as he turned and with obvious lust in his eyes, took me in his arms and kissed

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me. The kiss went on unbroken for several more minutes and he grunted, taking his mouth away from me. He eased me down to a flat rock wedged between dozens of jagged rock peaks, the cold water of the Pacific washing over my feet and arms every few seconds.

"Comfy?" Surprisingly, I was. Then Frank's hands went between my legs. "Open up for me, love child." I couldn't resist him, I opened my legs and his hands went to my thighs, running over them. His eyes gleamed down at me and I stroked his arms, wishing I had his mouth again. He leaned down and kissed me again and I felt the rock underneath me growing warm. His fingers started strumming over the sensitive space between my cock and my ass. He was getting me ready for him.

Lost in the sensations he was creating, the gentle way his fingers moved to my balls, neglecting my hungry cock, I squirmed on that now hot rock...it was almost like being on the warm hood of a car, laid bare and waiting for my lover to rock my world. I suddenly remembered a time when I had a date with a guy I really liked and we'd talked about fucking on the hood of his car, but it never happened.

Frank's rigid cock poked at my ass and I felt him enter me, cold then hot, the second he was inside me. A fresh wave splashed over me and the water seemed suddenly solid. I glanced down in shock. A watery figure emerged, glanced at me, but I saw no face, only a mouth as it descended over my cock. Water flashed at my nipples and, as Frank fucked me hotly, three mouths worked on my nipples and cock, sending me into a frenzy.

"That's it, baby, I want to see you turned on...I want to watch you come." Frank's voice was low, hypnotic, as his mouth came down on mine again and the mouth on my cock send cold water down over my balls as a pair of hands started to massage them. They weren't Frank's hands. They were occupied holding my ass up to his greedy cock as Frank started thrusting sizzling streams into me.

"Oh, Anthony, I love you," he whispered and then I was coming, into the cold wet mouth of the ocean spirit.

Frank kept moving in and out of me, even as the ocean spirits receded, leaving us alone.

"I could never share you with anything, but nature spirits." His voice was low, raspy. I wanted to tell him I loved him, but nobody had ever made me feel this way and I felt vulnerable, frightened. An admission of my own love might send him away. I pulled his mouth down to me instead and I felt his hot tears mingling with my own.

We wandered back to our cabin, back to bed, to the sounds of nothing but our breathing and the intermittent rain making me burrow deeper into my lover's arms. I felt Frank's chuckle as I kissed and stroked his throat.

"You're a bad boy." He was immediately hard, ready for action, but then my phone started ringing, the loudness making my heart beating wildly. Three a.m. It was Rufus. I had to answer it.

"I've been up all night in the fucking bathroom."

"Oh, you have? I'm sorry to hear that, Rufus." Frank was being very naughty, grinding his lips against my ass, making me gasp.

"Confidentially speaking...you...ah...can you make sure April can't feed me leftovers?" Rufus sounded frantic.

"Not a problem. I will handle it." I made a note in my rapidly swelling mental notebook to make sure all leftovers magically disappeared from Rufus's kitchen.

"Excellent," he whispered. "Erm...I gotta go. I gotta run back to the loo."

"Turn it off. You're mine now," Frank muttered. "He can have access to you later."

"All right," I giggled as his tongue went back to work on me. I tried not to think about our wild encounter down by the water. I focused on getting Frank back inside me, where we both wanted him to be.

We fell asleep at last, me encircled in Frank's arms and, the second my eyes closed, I found a

surprising thing waiting for me, the image of my first lover. I saw him exactly as I had the first time we met as adults. He was the daddy type, the kind of guy I always went for in my experimental years.

Matthew had been a good friend of my father's, but had lost contact with us after my mother left. Having a woman walk out on you was a damning thing it seemed and the only people who stayed even remotely connected to us were widows and divorcees who sprinted over daily with casseroles and cakes. They were all pawing at the wrong door with my dad. He was still in love with my mother and took years to progress past the bewildered phase. Years which in he experimented here and there, but the second some demand was made, he'd bail and I'd be forced to lie and tell repeat female callers whatever feeble lie came to his terrified brain.

But Matthew wasn't entirely to blame for abandoning us. He'd married a Greek woman and spent half his year in Athens, the other half in the northern suburbs of Los Angeles. The marriage broke up when I was eighteen and in desperate need of real honest to goodness homosexual contact. Matthew left Athens for good, bestowing his apparently lavish estate to his estranged wife and moved to a bachelor pad in the heart of downtown Los Angeles's garment district. He developed a reputation as a real ladies' man and he and my dad had dinner a couple of times, my father raving to me about Matthew's bachelor pad. Considering we'd been living in the same, dingy two bedroom North Hollywood apartment we'd had when he'd been married to my mother, I could understand the lure of a loft with a New York vibe to it. Then one night, dad took me to dinner with them and I was startled to see how well Matthew had aged.

As I squirmed in bed thinking about Matthew's piercing blue eyes, I remembered them being almost as beautiful as Frank's. When my dad and I walked into Matthew's place, I remember I got a hard on just looking at him. He took us to a downtown penthouse cafe for dinner and he spent a lot of time asking me questions. Then my dad left us to go meet some woman for coffee.

"I'll drop Tony back home," Matthew assured him. I felt very cosmopolitan, very grown up walking through downtown's quiet streets back to the warehouse he owned and the top floor he'd converted to a residence. Matthew and I sat on the star-lit roof drinking snifters of 1873 vintage *Guillet & Cie Grande Champagne Cognac*.

About the strongest thing I'd had to drink at that time in life was beer and wine at church. That liqueur of Matthew's went straight to my head and his stories of his fascinating life rerouted the effects of that priceless alcohol straight back to my cock. He stopped talking at one point, came over to me, kneeling between my legs.

"Glikos. Ise poli glikos, you are very sweet," he whispered and then he kissed me. I had never been near a man and the fact it was this older, straight, divorced, *straight* man was utterly shocking and hugely erotic. Our kisses went on for some time, his tongue and lips moving down my chest.

"I have to take you home," he murmured against my mouth. But I didn't want him to take me home. By the time I stumbled out into the darkness and walked with him to his car, I was infatuated.

Outside the apartment building where I still lived with my dad, Matthew turned in his seat and looked at me. His mouth was on mine in seconds, his hand massaging my crotch. He got his fingers into my open zipper and accelerated in a haphazard way around the corner, where he took my cock out of my pants and gave me a blow job.

I came in my father's friend's mouth as my father rounded the corner in his nine year old Ford Taurus.

"When can I see you again?" Matthew asked me.

Neither of us could wait. The next night, he

picked me up down the street from my father's apartment, took me out to an expensive restaurant where he touched me under the table cloth all night.

We had some mutual sucking in the backseat of his car and he told me he wanted to fuck me on the hood, but he never did. Three times we met for dinner and three times we went back to his apartment for those lethal nightcaps. The first time we actually went inside the apartment and to his bed, I was ecstatic. I assumed we were starting a relationship. We had a raging cock sucking session and finally, he took me, at about three in the morning, plowing my virgin ass as I told my dad I was spending the night at my best friend Jason's house.

And that was the last time I was in Matthew's bed. For days, my ass burned and throbbed and still no calls came. When I could no longer stand being ignored, I took the plunge and called him. A woman answered his phone. When Matthew took the receiver from her, he was so rude to me, my ear felt singed for a week.

Weeks passed into torturous months and one night, two years after I'd last seen him, when he was remarried and evidently unhappy, he tracked me down in my own apartment. He begged me to see him. I refused, but he pleaded with me and I relented. He picked me up, took me to dinner in one of his endless expensive restaurants, drove me to Griffith Park and attacked my cock.

We spent a good hour rediscovering one another in the backseat of his Daimler and, with Matthew still possessively planted inside me, we swapped, eager, hungry kisses. I stroked his face and neck.

"When are you going to take me back to your place and fuck me in your bed again?" I whispered.

His instant laughter was cruel. "I don't take *poustis* to my bed." The shock of being called gay in a derogatory way by a man who could not get enough of my mouth on him or me in his mouth was like being abandoned all over again. He laughed hysterically when I walked away from him down the mountain park road in total darkness. He wasn't laughing a few days later when I refused his calls, then once again reneged.

An hour before we were supposed to meet, I called and canceled. I couldn't start something that could not end happily. It took all my strength and courage to make that call. His instant fury and demeaning words told me I'd made the right decision. But then he grew frantic, calling me constantly.

"Listen to me," he told me one night, calling from a payphone around the corner from my apartment. "I got married. I made another stupid mistake. That's why I can't take you home. But if you give me a chance, I will make things right. I will fix things so we can be together."

"Fix things first," I told him. He let out a ragged breath.

"Okay, you'll see. I can be the man you need."

We never spoke again. Matthew fell out of my life and I never allowed myself to think about him. Falling for Frank, opening myself up again had exposed a wound I thought was long healed.

Now as I twisted and turned in Frank's arms, I felt him wakening, heard him whisper, "Don't think about him. You've got me now." And I felt his arms tighten around me and I wished and wished with all my heart that we could always be this way.

* * * *

Most movies shoot five days a week. When you go on location, the rules change a bit, especially when there's inclement weather. You can expect to work six days a week to make up for lost time, but Sunday is always a day of rest.

Our set had become a bit of a cold war zone with poor Mena, the most recent and fired guardian of Rufus's penis being rehired out of necessity and then being treated shabbily by both Rufus and April. The poor girl could do nothing right in her new position as production coordinator.

"We want peanut butter flavored ice cream," they told her one evening and she and *Keoni* drove frantically all over the island looking for it. She came back with a container, triumphant, until April took the gallon container out of Mena's hands and tossed it into the trash.

I found myself naturally gravitating toward her, trying to help her as much as possible. Mena, *Tuyen* and I became a kind of unit, covering each other's asses and developing unhealthy chainsmoking habits.

"We're like the Three Musketeers," *Tuyen* said one evening as we sat on the shores of the *Ka'anapali* Beach Hotel as Frank brought us each a cocktail.

He removed the cigarettes from each of our mouths, muttering, "Disgusting habit."

"He's bossy," Mena huffed, lighting up again.

But I liked it. Frank and I cuddled on a chaise together and I secretly felt like we were the Four Musketeers, but I couldn't say so since he wasn't working on the movie, not officially anyway.

My first day off the following day was a great source of joy for me and Frank. I felt guilty not to have called my dad since my arrival, but I hadn't been able to articulate my thoughts on seeing my mother yet, so I started my morning with a call to him as Frank made pancakes for breakfast.

When he didn't answer his phone, I left my dad a message, relieved quite honestly, to put off a bunch of questions I still didn't know how to answer. As I framed my voicemail message, I spied *Keoni* from the living room window. I mentally shook my head at his dangerous game of musical beds and tried not to throw up thinking about the fact that he was sneaking into the director's cabin with Ollie. A threesome with those two? *Eeew*!

Frank had big plans for our day and, after checking in with Rufus who assured me April would take care of his needs, I relaxed for the first time in a week.

"Here you are, darling. Macadamia and coconut pancakes and coffee and then the world is ours!" Frank's cooking was about as stunning as his lovemaking.

"Where are we starting?" I asked him, enjoying every bite.

"*Moku'ula.*" He shook his head when he saw me reaching for my trusty *Maui Revealed* book. "You won't find it any guidebooks, sweetheart. Now hurry up and finish. We gotta get moving." We ate quickly, showered together and I was surprised when *Keoni* showed up at our door.

"Frank said you wanted to go to a car rental agency? Best thing to do is get one at the airport. I

have a friend who works at Dollar. I can get you a good deal for a month."

A month? I was ecstatic. That meant *Keoni* thought I'd be staying on the movie. The three of us headed to *Kahului* Airport in high spirits.

"What are you doing today?" I asked him.

"Hanging out with the kids. My old lady's firm on that one."

"Did we take you away from them?" I asked, feeling bad now.

"Oh, no. She loves you guys. As long as I'm back for the family *luau* this afternoon, that's all she cares about. Say, you wanna come?"

"Yes," Frank replied and, in truth, I was looking forward to a genuine *Hawaiian* family *luau* myself.

Keoni hustled us an excellent deal on a convertible PT Cruiser. The entire Dollar parking lot was made up of Dodge Neons and PT Cruisers.

"This will mark you less as a tourist than the Neon," *Keoni* said. "Just don't leave anything in plain sight. Otherwise it's guaranteed to be stolen."

I signed on as the sole driver since Frank had no ID.

"How can you have no ID, man?" *Keoni* chastised him, but Frank took it in good stride. We promised to be at *Keoni's* house by two o'clock and we roared off down the *Kuihelani* Highway toward

Lahaina. It felt so good to have some autonomy and to have the top down. We fiddled with the radio dial and came upon *Keali'i Reichel* singing *Hawaiian Lulluaby* and for me, time stood still.

In the distance, a huge and beautiful rainbow arced over *Haleakala* as *Keali'i* sang, *Where I live*, *there are rainbows*...

Frank's hand reached across the seat for mine. "You are really a wonderful man, I am so lucky it's you."

Brushing tears from my eyes, I squeezed his hand. *"I'm* lucky and very, very thankful."

Keali'i kept singing, Where I live there are rainbows, with life in the laughter of morning and starry nights. I can smile when it's raining and touch the warmth of the sun. I hear children laughing in this place that I love...

And precisely on cue, the rain came back.

Frank and I looked at each other and laughed. "Want me to put the top back up?"

I shook my head. I was starting to tell the difference between a storm and a tropical rain and this was a tropical rain. We rounded the coast from *Ma'alaea*, heading northwest and I smiled, even though it always smelled dreadful here due to the wild bird refuge at the heart of this coastal town. I was smiling because I knew where I was, everything felt familiar, yet I felt alive with the sense of exploring a deep part of me, a newness

and yet a sense of finding myself again. I belonged here. I just felt it.

In *Lahaina*, we parked outside a baseball field and an animated Frank tore across the field, with me trying to keep up with him. Clusters of people were in various stages of digging, brushing, sifting and several of them looked up, surprised and delighted to see Frank.

"Welcome back, stranger!" One woman rushed over and hugged him. "Long time since we talk story, Frank. How you been? You been on *Molokai*, eh?"

"Yes. It's going well."

Molokai. What had he been doing on the island of *Molokai*?

Frank turned to me, introducing me to everybody. "I wanted Tony to see what you're doing here...oh, Tony...come, sweetheart. I want you to see this." He showed me an artist's rendition mounted on a wooden post of what was once a small sacred island home to the High Chiefs of *Maui* from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, and the Kings of the united *Hawaiian* islands in the nineteenth century.

"Moku'ula was considered a *piko*, a place of great cosmic power," Frank told me.

"How did it become a baseball field?" I almost screamed the question and he gave me a pitying look. "White man's ignorance. They covered it all up at the beginning of the twentieth century. There were two baseball fields here until they found human remains under one field and that's when the investigations began. We are finding most of the lost and sacred island is pretty much intact.

"Underneath this spot, we've discovered *Mokuhinia*, a large fish pond that once surrounded the whole island. We've been able to figure out it covered about seventeen acres. We'd like to excavate some of it, as much as we can. There are natural springs still running underneath this field. They're obviously not visible, but they're still there. They run straight to the ocean. We can excavate those and they'll run straight from the restored pond, back to the ocean.

"You know, in ancient times, this pond was the home of the *Mo'o*, or lizard goddess, *Kihawahine*. She lived in the rivers and ponds, mediating between the earth and water, fundamental elements in *Hawaiian* religion. *Kihawahine's* presence at *Moku`ula* made the island a central power point for *Hawaiian* royalty. Through the goddess, they were able to communicate easily between the human world and the spiritual realm."

I stared at him, enthralled that I was in a place where great importance was being placed on the decimated home of a lizard goddess. "Was this the same lizard goddess associated with La'ieikawai?"

"A close relation. That was *Kihanuilumoku*. Our lizard goddess here was the only one to have traveled to all the islands. This has been a very important and exciting discovery, the remains of *Moku'ula*."

"How come I haven't read about this?"

"You will. We're on the national register of sacred sites now. We've been raising money to help with our restoration efforts."

"I want to help." Suddenly this matter was important to me. "Will you introduce fish as part of the pond's restoration?"

"Yes." His smile was disarming. Now I knew what he'd been doing in *Molokai*. I'd read about the pond restoration efforts there. Whole families subsisted now on this ancient form of aquaculture and I wanted to be a part of it. Frank walked me around, describing all the things that once stood at *Moku'ula*.

"Queen *Keopuolani,* the Sacred Wife of King *Kamehameha* the Great was buried *here,* so was her daughter, the chiefess *Nahi'ena'ena,*" he told me.

I knew the Great King's burial place was a long held secret and I also knew something about *Nahi'ena'ena*. She intrigued me since she was a tragic figure in *Hawaiian* history. She married her brother, King *Kamehameha* III and died very young, giving birth to their stillborn child.

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Frank showed me everything and the longer I stayed, the less sad I felt about the betrayal of the *Hawaiian* people and the more I felt connected to the land and its sacredness.

"There's great *mana*, great power still here," Frank told me. "In spite of the desecration. The future is in the past and we must honor it."

It was hard to leave *Moku'ula*. As Frank talked, I could see the King's residence, the giant lizard capsizing a white traveler's canoe. I could picture the coconut palms sheltering the grass huts that once dotted the islands and it made my heart sore.

We drove upcountry and neither of us spoke. I knew Frank had shown me a part of Maui the average traveler never sees. In Wailuku, we followed a convoluted trail of winding streets as Frank told me that like the other upcountry neighborhood of Makawao, this one was where the locals lived. He drove me around, showing me sprawling homesteads straight out of picture books and wooden homes that would have been at home in Wyoming or Montana. We found parking on Market Street, which was a delightful clutch of antique stores with cute names like Traders of the Lost Art and Viva Lost Vagueness, book shops, oldfashioned records shops and tiny, tasty-looking Asian restaurants of every kind. We took a long, looping walk down to the Millyard and stopped at a cute little place called Sam Sato's.

It was a very down-at-heel set up, despite the exterior appearing new. The place was packed and smelled of good food. I loved the family's altar of temple cats, incense and fruit parked on the shelf behind the counter. Sam Sato clearly took his success as a sign of spiritual support.

"No self-respecting guest goes anyplace without an *omiyage*, a gift," Frank grinned at me. He ordered a large box of Japanese *manju* pastries plump-full of sweet *adzuki* and lima beans and a few dozen turnovers filled with peach, apple, pineapple and coconut.

"Probably we should run," Frank's expression was apologetic. "We just cleaned them out and some of their customers will get really mad."

"Got any *manju*?" a burly man entering the store asked the harried girl behind the counter. Frank and I made a run for it and I held the box of still warm pastries. We laughed as we took the corner sharply, almost running down a woman crossing the street with shopping bags.

It was my mother.

"Mom!"

She glanced at me, her eyes furtive and...desperate. What was going on? She appeared to be wrestling with the idea of running away from us.

"You need a ride?" Frank asked in his amiable way.

"No, thanks. I'm just across the road there." She pointed to a pair of windows above an antique shop on the corner of Market and Main.

"Cool, we'll come up and talk story for a few minutes. We've got some place else to be." Frank's cheerfulness set off a dark gray cloud across my mother's face. She didn't look like she wanted visitors, but as we took the long flight of stairs to her second floor apartment, she smiled.

"I don't get many visitors."

She unlocked the door and I was surprised to see a small, very neat apartment decorated in a vacation style as if she'd rented a beachside condo. A *Hawaiian* fabric in giddy hues of reds and oranges covered a sofa, a framed poster of a John Kelly print above it. I recognized the image of the man serenading a woman with his ukulele as *Hawaiian Night*.

Chairs matching the sofa and a bamboo dining set pushed against the windows completed the room, which smelled strongly of cigarettes.

As my mother told us to sit at the table, we looked around.

"You want coffee?" she asked.

"Sure," I piped up as I looked out the windows at *Wailuku* in action. I got the feeling my mom spent a lot of time at this window, looking out at the world. I felt her despair and I knew, just knew, that she was alone here. I didn't sense her husband's presence at all.

Frank, who took the seat beside me, put his hand on my back. It felt warm, reassuring. I smiled at him, but I wondered what the heck was going on. I glanced toward another room, her bedroom. I saw a bed and a desk with a computer set up on it.

My mother came in with a tray loaded with cups, slices of cake on a plate and an ashtray. She set the tray on the table as if it had been a burdensome chore to carry it from the kitchen, sat opposite me and fired up a cigarette.

"I supposed you've figured out Joe isn't here." She tapped the cigarette into the ashtray, even though there was no ash on it yet. She was angry.

"Well, no. I didn't...know...what's going on, mom?"

"I left him, about a year ago."

That surprised me.

Frank was pouring coffee, passing cups around. "You want some *manju*?" he asked her, pointing to our box of goodies.

She shook her head. "We've talked of reconciliation...but..." her shoulders drooped. My mother's tears didn't seem real. I'd seen her fake weeping before. I recognized it from childhood and suddenly, the image, the long-buried memory of her coming home and sitting in our kitchen crying as my father demanded to know where she'd been all night, pointing to her bra, stashed in her purse...it all came flooding back.

"Don't worry, I won't press you for details." My voice came out flat, but it was enough to stem the drama tide. She picked up her coffee and sipped, lighting a second cigarette off the first.

We didn't stay long after that. It was an odd, unsettling experience and we stood to leave her alone in her stripped-down apartment with her secrets laid bare. I was shocked to hear my father's voice.

"Luka, you there?"

"Is he here?" I asked, feeling as if the room was spinning.

"No, he's on my computer. I've got *Skipe*." She waved us off and practically pushed us out the door. Oh my poor, deluded father. I could see her reaching her expert talons in his direction and I knew he was no match for her machinations.

"Don't worry so much," Frank whispered, kissing me outside the building. I nodded and he unlocked the car. I felt better as we peeled away from the curb and my mother's unhappy life.

Frank glanced at me. "How do you feel about skipping the *luau* and spending the rest of the day naked with me?"

My glee must have transmitted itself because his laughter seemed to resonate off the mountains surrounding us. "Tell you what." He took my hand, placing it on his lap. "Let's go for a couple of hours, then we spend the rest of the day naked. Deal?"

"Very good deal." My hand shot straight to his crotch. I was pleased to find he was getting hard.

"You're a bad boy," Frank grinned. "I'm gonna kill you in bed later."

"How about a little...appetizer...a preview if you like, of...er, coming attractions?"

"I know just the place...nice and secluded," my wicked, wild rainbow man said.

"Mmm...I was hoping you might."

We wound up the mountainous *Haleakala* Highway toward *Kula*, a lovely, lush, densely green town shrouded in a permanent mist, despite the sun hovering overhead. The effect was beautiful, but almost alien. I'd never seen anything like this.

Frank pulled off the main road, through a clump of *Kiawe* trees and turned off the engine. His face went right to my crotch, his fingers working to free my cock and then his mouth was on me. I stroked his head and back. Since my time with Matthew, I was always the one pleasing a man, not the one being pleasured.

"Who's cock is this?" Frank came off me long enough to ask me stupid questions.

"Yours, of course."

"Good answer." In one swift movement, he had

my pants down at my ankles, his mouth back on me, two fingers working at my ass.

"Oh, God, Frank. Nobody...nobody ever made me feel like you do."

Those blue-purple eyes looked up at me and I felt myself coming close to the brink. His fingers slid into me deeply and I felt his tongue lashing at the slit in the head of my cock as his lips moved up and down bringing me wave after wave of pleasure. The feeling of intense release started at my toes, shot up my *tailbone*, through my spine to the base of my skull. Wave after wave of engulfing pleasure.

CHAPTER NINE

Frank seemed to know exactly where *Keoni* lived. There was a fine line between our intimacy and a *no go dere*—as they say in the islands—policy between us. I was still in a daze from that amazing blow job and was a little pouty that he was making me wait to bring him such raw pleasure.

When I was in this state, I wanted to know more, always about him and he would tense up when I asked too many questions. Now, as much as I wanted to know about his magic, I was afraid close inspection would make him disappear like a *will o' the wisp*. I did not want to chance spoiling a precious drop of our time together. And yes, the idea of not being with him gnawed at me when I allowed my mind to wander, but with Frank, every second counted.

He noticed everything. "Look at this *plumeria* tree. Look at the shade of those petals. Have you ever seen a deeper red, Anthony?"

As we entered the mountainous hear of the

Kula district, we had to stop so I could see heavenly vistas for miles ahead, birds, insects, you name it.

We took our time climbing up a steep mountain road at the top end of *Kula* Highway, our rental car moaning its protest at the unpaved road, even as Frank and I marveled over the lushness of the scenery.

Most of it was alpine. We could have been in Switzerland, except that I bet you didn't see too many peacocks and chickens crossing the road in Switzerland.

Parking outside a sprawling rural property, dogs, cats, two cows, several piglets and more chickens, peacocks and ducks ran amok. Frank and I laughed.

"Aloha!" Keoni's wife Annie was running out of the house, pushing open a rusted gate. Three children kept plucking out our fingers and shirt sleeves and dragged us around the side of the property, overgrown with torch ginger and *naupaka*. There must have been fifty people in the backyard, laughing, singing and dancing as four men jammed away on ukuleles, guitars and drum gourds.

"E Komai mai, welcome," *Keoni* shouted, embracing us both. *"Nou ka hale.* The house is yours. You're just in time. It's my uncle's *yakudoshi* and we're opening presents!" I had no idea what a *yakudoshi* was, but quickly learned it was a Japanese birthday celebration. Certain milestones were also specifically celebrated, I discovered. It was *Uncle Tosha's* sixtieth birthday, a very important achievement.

As I gazed at the man dressed almost head to toe in red, Annie was giving me a rapid-fire lesson in culture as the musicians kept up a terrific pace in strumming. Bottles of Primo, the *Hawaiian* beer that had disappeared from circulation for years and, only in recent weeks been reintroduced, sat imbedded in ice chests and upturned suitcases. The musicians would shout, "Bring me a Primo, Kimo," to the kids, who would happily comply.

I was amazed at the variety of ethnic blends of Annie and *Keoni's* huge family. Japanese, Spanish, Chinese, French, American, Filipino mingled with *Hawaiian* blood...these people were beautiful and happy. Ranging from newborns to ancient, everybody had a smile on their faces.

"It's *Uncle Tosha's* birthday, and since he's turning sixty, we call it his *kanreshi*," Annie told me. "That's a very special birthday. We say it's like a rebirth, so we celebrate big! Many of his gifts will be red, which is why he's wearing red. It's for good luck."

"I didn't bring anything red." I felt utterly dismayed.

"You bring food from Sam Sato, even better,"

Uncle Tosha grinned, revealing a mouth almost empty of teeth. He was a gentle, funny, loving guy who enjoyed being the center of attention and he unwrapped the box of pastries like a little kid would as the assorted *keiki*, children, grabbed for them with both hands.

Annie led me and Frank to a long table sagging under the weight of a ton of food. The various dishes assembled were not only delicious, but apparently laced with crack because I could not stay away from them. I went back for second, third and fourth helpings.

Keoni's children who were the sweetest little kids, Jack who was seven, Angel, the only girl who was four and the apparent darling of the crowd, three year old Joey, wanted us to swim with them. *Keoni* lent me and Frank some board shorts.

"Don't let anything happen to them," *Keoni* admonished. I was about to reassure him when I realized he was talking to his children.

Frank and I let the children lead us to a mountain stream at the back of the property that took our breath away. The water, though cold, had a blue hue to it from the Eucalyptus growing all around it. Green silverswords, which the kids told us were very rare and sacred to Goddess *Pele*, sprouted beside bird of paradise plants in red and purple. We played Marco Polo, the kids

swimming away from us like agile fish and Frank and I would meet underwater to exchange kisses.

The kids were so much fun to play with, their sunny good nature reminding me of what my childhood was like where we had to invent our fun and games. I was pleased that *Keoni* and Annie were raising their children the same way. When Frank built a waterslide out of banana palms, the kids went crazy and I swallowed bucket loads of water laughing as they slid down slippery moss slopes into the stream.

Annie called us back to eat as it grew dark. Tiki torches and string lights came on and more food materialized.

"You have to have some of my passionfruit pie," Annie told me. I had never sampled anything more amazing. I could honestly understand now why *luaus* in old *Hawaii* often lasted for days.

Frank and I had so much fun talking story, it was hard to go home. *Keoni's* children cried when we left, which was adorable. Everybody took turns hugging us goodbye, but the line seemed never-ending. I realized then that people kept getting back in line as a ruse to keep us there.

"You're our *hanai*, our family now, you come back anytime, yeah?" Annie said a couple of times. I had a feeling I would come back here. I already felt a bond with her, an inexplicable attachment and I wished her husband would stay true to her.

Frank gave *Keoni* a bear hug. "You have one fantastic family," he told him. "You are the luckiest man I know."

"Thank you." *Keoni* slipped his arm over his wife's shoulder and she beamed. A curious expression came over his face as if he had suddenly realized just how lovely she was.

We drove home, holding hands, our containers of food filling the car with wonderful scents of the day.

"That was wonderful, Frank."

"You know what, baby? It's only going to get better."

The next morning, *Keoni* had me back on the set in *Lahaina*, for our final day of second unit, or action work, on the helicopter chase scene involving Rufus and April. Our leading lady had been impossible for *Tuyen* to deal with before she started polishing Rufus's bed knobs, now she was insufferable. I arrived to hear her bawling out the tearful costumer who came bursting out of the trailer.

"I can't take it anymore," *Tuyen* told me. "She's worse than ever. She insists on wearing those stupid outfits. She says you *promised* to get them in the movie."

Wincing, I remembered the rash promise I'd

made. I patted *Tuyen's* shoulder. "I did say that, but I didn't really think about it afterward. I do know I didn't say *how* I was going to get them in the movie."

Tuyen stopped crying and stared at me. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Well, we're in *Lahaina*. There's a boatload of expensive stores all around us. I was thinking, why not get some extras...say some Japanese extras, getting off a tour bus in those tops?"

Tuyen's face turned fierce. I braced myself for a left hook to the jaw and got a hard kiss on the mouth instead. "Brilliant! You're absolutely brilliant!" She took off back to the wardrobe trailer. I had just been kissed by a woman. My father would be very happy.

My father. I checked my I-phone. Still no messages. It irked me that he was playing electronic footsie with my mother, but couldn't return my calls. I tried again as I headed to Rufus's trailer. Another call shunted to voicemail. Another fake-cheery message from me. Business as usual in my crazy family life.

Rufus and our director Larry Gold were in the middle of an intense argument with the visiting studio executives who were trying to talk them into moving closer to town for the remainder of the shoot. Rufus refused and a lot of uneasy glances went around the group, but Larry called order to the set and I immediately followed Rufus to get him ready for the scene.

"I want to live in George Harrison's house. I will not be treated like a fucking tourist," Rufus kept saying to me as I handed him his bloodied shirt and checked the last Polaroid taken by the script supervisor to check how many buttons he had undone in the last take. We were shooting a different part of a scene we'd already shot, but we wanted the shots to match. They call this *continuity* and it's an important part of the assistant's job and the script supervisor. Some do a crappy job of it, which is why in some movies, you notice the crappy job.

Take for example, *Love Actually*. It's one of my favorite movies, but the continuity is abysmal. From his first appearance in it, Hugh Grant is the victim of really poor continuity. In the scene where his character enters Number Ten Downing Street, his tie changes continuously in one relatively short scene.

Rufus, I discovered was the consummate professional in these matters and he and I scrutinized the Polaroid until we were satisfied he was ready.

"How does my ass look?"

"Hot." The word slipped out before I could stop it, but Rufus got a kick out of it.

"Good." He went down the stairs of his trailer

in high spirits and I kept my fingers crossed that lust, or love or whatever he and April had lasted because I liked him when he was happy.

Across the street, I saw Frank lounging against a tree watching me. When I glanced back however, he was gone. I wondered if I'd imagined it, but I didn't think I had. I couldn't wait until my work day was finished to be with him again.

He materialized at lunchtime, which was at eleven am, not unusual when your work day on a movie starts at five a.m..

"Your mother is coming to dinner," he told me, his mouth on my ear just as I was loading up on carbohydrates at Annie's craft service table.

"The hell she is," I snarled out of shock at his sudden appearance and the news of *Luka* invading my own little personal sanctuary.

"She's bringing the wine, we're cooking. I'll be around. So don't think you can go hide in a movie theater or something."

That shocked me. Had my mother told him my lifelong secret hiding place? Had he talked to my dad?

"Don't look me in that tone of voice, Anthony. I can read your mind. It was one of your prerequisites, you know."

It was? I stared at him stupidly. I got another hard kiss on the mouth, this one a lot more pleasurable than the first. "Flirting with my bitch, Frank?" *Tuyen's* playful laughter interrupted us.

"Sure am, *Tuyen*. Say, what are you doing for dinner?"

By the end of the day, I think he'd invited everybody and I fretted about the menu and having enough chairs.

"Will you trust me?" Frank asked as he collected me in the rental.

"But I'm not much of a cook. I have three specialties."

"I have dozens." His smile was disarming. "We still have time to go home, fool around and still put on a really decent spread."

"We do?" The fooling around part totally got my attention. It kept me enthralled all the way back to our part of the island.

"Hey, there's something I want to show you." He slammed on the brakes as we veered past the turn off for the town of *Hana*, past the handlettered *Baby Pigs Crossing* sign. He took me down a slippery slope, holding me to him as I skittered right into his clutches. I was mesmerized by what looked like the Virgin Mary, curved into stone at the side of the road that crumbled away into the sea.

"This is the *Virgin By The Roadside,* something you won't find in guidebooks, but she is revered by the locals. You make a wish, a heartfelt wish and you leave her an offering," Frank told me.

"I wish I'd known we were coming to visit. I don't have anything. Oh wait...I have half a packet of one hundred calorie shortbread cookies." I glanced at Frank's amused expression. "Well, I am *sorta* trying not to be a complete food whore."

"Make a wish." His voice was gentle. Of course, I wished to be with him forever. And as I placed the cookies at her feet, next to the weathered notes, fruit, small coins, candle stubs and cookie crumbs, I believed the virgin heard all voices.

"Come on, babe." Frank's arm tightened around me. "I want you, then I want to cook the best meal our friends ever ate."

CHAPTER TEN

We went straight to bed the second we got home and I tried not to panic when I saw the bungalow was exactly as we'd left it in the morning. How were we going to feed the multitude of people who were expecting the gourmet offerings Frank had been promising?

Me, I had some gourmet offerings in Frank's pants that needed my full attention and I was more than happy to put off reality until we got some lovemaking out of the way.

It was with our usual frenzy that we attacked each other and although it was over far too soon, I loved the way we fell into a deep, short sleep, completely wrapped around one another. It felt like moments, but must have been longer because I was awoken by a hammering at the door.

"Oy, you two!" It was Rufus. The house was in darkness. I was alone. I lifted one eyebrow, wondering if I was about to meet my Waterloo and I padded over to the window and looked outside.

"There he is," I heard somebody shrieking. "And he's naked!"

I jumped back, yelling, "I'll be right down!" I almost fell down the stairs in my haste to throw my discarded shirt and pants back on, wishing I'd had time to spruce up and wondered if they'd all make fun of me for wearing the same clothes I'd been wearing all day on the set. I glanced at the living room. Nothing. *Nada.* As in not a thing had been done to prepare for our guests and Frank was gone!

Cracking the front door open, I debated feigning illness, but Rufus had his foot wedged in the door. "Something smells good. I'm starving, me." Was he pulling my leg? He was carrying two bottles of *Dom Pérignon Rosé Champagne* in each hand. I happened to know that one bottle alone cost four hundred dollars. He muscled his way into the house, Rufus, *Tuyen*, and April leading a brigade of people anxious to get in from a sudden, flash downpour.

Everybody rushed past me, except *Tuyen* who braked on her nine inch designer heels.

"Oh. Oh, my God. Is this jacket a *Zegna*?" She pulled at an impeccably cut black jacket that had materialized on my body, causing me to giggle. She touched the fabric reverently. "Oh my. It is, isn't it? Vintage, reversible *Zegna*."

I had no idea what she was talking about. To me it could have been a pasta sauce she was rattling off there.

She clutched the jacket to her body. "It's like being right next to God."

"Not quite, *Tuyen*." Frank was on the doorstep now, my mother, who looked a little dazed, standing beside him. "Sorry we took so long, sweetheart." Frank stepped in and kissed me. "Have you been looking after the turkey?"

Turkey? I turned and stared as he rushed past me and I gaped at the long table that had somehow turned up in the bungalow. I watched everybody admiring the hundreds of lit candles, the impeccably laid tables and the butler from Rufus's big party handing around glasses of champagne. It all looked...amazing.

"Wow," my mom said, standing next to me. Frank came over with three glasses of the pinktinted bubbly stuff. I took a sip as my mother kept a roving eye on the beautifully decorated room.

"You cooked?" She was looking at me.

"Of course he cooked. He loves to cook." Frank grabbed me.

"He does?" My mother looked at me in total surprise. "Your father told me your idea of cooking was heating up takeout."

"I am not completely hopeless, you know." I sipped my champagne as she arched a brow. I wanted to rip it off.

"No darling, you're not," Frank said, kissing my forehead. "Now run along and mingle, *Luka*, so we can get dinner on the table."

The house kept filling up with people. *Keoni* and Annie showed up with their wonderful kids and crazy Ollie taught them how to play poker, using matchsticks for tender.

"You have a great way with cards. You ever been a croupier?" my mother asked him, clearly trolling for fresh bedroom talent.

"Nope. Spent several years in prison and all we did was play cards."

She didn't know how to respond to that and Ollie wasn't particularly interested in pursuing the topic. Those three little kids were kicking his ass.

Everybody was in a good mood as we munched through soup, salad, turkey and all the trimmings and when Annie produced two of her passionfruit pies and Frank placed two pineapple upside down cakes on the table, nobody was complaining, except the kids, who let me tuck them up on the sofa with warm blankets, where they slept, apparently used to dozing through anything.

Keoni started singing *Hawaiian Lullaby* at one point, when somebody mentioned the wonderful rainbows we'd been getting with all the rain. He stood up and sang, his voice pure and beautiful and angelic. Everybody stopped and listened as he repeated the refrain, Where I live there are rainbows, with life in the laughter of morning and starry nights. I can smile when it's raining and touch the warmth of the sun. I hear children laughing in this place that I love...

His seven year old son Jack woke up crying and *Keoni* picked the little boy up into his strong arms. "What's the matter, sweetheart?" he asked as Jack wound his arms around his father's neck.

"You never sing that song to me anymore. You used to sing that song to me all the time when I was in there." He was pointing to his mother's belly and Annie and *Keoni* exchanged surprised looks.

"Jackie, you remember that?" *Keoni* kissed his little boy's head. A strange look passed between husband and wife. *Keoni* glanced back at the rest of us. "I used to sing to Annie's belly when she was pregnant with Jack."

"That's fucking beautiful, that is." Rufus actually seemed overcome with emotion.

Keoni smiled. "I wanted my son to come into this world knowing he's a child of this land and the sky." Watching him gently tuck his son back into sleep on the sofa, I had the feeling Jack was going to be a great and powerful man.

And precisely on cue, the rain came back. My mother had been drinking quite a bit, slipping outside to smoke cigarettes with the only other smoker on the premises, our director, Larry. She must have made a pass at him because I saw them darting off to his cabin from the window and Frank caught my gaze and shrugged.

People started leaving. It was a *school night* for everyone after all, but I was surprised to see everyone leaving with huge amounts of leftovers. I had no idea where the food had come from or how Frank managed leftovers with all the guests we had. I wondered if it was a bit like the loaves and the fishes. I was dazzled by Frank's supernatural talents.

When the last guest left – *Tuyen*, with the jacket Frank had vaporized onto my body and which she wanted to *borrow* for Rufus – Frank and I decided we deserved to celebrate a little in private.

"There's so much I want to ask you," I told him, running my hands along his chest.

"You know everything there is to know." His face clouded over for a moment. "I haven't always been a good man, Anthony. You bring out the better nature in me." Before I could respond, the man had me on the floor, barely managing to kick the door shut before he started tearing at my clothes.

"I don't know what's the matter with me, because I am normally a patient man, but with you, I have no patience." Frank was frowning, having trouble with the buttons in his jeans. "Let me handle that." I turned him over on his back, both of us breathing hard as I negotiated the buttons that hid that beautiful, big cock from me. He looked almost bashful as I sucked it the second my fingers made contact with it. It was as if I'd stuck him with a live wire.

"Oh God, Anthony...you don't know..." he was jumping all over the floor trying to get closer to me, trying to get more of him into my mouth. I could barely keep up with his raging hormones, not that I was complaining. I couldn't remember ever having this effect on a man. I sucked Frank with an eagerness your average man on death row would attack his final meal. I loved this man's cock. *I loved this man*. The thought hit me like a tidal wave and I held him in my hands.

Raising my hot wet mouth from him, we stared at each other for a moment. It was on the tip of my tongue to tell him I loved him.

"What are you doing?" His voice was thick with emotion. "Are you trying to drive me crazy?"

I let my tongue stroll over the head of his cock and he went berserk, trying to inch his way back into my mouth. But I was determined to prolong things just a minute or two...and then I saw the pre come on the tip of his cock and knew he was too close for too much exquisite torture, so I sucked him all the way down my throat, watching his face contort with carnal pleasure. "Anthony! I love you!" he screamed as his cock hit the back of my throat. I felt his orgasm rock his body and mine, felt his pulse racing at the wrist that encircled my head. I kissed his fingers one by one and I felt him release a jagged sigh of contentment.

* * * *

We were all awakened early by the screams of two middle-aged women struggling with our security guard who was trying to wrench them back to the beach side of the property gates. In his lifetime, George Harrison had kindly made a deal with local inhabitants, who were allowed to use his property as an access route to ancient *Hawaiian* trails.

The *Maui* council, which had long deemed it illegal for anyone to *own* a beach, reversed this decision when poor George found that the locals were taking advantage of his largesse by bringing everybody they'd ever met over to his estate. In one famous incident, his housekeeper came down to his kitchen one morning to find a strange woman sitting at the table chomping frozen pizza, refusing to leave even when the police arrived. At the time, he'd just been stabbed by another stalker in his London residence and he was recuperating, terrified of his tropical idyll also become a haven

for nut jobs claiming to have *special relationships* with him.

Long legal wranglings ensued, which George won but now the property was being rented out, the locals seemed to have taken leave of their senses. People were constantly crawling over the property, hoping for a glimpse at Rufus and we had to keep security patrols around when Rufus was in residence.

For the first time, he seemed indifferent to the early morning attempt at getting up close and personal with him.

"When they stop wanting to look at me, then I'll start to panic," he muttered, climbing into the jeep for our ride to the set, snuggling next to April who was doing a spot check on her constant arsenal. Two cell phones, sidekick, tazer, stun gun, mace, tube of slut-red lipstick. Check.

A still slightly tipsy *Keoni* finally came out of Rufus's house where his family had spent the night and climbed into the passenger seat. Realizing he was supposed to be driving, he got out, got into the driver's side and fell asleep at the wheel.

Frank came out of our bungalow, nudging *Keoni* across the seat. "I'll drive." He took over the wheel. And just like that, the Three Musketeers became Four.

My mother wanted to come over for dinner

again, apparently having had a *really good time* with Larry Gold. But Larry was avoiding her like a dose of arsenic.

"I must have been blind drunk," he kept telling everybody on the set. "I'm as gay as a boy scout's jamboree. I don't actually remember actually having sex with her, but she says it happened and Ollie found me in bed with her..." He lapsed into silence.

Ollie, breathing heavily, nostrils flared like an enraged bull, was paging through a copy of the magazine *Guns And Ammo* and it seemed to be a good idea to keep *Luka* well away from both of them.

Mena meanwhile, mourned her lost contact with Rufus, allowing him to push her around just in case he remembered he liked her. That didn't seem imminent and so Frank and I tucked her and *Tuyen* under our wings. *Tuyen*, realizing that *Keoni* was trying to be a faithful husband, backed away from him and Frank and I rewarded her with cocktails right after work and fun meals we all whipped up together.

Not that Frank and I didn't get our private time. It was so nice being in bed together, it was hard to get out of it. But by the end of the week, we could put my mother off no more and we packed up *Tuyen* and Mena and drove to meet *Luka* for dinner, well away from the property. We picked her up at her apartment and drove to Mama's Fish House in *Paia*. This wonderful restaurant, a converted beach house felt like the piece of Polynesian Paradise I'd hoped to find in *Hawaii*. I loved the art work on the walls, the musical artifacts, the attentive service and the unbelievable food. I got the traditional Samoan *lau lau*, an enormous plate of fresh *opakapaka*, snapper, steamed in *ti* leaves and coconut milk, served with purple *Molokai* sweet potatoes, baked banana and a fresh pot of young coconut milk to pour over my plate right at the table.

I'd never eaten anything so delicious. We all laughed and joked, even my mother was charming. We tasted each other's food and shared coconut cheesecake and *lilikoi*, or passionfruit crèmes brulees.

"I'd like a Polynesian Black Pearl to go," Frank told our waiter.

"What's that?" I asked Frank who glanced at me.

"A very decadent chocolate concoction and I can't think of anything I'd like more than you and some black pearl in bed tonight." He leaned over and kissed me, the girls all winking at me and Frank turned back to the waiter. "I think we also need five chocolate martinis, just to really make this a night to remember."

As Frank took care of me and the girls, I tried

not to think of the lavish meals I'd once shared with my first lover, Matthew. I realized I was petrified Frank was going to leave me, too. I felt his hand reaching for mine, his mouth on mine again. No furtive fumbling. No secrecy. Everything he did effectively swamped my thoughts with pure, raging passion.

We dropped my mother home in a cloud of good cheer. As *Tuyen* and Mena dozed in the backseat, Frank held my hand as we drove back home, Frank's eyes on the road, mine on him and, when our glances met, I was sorry we were not alone.

In bed that night, he was as ardent as ever, but there was a tenderness that hadn't been there before. We rocked each other to sleep and at three a.m. he woke me with kisses.

"You have to watch this with me, darling. It's my favorite movie."

"What is it?" I mumbled through rubbery, sleep deprived lips. Where did he get his stamina?

"It's *Mary Poppins.*" He sounded so happy, pulling me closer.

"I don't want to see that. It's a sad movie. She leaves in the end."

"Not in this version."

My father called early in the morning, waking me with the words, "How is your mother? Is she okay?" I tried to loosen Frank's grip on me, but his blue-purple eyes were on my face, his hand doing rude things to me under the sheets.

"Dad, I know you've been speaking to her."

"Oh. Well, you know...she says she's fine. She looks as adorable as ever. Don't you think she looks fantastic? I mean I've only seen her on webcam, but she still looks hotter than any other woman I know."

Holy cat. First Rufus, now my dad.

"Yeah, she's magnificent."

Frank's head moved under the sheet, reminding me of the time I called my dad to lie about my whereabouts as I lay in bed about to be speared for the first time by another man's penis, *his friend's penis*. This time, there was no shame, no secrecy, but there was the same urgency. I watched Frank's tongue circling the head of my cock in a maddening way, just swirling over it again and again, his tongue moving in circles, catching the tip into his mouth and sucking on me in a persistent way that sent ripples of pleasure shooting straight up my spine.

"I'll call you back, dad."

"Okay, son. Have an awesome day and uh...kiss your mother for me."

Frank flipped me over on my belly and I clutched the sheets with my fingers and teeth, praying and wishing and *yes*...his tongue went to

my ass hole, sensitive from our nonstop roster of sex. He took his time licking me and I found my hips swaying back and forth, my cock brushing up and down on the bottom sheet. When he thrust two fingers into my ass, I couldn't help it, I came all over the sheet and Frank turned me over, putting his cock into me as I was still coming.

"You didn't wait for me. There's gonna be big trouble if you don't come again for me, Anthony."

I loved feeling his full weight and he took a long time to fuck me, slow and deep and alternating between talking a lot of sex trash to me and then telling me he loved me.

"Frank, I love you, too," I blurted, breathless as I watched his beautiful body hunkering down on me.

"Tell me again." And I did as he moved in and out of me in a reverent way. His fingers curled around my cock when he was close to coming and he made sure we came together. An hour later, as I headed to work, my legs were still shaky.

"I want a repeat tonight," he whispered against my mouth. He wasn't the only one. Frank stocked the fridge with all kinds of goodies and the moment we came home, we entered our endless whirl of food and fucking.

This became our ritual each night after work. We'd jump into bed, put our clothes back on and drink cocktails with the girls as we came to call my mom, *Tuyen* and Mena.

On our day off, we kept to a ritual of exploring sacred sites all over the island and finding remote, idyllic places to make love, before returning to our bed for marathon sessions of food and sex.

And then a weird thing happened. The weather improved and we were making good time on the shoot, so our director gave us the whole weekend off. I could hardly wait. I rushed home to meet Frank who hadn't come to the set that day and I was full of hopes and plans for a day trip to one of the other islands. Outside, the light was beautiful, the sun taking its time to set in a dry sky full of promise. We made love as soon as he walked in the door, but Frank was in a strange mood.

"Are you okay?" I asked him.

"Of course. I'm with you. Now take a shower, baby and I'll call your mom and find out where she wants to meet."

"Meet? We're meeting her someplace?" I shrugged. "Okay." I gave him a kiss, he gave me one and on and on until he pushed me toward the shower and I went off to get cleaned up alone.

When I came out, he was gone. That was weird.

"Frank?" I searched and searched. And then I started worrying. I had no idea where we were meeting my mom or when, and now there was a knock at the door.

It was *Keoni*. "Hey, *brah*...I got Frank's message.

You ready?"

"What did Frank say?"

"You're meeting your mom in Lahaina."

"Okay, but he's not here."

"Oh...well, he didn't say *he* was going. He said I should take you. That something came up. He's got the car."

I felt like I'd been kicked in the guts. What could have come up that he couldn't have told me in person? *He's just not that into you. Maybe tons of people put in orders with the elders and now it was somebody else's turn.* I blew out a breath as we walked down the pathway and jumped in the jeep. My pained thoughts kept me occupied in a fruitless, unpleasant way through pelting rain as we approached *Lahaina*.

She was waiting for me outside *Hilo* Hattie's.

"I'll wait here for you." *Keoni* gave me a sympathetic smile. "Take as long as you need." He lay back in his seat and seemed to fall into instant sleep.

"What's going on?" I asked my mother whose eyes were red-rimmed. She'd been bawling.

"What's going on is that I need to get a get."

"A get?"

"A religious divorce. Since I left Joe last year, I've actually been talking to your dad...we want to give things another try."

I stared at her. How long had this been going

on? I talked to my dad every few days and he never once mentioned any of this. In fact, he seemed giddy about their computer sex, which was not something I really wanted to know about. Maybe that's why he hadn't told me things were a little more serious.

"Technically, legally," my mother was saying, "I'm sort of still married to Jim Cohen in the eyes of the Judaic faith."

"Terrific."

"Joe wants to marry somebody else and frankly, I think it's the right thing for both of us. Frank arranged everything."

"How thoughtful of him."

"Doesn't he tell you anything? Or are you too busy bushwacking each other in that bungalow of yours? Now look, the rabbi is here in *Lahaina* and I need a ride. I don't want your father to know. I want it done cleanly, quickly. I do love Hud, you know." Hud was her nickname for my dad. Trust me, you don't want to know how she came by that one.

I was reeling at the inappropriateness of it all. Me, helping my absconding mother to keep secrets from my father. On the other hand, how appropriate that I would be the one to help bring her closer to him.

"Where do we go?" I asked.

"Frank said you'd understand." Her expression

brightened.

Inwardly I cringed. I didn't understand. I didn't want to understand. I wanted to be with Frank, but the perfect man I'd created, the perfect love I'd wanted, didn't want to be here with me.

Creep Cohen was the same ugly cretin I remembered from my one miserable *nekked* summer holiday I'd had with him and my mother when I was fifteen. Now Creep Cohen stood looking nervous and hostile at the Rabbinical Center in the old *Lahaina* Courts building.

My mother held out her hand to the rabbi who ignored it.

"I don't think he's allowed to shake your hand under spiritual law," I whispered, but she was wounded. It only got worse.

She wept through the service, which was strangely beautiful and very sad. It involved much chanting, singing, praying and the lighting of candles. My mother and Creep Cohen were asked repeatedly if this was the right decision. The unmarrying of them seemed to also be almost the undoing of them.

Afterward, my mother asked me for a few minutes alone with the Creep. They whispered in the doorway of the building in an anguished way to each other. They did a lot of hand holding and rubbing and suddenly I was afraid she'd run off with him again. She twisted her neck to see if I was watching, caught my owlish scowl and hugging him quickly, she finally walked away from him.

They were both in tears as she came toward me, but she never looked back. If all divorces were handled like this, with as much emotional and spiritual integrity put to question, there were would be fewer of them, I decided.

The rain came down as *Keoni* drove me and my mother out of *Lahaina*.

"I'm leaving town on Friday, flying back to the mainland. Your father and I are eager to see each other again." My mother's voice broke. "If you want my apartment, it's yours. It's very nice, even though I haven't done much with it. Maybe after your movie's over, you might want to stay a while. Frank tells me you want to explore other islands, really get a feel for the place. It can be your base."

This was all too much to bear. Frank knew everything about me. I knew nothing about him. Frank knew things about everyone and everything, even my mother. And he had disappeared on me, leaving me to carry a big emotional load.

We both wept until she suddenly stopped and said, "Why are *you* crying?"

"It was a very...moving service," I said, but I wasn't being honest. I was afraid of going home and not finding Frank.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

He wasn't at the cabin. There was no trace of him, in fact our full fridge of food had even disappeared. Oh great. This time I'd attracted a guy who left with the food he put in the fridge. I couldn't feel him...it was like he'd never been here. It was stupid, but I couldn't face the bed without him so I grabbed a blanket and camped on the sofa, channel surfing. What I yearned for was love. I was dying for love. Not for one more revolutionary diet pill. Why was the same ad on every TV channel?

I hit the mute button and looked into the kitchen and decided that no, the bag of *Maui* chips wasn't the antidote to the blahs. I turned over and tried to sleep, waking up every five minutes to the tiniest sound.

Not once was it him. In the early morning, I awoke, determined to stop feeling sorry for myself. I had to stop feeling like a big loser. The rain was falling in sheets, thunder and lightning crackling. I made coffee and turned on the radio in the kitchen.

Lenny Kravitz's *It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over* was playing and I felt absurdly pleased. God was giving me a message. Don't give up. Just wait. It gave me the strength to get ready for my day. By the time *Keoni* came to collect us all for the location drive, I was in good spirits.

By the middle of the day, I thought I would die. Just die. Frank was gone. I had to accept it. At the end of the day, I knew he was coming back. He would, I just knew it. I went on like this until the end of the day when exhausted, I fell into bed.

It was a pattern repeated the next day and the next. People asked me where Frank was and I had no good answer.

"Did you have a fight?" *Tuyen* asked me.

"Not that I know of."

She patted my arm. "He's an island guy. They lose track of time."

I hid from the girls in the evening now, unable to laugh and joke and host cocktails in my lonely bungalow. I had a bizarre dream one night I attributed to the three bottles of *Big Bang Pale Ale* I'd guzzled after a solo trip to the Star Market. I loaded up on empty carbs and ate constantly as I watched a heartwarming marathon of gruesome episodes of *The First 48*. That night, I dreamed that Frank was in bed with me, begging me to fight for him. For me, *for us*. I awoke in tears, convinced I could not get through the day, but minute by minute, I did.

I made mistakes, but I covered my ass very well, when *Tuyen* and Mena weren't pinch-hitting for me. I kept it all in and, on the third day, *Keoni* cornered me.

"What's going on? Where's Frank?"

I burst into tears. "I'm no good at this shit. You gotta talk to Annie. She's much better at the boohoo stuff." He took off, evidently petrified I was going to try and get deep and meaningful with him.

We'd taken up shooting at the edge of the magnificent *Iao* Valley, one of the scenes of great royal battles in *Hawaiian* history. It was a stunning place and a quiet calm took over everyone, except Rufus and April who were still behaving like pashas on crack. One day, I took advantage of Rufus's reckless *nooner* with April Moon in his trailer and the break in the weather to take a walk along a roadway, away from the cast and crew.

I was trying to keep myself from completely falling apart. I'd started to cry when I voice said, "Are you okay, young man?" I looked in the direction of the voice. It was a priest and he was sweeping up outside a church that looked very new.

Casting around for something to say, I asked, "Is this a Catholic church?"

"Anglican."

"I don't know much about the Anglican church. I was raised Greek Orthodox."

"Oh, so I shouldn't invite you to come to our first evensong next month?" When I didn't respond, he beckoned me to him. "Come, let's drink coffee and we talk story."

He led me to some small stone steps leading up to the church and poured me a cup of coffee out of a beaten old thermos into a tin mug. I sipped at it. It was good.

"I'm Father Flanagan."

His hand was warm and reassuring. I introduced myself and asked, "Evensong. What is that? I love the name."

"Some people say it's the most mystical service in the Church. It's essentially evening prayer. The Feast of All Saints is especially popular. It's a service of reflection, of leaving oneself open that God may speak to us through the psalms and readings. When evensong and morrowsong accord, that is the perfect moment to offer up true prayers to God."

"Do I seem like I have a need to offer up a true prayer to God?"

Father Flanagan smiled. "You seem to me to be somebody who is in a great deal of pain. I'm offering you compassion, not a pitch for a religious conversion." I laughed then. "I'm not particularly religious. I guess you could say I yearn for an authentic voice."

He smiled and got up off the stone steps. It looked like it was going to rain again. I felt like I was keeping him, but I liked this man.

"Morrowsong...what is that?" I asked.

"Morning prayers."

"When evensong and morrowsong accord?"

"The poets say the archangels particularly listen to heart-felt prayer when they accord – when they meet."

"What time to do they meet?"

He hesitated, but I was not surprised when he replied, "Around three a.m."

"Where the fuck were you?" Rufus asked me when I came back.

"Taking a walk."

"I want some tea and April wants some raisin toast." I nodded and went off to get their food. At the craft service table, Annie, *Tuyen* and Mena were engaged in apparently juicy gossip. It must have been very juicy because they all stopped talking as soon as I showed up. I saw lots of glances, hand gestures, heard some whispering.

"Are you on drugs?" Mena asked me as Annie toasted April's bread in a tiny broiler oven.

"I wish I was. You got any?"

They all lapsed into silence.

"So he dumped you, eh?" Annie came right out with it.

"I guess he did."

"Men are all bastards, except my *Keoni*," she tittered. That was rich coming from a woman whose husband had fucked everybody on the set except me. "Eh...you'll get over it. Plenty more fish in the sea."

And *Keoni* thought Annie was better at the boohoo stuff? I took the tea and toast as she said something about, "You'll see...more better men out there."

Yeah, right.

* * * *

At three the next morning, I felt foolish, but I went to the edge of the property and looked out over the Pacific. As rain dropped on me in slow, rhythmic measure, I whispered to the infinite.

"Please bring him back. I will do whatever it takes to be the man he needs." As an afterthought, I added, "I will even stop eating chocolate."

My words were out there for the universe to judge, weigh and decide. Life or death. Love or loss? I was sick of losing the people I loved. I wanted whatever the universe had to send me wherever Frank had come from...somewhere, out there beyond the reef.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Had I really promised to stop eating chocolate? I had. Which meant those chocolate covered Oreos sitting in my fridge would not be my breakfast. It was Friday and a full weekend loomed. I was desolate. For the first time since I'd arrived, I dreaded having two days off.

I felt very odd, in a state of limbo. I couldn't really define how I felt, but when I turned on the radio and Elvis Presley singing *Beyond the Reef.* I thought it was a message, a sign. I didn't even know there was a song called *Beyond the Reef*, but I listened to the words, searching for meaning in Elvis's tragic tone.

Beyond the reef, where the sea is dark and cold, my love has gone –

There was a knock at the door, interrupting me. I wiped my tears, picked up my cell phone and thought I had done a good job of pasting a smile on my face when I went to greet Keoni.

"What's wrong with you?" he asked me. "You still pining over Frank?"

I looked at him. "What makes you think I'm pining?"

"I don't hear those happy sex sounds coming out of your cabin. I see the hurt in your eyes. I'd give you a righteous fucking, but I've got my hands full."

Suddenly he was on me and I wasn't resisting him. He had his hands on my pants and I was letting him attack me, tears in my eyes as I tried to imagine he was Frank.

"Stop," I shrieked. And then I woke up. Thank God, it was all a dream.

In the morning, the real morning, I sliced some papaya, squeezed a lime over it, brewed coffee and commended myself for ignoring the cookies that were screaming my name from the inside of the fridge.

Switching on the radio, Elvis was singing *Beyond the Reef* and an odd feeling of déjà vu swept over me. And then *Keoni* arrived.

"You taking your mom to the airport this afternoon?" he asked, sounding grumpy.

"Yeah, I guess I am."

"She's such a bitch. She told my wife we fooled around. I spent the night on the sofa."

"That sounds like Luka."

"I mean...geez...just when I go and turn over a new leaf...it was bad enough having you and Frank stare at me like I was murdering my babies...say, he back yet?"

"No."

"Wanna quickie? For medicinal purposes?"

I laughed then. "For you or for me?"

"Both." He grinned. "You look so unhappy and I care for you, *brah*. I can only say that man loves you. Whatever he got goin' on, he'll be back. Have faith. Yeah? Remember to lead with your heart." It was an odd thing to hear from him, since Frank had said the same to me once.

"Whatever." I shrugged my arms into a jacket and he looked at me.

"I had a weird dream, Tony. I didn't want to say anything, but I hate seeing you so sad...Frank came to me. He said to remind you that faith is not being sure where you're going, but going anyway. You gotta roll with the punches, but lead with your heart, yeah?"

"Frank said...that?" I was at a loss for response, even as my heart wanted to snatch at the words like an offering from the gods and goddesses. *Keoni* stepped forward then and kissed me. He took me by surprise and, though I briefly thought about giving him a total rub down with my tongue, for medicinal purposes you know, I knew I loved Frank. As crazy and inexplicable as it all was, he was the man for me.

Keoni was not used to rejection, but took it well when I said, "I can't help it. He's got my heart in a box. My balls are in there, too."

"Lucky guy." *Keoni* gave me a hug and I was relieved there were no hard feelings. The only hard feeling I wanted was my man's dick giving me a proper seeing-to.

On the way to the set, I found myself asking *Keoni* how he felt about the red-hot affair going on between Rufus and April.

"Her husband's arriving this morning from the mainland. After I drop you off, I go to pick him up." *Keoni* was grinning. "She doesn't know it yet. He wanted it to be a surprise."

Oh, boy.

Keoni dropped me off, gave me a cheery wave and pulled back out onto the highway. Rufus's trailer was rocking. Rule number one in movies. When the trailer's a rockin', don't come knocking.

I wandered over to craft services and Annie handed me a red *manju* bun and a cup of coffee. She always took care of me food-wise, my Annie did, even if her attempts at cheering me up with the there's-other-fish-in-the-sea speech were ham fisted. I felt good knowing there were some people on the set who cared about me.

The crew guys, actually a lovely bunch of lunatics, were talking about their sexual

conquests – mostly imagined – and the trailer was still rocking when *Keoni* returned with April Moon's husband. Things got ugly fast. He burst into the trailer, beat up our star, which left me and *Keoni* to take him to the hospital for x-rays and then I took him back to the property. I left him in bed with a bottle of Jack Daniels and, as I walked back to the jeep, *Keoni* came up to me.

"Somebody's in your cabin, brah."

Throwing open the cabin door, I could hear the shower running.

Frank was back!

I tore up the stairs screaming, "Frank! Frank!"

Steam swirled out of the bathroom door.

I opened it and ripped back the plastic shower curtain.

The man inside the shower looked startled, but recovered quickly.

"Who the hell are you?" he said

"Who the hell are you?" I said.

"Who the hell is he?" *Keoni* said from behind me.

"I asked first."

The man was covering up his dangly bits with my favorite sponge.

"You're in my bathroom, mister, and I warn you, I am armed."

He looked at me. "That's a hairbrush."

I looked in my hand.

Keoni grabbed at the vanity. "I have a...nail file. And I'm not afraid to use it."

"I'm really scared now." The man in the shower turned off the taps, groped for the towel I held out to him, threw back the curtain and stepped out of the tub.

He was actually quite handsome, for a lunatic that is. "Sorry, I was looking for Rufus Roscoe."

Keoni and I looked at each other. "Leave now and I won't call the cops."

"You won't call the cops. Rufus and I are soul mates."

I picked up my cell phone and dialed nine one one. "You're going to have to secure this," I told *Keoni*. "I gotta pick up my mom."

Keoni looked at me. "I'd fumigate that loofah if I were you."

* * * *

I collected my mother who came out looking loony in a bird of paradise print pant suit that was guaranteed to give the person sitting beside her on the plane a giant headache within minutes. She gave me her apartment keys on a ring with a massive set of shark's teeth attached. How apt, I thought, worried about what my father was getting himself into. At this point, I did not want to be in her apartment for a myriad of reasons, not the least being I was afraid, stupid as I felt thinking it that Frank might not find me again.

My mother stuffed the rental car with boxes, bags and suitcases and prattled on and on about sticky windows, her unpaid phone bill which she swore she would take care of the moment she got to Los Angeles.

We were on Baldwin Avenue when she said, "I'm so happy that we are going to be a family again."

"It's a bit late for that," I muttered.

"Boy are you a sore head. Just because your man dumped you..."

"Fuck you!" I screamed. I completely lost it, my mother looking saucer eyed as I screamed the words again.

"What's wrong?" she asked me. "I had nothing to do with it."

I pulled over to the shoulder of the road, blinded by tears of rage. "You have everything to do with it. You left me. You cursed me. Everyone I have ever loved left me, starting with you!"

"Oh, not this old song again – "

"Old song? Woman...we have never discussed it. We have never ever gone over this because you never wanted to acknowledge what you did to me and my father."

"Woman? Did you just call me woman? I am your mother and I demand respect from you." "Respect? You want me to *respect* you? Don't make me laugh."

She reached into the consul and took her shark teeth keys. "You're no longer welcome in my apartment." She crossed her arms over her massive chest. A difficult gesture considering the size of her...girls...but she did it.

"I don't want your apartment. I don't want anything from you. I'll take you to the airport and that's it from me. My father might be pining for you, but I gave up on you a long time ago, *Luka*." She looked out the window in a bored way. "You have no idea what you did to him, do you? Do you know he worked double shifts at that horrible restaurant? For years, *Luka*. He was father and mother to me. You marked us both. Everybody talked about us. There go the Kaven men...you know she left them."

Pausing to take a breath, I was surprised when she turned on me, pure venom in her eyes. "Yeah, and you repaid him by fucking his friend Matthew!"

That shocked me, I had no idea she even knew about Matthew.

"Yeah, you think he didn't know? He called me and Joe and we made a few phone calls and put a stop to those...shenanigans. You think I shamed your father? How do you think it would have looked...how he would have felt with you shacking up with Matthew?"

My mother was behind Matthew's disappearance from my life? I shook my head. My God, there was no end to her cruelty.

"You should have let it run its course. You had no right to interfere in my life." My mind was spinning. All these years I'd blamed myself, something about me for being the reason Matthew bailed on me.

"Run its course? You little simpleton. I wasn't going to let you embarrass me or your father anymore than your...sexual persuasion already did."

I started the car again, swung into traffic and narrowly avoided a car with a pair of canoes on the roof.

My mother was silent as we both braced ourselves for the collision that didn't happen.

"You just—"

"Shut up!" I yelled to her. *"Just keep your mouth shut."*

She reached across the seat and slapped my face so hard, it had to have hurt her hand. That did it. I pulled over to the side of the road.

"What are you doing?" she squawked.

"Dumping you like you dumped me."

"But I have a plane to catch."

"Tough."

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have hit you."

But I didn't care. I got out of the car, called a taxi service and left her on the pavement with all her crap.

"You can have the keys."

She handed them to me and I looked from her to them. "I don't want your keys. Don't you understand? I never wanted anything from you. I only wanted you." My mother looked at her watch.

"If I miss the plane, it'll be your fault."

"Tough," I said again. "And let me tell you something. If you hurt my father again, I will make you pay." She open and shut her mouth as I got back into my car. "Bon Voyage, Luka." I did a swift three sixty point turn, tore off down Baldwin Avenue and when I was certain she could no longer see me, I pulled the car over and wept.

* * * *

Rufus was a wreck the next few days, unable to shoot due to black eyes and bruises that no amount of makeup could correct. His behavior was atrocious and his mood in the black zone now that April was back with her husband at one of the big hotels in *Wailea*. Mena was back to babysitting Rufus's cock. It was startling how easily Rufus transferred his er...affections. I did all the things Rufus asked me to do and I tumbled into bed each night exhausted, waking at three a.m. and heading down to the beach for my morrowsong prayers.

The first day Rufus was allowed back on the set, *Tuyen*, Mena and I worked on his makeup.

"If you yell at me one more time, I'm shoving this makeup brush right up your left nostril, you pompous git," Mena announced.

"Christ it's a fucking turn on when you talk to me like that." Rufus looked at her in a way that surprised me. Was he actually into her? We managed to get him outside when he was convinced his bruises were well covered, just in time to hear the rattling of the chains that lock the property gate. Two pretty women wearing backpacks and hiking boots were throwing themselves over the gate. Landing with a pair of thuds, they dusted themselves off and strode toward us.

"Hi." One of them lifted a hand in greeting. "Is this the right way to the Blue Pool trail?"

"You're trespassing!" Rufus screamed. "You're committing a crime and I will prosecute!"

"Yes, the trail is up this way," I pointed. "That way leads to Blue Pool, that way is the bamboo forest."

"Bloody fans!" Rufus hollered, but the women were looking blankly at him.

"That way is also the ancient, abandoned village of *Ulaino*." I was trying to get the women to

move on.

"They don't want a fucking trail, they want me," Rufus shouted.

"Who are you?" one of the women asked.

"Who am I? Who *am* I?" Rufus looked confused.

"Rufus Roscoe, the actor." Mena smiled in an encouraging way.

The women looked at each other. "I'm a Brad Pitt fan myself," the second woman shrugged, causing Rufus to have a near coronary at the unfairness of his life.

"You! You're fired!" Rufus shrieked at me.

"Why are you firing him? It's not his fault," *Tuyen* blurted.

"Tuyen, don't," I said, but it was too late. She got the chop, too.

Ten minutes later, we were rehired and we all went back to work.

"I'm getting too old for this shit." *Tuyen* snuggled into me and I put my arm around her as we began the drive back to the *Iao* Valley.

We made a brief pit stop in *Lahaina* so *Tuyen* and I could collect some fresh clothing for Rufus and I ducked into an interesting looking store called *Made in Hawaii*.

I studied the beautiful collection of *petroglyph* necklaces she had in a display case and was shocked to see one for *Rainbow Man*. Once again, I

was finding something new I didn't know about *Hawaii*.

"What can you tell me about *Rainbow Man*?" I asked the clerk and she stood beside me, smiling.

"Well, he's very special. One of the oldest nature spirits. He is the symbol of ultimate protection. A gift from the gods."

Now why didn't that surprise me? I bought the necklace, which came with a black cord and I tried to feel only gratitude for the gods allowing me to love Frank, even for a little while.

Our day went pretty well, considering the frostiness between April and Roscoe and the new smugness Mena had, which created havoc for me and *Tuyen* with April. But still, considering how badly it could have gone, things were pretty civilized. In my bungalow that evening, I cracked open a Big Bang Pale Ale and settled in to watch the Merrie Monarch *Hula* Contest that had all the islands enthralled. My Iphone rang and I was surprised to find it was my dad.

"Hey, Dad." I wondered if he was going to yell at me for leaving my mom on the side of the road.

"She told me what happened."

"Oh." I hit the TV's mute button, watching a beautiful woman in a traditional *hula* skirt moving with the grace of a slow tide.

"Tony, I have never had a problem with you being gay." My father sounded tired. "I had a problem with you being so unhappy. She had no right to say the things she said to you. She forfeited the right to parent you the day she walked out on us." A pause and I felt tears peppering the backs of my eyes. "I had forgotten how mean she could be. I just put her on a plane to Chicago. She's going to visit her family for a while, figure out her life."

Chicago. To her family who had chopped me and my dad like dead limbs when my mother left. "I'm so sorry, Dad."

"You did nothing wrong. When she told me she slapped you, that did it for me. She used to hit me you know."

I had no idea. I shook my head as my father started to sob. "I waited so long for her, wasted years of my life. Don't pine for love, Tony. You are a good man, with a heart that makes me proud to be your parent. If you love this guy...what's his name? Frank? Don't let anything stop you."

"Thanks, Dad. Are you going to be okay?"

"Sure. I...er...I think I've found someone I like, if she can forgive me for acting like an idiot over your mother."

"Go get her, dad. You deserve to be loved." My father chuckled and then we both went silent.

"Tony...I want you to understand, we interfered over Matthew because we knew he wasn't serious about you, not for any other reason."

"She didn't say anything to Frank to make him go away, did she dad?"

"No, of course not. I got the impression he had some job to do and he was coming back. That's what he told your mother. You mean you haven't heard from him?"

"Not yet." Frank was coming back?

My dad cleared his throat in a way that always meant he was disturbed. "This fella better treat you right."

I laughed. "I'll let you know if he doesn't."

"You do that," my father said. And I heard his doorbell ring. I could never persuade him to get rid of that sound of barking dogs and screeching cats. "I think it's my date." I let him go and, for some reason, decided I wanted to visit with Father Flanagan. I drove all the way back to the *Iao* Valley. Maybe I'd attend Father Flanagan's evensong service. I was surprised to see that the church was dark. I peered at my dashboard lights. Six p.m.. Surely somebody had to be around?

Getting out of the car, I walked toward the church and a woman leaving flowers in the small graveyard next to the church, looked up at me.

"*Aloha.*" I smiled at her. Do you know where I can find Father Flanagan?"

She gave me an odd look. "Father Flanagan?" She came toward me and seemed upset now.

"How do you know Father Flanagan?"

"I...met him, last week. We sat and drank coffee from a thermos."

She was staring at me and then I saw it. *His grave*. My God. He was dead. Long dead. *As in years and years ago*. Somehow, some way the universe had sent me help from beyond...beyond the reef. I had asked for it and I had prayed...the woman was looking at me.

"He only comes when people are very desperate." Her eyes filled with tears. "Tell me...is he okay? Only I miss him so much, but he never comes to me. Others have seen him. He's been gone ten years, but he was my brother, such a good, good man. Is he okay?"

"Very okay. He...and yes, he is a good man. A loving man. I can't believe he was a ghost. I shook his hand. He felt real. He felt warm..." My voice fell away and I was silent.

"He drowned. My brother was a man of the ocean and he drowned. It still seems...unreal, but in death, he still reaches out." In the corner of the graveyard, I saw Father Flanagan. He smiled at me, broom in hand and then vanished. I knew he was waiting to greet the next tortured soul. I didn't know how, but I knew I had to make room for the next person who needed some faith.

What was it Frank had said to me about Faith? *"Faith is not being sure where you're going, but*

going anyway. You gotta roll with the punches, but lead with your heart..."

"I have to go. There's someone I have to see..."

"Thank you," she whispered.

"No, thank *you*." I gave her a long hug and climbed into the rental. The first drop of rain fell as I rounded the first corner.

"Oh God, oh God, don't stop!" I screamed aloud. Frank only came when it rained. The rain fell harder, as if challenging and testing me, how badly did I want this? How much did I want him?

I took every hairpin turn to *Kapukaulaua*, parked besides *Keoni's* jeep and I ran to my cabin, shouting Frank's name.

The shower was running. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

With great trepidation, I pulled back the shower curtain and there he was. The only man I could ever love.

"Frank."

"Oh, baby, what took you so long?" He pulled me to him and I cried in his arms. Frank kissed away all my fears and told me I would come to love the rain.

"But I already do." I turned off the taps and dragged that man to bed. I wanted him to know just how much I loved the rain.

And my gift from the gods. "Slowly, baby." He calmed me with his words. "This time, the rain

will last forever."

"It will? Do you promise? You won't leave me again?"

"I never left you. I was always with you. I just had to let you fight some battles. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do. Now, shut up and fuck me."

In my heart and in that bungalow, love planted long, firm roots that night and we embraced the rain, over and over again.

Where I live there are rainbows.

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.

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