

Red Hawaii

**By
Brandy Golden**

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Chapter One

"Earth to Melissa---*hello!*" Kelo stood in the doorway of the living room, hands on her hips, amused exasperation written all over her face as she called to her roommate.

She shook her head ruefully. Melissa was watching that dumb John Wayne movie again! She frowned trying to remember the name of it. It was the one where John Wayne puts Maureen O'Hara over his knee and paddles her with a coal shovel. As if she could even feel it through all those petticoats! What a hokey movie! Just let some man try doing that to her! She wasn't a black belt in Karate for nothing!

She strode over to Melissa and waved her hand in front of the television screen. "Come back to planet earth, Melissa," she caroled, turning off the television and the VCR. She turned to face her dreamy eyed roommate. "How can you watch that stuff? It's so bogus!"

Melissa sighed as she looked up at Kelo, her velvety brown eyes still dreamy. "It's not bogus," she replied. "It's so romantic! How come there aren't men like John Wayne around any more?" She crooked her elbow and propped her head up on her hand. "It takes a real man to turn a woman over his knee and spank her."

"You mean it takes a real jerk," Kelo replied, snorting indelicately. "If some guy tried that on me I'd flatten him so fast his head would spin."

Melissa giggled at the image of tiny, fiery Kelo flattening a big man like John Wayne with a Karate kick. "If anybody ever needed a good spanking, it's you, Kelo. You have no respect for men." She yawned and got up from the couch.

"When I meet a man who *deserves* my respect, then I'll *give* him my respect," retorted the spunky girl. "And it won't be because he's big enough to force me over his lap! Any man with more muscle than brains can do that!" She spun on her heel and started for the bedroom. "And you better get a move-on if we're going to get to that Luau on time," she tossed over her shoulder.

Melissa shook her head and grinned. That Kelo! It would take quite a man to tame that girl. As beautiful as she was spirited, Miss Keely Leani O'Halloran was a handful. She and Kelo had been friends since grade school. Kelo had always watched out for her and been fiercely loyal to her when her other friends had drifted away. Her face saddened as childhood memories closed in on her.

Quickly she shook her head, chasing away the past. It wasn't important anymore. What was important was that Kelo had always been there for her and she knew that same fierce loyalty and protective allegiance would apply to anyone that Kelo loved. But it would take a real man---the right man, to win Kelo's trust and affections. It would never be forced from her; she would have to give it freely.

Kelo opened the fourth drawer in the dresser and rummaged through the clothing, grumbling to herself, "Now where did I put that darn coconut contraption? I'm glad this is the last night we have to do this!"

She looked up as Melissa entered the bedroom and walked to the chest at the foot of the bed. Opening it, she brought out the item Kelo was looking for and began swinging it in a circle. "Looking for this?" She giggled, tossing it to her roommate.

"How did you know?" Kelo cooed sweetly, catching the bra and heading for the mirror. She completely ignored the fact that four out of the five dresser drawers were still hanging open, their contents spilling over the sides.

Picking up a second coconut bra out of the chest, Melissa cooed just as sweetly, "Because I know how organized you are of course." Looking around Kelo's room, she shook her head. It looked like a hurricane had gone through it.

Melissa took off her T-shirt and joined her friend in front of the big mirror that stretched the length of the dresser. Both girls were silent as they concentrated on getting the coconut cups over their bras, the straps around, and the Velcro fastened beneath their bra straps so it looked like they were only wearing the coconut bra.

Then both removed their jeans, slid on the green spandex shorts, and slipped into the full grass skirts that Kelo had placed on the dresser. They put the remaining rings of flowers in their hair, and the leis on their ankles and necks. They studied their outfits in the mirror with critical eyes.

They both looked like island girls but there were vast differences in the two girl's physical appearances. Melissa was tall and willowy; her beautiful brown hair fell just below her shoulders in a smooth, straight waterfall. Wispy bangs hung above big brown eyes that were velvety and soft and she had a dreamy eyed expression that made her whole appearance seem soft and feminine.

Kelo was a tiny wood sprite, with a curvaceous figure and long black hair that came to her waist in a rippling cascade of soft curls. Her eyes were a startling blue, a heritage from her Irish father and could turn almost purple when she was angry. She

had a clear direct gaze that could bore holes through you while she gave you the backlash of her Irish temper.

"It's almost time for Nuk to pick up us," said Melissa, as she picked up her T-shirt and put it back on.

"I know," replied Kelo. "I really am glad this is the last night we have to do this." She reached into a pile of clothes on the foot of her bed and dug out a T-shirt. She surveyed it critically to make sure it wasn't too badly wrinkled, and then pulled it on over her head. "I'm ready for a nice, long, week-end break. Doing the island dances for the tourists is fun, but I need to rest before next Monday." She headed for the living room.

"I know what you mean," replied Melissa, following her roommate. "The cliff diving classes start at 7:00am sharp on Monday morning, and Pani hates it if you're late."

"Tell me about it," declared Kelo, as she opened the living room door in answer to the chimes peeling through the apartment.

"Aloha! To the two most beautiful girls to dance the Hula tonight!" Nuk's enthusiastic greeting brought a smile and a quick retort from Kelo.

"We're the *only* two girls dancing the hula tonight, brainiac!" She flipped her hair back over her shoulder and grinned saucily at him as she started through the apartment door.

Nuk raised his arm in a mock threat to spank her backside and she sidled sideways, wagging a warning finger at him. "Uh, uh, uh," she threatened impishly, her other hand over her bottom, "save that machismo rubbish for someone who cares!"

Nuk grinned but his warm brown eyes looked admiringly at Melissa, and he took her arm to escort her out the door.

"How come I get no respect from that one," he complained.

Melissa, amused by Kelo's perky comment piped up, "You'll have to have more than a handsome face to get on Kelo's good side."

Bickering with an easy camaraderie, the three friends stepped out of the apartment building and into the balmy island air. The evening breeze of Honolulu felt silky smooth as it caressed their faces, gently blowing their hair back. They walked the few blocks to the beach where the luau was being held. The big oceanfront hotels held luaus for the guests on a regular basis and sometimes, when funds were low; Kelo and Melissa would perform some of the traditional island dances for them.

The luau seemed to be going in full force when they arrived. The tiki torches were flickering along the beach, making the water lapping at the shore seem dark and mysterious. The delicious smell of pork wafted up from its bed of leaves where it had been buried in the sand hours ago to slow cook all day.

Kelo sniffed the air appreciatively; her stomach reminding her it had been early morning since she had eaten.

"Look, Kelo, there's Pani! And just look at that hunk that's with him," exclaimed Melissa, gouging Kelo in the ribs with her elbow and waving enthusiastically with her other hand.

"Hey...what am I, chopped liver," complained Nuk, his brown eyes twinkling. His black mop of curly hair, big brown eyes framed in dark lashes,

and broad expanse of bare brown chest made him anything but chopped liver in Melissa's opinion.

"Now don't be jealous, Nukky, you know I love you best!" She batted her beautiful eyelashes at Nuk, who tipped her chin up and gave her a quick kiss on the lips.

"Just remember that, little woman," he growled, leading both girls to the bottom of the stage steps. Then he continued, "The man with Pani is the one who is going to help him restructure his business and take over the cliff diving classes for a few months. Pani wants to try out some new ideas." he explained, while they waited for the girls cue.

Startled, Kelo's head snapped around to stare at the man beside her father. Her eyes narrowed as she appraised the muscular physique. She could not see his features clearly, but she could certainly see the broad shoulders and long well shaped legs. His arms were folded across his chest and he was looking right at her!

A funny sensation curled in Kelo's stomach and she was instantly on the defensive. Her chin went up and her eyes went a darker shade of blue! She could feel his commanding aura from here and she resented the fact that he was appraising her, completely ignoring the fact that she was doing the same thing to him!

"We're on, Kelo," whispered Melissa, as she poked her friend in the ribs.

With a haughty toss of her head, Kelo turned and walked with Melissa up the few steps of the platform to begin their performance.

Nick Gorman watched as the two island girls and their brawny friend approached the stage set up for the luau performances. His attention was riveted on the tiny girl who walked with the confident air of

one who knows who they are and what they want out of life. She could not be more than 5ft tall, but she had a proud bearing that set her apart. She was incredibly beautiful and he wanted to meet her up close.

"Who are the girls that are performing, Pani?" he asked casually, not taking his eyes off Kelo.

Pani had seen the look in the younger man's eye as the girls had approached the stage and he was pretty sure Nick's interest was in Kelo, not Melissa. Beautiful as she was, Melissa was not Nick's type. Besides, it was well known that Nuk and Melissa were practically engaged. Kelo, however, was a different story. His adopted daughter had been catching the attention of men since she was fifteen years old, but now, at twenty-five, Kelo still had not returned any man's interest. He wondered if she ever would.

"The tall young lady is named Melissa, and the smaller girl is my daughter, Kelo." Pani grinned as Nick's head swiveled to return his serene gaze. "They are both beautiful, are they not?"

"My father never told me you had such a beautiful daughter, Pani," he replied smoothly, "or I might have visited before this. Why doesn't she live at home?"

"Kelo is very independent and prefers to make her own way. She and Melissa have been friends since grammar school, and they are now roommates," explained Pani.

"You will meet them both tomorrow for sure, they are cliff divers. But if you would like, I can invite Kelo back to the house tonight for drinks and we can talk a while, eh?" He was amused at Nick's concentrated attention on Kelo.

Nick did not respond he was too busy appraising the island beauty. There was something about her that made his heartbeat quicken.

Both men saw her suddenly turn and stare at them. They could not see her expression, but Pani assumed Nuk had just explained Nick's presence. He had known that Kelo would not be pleased that he had not ask her to take over the classes...but he felt she was just not ready yet. She was very good, excellent in fact, but still lacked the self-control that Pani felt was needed for the kind of responsibility it called for. So he had simply put off telling her until it was necessary.

He could tell from the way she tossed her head back that she was not pleased at the news. He really should explain her Irish temper to Nick before they met, but he guessed he would just wait and see how Nick handled her. He grinned, pleased with himself. If Nick was anything like his father, his headstrong daughter was in for a very rude awakening.

Nick began to move closer to the stage, looking for a comfortable chair that would allow him a good view of the performers. "I'd like that," he responded at last to Pani's question concerning Kelo. The two men found some seats and sat down.

"Would you like something to eat, Nick?" Pani saw that the leaves were being pulled away from the roast pork that had been lifted out of the pit and he knew it would only be a few minutes before big platters of the succulent meat would be on the tables with the Poi and other traditional dishes that were served at the luaus.

"Not right now, you go ahead. I'll grab something in a little while."

Pani grinned. Nick had not taken his eyes off Kelo. He got up and wandered over to the tables. He had known Nick's father, and a shrewder businessman could not be found anywhere on the islands. Nick took after his father, and Pani was hoping that Nick could help him with some of his business arrangements, as well as taking over the cliff diving classes for the next few months.

When his old friend had died 4 years earlier, Nick had taken over the family's chain of accounting firms and done very well with it. He was also an excellent cliff diver and ran some of the classes on Maui from time to time.

He was surprised that Nick and Kelo had never met, but he supposed it was because Nick had gone to the states to attend a University while Kelo had gone to a local college. And of course, Kelo had been raised on the big island of Honolulu and Nick was raised on Maui. He was twenty eight years old, had a Master's degree in business and was a young man with a bright future. It would please him very much to see Nick and Kelo get together. But he feared it would be a hard struggle for Kelo, if she even took an interest.

He frowned as he thought about the emotional obstacles she had had to overcome after he had adopted her and brought her to his home. Her ordeal with her father and subsequent loss of her mother had left deep scars. It would take an exceptional man to breach her defenses. But maybe, he hoped, just maybe, Nick Gorman might be that man.

Kelo was seething. How dare Pani do this to her? If he had planned on getting someone else for the cliff diving classes, why hadn't he told her about it? She was as good or better than anyone else he

could get, and he knew she had wanted to do it for a long time.

It was so unfair! Of course he would choose another man! Men always stuck together. Well, she would give him a piece of her mind tomorrow! She was too upset tonight, and as much as she would like to chew on him, she loved him dearly. She was afraid if she tackled him tonight, her temper would get the best of her.

As she walked down the steps after the performance she saw her father motion her to come over to him. She deliberately turned her head away and refused to acknowledge him. Hurriedly she disappeared among the crowd, and then on out to the outskirts of the party. She headed toward the special grove that her and Melissa often went to so they could be alone and think.

It was off the beaten track and the average tourist would have to be enterprising to find it. It was secluded among the wild growing hibiscus flowers and other exotic plants that grew on the island, and it was the perfect place to sit on the old worn stone bench, lean back in the sun, and relax.

At one time, it must have been part of an old beach estate, but it was overgrown and unused and the new owners of the house either did not keep the woodland area up properly, or it had become public property, because few people ever went there.

As she walked along the path through the undergrowth, she wondered what had happened to Nuk and Melissa. They had left before she was finished. She had the last dance of the show but she had noticed they seemed to be arguing just as she was beginning her performance.

As she approached the small clearing, the trees were thinning out and moonlight was streaming

down through the canopy. Suddenly, she heard Melissa's voice, crying out, "No, Nuk, no...you can't...Nuk...stop! You can't do this!"

Then slapping sounds began to assail her ears, along with Melissa's protests! What in the world was going on? It sounded like Nuk was...no...surely not! Surely gentle easygoing Nuk was not spanking her friend! But if not that, then what *was* he doing to her?

She couldn't believe he would actually hurt Melissa---better make sure though! She stepped through the green flowering wall.

There on the stone bench was Nuk, seated at a slight angle with his back to her, muscles rippling beneath his bare skin as he raised his right arm above his shoulder and came down with a resounding SMACK! Right on poor Melissa's bare upturned bottom!

Her best friend was lying over Nuk's broad hard thighs, her arm pinned in his huge left hand. Her grass skirt was lying on the ground and the green spandex shorts she wore beneath the skirts were down at her knees. Her legs were kicking and flailing and Melissa was howling!

"Don't you ever use that kind of language to me again, young lady," growled Nuk in a stern voice that Kelo had never heard before.

Suddenly, strong arms closed around Kelo's waist and she was yanked off her feet and back through the flowering hedge! Her Karate training kicked in and she went on the defensive, her head snapping backwards to connect with a hard chin. The hold on her waist instantly loosened and as she leaned forward and rammed her elbows back into a hard stomach, she heard a grunt. She was immediately dropped to the ground where she

stomped on the closest male foot, stepping forward with her other. She danced forward and spun around balancing lightly on the balls of her feet, fists extended and ready for frontal combat. It was then she heard a muttered expletive!

Her heart was beating fast at the unexpected attack. The instant she saw her attacker she recognized him as the man who had been standing beside Pani at the luau.

Nick stood facing the little whirlwind in front of him, his jaw aching, his ribs complaining and his foot throbbing. Pani hadn't told him the little firebrand knew Karate! She had completely caught him off guard. No one ever caught him off guard but this little sprite had managed it in about 3 seconds.

"If you don't want to end up in the same position as your little friend in there, pick up those deadly feet and go back the way you came," he grated out between clenched teeth. He pointed to the path behind her, his green eyes shimmering in the moonlight and daring her to defy him.

Kelo dropped her defenses and lifted a rebellious chin in the air. "I'm going, but only out of respect for Melissa's privacy," she hissed back at him. "Not because of you. You have no right to order me around!" With that, she turned her back on him and marched down the little path through the undergrowth until they came back to the sand.

When they stepped out onto the deserted beach she whirled to face him. "You scared me to death back there," she exploded! "What kind of moron grabs a woman from behind in the dark?" Kelo was really working herself up to a full head of steam. "Just because my father chose you to run the diving

classes don't give you the right to manhandle me. I don't even know your name ..."

"That's enough!" The order was barked out between clenched teeth. "For your information, I grabbed you because the two in the clearing were obviously having a private discussion and would not appreciate your presence---and I wanted to get you out of there quickly before they noticed."

"Why didn't you just tap me on the shoulder or something?" Kelo was still furious, her blue eyes a dark amethyst color indicating the depth of emotion she was experiencing.

"Right," he retorted sardonically. "And wait for you to scream and embarrass them half to death! Why in the world did you go in there anyway?"

"I went in there because I heard Melissa crying out and I didn't know what was going on. I wanted to make sure Nuk wasn't hurting her."

"Are you saying you didn't recognize the sound of a good spanking being administered?" He asked silkily. "If so, then it's obviously been too long since you had one. Judging from your behavior tonight towards your father, you are long overdue."

"In case you didn't notice, I am not a child! The last time Pani spanked me I was sixteen and deserved every bit of it. But I'm not sixteen anymore---I'm twenty-five, and no man lays a hand on me."

Kelo drew herself up to her full five foot stature and stood proudly with her hands on her hips, the evening breezes billowing her beautiful hair away from her face. She was deadly earnest and Nick sensed there was more to her declaration than a spoiled attitude. Her whole body was as tight as a wire and he knew if he touched her, she would explode in frantic fury. In spite of her flat

declaration he could see her lower lip tremble slightly and he knew she was fighting for self-control.

Normally, Nick was not a man to back down from a challenge, but there was something touching about her proud defiance that struck a cord deep within him. He sensed vulnerability. She had been deeply hurt by some man at some time in her life, and she was desperately trying to keep that from ever happening again.

"You are certainly not a child, young lady, but if and when I decide to spank you, all your Karate training will avail you nothing. And if you keep up this disrespectful attitude, it may be right here and now."

Chapter Two

Nick, too, placed his hands on his hips and gazed at her with shimmering eyes that were filled with a decided warning. He was giving her a chance to back down gracefully. If she refused, she would find herself over his knee in a heartbeat whether she allowed it or not! He refused to be intimidated by a fiery sprite no bigger than a minute.

Kelo knew when to concede defeat. The man before her was not as big as Nuk, but he was a respectable six foot with broad shoulders, well-muscled thighs and a square jaw that spelled out stubbornness equal to her own. He had curly, dark brown hair, his island heritage and shimmering emerald green eyes. He was quite a striking figure and the set of his face was implacable. She was pretty sure she would not catch him off guard again, and she could also sense that he was quite prepared to carry out his threat to spank her if she continued to challenge him.

She spun around and started determinedly down the beach, intending to go home.

Nick fell in step beside her and it was uncanny the way she instantly felt as if she was right where she belonged. For a few minutes, there in the pagan moonlight, on a deserted beach, there was only the two of them and she felt safe. She didn't even know his name, had never met him before this night, yet she had allowed him to back her down, something only those few she really cared about were able to do.

"Don't you have someplace to be?" She grumbled feeling disconcerted now and out of her depth.

"I can't leave you alone out here, someone might attack you." He was slightly amused at the sulky tone in her voice.

She stopped and turned to face him. "Just who the hell are you anyway? How does my father know you?" Her tone was demanding, her eyes still a dark blue.

"Uh, uh, watch that tone of voice, young lady." His voice was mildly warning yet there was a hint of steel beneath the words. "You don't want to end up like your friend before this night's over."

He watched the play of emotions on her face and knew she was very indignant at his words, yet cautious as well. When she folded her arms across her chest and started tapping her foot, he knew she was on a low boil.

"My name is Nick Gorman...Pani and my father were old friends. Your father asked me to help him with some business strategies. He intends to clear his schedule in order to put those strategies into effect, and he asked me to take over the classes for him as well. Things are running smoothly for me right now on Maui, so I agreed."

"But why you?" she asked irritably. "I am perfectly capable of running the class. I've been diving since I was fifteen. He did not have to bring in an outsider."

"I'm hardly an outsider Miss O'Halloran. I grew up on Maui and I've been cliff diving more years than you have. I run classes on Maui from time to time and I was happy to help Pani out."

He was beginning to get a little irritated himself. "If you had bothered to acknowledge your fathers hand signals tonight, we would be seated at his home right now discussing this very thing."

His voice became stern as he reprimanded her. "You should not have ignored your father and took off. It was rude and childish. And walking alone on a deserted beach is unwise. You put yourself in danger because you were having a temper tantrum and left Pani in the embarrassing position of having to explain your anger. If I were him, I'd put you over my knee and administer a good paddling!"

"Well you're not him, and I can take care of myself!" So just go away and leave me alone!" It infuriated her that he thought he could tell her what to do. She turned around and began stalking back down the beach from the direction they had just come from.

Nick grabbed her wrist and spun her around to face him. "You are not going back out there alone and if you try any moves on me, it would behoove you to know that I'm a sixth level black belt myself and you won't find me such an easy target this time!" His voice was low and dangerous and green flames were glinting in his eyes.

Kelo ignored the warning as her Irish temper flared out of control and she began kicking out at the infuriating male and cursing with language that would make an Irish sailor blush!

Nick released her and began countering every move she threw at him. Kelo was good. Very, very good. With the moves she was making, he knew she had to be at least a second level black. However, she had the disadvantage all the way around...she just didn't know it yet! She would soon enough though, and when she had exhausted herself, he intended to give her a lesson in manners...and it wouldn't be with a Karate move!

Kelo was swearing a blue streak, mad with frustration, totally out of control! She had hit this

infuriating man with everything she had and he wasn't even breathing hard. He had countered every move she had made with easy expertise. She had not been out of control like this since she was nine years old and Pani had spanked her for the first time.

After her mother had died from the beating her abusive father had given her, Kelo had withdrawn into her own world. The years of abuse she had seen heaped on her mother and sometimes on herself, were memories she never took out to dust off.

Her mother had left Ireland, bringing her only daughter to the islands in an attempt to hide from Michael O'Halloran, but it had not worked. He had found them and when he did, he put her mother in the hospital. By the time they found Kelo's hiding place, her mother was gone and Kelo was gone as well, into her own mind where no one could hurt her.

When the gentle giant and his wife had come for her, she had put her hand in his, feeling instantly at home. Pani and Tunea had loved her and brought her back to the real world.

However, she had an explosive temper that would prove to be her undoing. Pani had known this and as much as he hated to do it, he knew he would have to teach her to control it, and soon. He and Tunea had tried everything they knew, but nothing seemed to make a difference until that one day...when Kelo's temper had blown out of control once again.

It was over a trivial thing, but Kelo had screamed and started throwing things at Tunea, having a royal temper tantrum. Pani knew he could no longer allow this behavior. He picked up the tiny

girl and took her seat on the kitchen chair. He put her down between his knees and held both of her arms at the elbows and looked into her face. Then he had spoken firmly to her.

"Kelo, you cannot do this. Losing your temper like this is hurting you and those around you as well. You have hurt Tunea. You cut her lip with the glass you threw at her... look!"

She had looked and seen Tunea, nursing her lip with a cloth, the blood trickling down her chin. She felt bad and wished she hadn't thrown the glass. Her eyes began to tear up as she looked up at Pani. "I'm sorry Pani, I didn't mean to hurt Tunea."

"I know you didn't, but you have to learn there are consequences for bad behavior. I am going to help you learn to control that temper. I am going to put you across my knee and spank you, Kelo, and it's going to hurt. As much as Tunea is hurting right now and maybe more. But I am doing it because I love you...and the pain will be gone quickly, and you will feel better. Then each time you feel like throwing something, you will think of this spanking and know that another one will be waiting for you if you do. Do you understand?"

Kelo had nodded her head. She knew what a spanking was. Her mother had spanked her, but her father, he had just lashed out at her, hurting in any way he could. He had broken her arm once. She looked up at Pani and knew he would never hurt her. She trusted him.

So Pani had gently laid her over his lap and pushed her jeans and panties down. Then he had spanked her and it had broken her heart...but as he had said, when it was over she felt better. He held her and comforted her while she sobbed and told her she was safe and no one would ever hurt her

again. She had believed him. But just the same, she had studied Karate with intensity, arming herself with the ability to protect herself. No one would ever have the chance to hurt her again as long as she could do something about it.

Kelo brushed away those flashbacks that had gone through her mind in an instant and stood panting, glaring at the man who defied her every effort. She was no longer furious, just tired and spent, her emotions heaving as well as her chest.

Nick stood at rest, but prepared. When she made no more efforts to attack him he studied her face, seeing the uncertainty in her blue eyes.

He reached out and cautiously drew her into his embrace. She rested her forehead against his chest and he gently rubbed her back.

Then he tipped her chin up to look into her face. "Do you know what happens to little girls who throw temper tantrums?" he asked gently, searching her face.

"Yes," she whispered dazedly. "They get spanked. But you have no right. You are not a part of my life."

"Oh yes I am," he replied firmly. "I fell in love with you minute I saw you. When you came walking toward me at that luau I knew you belonged to me. I knew you were what I have been waiting for all these years. Can't you feel it too?"

It was as if time stood still...the moonlight, the surf, his gentleness. They combined to make everything seem a dreamlike state and Kelo was entranced. She thought about the way she had felt when he had fallen into step with her a little while ago. That feeling that had told her she was finally where she belonged and no longer alone.

"Yes," she admitted. Looking up into his warm face, she said softly, "Hello, Nick Gorman, are you going to spank me? I'm afraid I lost my temper tonight and since you're the one who loves me, that makes it your job."

"I certainly am, little one. You have to learn you can't go around throwing temper tantrums and swearing a blue streak at your husband. He doesn't approve."

Nick's face was carved in the moonlight like a stern pagan visage as he took her hand and led her over to a big rock where he sat down. They were facing the sea and the tide washed gently around their feet. Calmly he pulled her between his knees and removed the grass skirt and then carefully laid her over his lap and tugged down the little green shorts.

Kelo shivered as the cool ocean breezes caressed her naked buttocks. Pani had spanked her many times through the years for her abominable temper so she knew what to expect. Still, when that first swat landed, she jumped and gasped.

Nick admired the lovely view before him. Softly rounded buttocks gleamed in the moonlight. Long slender thighs met silky knees and calves and sloped on down to shapely ankles. The huaraches had fallen off her feet and they were bare, toes hardly touching the sand. The creamy expanse of her back narrowed to a small waist, gently flaring into curvy hips. She was beautiful. There would be time, the rest of their lives to explore and learn each other's bodies, but for now, he had a lesson to teach.

He raised his arm and landed the first of many spanks on her right cheek. Then the left, and he continued to alternate, careful to take in her thighs

as well. Soon her protesting cries were filling the night air...and then she was sobbing.

Melissa and Nuk stepped out of the green brush undergrowth and onto the expanse of sand. The night breezes caressed their skin as they walked along the sandy beach, hand in hand.

Suddenly, they heard soft cries on the wind, like someone in pain. They hurried their footsteps and drew closer to the sounds. Then they saw the couple on the boulders near the water at the same time. When they saw a man's arm going up and down and the corresponding cries, they knew someone else was doing what they had just been doing.

"Let's go up a little higher on the beach so we don't disturb them," whispered Nuk in Melissa's ear.

Melissa agreed and they moved a little higher, but as they drew level with the couple, she gasped in recognition, "That's Kelo!"

"Yes," replied Nuk, his teeth gleaming in a smile only a self-satisfied male can give, "and that's Nick Gorman. It looks like Kelo has finally met her match."

"I think I'll wait until later to congratulate her," giggled Melissa, thinking of Kelo's words earlier that day. "I guess she found someone she couldn't flatten with a Karate kick after all."

Kelo opened her eyes and flipped onto her back. "Ouch," she yelped as her bottom made contact with the mattress. Blast that infuriating man! She had forgotten about her bottom before she flipped over.

She grimaced and sat up, sliding her slender legs over the side of the bed. Padding to her dresser, she lowered her pajama shorts in front of

the mirror to expose her bottom. Glancing over her shoulder, she surveyed the damage. Not too bad...a few small residual bruises, but not bad to look at. She just felt sore; which made her feel achy and grouchy.

Grumbling to herself she grabbed some clean undies and a bathrobe and headed for the bathroom to get a hot shower. Yawning, she stepped out into the hallway and saw Melissa just coming out of the bathroom, obviously fresh from her morning ablutions.

"Good morning," she smirked at Kelo, amused at the grumpy look on her friend's face. "Looks like you woke up with a toothache, what gives?"

"Its not my tooth that aches," muttered Kelo.

"Imagine that," murmured Melissa cheekily. "You'll never guess what Nuk and I saw last night," she went on, her brown eyes brimming with laughter.

Sending her friend a suspicious look, she asked dryly, "And what might that be little miss sunshine?"

"Just a certain little miss, who will remain nameless, over someone's knee getting her little bottom spanked," she replied, giggling.

Kelo opened the bathroom door, "Gee, little miss, I didn't know you had out of body experiences," she cooed wickedly, closing the door on Melissa's astonished face with a satisfied smirk. That will fix her, she thought, getting the shower ready. She ignored Melissa's yell through the door.

As Kelo undressed, she thought about all that had happened the night before. How in the world had she gotten to the point where she had ask for a spanking? Or had she ask for it? She frowned, trying to remember.

She had only ask if he was *going* to spank her, she remembered. But then she had stupidly said it was his job since he loved her. And she meekly let him pull her over to a boulder, take her grass skirt off, pull her green shorts down and blister her bare butt!

How dumb can you get? She asked herself. She groaned at the implications.

Somehow it all seemed so horribly tacky in the broad light of day. Love? How could he possibly love her at first site! What a lot of hogwash! Surely it was all a terribly embarrassing bad dream from which she would soon awaken.

She tested the flesh on her buttocks. Nope, still sore. That meant the nightmare was all too real! She groaned again at her gullibility. At least he wasn't here for the rest of the weekend!

If that isn't just like a man, she thought perversely. Outrageously lie to a girl, then spank her, kiss her, and leave her alone for two days! If that don't take the cake, she thought, shampooing her hair with vigor, I don't know what does!

By the time Kelo had finished her shower she was thoroughly aggravated with Nick Gorman and if he had been there, she would have given him a good piece of her mind! But he had run off like a coward, afraid to face her righteous wrath!

Still grumbling, she dried herself off, dressed, and then rolled her wet hair in a towel. At least she felt a little more human she thought, as she slipped into her bathrobe and slippers.

She winced at the thought of facing Melissa. It was quite apparent that she had seen Nick paddling her and now she was romanticizing it into the worlds greatest love story. Blast and bother! What was she going to do?

Melissa's mouth opened in a round oh of surprise when Kelo dropped her little bombshell and shut the bathroom door in her face. "How did you know?" she yelled at the closed door, but Kelo refused to open it.

Disgruntled, she walked into the living room and turned on the T.V. She ejected the John Wayne movie she had been watching yesterday...the one where he spanked Maureen O'Hara and put in a different one. One with no spanking in it! She watched as the intro came up but her thoughts were on last night's events.

Nuk had met her at the stage with the disappointing news that he had been called to Maui for the reserves for the weekend and he would be leaving first thing Saturday morning. She had been angry because they had had plans for Saturday night that she hadn't wanted to break! To make a long story short, she had lost her temper, something she rarely ever did, and told Nuk he was a lame brained, cross-eyed, knock kneed son of a she dog and selfish to boot. She had gotten that one from Kelo!

She had stalked off down the beach, heading to the small clearing in the woodland area where it was secluded and peaceful and she could be alone. She hadn't realized that Nuk had been no more than a hundred feet behind her!

She shivered when she pictured him in her mind's eye as she had seen him last night, coming at her through the flowering hedge; his upper body bare except for the colorful Lei. He had seemed positively primitive as he came up to her in the moonlight and without a word, jerked the Velcro fasteners on her grass skirt apart and thrown it on the ground. Then he had sat down on the stone

bench and pulled her across his hard thighs, yanked her green shorts down to her knees and began spanking her hard and fast, lecturing her as he spoke. She had put her hand back to shield her bottom but he merely pinned it against her back without missing a stroke. It had felt like he was literally blistering her butt as his large flat palm connected over and over until she was kicking and wailing her apologies. Nuk had held and soothed her after it was over but it had left her feeling unsure of herself and their relationship.

She sighed heavily and tucked her legs up under her on the couch, thinking and examining her feelings. She hadn't really slept that well for all her teasing of Kelo this morning. She was twenty-four years old and certainly not a child anymore, but she didn't understand herself. She realized that she did enjoy watching the occasional spanking scenes she had seen at different times over the years, and thought how romantic it would be to have a man like that.

She had even wondered what it might be like if Nuk ever did that, but he was so easy going and she was not prone to losing her temper, so it had remained a romantic mystery...until now. She sighed again and got up to look out the window. You could see the ocean from here and the waves rolled and splashed upon the sand, leaving little foam trails as the water receded to the sea.

She knew what was really bothering her though. The real problem was that for all her romantic feelings concerning a *real* man, the ugly truth was....it had *hurt*! And it had hurt a lot! She didn't know how Nuk felt about it or if he planned on making it a part of their marriage but she was pretty sure how she felt; she wanted no part of it!

She shivered and rubbed her bottom reminiscently, remembering the helpless feeling she had experienced! She had been so embarrassed when he had put her over his lap, her bare bottom sticking up in the air. Of course that had been the least of her worries once Nuk had lit the fire in her cheeks. It had truly felt like her bottom was on fire! She groaned when she realized that Kelo must have seen or heard them. It was just too humiliating for words. But then she had seen Kelo as well, so she guessed they were even on that score.

She turned as she heard Kelo coming out of the bathroom and into the living room to plop down on the couch. From the look of her face, she was still upset over last night too. She walked over to the couch and sat down sideways, facing Kelo, tucking her foot up under her.

Kelo sat with her head resting against the back of the couch, her eyes closed. She heard Melissa come over to the couch and felt the slight dip of the upholstery as she sat down. She waited for the inevitable teasing. When Melissa did not speak she opened her eyes and turned her head to look at her. Seeing her troubled look, she sat up.

"What's the matter, Melissa?" she questioned sensing that something was not right.

"I'm sorry I teased you, Kelo, " she sighed ruefully. "I guess we are both in the same boat this morning, aren't we?"

"Has Nuk spanked you before?"

"No, last night was the first time," she admitted.

"So how come you're not all dewy eyed and over the moon then? Wasn't that what you wanted?"

"No...yes...no...I don't know," she shrugged her shoulders helplessly. "I thought it would be

romantic, but ...it was actually embarrassing and it really hurt...a lot!

"Tell me about it," Kelo replied, grimacing. "But you've never been spanked before have you? As I remember, your Mom and Dad didn't believe in it."

"Actually, they used to swat me once in a while, but very rarely, and nothing like Nuk did last night, that's for sure!" She rubbed her sore cheek that was up off the couch. "He sure has a hard hand!"

"So does Nick," Kelo agreed sympathetically. "I still don't know how in the world I let him do that. It must have been the moonlight or something. I'm never going to let it happen again though, I can tell you that," she stated emphatically.

"Me neither," Melissa agreed fervently, "I don't want any more of that!" They both giggled as they stared at each other.

"Yeah, now we just have to make sure *they* understand that!" They were both silent. Would Nuk and Nick really understand? Why did they have this little giggling doubt at the back of their minds?

Chapter Three

Monday morning dawned clear and beautiful as usual on the lovely island of Honolulu. Melissa and Kelo were in Melissa's car, and headed for Wiamea Falls for the diving classes.

They had both began classes when they were sixteen and dived regularly for the tourists. Pani insisted that all divers attend the classes and then they would divide into groups from beginner, to intermediate and then expert. Nuk was an instructor in the beginner's class. Pani himself instructed the expert level and oversaw all the classes.

Melissa pulled into the parking lot and threw her car keys under the seat. She rarely ever locked her door, preferring to leave her keys in the car rather than hassle with carrying them around and leaving them somewhere.

The girls got out of the car and walked through the deserted parking lot and around the back cliff side of the falls. Kelo checked the water levels as she passed the pool. It had been a dry season this year and the water levels were down. There had not been enough rain to make the falls as full and beautiful as they usually were. That meant diving was a little trickier than usual.

To the right of the pool was a naturally carved cavern that was open on both ends. Inside, lockers and benches had been built into the natural stone formations and the students stored towels and personal items here that they didn't lock in their cars.

Kelo and Melissa stopped to remove their t-shirts and shorts and put them in the lockers. Then, dressed in one-piece diving suits, with flip-

flops on they feet, they started up the broad stone steps that led to the top.

Kelo was feeling a little uneasy and resentful this morning. She had not seen Nick since last Friday night and she was still peeved at him. Plus she resented the fact that he was taking Pani's place as instructor; she had really wanted to do that herself. She didn't have a choice of course, if that was what Pani wanted to do. But it didn't mean she had to be happy about it! She had spoken with Pani yesterday and when he had gently explained that he felt she needed better control, she had spouted off angrily at him.

He had looked at her with that stern look she remembered so well and simply said, "That's enough! That's precisely what I am talking about it. Now do you understand?"

She did, but she still didn't like it!

They reached the top of the cliff and saw Pani, Nuk, and Nick all standing together with another man the girls didn't know. Apparently they were going to have a sub for the intermediate classes. Fine, it didn't affect her anyway. She was just going to attend the class and then leave for her job. She didn't intend to spend any more time with any of the infuriating males she had to deal with than necessary. Especially Nick! She didn't need this class anyway. She had been at the expert level for ages. All she needed to do was practice her learned skills. She didn't need him to tell her how to dive!

"Aloha, everyone," Pani clapped his hands to get everyone's attention. "May I have your attention? I'd like everyone to meet a good friend of mine, Mr. Nick Gorman. Nick is going to be taking over the classes for the next few months, which means he

will be running the expert class and supervising the diving ceremonies.”

Nick’s eyes lit up when he saw Kelo step up the last step and onto the cliff top. He had hated leaving her last Friday for the whole weekend, but it couldn’t be helped.

He had looked forward to seeing her last night but she had apparently been called out to visit a sick friend. He frowned, wondering now if that were true. She had a sulky look on her face and he could see she was pouting. Apparently she was having second thoughts about Friday night. He should have known it would not be that easy to win her trust. They had only had a few hours to talk and get to know one another.

It had seemed like magic there in the moonlight, on the beach, with the sound of the surf all around them. She had submitted to his spanking her as if it were her destiny, which of course it was. But she had had two days to rebuild her defenses. Plus the fact that she was still upset about him taking over the classes. Pani had told him about her visit yesterday and her anger. He said he’d been tempted to put her over his knee, but he had let it go.

Well, he wouldn’t be letting it go! That young lady was going to be over his knee a lot at the rate she was going and that was just fine with him. He looked forward to their encounters and he planned on marrying her as soon as possible. He smiled a satisfied grin. She would be his, and he would cure her of her temper.

Kelo saw the smirk that crossed Nick’s face and her resentment smoldered. She tried to concentrate on his words as he began his lecture to their group but it was all old hat to her and she was

bored. He hadn't even said good morning to her! Of course she hadn't spoken to him either, completely ignoring the fact that she had purposely held Melissa up so there would not be time for small talk this morning!

"We will not be practicing the running dives until we've had some rain," Nick was saying to the group. Since this is the group that does those, the others don't have to worry about it. The water levels in the pool are decreasing on a weekly basis and the running dives put you too far out. We don't want anyone to end up with a broken neck."

"What do you mean, Mr. Gorman?" said Kelo indignantly. The running dives are our best dives. We've done those when the water was at these levels before. Why are you so worried about it now?"

"They have rarely been this low, Miss O'Halloran and we have several divers who have only just achieved expert level. I don't want to take chances. There are enough beautiful dives that will impress the tourists without putting anyone in danger." His eyes were glittering, his voice laced with warning. Kelo knew she was pushing his buttons with her attitude, but she couldn't seem to help it.

"Nick is right, Kelo," Pani added, sensing the underlying currents between Nick and Kelo. "There is no need to take chances when you don't have to."

Kelo couldn't believe Pani was taking Nick's side! She knew darn well the running dives had been done at this level. It wasn't fair! Nick just wanted to prove to her that he was the boss. Well, she'd show him! No one told her what to do anymore. She folded her arms across her chest, and ignoring Nick, walked a short distance from the group.

Nick continued his instructions, quite aware of the fact that Kelo had walked away from the group in a fit of pique, but he ignored her for the moment. He would deal with her later!

Suddenly Pani yelled urgently, "Keely Leani, don't you dare do it!" He whirled around just in time to see Kelo headed at a dead run for the cliffs edge!

His heart leaped into his throat and for one macabre moment, time seemed frozen as Kelo's slender body hung in mid air, straight as an arrow, her arms stretched out from her sides, her beautiful hair billowing back from the wind. It would remain forever etched in his memory. The beginners and intermediates oohed and ahed while the expert class gasped collectively. Then she began her descent and dropped out of sight. He whirled and headed for the path down the cliff side, praying all the way that he would not find her floating in the pool with a broken neck.

Pani was right behind Nick, but he was not as fast as the younger man. This was by far the stupidest stunt Kelo had ever pulled out of temper and he could not let this pass. He did not know what was going on between her and Nick, but whatever it was, it had triggered some powerful emotions in his daughter. She hadn't been this out of control for years. He was pretty sure she could make the dive, she was very small and had excellent judgment, but it was a stupid unnecessary risk to take.

Kelo loved the feeling of flying when she leaped from the cliff, it was so free and wild. The free fall, the execution of the dive maneuvers; it was all a high that she was addicted to. She loved it fiercely. Her body sliced into the water in perfect precision. She arched her neck and began curving away from

the bottom and back up. Her nose slightly scraped mud as she came back up and it surprised her. She came up, up, up to the top and burst from the surface of the water, flipping her hair back, her blood racing. She quickly swam the few strokes to the side to come up by the path side of the pool.

When she could stand, she walked out squeezing the water from her hair and cleaning the mud off the end of her nose. She began to tremble slightly as reaction set in, and she realized just how close she had come the sloped side of the pool on her underwater ascent. She padded over to the cavern in the rocks to get her towel.

Suddenly, she heard clattering footsteps coming down the stone path. She looked out the stone arch of the doorway and saw Nick and Pani hurrying down the steps. Nick's face was a thundercloud as his gaze pinned her in her tracks, and she hadn't seen that look on Pani's face since she was sixteen. Her bottom tingled in salute to the memory!

Blast and bother! She hadn't thought about what would happen when the dive was finished, only in tweaking Nick by making the dive! Maybe she shouldn't have been quite so quick to rebel. Gulping, she did the only thing any red-blooded girl who had two spanking males bearing down on her at once would do, she ran! On winged feet she flew down the trail towards the parking lots, veering off on a path grown over by lush foliage. She glanced over her shoulder. Nick couldn't be more than 100 feet behind her and gaining fast. And Pani wasn't too far behind him! Oh Lord, was she in trouble!

He watched from the lush green foliage, awaiting the girl coming down the path. His eyes were malevolent as he stared at her, taking in the

beautiful features and lithesome body. Yes, she had turned into her mother made over, the bitch.

Kelo never took this path because it was so overgrown, but in her urgent need to get away from Pani and Nick, she had taken it as the first available bolt hole. When Michael O'Halloran stepped onto the path before her, she went instantly into shock.

"Give it to me," he demanded in a guttural voice, his hands clenched in suppressed rage. The madness in his eyes gleamed as he commanded her. "I know you have it! That bitch gave it to you and you've hid it from me all these years. You know what I'm talking about! I want it!"

Must hide, thought Kelo, Mommy said I must hide and never let him have it. She had hidden, but he had come anyway. He had found her hiding place. She ran and ran to find another place. Must find a place where he won't find me. She ran to the cellar door, glancing behind to see if he was following. She didn't see him. She struggled to lift the heavy door and finally succeeded in getting it thrown back and ran into the cool dark cavity hollowed out in the hill. Must hide! She glanced around, frantically searching for something, anything...she saw the old chest her mother had put there to get out of the way. She climbed into the chest and shut the lid. She held her breath trying to be as quiet as possible. She heard his footsteps coming...he was coming...she was terrified... could hardly breathe.... whimpering...sirens...she had to find a place where he couldn't get her! Suddenly she was in a beautiful meadow. It was lush and green and the sun was shining. There was no one there. She would be safe here. No one ever came here, she just knew. She could feel it. No one would get her here. She would always be safe here.

She could hear voices calling to her. She didn't want to go back. He would get her if she went back...She felt like she was floating along on the beautiful green grass. She would wait for Mommy to come and they would stay here forever. No one would ever hurt them again.

Michael O'Halloran stared down in frustration at the girl on the path. She had dropped to the ground and had her arms around her knees, just rocking back and forth. Her eyes were vacant...again! Damn and blast!! Every time he had approached her over the years she did this. She was hiding from him, but he wouldn't let her hide for much longer. He would make her tell him where she hid it this time, or he would strangle the very life from her useless, whoring body.

As he reached for her he heard footsteps pounding on the path beyond her. They were coming after her. Why did she always have so many protectors he wondered insanely? Every time he got close, someone got in the way. In frustration he kicked her in the hip, his fury mounting, then he slipped back into the green undergrowth and sped away. He would get her soon. No one would get in his way this time. It had taken a long time for him to get back to her, nine long years; he could wait a few more weeks.

When Nick rounded the corner he saw Kelo on the ground. She had her arms around her knees, rocking back and forth. She must have fallen and banged her knees he thought angrily. The little idiot! First he'd make sure she wasn't hurt, and then he'd tan her hide. He ran quickly to her side and knelt down, taking her hands to move her arms aside.

"Are you hurt," he demanded brusquely, examining her knees. There was nothing on her knees or ankles as he quickly perused them. "You ought to know better than..." he broke off when he looked at her face. "Kelo?" he questioned uncertainly, "Kelo, are you all right?" The anger had gone instantly out of his voice as he realized something was not right. Her hands lay limply in his and she was looking right through him as if he wasn't there. She made no move to draw away from him or to acknowledge his presence. "Kelo," he said, urgently this time, fear stealing into his heart. "Honey, what happened? What's wrong?" He turned around as Pani rushed up behind him.

Pani knelt on the path in front of his daughter and took her hands from Nick. He knew what had happened when he saw Nick kneeling in front of Kelo, worriedly calling her name. "Kelo," he said softly. It's me, Pani. I'm here now, sweetheart.... you're safe Kelo... I'm here. No one is going to hurt you, baby girl.... come back to Pani... Kelo... come back to me."

He quickly took off his shirt and slipped her arms into it and folded it over her damp swimsuit. He picked up her cold hands, seeing them begin to tremble; he knew she was chilled and in shock. Then Pani sat down on the path and took her onto his lap and wrapped his strong arms around her, letting his body warmth seep into her. He gently rocked her, soothing her with assurances and loving words while he held her in a tight embrace, her head tucked under his chin. "You're safe now Kelo, you're safe, my baby girl... no one is going to hurt you... you're safe. Come back to me Kelo...come to Pani; he continued softly crooning and rocking.

Kelo was floating along on the grasses, the gentle breezes blowing her around as she moved in rhythm with nature. She heard the voices calling her. She heard one voice louder than the others. It seemed very worried and familiar too her somehow, and she wanted to reassure it that she was okay, but not yet... not yet. Now Pani's voice was calling to her, telling her she was safe and to come back. She knew Pani and Tunea, they loved her and protected her. If Pani was here, then she was safe...it was okay to leave the meadow. She drifted towards the voice, following his voice on the gentle breeze until she saw him. She held out her hands...he smiled and took them. She looked up into his face. "Pani," she whispered, "you're here."

Pani looked down at the face of his daughter, seeing recognition once again in those vivid blue eyes and answered, "Yes Kelo, I'm here. Nick is here too. We'll always be here to keep you safe."

Kelo turned her head to see Nick kneeling before her, concern in his green eyes as he looked at her and took her hand.

"Hello Nick," she said softly, the gentle meadow breezes leaving her behind. They had left her with Pani and Nick. "You've never been with Pani before," she whispered, yawning widely.

Nick glanced at Pani, a question in his eyes. When Pani nodded at him and then at Kelo, he answered, his heart in his voice, "I'll always be here for you, little one."

Content, Kelo gently laid her head on Pani's shoulder and was instantly asleep, her tight grip on Nick's fingers relaxing and falling away.

"Take her, Nick," said Pani. "She'll be okay when she wakes up, but for now, she needs to sleep and rest."

Nick gently took the sleeping girl and lifted her from Pani's arms. "What happened here, Pani?" he questioned, holding Kelo's limp body up close in his warm embrace. Her head rested between his shoulder and his chin and he held her easily, barely registering her slight weight.

Pani stood up and reached for Kelo, but Nick shook his head, indicating he was not giving up his precious bundle.

"Let's get her to the car and home to bed," replied Pani, and then we'll talk.

"All right," he answered, following Pani down the path.

In a few minutes they had emerged into the parking lot where Melissa and Nuk were waiting for Kelo to arrive. When they saw Nick carrying Kelo, and Pani striding along in front of them with a worried look on his face, they knew something had happened besides Kelo's dive from the cliffs.

"What happened to her, Pani?" Melissa asked anxiously, as Nick motioned Nuk to open the back door to her car.

"It's happened again," he answered her quietly, watching as Nick slid into the back seat with Kelo being careful not to bang her against anything.

"Oh no," whispered Melissa, her hand on her throat. "I thought she was past all that."

"So did I," he replied grimly. "You drive them back to your apartment, Melissa and I will follow with Nick's car."

"I will follow you as well, Melissa," said Nuk, his eyes on her pale face. "Are you okay to drive?"

"Yea...yes," she replied distractedly, "I'll be fine. I'm just worried about Kelo. She smiled at Nuk and slid into the driver's seat, fishing for her keys under the seat.

Nuk's eyes narrowed as he saw her fishing for the keys. Obviously she had left the door unlocked and the keys in the car...again! They would have to discuss that later. For now, Kelo needed to be taken care of. He didn't know what was going on, but obviously Pani and Melissa did.

Melissa unlocked the door to the apartment and walked quickly to Kelo's bedroom door to open it for Nick.

Nick walked into the bedroom and laid Kelo on the bed, and then he quickly took off her shirt that was getting damp and peeled the wet one-piece swimsuit from her unresisting form. His breath caught in his throat as he drank in the sight of her naked beauty. He quickly tucked her up under the covers and brushed her hair back from her forehead. She looked so vulnerable in her sleep and his heart swelled with love for this little bit of a woman. He had only known her for a few days but it was as if he had always known her. She filled a part of his life that had been incomplete until now. He leaned forward to press a gentle kiss on her forehead. He didn't know what was going on, but he would find out.

Back in the living room, Pani and Nuk were just arriving. When Nick came out of Kelo's bedroom, Melissa invited them all into the kitchen.

"Sit down and I'll make some coffee," she said, pale, and still a little shaken.

"Ill help you," said Nuk, taking the coffee can from her trembling fingers. He quickly prepared the coffee pot while she got out sugar, cream and cups and sat them on the table.

"What's going on, Pani?" questioned Nick quietly. When Pani didn't answer right away, he felt

a surge of fear. Had he somehow been to blame for what had happened?

Pani looked at Nick and Nuk, trying to decide how much to tell them about Kelo's past. She was a private person, and only a select few knew of the fears that had haunted her from childhood. Melissa was one of those few.

Seeing Pani's hesitation, Nick spoke softly, "I love her Pani, and I intend to marry her if she'll have me. I know that love at first sight sounds corny, but I've always known that's the way it would be for me." He ran his fingers through his brown curls, concern on his face. "I need to know what's going on and if somehow, I've been the cause of this happening today."

Nuk walked over and put his hands on Melissa's shoulders. "Since Kelo is family to Melissa, that makes her family to me and I want to help protect her if necessary. But I can't if I don't know what's going on."

Pani looked at the serious faces of both young men, then at Melissa. At her nod, he sighed. "Okay," he said quietly. "I guess you both have a right to know. Nuk, is that coffee ready?"

When Nuk had poured a cup of coffee all around and they had taken a sip of the hot soothing brew, Pani began.

Chapter Four

"Kelo was only five years old when she and her mother moved here from Ireland. They rented the cottage next door to Tunea and I, and it didn't take long for Tunea to find out the sad truth.

Michael O'Halloran was Molly's husband and he was an alcoholic. He was a violent man and the alcohol made it worse. It was usually only Molly that he hurt when he was drunk but then he had started hurting Kelo as well. He told Molly if she ever left him, he would kill them both.

When he threw Kelo against the wall in a drunken rage, broke her arm, and bruised and scraped her ribs, Molly decided she had had enough. She had no one but her mother for family and her mother couldn't stand up to Molly's husband either. Instead she had given Molly money to get away and start over somewhere with Kelo, somewhere he would never find them. We think there was more to the story than what Molly told us, but she never said what it was.

They were here for about six months before he came for them. Tunea heard Molly screaming and called the police, and then called me at work. When I got there the ambulance was just taking Molly to the hospital. She was dead on arrival from internal injuries. We searched and searched for Kelo. We finally found her over an hour later, in a chest in the cave cellar, just like you found her today. Tunea and I took her into our home. Michael O'Halloran ran his car off the cliff road and into the sea. His body was never found."

Pani sipped his coffee and cradled the cup in his hands, staring at the liquid. Nick knew he was not finished.

"The authorities tried to get in touch with Molly's mother, only to find out she was dead.

When they contacted the O'Halloran family, they told us that Michael O'Halloran had been unable to father a child and they didn't want the brat that his whoring wife had produced." Pani's usual pleasant features were grim and forbidding. "Such terrible things to say about a small child and her gentle mother. We were shocked and outraged. Tunea had fallen in love with Kelo from the beginning, and we had never been able to have children, so we adopted her as our own." He took another sip of his coffee.

"When the doctors and therapists saw that Kelo responded to us, it made it easier to adopt her. The therapist said that Kelo would go inside herself to hide from what was hurting her on the outside. In her mind, she could not be hurt, so she used that as an escape from reality. But Tunea and I could always get her to come back.

Eventually the times she did this became fewer and fewer. It took about three years before she finally stopped retreating. She only had about four incidents between the age of eight and sixteen. It was never really clear what triggered these incidents. After she turned sixteen, she never had another one, until today."

Nicks mind was reeling! Until today! Today when he had been so angry he would have spanked her on the spot if he had caught her. Was that what triggered her withdrawal from reality? Was it the threat of physical punishment? If so, then this would change their whole relationship. He'd find some other way to handle her when she flared up, but he would never lay a hand on her again!

"Pani, do you think I caused this?" he asked quietly, pain glittering in his eyes. "If I had caught her today I would have paddled her on the spot. She knew this and it's why she ran. Do you think she was afraid of me?"

"You would have spanked her?" Pani asked, surprised at Nick's admission. "I figured she ran because she knew I was going to spank her the minute I got to her! Why would she have thought you were going to?" he asked curiously.

"Because I spanked her last Friday night for attacking me with Karate.," stated Nick bluntly. "She totally lost control and began fighting me. I let her wear herself out and then I put her over my knee."

"So that's why she's been in a snit all weekend," mused Pani. "No, that wouldn't trigger it Nick. I've been paddling her bottom for years, it's the only way I could find to teach her to control her temper. I was wondering why this sudden loss of control lately. I've not had to spank her since she was sixteen. She must have strong feelings for you as well to be so defiant."

"Sixteen? That number seems to be coming up pretty regularly." He regarded Pani thoughtfully. He was very relieved to hear Pani's words, but still, there was something not quite right here.

"How long does Kelo sleep after one of these trances? Has the therapist got any ideas about what triggers them?"

"She usually sleeps for several hours. And they only think that in some way, she is reminded of her father. Since he is the one she was running away from when we found her, they insist that it has something to do with his memory, but just what that is, they don't know. Sometimes it can be a

smell, or a particular sound, or a flashback, or a person, or just about anything. Unless the person themselves can tell you, which Kelo can't, its hard to tell just what it is."

"Does she ever talk about her father or mother?"

"She talks about her mother but she never mentions her father," replied Pani. "And we don't try to talk about him either. We used to in the past, but she always changed the subject."

"Well, that explains a lot of Kelo's temper," said Nuk, his brown eyes thoughtful. "And her mistrust of relationships."

"Until Nick here," interjected Pani, Kelo has never expressed interest in any man. The fact that she got so angry with you is a definite sign that her emotions are involved, even if she doesn't realize it."

Melissa yawned and pushed her chair back. "I think I'll go check on Kelo," she said.

"Good idea," said Nick. "I'll go with you." He got up and followed Melissa out of the room.

Nuk and Pani grinned at each other. They were happy to hear that Nick was in love with Kelo. Now if Kelo would just cooperate!

Kelo slowly opened her eyes and looked around her bedroom. She yawned. She was still tired. She turned her head and looked at the clock on her nightstand. It read 9:45am. Blast and bother! How could she have overslept like this? And why hadn't Melissa woke her up! The diving classes were supposed to start at 7:00am. She tried to flip the covers back but her arms felt limp and weak.

Suddenly she realized she was naked! What was going on here? Then she remembered. She and Melissa had gone to the classes and Nick had

been there. She frowned and rubbed her temple trying to think. Her brain seemed like it had fog curling through it and it was clearing up very slowly.

Ah yes, Nick had announced they were not going to do any running dives and it had made her furious. Determined to show him he could not boss her around, she had dived anyway. And then, he and Pani had met her at the bottom of the cliff. She remembered their faces all right! She shivered! They both had had that spanking look in their eyes, and they looked ready to deliver on the spot! So she had panicked and ran. She had taken the woodland path and...she couldn't seem to remember anything beyond that. There was something.... something teasing her memory, but she couldn't quite place it. What was it? She shook her head as if to clear it.

She sat up and tried to swing her left leg off the bed, and then hissed in sudden pain. Examining her hip, she saw a huge discoloration coming out from just below her left cheek and spreading around and up her hip towards the middle of her back. And it hurt to move! Where had that come from?

Suddenly the bedroom door opened, and there in the doorway stood Melissa, with Nick right behind her! Gasping, she grabbed the cover and pulled it up to her breast.

"Don't you dare come in here, Nick, I'm not dressed! What's going on here, Melissa?" she demanded. "Why am I home and in bed?"

"How are you feeling, honey?" asked Nick, ignoring her edict and coming to her bedside.

"Nick! I asked you not to come in here. I'll be fine, please go," she said, her face turning pink.

"Would you get some clothes on then, please?" Nick stated coolly, eyeing the covers she had pulled

up to her breast. "Your father and I would like to talk to you." He left the room and went into the kitchen. "Kelo is awake," he told the other two men. I asked her to get dressed and come out so we can talk."

"She's awake?" said Pani, surprised. "She used to sleep for hours after one of these trances. It hasn't even been two hours yet, and she's already recovering. I think that's a good sign."

Melissa walked over to the bed and sat down. "You had another spell, Kelo. Nick found you on the woodland trail and carried you to the car."

"Another spell? But why after all these years?" She rubbed her temple. "And how did I get undressed?"

"I'm afraid Nick undressed you," explained Melissa grinning at Kelo's outraged expression.

"What? Why did you let him do that?"

"Because you were sound asleep and I couldn't lift you to get the wet clothes off."

"Would you bring me some clothes please? I seem to be really weak and my hip is badly bruised. It hurts to move my leg." She winced as she slid her legs off the side of the bed.

"Here," said Melissa, returning with some clothes. "Put these on."

Kelo slowly put on the sweats and T-shirt that Melissa brought for her. When she stood and put her left foot down, she gasped at the pain that tore through her upper thigh and hip.

"What's wrong?" asked Melissa,

"I can't put my weight down on the left side. It hurts too much," she responded painfully.

"Show me,"

Kelo slid her sweats down on the left side so Melissa could see the bruise.

"You need to get to a doctor," she said. "That looks really bad. Sit down while I get Nick." She moved quickly to the door and opened it. "Nick, can you come here please? Kelo needs help."

Nick came rushing down the hallway and into the room. "What's the matter?" he asked, alarm in his voice. Pani and Nuk came in behind him.

"I'm afraid I can't put my weight down on my left leg," said Kelo, in a pain filled voice.

"She has a terrible looking bruise up her leg and into her hip. She may have bone bruised it, or maybe even dislocated the hip." said Melissa.

"Let me see," demanded Nick, as he crossed the room to Kelo's side.

"No!" gasped Kelo, looking at the three men in the room and promptly sitting back down on the bed.

"That's okay, Nick," said Melissa hastily. I checked it and I really think we need to get her to the doctor or the emergency room. I'll help her get some shoes on and then you can carry her to the car." Melissa got some sandals for Kelo and put them on her feet.

"Grab my purse please, Melissa," requested Kelo as Nick swung her carefully up in his arms.

Melissa got the purse and handed it to her.

"I'm going with you," declared Pani. I'll drive Nick, since I know where Kelo's doctor is."

"Nuk and I will wait here then," said Melissa. She opened the door so Nick could carry Kelo to the car. Pani followed them out, closing the door behind him.

Melissa yawned as she turned and saw Nuk seated on the couch. "Come over here, honey," he patted the leather beside him. "You look tired."

"I am," she said, following his instructions. "But I still have to go to work in a few minutes. I'm late now." She snuggled into his shoulder and he put his arm around her.

"I know, I do too," replied Nuk. "But before I go, we need to have a little talk." Just the way he said those words gave Melissa a sudden curling feeling in her stomach.

"Talk? About what, exactly?"

"About leaving your keys in the car and the car unlocked." He tipped her chin up to look sternly at her. "Haven't we had this conversation before?"

"Yes, but...I...I..."

"You know how I feel about that, Melissa, I've told you over and over. The parking lots are filled with tourists and all sorts of people. And if you do it there, you probably do in the parking garage at your work too, don't you?" He knew he was right when he saw the guilty flush of red on her face. "I've let it go this far because you usually do everything I ask when it's for your safety, but you continue to defy me in this. I can't have that."

"But Nuk I..." Suddenly she was face down over his lap. "No, Nuk.... stop..." but it was too late! Nuk started raining hard spanks down on her bottom. She still had her shorts on and the swimsuit underneath them, but they were scant protection from his hard palm. She yelped as his aim moved down to her bare thighs and he landed several hard swats on the tender skin just below her butt cheeks and the top of her thighs.

"No," she screamed and put her hands back. "Stop it, Nuk...stop it...or we won't be getting married!" The tears were streaming down her face and she was sobbing hiccupping sobs as he pulled her upright to look into her face.

"What do you mean?" he asked, a frown on his face.

"I...I'm saying, I don't like getting spanked!"

"I'm sure you don't, but that doesn't mean you won't get it when you need it!"

"No..."she spoke quickly as he tugged on her arm again. "No, Nuk, I mean it. You can't spank me. I don't want it in our marriage."

He studied her face for a moment, considering her words. At last he spoke. "Melissa, I don't know what to say right now. Administering a spanking when its needed has always been a part of our family life. I assumed from little things you've said now and then that you would accept it. You didn't say anything last Friday after I spanked you, what's changed since then?"

Melissa squirmed uncomfortably. He had a stern look on his face and she was afraid if she just said—it hurts!—she might just end up back over his lap again! But darn it, she couldn't really think of something convincing to say! She twisted her fingers together.

"I...I...I don't know Nuk. Its just that...well...I'm sorry if I've given you the wrong impression" She hung her head. "I guess it always seemed kind of romantic and everything, but...when you really did spank me and it hurt so much...I...I changed my mind," she rushed on as she saw his eyebrow arch. "I've been thinking about it all weekend and I've truly decided I don't want this to be a part of our marriage. Do you understand?" she pleaded.

"I understand that a little girl is trying to keep from getting her butt paddled," he said firmly, "but for the moment, we'll put this discussion on hold. We both have to go to work. But this isn't over," he warned, steel in his brown eyes. I fully intend to

have this be a part of our marriage, but I will discuss this at length with you tonight after we both get off work. And you better have a better reason than....it hurts," he mimicked, leaning over and giving her a kiss. "I'll see you later."

Melissa slumped back on the couch as he shut the door. She was relieved that he hadn't tried to spank her anymore, but now she was in a real dilemma. He had answered one question... he fully intended it to be a part of their marriage! She'd been afraid that might be the case. But how to convince him that she couldn't accept it? And was she really prepared to give him up if he refused? A tear leaked from under her eyelash. She might just have to.... but oh.... how that thought hurt!

"The good news is...her hip is not dislocated. However, there is swelling and damage in the surrounding tissues of the joint, and heavy bruising that continues on out from there," said Dr. Anderson looking at the trio of faces in the examining room. "She will need to stay off that leg for three days and at home for the rest of the week, doing as little as possible. But she can begin to put light pressure on it after Thursday. As for work on Monday, we'll see, but definitely no Karate or diving for at least three weeks."

"I don't have time for this," complained Kelo, a frown marring her pale face. "I have a job, and my classes and a million other things I'm responsible for! I can't just do nothing for three weeks!"

"You'll do as Dr. Anderson tells you," stated Nick firmly, glancing at Pani who nodded in agreement. Then they promptly ignored her and turned back to the doctor.

Kelo rolled her eyes; lord save her from over protective men! When would they learn she could

take care of herself? It wasn't her fault that she had ended up hurt! If they hadn't been chasing her in the first place she never would have fallen. She'd made the dive just fine, but they were the ones who got all bent out of shape because she had ignored them.

She folded her arms across her chest and glared at the three disgusting males in front of her. Dr. Anderson was talking to Nick and Pani as if she were five years old instead of twenty-five. She was an adult, thank you very much, and under her own blasted insurance coverage, he should be addressing her! Kelo had no idea how much she resembled a pouting child, her lip jutting out and her chin defensively in the air.

"It seems strange to me that she has no other scrapes or bruises except this one," mused Nick. "A fall that did this much damage should have resulted in scraped knees or hands or something else wouldn't you think?"

"Most likely she hit something protruding from the ground, like a tree root or a small stump or something that jammed straight into her hip," replied the Doctor. "The worst damage is centered in one spot and gets lighter as the area widens."

Nick looked at Pani thoughtfully. "I don't remember anything like that on the path, do you Pani?"

"No, and I was sitting on the ground as well, but I don't remember anything like that near there," he reflected, his hand on his chin.

"Can we go now," asked Kelo, her patience wearing thin. Her hip was starting to ache and all she wanted to do was get some drugs and get off of it for a while!

Dr. Anderson handed the prescription to Pani, much to Kelo's amazement and asked, "Is there anyone who can stay with her for the first three days until she can get around on her own?"

"She has a roommate and I can have her mother keep her company during the day. Or she can stay at my home for a few days," replied Pani.

"No!" exclaimed Kelo. The last thing she wanted to do was stay under the same roof as Nick. "It would be easier for Mom to come and stay with me than for me to drag everything I need over there."

Nick's eyes narrowed at her reaction. He knew why she didn't want to stay at her childhood home; she did not want to be in close proximity with him! But that was okay... because when she got her spanking for making that dive today, it would be better if they were in the privacy of her apartment anyway. She just hadn't figured that part out yet! He grinned innocently when she glared suspiciously at his assenting nod.

"Fine then," said Dr. Anderson, again ignoring Kelo and addressing the men. "Let me know on Friday how she's feeling and I'll let you know if she can go to work on Monday or not."

"Of course, Doctor," stated Kelo acidly. "I will be sure and call you and let you know how my leg feels." She threw her hands up in the air when the three men looked at her like she had sprouted two heads!

Nick carried Kelo into the apartment and headed for the bedroom as Melissa hastened to open the door for him.

"No, not in there," said Kelo quickly. "Just put me on the couch, Nick. I don't want to spend three days in bed with no TV or anything to do in there. We sleep on the couch all the time, its quite

comfortable," she snapped impatiently as he hesitated.

"Okay, I suppose that'll be all right," he said as her carried over to the couch.

"I wasn't asking your permission!"

His eyes glittered at her tone. "And I won't be asking yours in a few days either," he threatened softly.

"You wouldn't dare!" She hissed back, glancing around to make sure Pani and Melissa was not listening. Pani was busy talking to Melissa and calling Tunea.

"Wouldn't dare what, little one?"

"You know what I'm talking about," she gritted out, fuming.

"Wouldn't dare spank you?" he asked in a silky whisper.

"Only a brute would hit a woman when she's hurt," she whispered indignantly.

"Oh I don't intend to hit you, but I am going to turn your little butt red. But I'll wait until you're well little one. You can be thinking about it until then, because it's going to happen." He laid her carefully on the sofa, amused by her pouting glare.

"Tunea is on her way over to stay with you, Kelo," said Pani, walking over to the couch to talk to her. "Nick and I are going to go on over to the office, honey; it'll only be a few minutes until she gets here." He bent to give her a kiss on the cheek. "I'm not happy with your behavior this morning and if you weren't hurt I'd consider tanning your bottom," he stated sternly. "But it will have to wait. We'll see you later."

"And I better not find out you've been trying to get up either, young lady," said Nick firmly as he

planted a quick kiss on her lips before she had time to object.

Kelo scowled at the two men walking to the door. "You'd think I was five years old," she muttered, exasperated.

"Don't worry, I'll be here until Tunea gets here," said Melissa, "then I'll go on in for the afternoon myself."

With a... "Behave yourself,"... from Nick and a stern glance from both men over their shoulders, they left.

Chapter Five

"Can you believe that?" Declared Kelo, thoroughly aggravated. "Doctor Anderson actually ignored me except for the examination and those two acted like I was a naughty five year old being taken to the Doctor. He even gave Pani my pain prescription instead of me! I'm so mad I could bite nails," she burst out furiously, pounding the pillow with her fist, her eyes turning a dark blue. "How dare Nick treat me like this? Do you know he actually threatened to spank me when my leg is better? Just who the hell does he think he is?"

Melissa studied her upset roommate. "That was a pretty dumb thing to do this morning Kelo, you could have been killed. We were all shocked and worried, especially when they found you on the path like that," she said quietly.

Kelo looked at Melissa's face, finally noticing that she looked a little pale and her usual good humor was missing. Had they really been that worried about her? She wondered with a pang. She hadn't meant to hurt anyone; she just didn't like being restricted when she knew her own capabilities.

She heaved a big sigh and replied, "I'm sorry if I worried you all, I didn't mean to scare anyone. But I'm old enough to take care of myself and I knew I could make the dive just fine."

"I know, but now you may not get to dive at all. You know if you don't follow strict instructions you lose diving privileges for a period of time."

"I know, but I can't dive anyway now, for three weeks, or take karate classes."

"Is that what Doctor Anderson told you?" Asked Melissa sympathetically.

"Yes, and I have to stay off my leg for three whole days! And stay home for the rest of the week and take it easy, and you know that's torture for me!" She grimaced distastefully.

"I know," Melissa said with a smile.

Kelo eyed Melissa's wan face. "Is something else wrong, Melissa? You're awfully quiet and you look a little pale."

Melissa's eyes misted with tears. "Nuk and I had a disagreement after you left."

"What about?"

"He pulled me over his lap and started spanking me for leaving my keys in the car," she said tearfully.

"Didn't you stop him?"

"I tried...but he wouldn't stop until I told him we wouldn't be getting married if he didn't."

"Did you really mean that?"

"At the time...I just wanted him to stop," she said, a sob in her voice. "And now, I just don't know Kelo. I told him I didn't want this to be a part of our marriage."

"And what did he say?"

"He said it was a part of his family life and he intended it to be a part of ours. He was mad because I didn't say anything last Friday. He said we'd discuss it later and I better have a better reason than...it hurts!"

Kelo replied thoughtfully, "It sounds like you have a decision to make."

"It does, doesn't it?" she responded, still teary. "Oh Kelo, I really thought it would be so romantic and now...I don't know...I just don't think I can handle it. But I can't stand the thought of not marrying Nuk either! What am I going to do?" She put her face in her hands sobbing softly.

"I wish I had the answer for you, Melissa," said Kelo, reaching her hands out to her friend. "I really do. I guess you'll just have to think seriously about how it would be if you didn't have Nuk and whether you can accept his making that kind of a decision regarding you."

She squeezed Melissa's hands warmly, tugging her into a hug. "Maybe it wouldn't be as bad as you think," she said hopefully, knowing Melissa was by nature a follower. "If it's just the pain you're afraid of...well...it doesn't last too long!" She grinned encouragingly at her friend, "I've been over Pani's lap lots of time and I always felt better later, even though I didn't like the spanking! I'm not saying you should accept it of course, I'm just saying...don't let that be the only reason you refuse to marry Nuk, okay?"

Melissa returned her hug. "Okay. Thanks for the talk, I feel a little better." She wiped the tears from her face. "Guess I better get to work before I get fired." As she got up, the doorbell rang and she moved swiftly to let Tunea in.

Kelo waved to Melissa as she went out the door and grinned as Tunea came bustling in, a care basket in one hand and chocolate chip cookies in the other, fresh from the oven. She hurriedly sat them down on the coffee table and grabbed Kelo's hands.

"Oh, my poor dear, are you all right? Does it hurt very much?" she questioned anxiously, enveloping her adopted daughter in a generous hug that managed to put Kelo's face right between her ample bosoms. "I was just taking cookies out of the oven when Pani called and explained what happened. Shame on you darling, diving like that...your father should take you over his knee! Of

course he can't since you are hurt and ... oh my, you had another spell... I'm just so worried about you my sweet girl." Kelo managed to pull away as Tunea hugged her tighter and gasp out with a laugh, "I'm fine mom, really, I'm fine! No, it doesn't hurt as long I don't walk on it...Mom...just relax!"

She looked fondly at the woman who had taken her in when she was five years old. Tunea was not a lot taller than Kelo herself, but weighed quite a bit more. Still, she was not a big woman but she had a big heart and Kelo adored her. She couldn't remember when she had ever started calling her Mom, but she always had for as long as she could remember. Pani had always been Pani, unless she chose to aggravate him by calling him "Pops", which she did occasionally, and it usually earned her an affectionate pop on the rear!

"Did you bake those just for me, Mom?" questioned Kelo teasingly. Tunea knew that chocolate chip cookies were her favorite kind and usually had some on hand for whenever Kelo would drop in.

"Of course dear, you know I always do," Tunea responded, "and for Mr. Gorman as well. I found out that it's his favorite cookie too and since he is staying with us for a few months, I decided to bake some up for both of you!" She beamed at Kelo.

Bully for Mr. Gorman, thought Kelo, but she refrained from saying it out loud. "He's staying the whole time at our house?" Kelo frowned. That would put a crimp in her visits home. She hadn't known he was going to stay there the whole time he was on the island!

"Yes he is, dear. Your Dad and he get along quite well and we are enjoying his company. You don't get home near enough you know." She

scolded Kelo, smoothing the hair gently back over her ear. "We'd like to see more of you."

Kelo sighed. "I know, Mom, but I have so much to do all the time." She bit into the cookie that Tunea had given her. "Mmmm...just right and nice and warm still. Thanks Mom!"

"I suppose that's all you've eaten this morning?" questioned Tunea looking at her sternly, already knowing the answer.

"You know me pretty well," Kelo grinned cheerfully.

"Tsk, ts, it has been awhile since Pani warmed your bottom for you. You really need a good one," she said, laughing at Kelo's unrepentant grin. "I'm going to the kitchen to fix you some of this nice soup I brought for lunch and I want you to eat every bite or I'll tell your father on you!" She shook her finger at Kelo and picked up the basket and the cookies and headed for the kitchen.

Kelo couldn't resist saucily sticking her tongue out at her mother's retreating back.

"And you better keep that tongue in your head, young lady or I really will tell your father," she retorted without even looking back, much to Kelo's amazement. She'd often wondered if Tunea had eyes in the back of her head!

She settled back on the fluffy pillows that Melissa had brought out for her and yawned. Soon, she was drifting off to sleep, the pain medications doing their job and helping to relax her.

When Tunea came back to see if she was ready for the soup, she found Kelo fast asleep.

The poor dear, she thought, gazing lovingly at her. The soup could wait. Then she covered her daughter up with the colorful afghan from the back of the couch and picked her embroidery up from the

basket she had brought in. She sat down by the window where she could see better and began to work.

Pani and Nick got into Pani's car and headed out into the noon traffic of Honolulu. It was a busy time of day and the streets were bustling with local tour buses and cars.

"Pani, do you need to get into the office right away?" Asked Nick. "I'd like to go back and look at that path again where I found Kelo. Something doesn't seem right here."

"No, we can do that if you wish. I have wondered about that myself," he replied thoughtfully.

"Does Kelo know that O'Halloran is not her father?"

Pani was quiet for a moment, and then he spoke. "No, we didn't tell her that because we didn't know for sure. If O'Halloran's family didn't want responsibility for Kelo, for whatever reason, it would be simple enough to make up that story and no one would truly question it since they are not immediate family to Kelo. Since we wanted to keep her ourselves anyway, we didn't wish to contest their decision, and neither did the authorities."

"Didn't she ever wonder why none of her father's family came for her?"

"No, she never mentioned her father in any way. Like I said before, we tried to talk to her a little bit about it, thinking we should explain so she wouldn't feel abandoned, but she had no desire to listen. She never mentioned a word about his family at all and never has expressed the slightest curiosity. We told her about her grandmother and she accepted that just fine. But we never talked about him."

"And Molly never gave you any indication that he wasn't Kelo's father?" Nick asked curiously.

"No, she never said anything about that. Just that they were hiding from him because he threatened to kill them if he ever found them. That's all we know," replied Pani.

Pani parked the car in the parking lot close the end of the woodland trail. The two men retraced their steps until they came to the spot where they had found Kelo. It wasn't hard to find because it was just around a corner where the path widened out and there were no overhanging branches in the way.

They carefully perused the spot, looking for anything that would cause the damage that Kelo had sustained to her hip. There was nothing there, no rocks, no branches, and no roots sticking out. Then Nick began looking off the side of the path, lifting underbrush out of his way. Pani watched him and began to get a glimmer of what Nick was doing, and he started on the left side of the trail.

"Here," exclaimed Nick, calling to Pani. "Look here, Pani, see this?" He pointed to a soft area of ground that had been covered by the brush he was holding out of the way. In the soft dirt were impressions of shoes. As Nick moved the brush aside, you could see more impressions, as if whoever had been standing there had been there a while. He and Pani kept sweeping the brush back, looking for more footprints.

Suddenly Pani exclaimed, "Look at this!" He picked up a round black plastic cover of some sort.

"That's a lens cap for binoculars," said Nick, frowning. "It looks to me like someone was standing here waiting for someone to come down

this path. Does anyone ever use this path on a regular basis?"

"No," replied Pani. "It's overgrown and longer than the other trail, so people rarely use it unless they just want too. I doubt that Kelo would have come this way if she hadn't been running from us! She's small and can slip through here faster than we could, giving her a time edge so she could get out of the parking lot before we caught her!" He grinned at the younger man. "My daughter is very resourceful."

"She won't be so proud of herself when I put her over my knee for this," growled Nick.

"Be careful with her, Nick," responded Pani, looking thoughtfully at the younger man. "I believe there are still emotions that drive Kelo that we do not understand, even today. And I somehow feel there is more to Molly's story that is locked up in Kelo's mind somewhere that she does not realize she knows. You generate deep emotions in her, this I do know, for she has not been out of control for a very long time. I don't want her to be hurt in any way."

"Does this mean you don't approve of my spanking her?" asked Nick carefully.

"No, it doesn't mean that," Pani replied. "I know she is headstrong, with a tongue like a razor; I am just saying be aware that there are undercurrents here and handle her accordingly. She is very cautious of men, so don't expect too much too quickly from her. You are the first man who has had any affect on her at all. Usually she just brushes them off like insignificant flies in her way. Until you came, I had begun to give up on her ever finding anyone who could get past her indifference."

"I'll keep that in mind, Pani, I believe I understand what you are talking about," he said musingly, thinking of the night on the beach when he had sensed more to her declaration about "no man ever laying a hand on her," than what appeared on the surface.

He gazed up through the trees towards the top of the cliff. "You can see the classes from here, but you wouldn't be able to make out anyone without a pair of binoculars. It appears that someone was waiting here for someone to come along," he said speculatively, his eyes narrowing as he looked from the cliffs to the ground. "Whether it was someone specific, or just anyone, is not possible to know at this point."

He turned to look at Pani. "What if Kelo just happened to be the one who came down here? Suppose it could have been anyone else? Why would he hurt her like this? Its obvious to me that he either hit her with something, or possibly kicked her."

"Perhaps he got frustrated because she reacted to his presence in this way," replied Pani, following Nick's train of thought. If he were waiting for just any girl, because he wanted to attack her, then this behavior would take him by surprise...maybe even irritate him. Or if he was waiting for someone specific, why didn't he just stay hidden until Kelo was gone?"

"What if he really was waiting for Kelo?" Nick frowned, thinking of the possibilities. "Unless he mistook her for someone else."

"Kelo is pretty small to be mistaken for someone else," replied Pani. "So that means he probably was waiting for just anyone and was frustrated with

Kelo's reaction, but we came along before he could do anything else about it."

"Well, at least we know now that someone was out here, but her reaction is strange considering her Karate training. She didn't hesitate to turn on me when I caught her unaware," said Nick rethinking the whole thing. "So lets just say that someone was waiting for her; what if it was someone she recognized and it triggered that response because of it? Who would trigger a response like that?"

Pani frowned, considering Nick's words. "What if it wasn't the person that caused it, but something about the person?"

"You've said that the therapist indicated she hid on the inside from what she was afraid of on the outside, yet you've been unable to pinpoint anything except for the fact it would have to do with her father, right?" Nick tried to clarify the facts.

"That's right," agreed Pani.

"You've also indicated only a few sporadic incidents between about ages eight and sixteen. It's been nine years now. Kelo has been living on her own, meeting new people, classes, work, and tourists on an almost daily basis. Her karate training has taught her how to expertly deal with the unexpected, as she demonstrated last Friday. So what could it possibly be about a sudden stranger that would trigger this response after all these years?"

"Are you saying what I think you are?" asked Pani skeptically.

"Yes," replied Nick, nodding his head. "You said Michael O'Halloran's body was never recovered. What if he didn't die in that crash? What if he is still around and looking for Kelo?"

Pani paled as he stared at Nick, "Do you think it's possible? And if he is, what could he possibly want with her?"

"I don't know," replied Nick grimly, "but whatever it is, it's not a loving reunion, judging from the damage he did to her hip."

"Let's get back," said Pani, looking uneasily around him. "I think this is something we may need to discuss with the authorities."

The two men began to retrace their steps to the parking lot. When they arrived in the parking lot and got into the car, Nick turned to Pani. "Why don't you drop me off at your house and I'll make some phone calls and pick up my rental. I know a few people in the police department and I'll have them check into O'Halloran's background again. Then I'll meet you at the office. We need to discuss this with Melissa and Tunea. I don't want Kelo left alone at all for a while."

"I agree, but what about Kelo?" Pani asked, concern in his voice. "We have to tell her what we think."

"Yes, but don't you think we should talk with the therapist who had her case first?"

"That would probably be a very good idea. I'll call her from the office while you check out the police department."

A few miles away, Nuk was busy at his postmaster's desk, working on paperwork and thinking about his recent conversation with Melissa. She had taken him completely by surprise. She had always seemed so in tune with him up until now. He loved everything about her, her femininity, the differences in his rugged hardness and her soft loveliness, her beautiful expressive eyes. She was intelligent with a mind of her own, yet mature and

giving and he had truly expected he would rarely ever have to spank her.

She had caught him off guard last Friday when she had suddenly flown into a petulant and childish display of temper, calling him names and stalking off alone down the deserted beach. He had followed, determined to have this out with her. He hadn't wanted to leave town with her angry and their dispute unresolved.

But when he reached the clearing and saw her standing in the moonlight, rebellion and defiance on her face, he had known she was in no mood to listen. She had folded her arms across her chest and tossed her long brown hair behind her shoulders. And then she had stamped her sandal-clad foot at the same time her lower lip dropped into a decided pout. There was only one thing to do he had decided grimly, it was time for an attitude adjustment! And he knew in exactly what position this change would be best achieved; and in the shortest amount of time!

Without a word he had advanced on her, taken off the grass skirt, pulled down her little green shorts and had her over his knees in the time honored position that many a wayward fiancée had found themselves in before her. Suddenly she had decided to talk, but it was too late! Despite her protests he had let his hand do the talking to her wiggling bottom while he stated in no uncertain terms his displeasure at her disrespectful and vulgar language! After several blistering swats, which had turned her bottom a delightful shade of dark pink, he had rested his hand against her rounded cheeks.

"Now are you ready to behave and quit acting like a five year old?" he had asked. When she had sobbed her consent, he had pulled her up and sat

her on his knee. She had sobbed her apologies into his shoulder and they had spent a delightful hour cuddling together and rehashing the previous conversation until they were both satisfied. She had said nothing about the spanking other than it had hurt and she was sorry.

It was supposed to hurt, that was the whole point! If it hurt, you behaved yourself so you wouldn't get another one! He didn't want to hurt her, but he knew that even though the spanking hurt her bottom, words hurt the soul a lot worse! He'd rather paddle her little butt than nurse any anger against her or say things calculated to hurt her feelings. As a man, he felt that was uncalled for and would only damage their relationship and tear down her self-esteem.

Nuk stared at the papers in front of him, not even seeing the words on them as his mind wandered. He had seen so many of his friend's parent's divorce through the years, due to that very thing. His own parents had kept themselves to a strict standard of respect through the years, and had not let their children tear one another down. He wanted to continue that with his own children. Even if it meant he had to spank his young wife a few times until she got the message!

He looked up as a sudden knock sounded on the door jamb of his doorway. Leando was coming through the door, an envelope in his hand and an excited look on his face.

"Look at this, boss," he said excitedly, waving the envelope at Nuk. "Look at the date on this envelope. I found it in the old sorting room behind the baseboards we pulled off."

During the past few days some of the postal workers had been clearing out the old mail sorting

room that hadn't been in use now for the past several years. Nuk had decided to have it remodeled and divided into two offices.

"It must have fell down there when the mail was being sorted and got stuck out of sight! It's postmarked close to 20 years ago!" He handed the envelope to Nuk. "Wouldn't it be something to mail this on? I wonder if whoever that is addressed to even still lives there... or is even alive?"

Nuk took the envelope. It was dusty and dirty, but he could see the address was somewhere in Ireland. He frowned, trying to make out the city, but it looked like it had gotten damp at some point in time and there were some old mold spots that had dried and smeared the city name. "It can't be delivered as it is," said Nuk, trying to wipe off the moldy area. You can't read the city to be delivered to."

"Can it be returned to whoever mailed it?" asked Leando.

Nuk looked at the return address and wiped off the dust. It was hard to read but...suddenly he looked closer, taking the envelope over to the window. Yes, it was faint, the address had been done in pencil, but the name in the top left corner was...O'Halloran! He looked up at Leando. "I'll take care of this Leando," he said firmly.

"Okay, boss," said Leando cheerfully. "Me and some of the guys are going to get some lunch, do you want to come?"

"No, no you guys go on ahead. I have some business to take care," Nuk responded, waving Leando out of the office. He sat down in the chair and tried to clean off a little more of the address. Yes, that was it all right. 1803 Maple, Honolulu, Hawaii. Being postmaster, Nuk knew where every

street in Honolulu was and he knew that Kelo's home address was not on maple. He frowned, trying to see whom it was addressed to. It looked like...Aaron Shaughnessy. He hefted the envelope, it wasn't very heavy, but there was something loose in it. It felt like something hard...and small. He needed to find out who lived at 1803 Maple, but first, he had a phone call to make.

As Nick entered the house, he heard the telephone ringing. He supposed he should answer it since Tunea was with Kelo. Walking into the den, he located the phone and picked up the receiver.

"Hello," he said.

"Nick?" It sounded like Nuk.

"Yes, this is Nick Gorman," he replied.

"Hi Nick, this is Nuk. Is Pani there?"

"No, he just left to go to the office. Do you need to talk to him?"

"Yes, I do. There is something here that I think you both should see. Can you meet me at Pani's office in a few minutes?"

"Sure, just give me time to make a couple of phone calls and I'm on my way," replied Nick.

Chapter Six

About thirty minutes later, Nick walked into Pani's office. Pani held an old dirty envelope in his hand and he was frowning.

"Close the door, Nick," instructed Pani. "I've already explained to Nuk what we found out today, and our concerns about Kelo's father." He handed the envelope to Nick. "Take a look at what one of the postal workers found today in the old sorting room at the post office."

Nick took the envelope and looked closely at it. His eyes narrowed as he saw the faintly written, *O'Halloran*, in the top left corner. "What is this?" He walked over and took a chair in front of Pani's desk and studied the envelope.

"It's postmarked almost twenty years ago. It looks to me like a letter that Molly must have mailed to this man, Aaron Shaughnessy, but it never made it there. It fell down behind a baseboard and was never found until today when the boards were removed for remodeling." Pani leaned back and looked keenly at the two men before him. "Nuk says the letter is not deliverable because you can't read the city in Ireland. Therefore, it can be returned to the owner."

He stood up and walked to the window. "That's Molly and Kelo's old address from twenty years ago, right next door to Tunea and I at that time." He looked back at Nick. "The question is, do we give it to Kelo to open first, or do we open it to make sure there is nothing in it that would harm her? Suppose there's something in there that Molly would never want Kelo to know?"

Nick held the envelope, turning it over in his hands, considering the choices. At last he sighed

heavily and ran his fingers through his brown curls. "I think Kelo would be very angry if we opened it without her permission. But, I fully understand your concern...I feel the same way. We all want to protect her from any more possible hurt."

He tapped the envelope against his palm. "May I hold onto this for a few days, Pani? Give me a chance to do some checking into O'Halloran's background and the circumstances surrounding his disappearance. I made some phone calls just before I came over to a detective friend of mine and he's looking into it. Plus the police will keep an eye on the apartment building periodically where Kelo lives, just as a precaution. I need to go to Maui for a couple of days. While I'm gone, I think you and Tunea should explain to Kelo the possibility that O'Halloran might not be her father."

Pani nodded his approval of Nick's words. "I think that's a good idea, I will do that this evening. Nuk, do you think you could take Melissa out for a while so Tunea and I can have some time alone with Kelo?"

"Yes, of course," replied Nuk, his brown eyes gleaming. He had some business to talk over with his ladylove anyway. He would take Melissa to dinner and then they would go to his apartment to talk. "I'll just give her a call and let her know we'll be going out for dinner." He stood up and shook hands with Nick. "Good luck, Nick, I hope you figure out what's going on. We'll help keep an eye on Kelo while you're gone."

Pani reached for the phone. "And I'll call Tunea and let her know I'll be eating in with her and Kelo, and then call the therapist to discuss the situation with her."

"I'll drop by and see Kelo on my way out," responded Nick, nodding to the other two men as he went out the door.

Kelo stretched and yawned, then grimaced. Her hip was pretty sore and she felt grumpy and out of sorts. It was about 4:00pm and she had slept all afternoon. She was also kind of hungry, and she realized that she had fallen asleep before Tunea had been able to bring in her soup. Must be the pain pills, she thought. She yawned again just as the doorbell rang.

"You're awake, dear," said Tunea as she went to the door to answer the chimes. "I wonder who that is?" She opened the door and there stood Nick, with a bouquet of purple roses in his hands. "Come in, Nick, come in," she gushed, "What beautiful roses! Let me get a vase of water to put them in."

"Hi, Tunea," grinned Nick, amused at the compliment. She shut the door and headed for the kitchen as he walked to the couch and sat down beside Kelo.

"Hello, sweetheart," he said, handing her the roses. "How are you feeling?"

Kelo, who was suddenly feeling a lot better, took the roses and sniffed their wonderful fragrance. "Pretty sore and tired," she admitted. Almost shyly she peeked up at Nick, thinking how handsome he was, even if he was bossy and domineering. Her heart skipped a beat as his gaze studied her face and his warm hand enveloped her small cool one. "Thank you for the roses," she whispered, unable to drag her eyes away from that beautifully chiseled mouth. She found herself wishing he would kiss her again, only this time, not just a quick peck.

Tunea bustled up with the vase of water and set it on the coffee table. "Here, let me take those for

you, dear," she said, taking the roses and arranging them in the vase. "There you go," she beamed. "Aren't they beautiful?" Seeing Nick's firm grasp on Kelo's hand, her eyes twinkled. "I'll just be in the kitchen my, dear, if you need anything. Your father is eating with us tonight and I'm going to start dinner."

"Thanks, Mom," replied Kelo, blushing when Nick held her hand tightly as she tried to pull away. "Can you help me sit up a little better, please?" she asked Nick as she tried to sit up and move the pillows with her right hand.

Nick pulled her up to a sitting position and adjusted the pillows so she could sit a little higher. "That better?" he asked softly, moving in closer to her side. Then placing one hand on either side of her body, he leaned forward and softly placed his lips on hers.

Time seemed to stand still for Kelo as his lips gently moved on hers, begging, demanding a response. She moaned softly and her hands slid up to rest on his broad shoulders, then slid around his neck as he deepened the kiss and drew her up close to his warm chest.

"I love you, little one," he whispered in her delicate ear as he drew her head to his shoulder with one hand, his other arm at her waist, holding her close.

Kelo breathed deeply, inhaling his intoxicating male scent and luxuriating in his warm embrace like a small kitten on a fireside hearth. He made her feel so feminine and fragile, and she ached and throbbed in places she never had before. Her breasts tightened as she pressed into his chest and she felt tingly, budding sensations. She looked up into his eyes and recognized desire in the

languorous green depths and she felt like she was drowning in new sensations that were exploding within her body. How could a man so infuriate her one-minute, then invoke this kind of response from her traitorous body the next?

Nick waited for Kelo's response to his soft declaration as he searched her amethyst eyes. When none was forthcoming, he felt a small stab of disappointment. He wondered what magic he could work that would bring back the Kelo from the beach? What was the magic combination that had made her melt into his arms and ask him if he was going to spank her? The whole scene had been surreal that night, like fate had intervened for one small moment, and Kelo had opened up and been the woman he had looked for all his life. She had accepted his dominance and sat cuddled in his arms, sobbing out her sweet apologies. They had kissed with a passion that had left him burning with unfulfillment. If only he hadn't had to leave so soon!

By the time he had walked her to her apartment and left her at the door, the shutters in her eyes were already closing to him. He had sensed embarrassment and withdrawal, and something else...mistrust? A door had swung firmly shut in her mind and he couldn't breach it again...yet. Give her time, Pani had said. Be patient. He ran his thumb softly down the side of her smooth cheek, caressing her lips. He had no choice but to be patient...she was his woman, even if she didn't realize it yet...and he wasn't giving her up.

"I dropped by to tell you I have to go back to Maui for a couple of days, but I'll be back on Thursday," he said softly.

Kelo stiffened in his embrace, his words like a dash of cold water on her awakening desires.

"Will you miss me?" he asked teasingly, hoping for a positive response.

"Should I?" she responded, taunting him with her words. "It's not like we've spent much time together is it?"

"No," he drawled lazily, "but I intend to change that as soon as possible."

"Humph," she snorted indelicately, " You're the same as every other man...spank a girl, kiss her and disappear." Oh dear, had she really said that? She'd been thinking about last Friday when she blurted that out!

"I haven't spanked you, yet," he grinned mischievously. "Are you asking me too?"

"Certainly not!"

"But you said...."

"No!"

"It can be done, even its only on one side," he suggested helpfully.

"Just go!" She gritted out between clenched teeth.

"No, really," he continued, sliding his hand under her right thigh and lifting her leg slightly, "see, I can just..."

"NO!" She exploded as she slapped his hand away, her face red with embarrassment.

Nick threw his head back and laughed at her. She resembled a spitting furious kitten and her eyes shot daggers at him.

"Oooohhh...you are so infuriating," she spat out, folding her arms across her chest. "Don't hurry back on my account! I'm happy you're leaving!" She tossed her head, not wanting to admit to herself that she already felt lonely. "You are an

insufferable, obnoxious, domineering, male chauvinist pig!" She ended her descriptive tirade by sticking her little pink tongue out at him, and then turning her whole body away from him to bury her face in the back of the couch. She *hated* being laughed at!

Unfortunately, when she turned away from him, she drew drawn her knees up and leaned them into the couch as well. Even though it was slightly uncomfortable on her left hip, it was better than looking at the pig! In her state of ire and irritation, she had unwittingly left part of her right buttock and lower thigh neatly exposed!

Nick was quick to take advantage of her mistake. He quickly changed positions, placed his hand on her knee, and popped three good swats on her lower buttock and thigh.

Kelo gasped and quickly straightened her body out, glaring at him accusingly.

"How dare you do that!"

"Don't call me names again," he said sternly. Then he stood up and looked down at her pouting face. "I'd behave myself if I were you, little one, you still have a good paddling coming for that dive. You don't want to add to it do you?"

She sulked, refusing to answer him. There was no way she was going to let him spank her; he just didn't understand that yet, the obstinate pig! She refused to listen to the little imp in her mind that was asking just how she planned on preventing it.

Suddenly he bent down and placed a quick kiss on her pouting lips. "Be good, I'll see you on Thursday." Then he turned and walked to the door, stopping to glance over his shoulder for a moment before he closed it.

She watched him go, confused at the feelings he generated within her. She hated his dominance, yet she felt bereft when he walked out. What was the matter with her? No man had ever affected her this way. She knew one thing; he threatened her very independence, her determination to rely only on herself. She didn't want to be taken care of, or be dominated. Her mother had allowed that to happen and her father had ended up not wanting either of them. They hadn't been good enough for Michael O'Halloran she thought bitterly. The only thing he had needed them for was someone to take his frustrations and anger out on.

She shivered, trying not to remember the many hateful and debasing things he had said to her mother. He couldn't control his anger and his drinking only aggravated it. In the end, he had killed her mother and tried to kill her as well. There was no way she would ever allow herself to be under a man's control and no man would ever raise his fist to her; not if she was in any position to do anything about it!

She stirred restlessly, thinking again of Nick. To be perfectly honest with herself, his spanking her was not the issue. She had gotten her butt roasted many times by Pani through the years. But Pani was her father, the only father she acknowledged, and Nick didn't inspire the same fatherly feelings in her that Pani did. She was quite aware that not all men were like O'Halloran, but the deeply rooted feelings of rejection and mistrust were so deep that she couldn't get them out. She would never be able to fully trust any man, not even Nick; and in the end, her lack of faith in him would drive him away.

Three hours later, Kelo was seated at the kitchen table enjoying the delicious meal that Tunea had prepared. She had been pretty hungry and the sweet and sour meatballs tasted heavenly as usual. It was one of her favorite meals.

Melissa had come home from work and showered, and then left with Nuk to go to dinner. Kelo had given her the thumbs up sign as they went out the door. She knew they had serious business to discuss.

She took a long drink of her pineapple juice and sat back, replete. "That was great, Mom, it was worth not eating all day just to fill up on those meatballs," she said with a big sigh.

"Thank you, dear," replied Tunea, "but you really shouldn't go all day without eating."

"I don't always," she replied. "Usually just until noon. You know I've never been able to eat very well in the mornings."

"I know, dear," responded Tunea.

Pani looked at Tunea and she returned his look, knowing what he wanted from years of marriage blending their thoughts almost as one at times. She nodded at him, indicating her agreement. It was time.

"Kelo, dear, your father and I want to talk to you about something important. Would you like to sit in here or go to the living room? I know your hip is still pretty sore."

"I think I'd like to back to the couch, Mom," replied Kelo gratefully. Her hip was starting to ache some now from sitting up on the kitchen chair, even though she had a pillow under her.

"Okay, your father will carry you and I'll make sure the couch is prepared with a sheet and a blanket for tonight," said Tunea, heading to the

linen closet in the hallway. When the couch was prepared, Pani brought her in and sat her gently on the couch.

"Thanks, Pops," she grinned at him, her eyes twinkling with mischief.

"Better watch it, young lady," growled Pani, "you're in enough trouble all ready."

"Gee, Pops," she complained, "you're not really planning on spanking me are you? I'm twenty five years old for heavens sake!"

Pani eyed her thoughtfully, taking in her mischievous grin and thinking how much he loved this adopted daughter, even if she had an awful temper! "No, I think I'll let Nick do that from now on," he replied.

"Pani," she gasped, her face flushing. "Nick Gorman is not going to spank me, I won't allow it!"

"What makes you think you can stop him?"

"He has no right!" she replied indignantly.

"He is in love with you, honey," said Pani gently. "You scared the living daylights out of him when you dived off that cliff. It was a very childish way to act after you had been given strict instructions not to do the running dives. And you disobeyed me when I called you back."

"But, Pani," argued Kelo, "I'm not a child anymore. Neither you nor Nick should punish me as if I were." She folded her arms, pouting like the five year old she claimed she wasn't.

"When you act like a willful and disobedient child, then you deserve the child's punishment," stated Pani sternly, his bushy eyebrows raised above his gleaming brown eyes. "What you did was a childish display of temper and you know what that gets you."

"I don't want you to spank me," she said sulking.

"I'm not going to, since Nick is planning on it. But if he doesn't, you can rest assured that I will," he promised her, his eyes perusing her petulant face.

Kelo stared at Pani's stern face looking down at her. She remembered that stance; the hands on the hips and the resolute look on the face. It meant he would not be talked out of the course of action he had decided on, and usually it meant a trip face down and bottoms up over his broad lap! She dropped her head, unable to meet his accusing glare any longer. She knew he meant business. Fine, she would not defy him anymore, but that didn't mean she would let Nick spank her. They were both in for a surprise if he actually tried it!

Looking at the top of Kelo's bent head, Pani was satisfied that she had been made to understand the trouble she was in, and while she may not like it, she would accept it.

He sat down on the couch beside her and thought of the business at hand. This was not going to be easy. He looked helplessly at Tunea, seated in the chair on Kelo's right. He wondered where to begin.

Tunea leaned forward in her chair and took a deep breath. "Kelo, your father and I have something important to talk to you about tonight. Its about Michael O'Halloran."

Kelo's head snapped up and her eyes blazed. "That man is not my father. He may have sired me but I will never acknowledge him as my father!"

Pani cleared his throat, looking for the right words to say. There really was no easy way to say

this he thought. "Kelo, we don't know for sure if O'Halloran was your father," he stated bluntly.

"What do you mean," whispered Kelo, her face going white.

"There's something we have never told you because we didn't know for sure if it was true or not." Pani rubbed the back of his neck, his face frowning.

"What is it?"

"First of all, O'Halloran's body was never found. The authorities just assumed that he was washed out to sea and lost after the car went over the cliff," he explained gently. "And secondly, when the authorities contacted O'Halloran's family, they said he would never have been able to sire a child and that you could not belong to him."

"Why haven't you told me this before," asked Kelo, her amethyst eyes dark in her pale face.

"Because we had no way to verify their claim. If it was true, then they had no right to have you, if it was false, then they were not prepared to take you in. Either way, Tunea and I loved you and wanted you for our own, so we adopted you without contesting them," he explained.

"Oh, how I wish you had told me this a long time ago," whispered Kelo fervently.

"We didn't tell you because we didn't want you to feel abandoned. We tried to talk about it a few times, but you had seemed to totally shut him out of your mind and wanted nothing to do with the subject," Tunea explained. "Why do you wish you had known earlier?"

"You have no idea how much I have hated myself, thinking that I was the daughter of such a violent and awful man. If he truly isn't my father, that would make me ecstatically happy. I've

blamed my terrible temper on him all these years and felt like he marked me to be a failure, just like him," ground out Kelo painfully, tears flowing down her cheeks, her hands knotted into fists. "He was a murderer, and I hope he rots in hell!"

She turned into Pani's warm embrace as he reached for her, holding her tightly as she sobbed into his shoulder.

"Sshhh, its okay, honey, its going to be all right," soothed Pani, rubbing her back gently, holding her close until her sobs reduced themselves to sniffles.

Tunea came over and sat down beside Kelo, handing her a Kleenex. She smiled at Pani over Kelo's bent head. He and Kelo had always had a close bond; Pani had always been the one to punish her, and the one she always turned to for comfort. She put her arms around her daughter and gave her a little squeeze, adding what comfort she could give. Kelo returned her hug and smiled at her through a mist of tears.

"I'm afraid there is something more, Kelo," added Pani gravely. Kelo turned to him with a puzzled look on her face.

"What, Pani?"

"Keep in mind first that we don't know for sure, but Nick and I suspect that O'Halloran might not be dead after all. Not only that, but we think he may be here in Hawaii."

"Oh my God," whispered Kelo. Her face had gone stark white, her eyes huge in her small face. Pani's face began to fade as Kelo's mind took over her conscious self.

He was coming; she could see his face, murderous in his rage. Run Kelo... hide... her mother urged. Never let him have it... run Kelo.

Kelo ran, but she stopped in the doorway and looked back. He had her mother by the throat. No, she screamed! She ran back and began hitting him on the arm, beating at him with her fists, the music box in her hand. No, don't hurt her! He backhanded her, sending her flying toward the open doorway. She got up. Her mother was on the floor. He was coming for her next! She ran and ran. Got to hide. Wait, Pani was calling her. Pani I'm here she called. Must get to Pani, I'll be safe there, must get to Pani. Suddenly, he was there. She looked up into his face.

"Pani," she whispered. "I saw him kill my mother. He killed her Pani and I couldn't stop him. I tried, but he was too strong for me." She burst into a storm of violent weeping. "He wants to kill me too, Pani. I know he isn't dead. He will come for me too."

"How do you know he's alive, Kelo," asked Pani urgently holding her face between his palms. "How do you know?"

"I saw him. At the school...in the backyard...at the bus stop...at my window...on the path," she recited, her mind racing; assimilating past and present.

"Why, Kelo, why would he want to kill you?"

"I don't know. I just know that he does. I can feel it," she droned in a monotone, tears streaming down her face.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" questioned Pani.

"I didn't know it until now," she said simply. "But, now I do."

Chapter Seven

Suddenly the phone rang, causing Pani and Tunea both to jump. Kelo just stared straight ahead, her eyes overflowing with tears. Tunea got up and went to the phone to pick it up.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Tunea, its Nick. How is it going?"

"I'll let you talk to Pani," she replied, handing the phone to her husband. Pani picked up the phone and went into the kitchen. Tunea held Kelo's cold hands, and brushed her hair away from her face. The tears were still flowing unchecked down Kelo's pale cheeks and splashing on their clenched hands.

"Sssh...its okay, my darling girl," soothed Tunea. "No one is going to hurt you. We will keep you safe."

But Kelo didn't feel safe anymore. He was out there somewhere and he would come for her...sooner or later. She must be prepared. "Mom, could you get me a pain pill?" asked Kelo. Her hip was really starting to ache again.

"Of course, dear," replied Tunea. She went to the kitchen and got a pain pill from the bottle and got a glass of water. She brought them back to Kelo. "Here, honey, take it and lay back. You need to sleep and rest."

Kelo obeyed Tunea's instructions and swallowed the pill. Then she lay back on the pillows while Tunea pulled the blanket up to her breast. I must rest and get well as quickly as possible, she thought. I must get prepared for Michael O'Halloran. He won't find a scared five year old this time, she decided grimly, trying to come to grips with the situation.

Pani walked in, the phone in his hand. "Nick would like to talk to you honey, if you feel up to it." He studied her pale face as he handed her the phone.

"Hello, Nick," said Kelo softly.

"Hi, little one, are you okay?" he asked, concern evident in his voice.

"Yes, I'll be fine. It was just a shock, that's all. I knew it all along but I just didn't know it. I suppose, because I was so scared of him."

"Don't be afraid, sweetheart, we're not going to let anything happen to you," replied Nick soothingly. He wished he hadn't had to come to Maui tonight. "I wish I could be there with you, little one. I miss you."

"Its okay, I'll be fine. I can take care of myself," she responded firmly.

Nick didn't like the tone in her voice. It was not disrespectful, but more like she was set on a course that she knew he would not approve of, but fully intended to do anyway. Maybe he could cut this short and get back to the big island before Thursday.

"Don't do anything foolish, Kelo," he warned, wishing he could see her face.

"What am I going to do?" she asked mockingly. "I'm laid up until Thursday, its not like I can go running around now, is it?"

"I've known you long enough to know you can get yourself into trouble in a heartbeat," replied Nick sardonically.

"When are you men going to learn that I'm not child anymore? I'm a second level black belt for bloody sakes, fully capable of killing a man if necessary," she stormed at him, her patience wearing very thin. "I don't need you to wrap me in

cotton wool like a bloody, blasted, china doll!" She was furious now and getting hot!

"Settle down and stop that cursing, Kelo or I'll..."

"You'll what? Spank me? That's your answer to everything, isn't it?" she lashed out, her temper out of control. "Turn the little girl over the big man's knee and it'll be all better," she mocked! "Well I wouldn't care if you did, it wouldn't change anything, can't you understand that? He hates me; do you hear me? He hates me...and I hate him! I can't wait until he comes for me, so I can kill him!" She threw the phone across the room and collapsed in a storm of weeping, hiding her face in the couch.

Tunea ran to Kelo's side and turned her distraught daughter into her bosom, rocking and crooning, stroking her hair, holding her close, tears streaming down her face as well.

Pani picked up the phone; his normally placid face a mask of concern. "Nick?" he asked, his voice gruff.

"Is she all right, Pani," asked Nick urgently. God, he wished he were there!

"She is very upset, Nick."

"I'm going to wrap things up as fast as I can and try to get back before Thursday." He paused and then added softly, a small catch in his voice, "Take care of her, Pani."

"I will. She will not be alone again until O'Halloran is behind bars." He clicked off the receiver on the remote and sat it on the coffee table. He smiled at Tunea and indicated that he wanted to take her place. Then he sat down and took Kelo in his arms and held her close, her head tucked under his chin. Slowly he rubbed her back and gentled her as her sobs wound down to little hiccups. Soon she was breathing deeply and he

knew she had fallen asleep. He kissed the top of her head and gently laid her back against the pillows. He smoothed her hair back as he studied her wan features.

Such a small girl to have endured so much he thought. They really needed to find out what O'Halloran wanted. Why would he be coming after Kelo? Obviously he had been trying for years to get to her. His eyes narrowed, considering the incidents Kelo had described. If he had wanted to kill her, he could have already done it, he realized. So he must want something else, but what?

Perhaps it was time to go through Molly's things. They had merely packed up the few belongings Molly had, and stored them away in the attic. When they had moved, they had transferred them to their attic in the new house, thinking Kelo might want to go through them someday. It had not seemed important until now.

It was also time to get in touch with his old friend. Now that they knew O'Halloran was alive, it was time to get the police actively involved. The chief of police could handle this quite well!

He walked over to Tunea and held out his hand to her. She snuggled against him and they stood together, each at home in one another's arms.

"Why don't you get some rest, sweetheart," he said softly, tipping her chin up and giving her a gentle kiss on the lips. I'll sit up with Kelo for a while. Would you rather go home tonight when Melissa gets here or sleep in Kelo's bed?"

"I'll stay with you, darling," replied Tunea. She knew he wouldn't be going home, even after Melissa arrived. And she hadn't intended to either.

He sat in the dark car, the binoculars trained on the second story window, watching, brooding. He

didn't know what the bitch had been upset about, but it looked like things were calming down now. He really didn't care. He had no feelings of concern for her what so ever. In fact, Michael O'Halloran had never felt much concern for anyone but himself.

She was just like her mother, he reflected, *and his mother as well.* Useless whoring bitches, delighting in leading a man on and then rejecting him to take up with another one.

He thought briefly of his father, remembering him hanging from that rope, his eyes bulged out, his tongue swollen and black; the flies already crawling up his nose and into his mouth. His anger simmered. His father had come home and found his mother in bed with another man. It had driven him to take his own life, leaving his son behind to find his cowardly carcass hanging in the barn.

He put the glasses down and took a drink from the beer can he had in his other hand. He drained it and threw it in the floor. His father had been weak and cowardly. Killing yourself over a stupid bitch was not a mistake he would make. When he had come after Molly and that bastard brat of hers, he had intended to kill them both. But in his anger to force the truth from her lying lips, he had squeezed too hard and killed her before she could tell him what he wanted to know.

He would have been good to her if she had let him he reflected. He had loved Molly Clanahan. But she had cheated on him! She had come up pregnant and he knew he couldn't father a child. Said she didn't want to marry him either! Well, it had been too late for that! She belonged to him...would always belong to him. And he'd make sure Shaughnessy never wanted her near him again. If it hadn't been for that brat forcing him to

hurt her, Molly would have never left, he was sure of it! He'd tried to do right by her, he really had. But she never appreciated anything he did for her. When he had shown her what he had done, she had turned on him, raging at him.

He had only done it for her, for them, he thought bitterly. When had called him a no good, drunken criminal and threatened to turn him into the authorities, he had gone a little crazy. It was the brat's own fault she had gotten in the way. When Molly had left, taking everything with her, he knew he could never forgive either of them for that.

It hadn't been too hard to find them. He had kept a watch on her mother's mailbox. It had only been a matter of time before she contacted her mother. He found the letter and tore it open, poring over the contents. It didn't have the exact address, but it had not been very difficult to locate her.

He picked up another can of beer and opened it, throwing the tab in the mess on the floorboard. Then he looked at his watch. It was only 9:30pm; it didn't look like old Pani and his wife were going anywhere any time soon, and he figured the roommate would be home later. Time to visit the old homestead and take a look around. He grinned to himself. They would never even know he had been there. If he could find what he wanted without going through Kelo, fine. It didn't matter how he got it, as long as he did. But before he left the island, he would pay her a visit. No woman kept Michael O'Halloran waiting for this long. He'd make her pay for whoring around with that man. He might as well make use of her himself before he choked the life from her worthless body. It had

been a long time since he had had a woman, ...too long.

Nuk stared at Melissa, his jaw clamped, the muscle twitching along its edge as he restrained his anger. She was sitting across the table from him; the glass she held in her hand was now devoid of its contents. The reason being, it was all in his lap and running down his pant legs!

Melissa was furious! How dare he laugh at her? She had tried to explain to him how she felt about him spanking her, and he had laughed at her!

She pushed away from the table and headed out the door of the restaurant. It didn't matter where she was going as long as it was away from Nuk Desmond. She had just hailed a taxi and it had pulled along side the curb for her to get in, when a hand on her elbow whirled her around.

"Just where do you think you're going?" Nuk ground out, his brown eyes snapping.

"Away from you! Let go of me," she demanded, trying to jerk out of his grasp.

"I brought you, I'll take you home."

"Don't bother, I can get myself home."

"You're coming with me, this isn't over," snapped Nuk. He began pulling her toward the parking lot where they had left his jeep.

"It is as far as I'm concerned," she retorted, frustration evident as she tried in vain to free herself from his grasp. She dug her heels in and refused to go quietly!

Nuk immediately bent down and swung her over his left shoulder and began carrying her towards the parking lot.

Melissa pounded her fists on his broad unrelenting back. "Put me down you Neanderthal!"

"I'd shut up if I were you," he warned bitingly. "You're in an excellent position to be spanked and if you kick me one more time, I'll do just that!"

Ignoring the warning, she let him have it with both feet and fists. "I said put me down!"

"I warned you," he growled and began slapping her skirted backside with sharp stinging smacks as he continued walking.

Melissa gasped as the hard spansks burned through her skirt and panties and she stopped hitting and kicking, aware they were drawing a crowd of onlookers. "Stop it, people are watching," she said trying to get her breath.

"Then you should have thought of that before you started all this," replied Nuk, his hand still smacking her backside.

"Please, Nuk," she begged, tears forming in her eyes from the painful spansks, "please stop, it hurts! I'm sorry." She wasn't really sorry but she wanted the painful onslaught to stop! And she was totally embarrassed!

They rounded the corner of the restaurant and away from the eyes of the curious pedestrians. Melissa was relieved there was no longer any one to witness her humiliation. He had stopped spanking her, thank heavens, but her bottom was burning and stinging from the painful swats he had given her.

"Put me down!" she demanded with as much dignity as she could muster from the position she was in.

"You're in no position to make demands, young lady," he growled in return. He walked up to the jeep and bent over to set her on the ground. "Now you're going to find out what happens to fiancées who pour wine in their men's laps." With that, he

put his foot up on the running board and yanked her across his knee. He flipped up her skirt and held it pinned beneath his left hand as he bent her over. He raised his right arm and brought it down with a full swing, right on the seat of her little bikini panties.

"Yeowch!" She squealed. Over and over his broad palm laid blistering swats on the rounded curves of her bottom as she danced and yelped her apologies. Finally, he pulled her upright and her hands flew to her thoroughly reddened bottom, rubbing as she stamped her feet trying to relieve the hot burning sensations.

He opened the door to the jeep, and put her inside, ignoring her when she cried out as her bottom came into contact with the leather seat. He fastened her seat belt and closed the door, then returned to the driver's side and got in.

As he started the jeep, he looked at the girl he had just soundly spanked. She was crying softly and wiping tears from her cheeks with the back of her hand. His heart went out to her but his face remained implacable. He was silent as he drove through the streets to his apartment.

Melissa's sobs reduced to sniffles as she calmed down. Her bottom was throbbing and burning and she was badly in need of comfort. She sneaked a peek at Nuk. His jaw was set in that hard line she had seen at the restaurant and she knew he was not regretting spanking her one little bit. She folded her arms and pouted. He could at least be sorry she thought! She supposed she shouldn't have lost her temper like that, but he was so exasperating! She wasn't sorry she poured the wine in his lap. He deserved it for making fun of her. She looked out the window, not really seeing

anything as they drove along. She was too busy thinking.

Nuk pulled into the driveway and turned off the engine. He came around to the driver's side and opened the door. Then he put his hand out for Melissa to take. When she refused to take his hand, his exasperation with her began to flare up again. It had only been simmering, but if she kept this attitude up, she was going to be over his knee again!

"I want to go home," she said, sulking.

"We are going to go in and discuss a few things first," he stated evenly. "So lets go."

He held out his hand to her again but she refused to take it and got out of the jeep on her own.

"Fine," she spat out, "lets get this over with." She swept past him, her chin in the air, refusing to look at him. When she got to the front door, she folded her arms and waited for him to unlock it, tapping her foot impatiently.

"Your attitude had better change, young lady," he warned, his voice low and dangerous, "or you're going to get another spanking."

"Don't you dare," she challenged, her usually dreamy eyes dark with anger. "Keep your hands off me."

"I'll do more than put hands on you if you keep this up. I'll take my belt off if I have to, Melissa! I don't know what's gotten into you, but I don't like it!"

"You wouldn't dare!" She looked at him like he had sprouted two heads. She was so angry she was ready to explode. She stomped into the living room and plopped down on the overstuffed chair, wincing

slightly as her bottom made contact with the cushion.

Nuk walked over and stood in front her, his hands on his hips and his mouth in a firm line.

"Are you challenging me?" He asked smoothly.

Melissa looked up at him, taking in the broad chest and strong arms that filled out the light blue knit pullover he was wearing tucked into Khaki trousers. She felt a surge of attraction pulse through her in spite of her anger. She glanced at the powerful thighs outlined faintly in the damp pants and trembled slightly as she remembered herself bent over those hard muscles. She closed her eyes, trying to shut out the memory.

When Melissa didn't answer him, Nuk's hands went to his belt buckle to unclasp it. As he quickly slid the belt from the loops the wicked hiss of leather on cloth had Melissa's eyes popping open. In an instant he had grabbed her arm and pulled her upright, his right arm lifting the belt. The shock of Nuk actually removing his belt made Melissa a few seconds too slow on the uptake and suddenly the belt snapped across her buttocks with a resounding thwack!

"Damn!" she yelped and backed up against Nuk's body so he could not smack her again, her right hand grabbing his wrist. "No, I'm not ...I'm not." she squeaked looking back at his set face. "Really, honey," she said breathlessly, her face pleading as he quirked his eyebrow and studied her face to see if she was serious. "I mean it! Please, don't do that again!" His belt had landed squarely across both buttocks and they were on fire from just that one stripe. Her anger had instantly dissipated and she wanted no more of that!

"Are you finally ready to stop pouting and listen?" He asked in a warning voice that told her he was ready to continue at the slightest hint of provocation from her.

"Yes, yes, I'm ready," she hastily assured him.

"All right then, sit down and let's get a few things straightened out." He let her go and after giving her buttocks a quick rub, she sat back down on the couch.

"I'm going to change my clothes," he said. "Why don't you fix us a drink?"

She nodded her assent. He started for his bedroom, then paused and looked back at her. "Don't even think of leaving," he warned, his eyes narrowing as he saw her guilty start. "If you do, I will come after you and when I find you, I will spank you no matter where it is, is that clear?"

She nodded again. As he disappeared through the door of his bedroom, she heaved a big sigh of relief. She walked over to the bar and fixed a couple of rum and cokes and wandered back to the couch with hers in her hand, rubbing her buttocks as she went. What was she going to do? There was no way she was going to put up with this! Especially after tonight! She had thought about it all day and she just couldn't come up with any good reason other than it hurt like hell and she wanted to part of it. As far as she was concerned, that was reason enough! But would Nuk buy it? She suspected not.

Nuk quickly changed his damp khakis for a pair of jeans and went back to the living room, relieved to see that Melissa had not taken off. He really didn't want to have to spank her wherever he might find her, but if that was what it took for her to realize he meant what he said, then so be it! He

picked up the drink she had left for him on the bar and walked to the couch and sat down beside her. He took her hand in his and they sipped their drinks in companionable silence. Finally he took her drink and his and sat them both on the coffee table to the side of the couch.

"Okay, Melissa, lets have it," he said scooping her up and sitting her on his lap.

She wiggled herself into a comfortable position, as comfortable as she could get anyway, and began playing with her fingers. Then she looked up into his concerned face.

She looked for a place to begin. "Nuk, you know I love you," her brown eyes pleaded with him for understanding, "but I really, really don't like it when you spank me." Her eyes misted with tears. "I can't help it, it's just the way I feel." She shrugged her shoulders. "It's not just that it hurts, but it's...it's...I don't know, violent I guess. It scares me when you get mad and I don't think I should have to live being afraid of you."

Nuk took her hand and absently rubbed her fingers with his thumb, considering her words. Finally he spoke. "Melissa, what do you think I should do when you lose your temper and call me names, pour drinks on my clothes, and hit and kick me? Don't you think that's violent? We aren't even married yet and the stresses of living together and raising a family are going to bring trials that we have to deal with. You're going to get mad at me and not like some of the decisions I have to make. I'm going to get angry with you as well. I've seen too many of my friends families break up because people take their frustrations out on one another with verbal abuse. They have no respect for each other and set no boundaries on the things they say

and do when they are angry. Do you want us to be like that?"

"No," she whispered, hugging her tummy. "Would you really call me awful names and not speak to me when you're mad?"

"I can't imagine me calling you abusive names, but I can see me getting angry and not speaking to you. Can't you see how that would drive us apart?"

"Yes," she answered honestly. "But it still scares me. And why should I get spanked for doing the wrong thing? What about you? You're not always right."

"No, we won't always agree. But in every group, whether it's a company, a team or a family, there has to be a leader, otherwise everyone would go in different directions. I feel like that's my role in the family. As my wife, I expect you to act your age and not like a sulky child. If you act like a child, you get treated like one. And as far as I am concerned, that means a trip over my knee when you act the way you acted tonight," he stated firmly. "The rest of it we will deal with as we come to it. I don't want to spank you if I can help it, but if you push me into it, I won't hesitate to do it."

"It still scares me," she whispered, her eyes hesitant as she looked into his face.

"I really don't want you to do it, Nuk. Please understand, I don't think I can live this way and I can't imagine my life without you." Tears overflowed her eyes and rolled down her soft cheeks.

Nuk sighed heavily and stared at her woebegone face. He didn't want to lose her either, but he felt so strongly about this. Finally he spoke. "All right, honey, I'll tell you what... we'll try it your way for a while."

She threw her arms around his neck and buried her face in his shoulder. "Thank you," she whispered gratefully. I promise, I'll be very very good."

"I sure hope so," he murmured ruefully.

Chapter Eight

Nick held the envelope in his hands, considering the ramifications if he opened it. He really wanted Kelo to learn to trust him completely and he was afraid if he opened it without her consent, it would destroy their budding relationship. He wished he hadn't had to come to Maui, but it had been unavoidable. He hated not being there when she needed him.

He really was going to have to get his own chopper, he decided. He looked at his watch. Ken would not be available now until 1:00pm tomorrow afternoon to fly him back to the mainland.

He really felt there would be a clue to what O'Halloran wanted with Kelo in this envelope. He sighed heavily as he considered his options. No, he decided, he would not breach her trust. But he could do something else. He picked up the phone and called the police station. Cindy could help him trace Aaron Shaughnessy; maybe he could shed some light on the situation.

Thirty minutes later, Cindy returned his phone call. He wrote down all the information she gave him on a notepad.

"Thanks, Cindy," said Nick. "I owe you one."

"I'll hold you to that, Nick, I'm free for dinner tomorrow night. I'll even cook," her sultry voice dropped to a husky whisper.

Nick pictured the luscious Cindy in his mind. But the picture of Kelo implanted itself right over it and he knew it wouldn't be the same anymore. "How about lunch tomorrow?" he offered instead.

"So that's how it is," she replied, amused. "The love bug has finally bitten you hasn't it, Nick Gorman?"

"Big time, Cindy," he chuckled. "Big time."

"I can't wait to meet her. When can you bring her in?"

"I'll tell you about her at lunch tomorrow," he said.

"Okay, see you at noon, and don't be late!" she ordered as she hung up the phone.

There were about six Aaron Shaughnessys on the list that Cindy had given him. Might as well go down the line, he decided, dialing the first number.

Several hundred miles away, Aaron Shaughnessy sat in his study behind his massive desk, sipping a brandy. It had been twenty-five years, but still a hint of perfume, a certain flower, or a young woman with long, curly, black hair could still bring to mind Molly McClanahan. She had been eighteen and he had been twenty...and they had been lovers all that long Irish summer. He could still see her gentle face, her blue eyes sparkling, her beautiful black hair hanging to her petite waist. They had laughed and loved and planned their future, in spite of the protests of his family.

He was Aaron David Shaughnessy, of the Galway Shaughnessys, and as such, could not marry a nobody like Molly McClanahan. But they hadn't cared what anyone thought. They walked in the sunshine beside the loch, loved in the wildflowers, and knew that nothing could ever tear them apart. He could see her face as she lay among the fragrant flowers in the sunshine, her arms looped around his neck. "I love you, Aaron," she had whispered in his ear. "And I love you," he had whispered back fiercely holding her tight in his embrace, vowing to never let her go. But they hadn't counted on Michael O'Halloran.

Aaron took a sip of his brandy. O'Halloran had come along and seemingly swept Molly off her feet. He was handsome, debonair and fell totally in love with his Molly. Molly had teased him about Michael, declaring he was jealous without cause and that she would always belong to him. When O'Halloran had come to him and told him Molly was pregnant, he had been devastated. How could she have betrayed their love? He had turned his back on her, told her he never wanted to see her again. O'Halloran had dragged Molly away by the arm. He could see her face, even today, tears running down her beautiful face, begging him to forgive her. He shook his head as if to clear away the sad memories and took another sip of brandy. The young woman at the dinner tonight had brought back memories of Molly with her laughing blue eyes and curly hair to her waist. Painful memories.

He had told his family it was over between him and Molly, and his door was shut to her. He never wanted to see or hear from her, ever again. They had been only too happy to oblige his wishes. Six months later, he had married the girl his mother had picked out for him, but try as he might, he had never been able to get Molly out of his mind. He and Lorene had never been able to have children. Molly had wanted a houseful.

He had never known exactly what had happened to Molly. There had been rumors, but he had never really wanted to know. It was the past and he couldn't change it now. He knew her mother had died and they had left Ireland. O'Halloran had come to his home about twenty years ago, under the guise of looking at his art collections from a public showing, but he had refused to speak with the man. He could remember the triumphant grin O'Halloran

had sent his way. He knew it was because Molly had chosen himself over he, Aaron.

What had happened to them after that, he never knew. There had been a rumor that he had been killed after they left Ireland, but the O'Halloran family had hushed it up and the circumstances were never public knowledge. It wasn't that he couldn't have found out if he'd wanted to; he just hadn't wanted to do anything to keep Molly's memory alive in his heart. However, it had survived in spite of his best efforts.

Brooding, he stared into the brandy. Suddenly, the phone rang, shaking him out of his reverie. Usually the butler answered the phone, but it was late in the evening and he was sure Quinn and his wife had already gone home. He picked it up. "Hello?"

"Hello, is this Aaron Shaughnessy?" asked a male voice.

"Yes," he replied, "I'm Aaron Shaughnessy."

"Does the name Molly O'Halloran mean anything to you?"

Aaron's face went pale and he dropped the brandy glass. "Who is this?" he asked gruffly.

Pay dirt! On the other end of the line, Nick smiled. "Mr. Shaughnessy, my name is Nick Gorman and I have a letter that Molly O'Halloran tried to mail to you twenty years ago, just before she was killed. I believe her daughter, Kelo, is in danger from Michael O'Halloran, but I don't know why. I thought maybe you could shed some light on this situation if I could locate you."

"Molly's dead?" Asked Aaron, hoarsely. "I'd heard a rumor that O'Halloran was dead, but I didn't know Molly was. How did she die?"

Nick sensed the distress in the other mans voice and realized that Molly must have meant something to him. He proceeded as gently as he could, "I'm afraid that O'Halloran killed her Mr. Shaughnessy, twenty years ago, and he tried to kill Kelo as well. We have reason to believe he is after her now, and we don't know why, but we need to protect her."

"My God," whispered Aaron. "I had no idea. You better start at the beginning and tell me everything."

So Nick explained everything to the other man and all about how they had come into possession of the letter. He then listened as Aaron explained what little he knew as well.

"Whatever is in the letter, Molly obviously wanted you to know. But we don't know if there is something there that she might not want Kelo to know. That's why I tried to locate you, so you could read the letter first," he explained.

"What you are really saying, is that you think Molly might name Kelo's father if O'Halloran really isn't her father and that it might be me," responded Aaron shrewdly.

"Something like that," Nick agreed.

Aaron felt like a ton of bricks had hit him in the chest as Nick explained about Molly. If O'Halloran was not the child's father, was he? His hands were shaking and he was almost afraid to go on. If Kelo belonged to him, then he had been a total fool! Either way, he had to know the truth...if it was there to be found.

"Read me the letter, Mr. Gorman," he said tightly. Hawaii is too far away for me to get there very quickly and we both need to know what's going on as soon as possible, so open it and read it to me."

That was what Nick had been waiting for. He had been hoping Shaughnessy would be willing for him to do that. He took a letter opener and carefully opened the top and took out the pages. Inside the pages was a small gold key. The writing was old and slightly faded, but still easily read. He picked up the phone. "There is a small key in here Mr. Shaughnessy. I am assuming the letter will explain its purpose."

"Go on, Mr. Gorman," Aaron instructed tersely.

My dearest Aaron,

I am praying that you don't throw this letter away like you did the others, before you read it. I have to let you know that Keely Leani is your daughter. Having said that, I hope it will intrigue you enough to finish reading the rest.

I am so sorry I betrayed you with Michael. You never would let me explain and I was so sure of our love, that I never dreamed you would return my letters unopened or refuse to speak to me on the phone when I called. I thought you would surely hear me out. It wasn't until your mother told me you were getting married that I finally stopped trying to contact you. It was obvious you were not going to listen or forgive me, so I tried to do what was best for Kelo and married Michael.

I did not mean to betray you. Michael pursued me but I never loved him. I'm sorry now that I teased you about him so often for it surely left a terrible impression on you. Michael stopped by the house one night when Mother was so terribly ill and I was so

worried. He was solicitous and caring and I didn't realize it at the time, but he kept refilling my wine glass as he listened to my worries about Mother. I didn't realize I had drunk so much until he picked me up and carried me to my bedroom. I tried to stop him, but he was too strong and I had had too much to drink and I couldn't keep it from happening. I felt so guilty afterwards, and refused to see him. He insisted that it was my fault and I had led him on and that he wanted to marry me and he loved me so completely he hadn't been able to stop either. I believed him when he told me this because the whole incident was hazy in my mind and I was so ashamed of my wanton behavior. It wasn't until much later that I realized the man was deranged and mad. When he found out I was pregnant, he went a little crazy. He was determined to have me and insanely jealous of you and he insisted that you would never forgive me if you knew I had betrayed you and was pregnant with another man's child. I did not know who the father was, much to my shame and disgrace, but I did not believe him about you. I felt so sure of our love that I knew you would forgive my one indiscretion and was also sure that Kelo would not be Michaels, because it was only one night. I often wish I had been honest and told you about it right after it happened, but I was afraid and kept putting it off hoping I might never have to face you with it. That was a foolish and immature decision. When he dragged me before you it was too late to talk

to you alone and I could not deny it when you asked if I was pregnant. I knew you were assuming it was Michaels and I could not get you to listen to me. You were so angry and sent me away. It's the last time I ever saw you. I wrote you several letters trying to explain, but they all came back. I tried countless times to call you but someone else always answered your phone and they said you had left instructions not to put me through. When your mother told me you were getting married, I became bitter and quit trying. Michael convinced me to marry him and I agreed, trying to do what was best for Kelo. I didn't realize until later that Michael was mad and insane with jealousy and a hatred of women festered inside him. He loved me as an obsession and hated himself for it. And he grew to hate me because he knew I had never stopped loving you. He began to drink more and more and when he did, he became more violent. For five years I stayed with him, until one day, he came home excited because he finally had hit the jackpot as he put it. When he explained that he had been to your art show and showed me the rare gold coin he had stolen from you, I was appalled. He said you owed it to us because the brat was yours and you should be supporting it anyway. It was then he admitted he could not father a child and it was the first time I knew for sure that Kelo did not belong to him. When I threatened to go to the authorities and reveal his theft, he said he would kill both of us if I did. But I could not live with him or

myself any longer. I fought and argued with him and he threw Kelo against the wall and broke her arm when she tried to interfere. It was then I knew I had to leave. I borrowed money from Mother and the next time he got drunk and was bragging about what he was going to do with the coin, I let him talk until he passed out and I took the coin, and Kelo and left. I was afraid to go to the authorities or to try to get to you because he told me he would make sure I was arrested for the theft just like he made sure you never knew the truth and I would never see Kelo again once I went to jail. I ended up here in Hawaii but I fear it is only a matter of time before he finds us. Inside this letter is the key to my music box. There is a fake bottom that's released by a pressure spot on the inside wall of the box.

I wanted you to have your coin back. It's the least I could do for betraying you. I couldn't allow Michael to keep it. It doesn't belong to me and you don't owe me anything. I only ask that if anything happens to me, you will take Kelo. She is innocent of her mother's wrongdoing and she deserves to know who her real father is. Please protect her, I fear Michael will try to get to her if he thinks she has the coin. I pray nothing will happen until you are able to come and retrieve it. I know how valuable it is and I don't want to send it through the mail. Again, I beg you, please don't turn your back on your daughter. She is alone in the world and you are her only living relative. Please come to Hawaii.

*As always,
Molly*

Nick sat staring at the letter for a moment, caught up in a young girl's dilemma and how it would affect the girl he loved today. He cleared his throat. "Ahem...Mr. Shaughnessy?"

"I'm here," said Aaron, his voice cracking. His mind was reeling and he was having difficulty controlling his emotions. Gathering his wits he said in a stoic voice, "I'll be in Hawaii as soon as I can make arrangements, Mr. Gorman. Please inform Kelo that I'm coming. I know this will be a shock to her and I don't believe I can lessen that with a call from me. It would be better coming from you and it will give her time to prepare."

His voice hoarse, he continued, " I'm assuming you must care about her to go to such lengths on her behalf?"

"I'm in love with her and I want to marry her," replied Nick softly.

Aaron hesitated a moment, again gathering his self-control. Then he spoke, his voice harsh from the strain he was under, "Mr. Gorman...Nick...I just want you to know, I'm not coming for the coin. Yes, it's rare and valuable, but the knowledge that I have a daughter is more so. The coin is hers to keep."

"What about the letter?"

Again, Aaron hesitated for a second, then replied hoarsely, "Let her read it, and when she is finished, tell her I hope she will have more compassion on me than I did on her mother, but if she refuses to see me when I get there, I will understand. I would like the chance to talk with her and beg her forgiveness for the years that have been lost to us,

but if she feels otherwise, I can't blame her. Either way, the coin is hers to do with as she wishes, I will not be leaving Hawaii with it in my possession."

"Yes, sir," replied Nick gently. "I'm giving you my home and cell phone number so you can call me with flight arrangements. I'll pick you up at the airport when you get in."

Aaron jotted down Nick's' phone numbers on a pad with trembling fingers. "I'll call you in the morning, as soon as I've made arrangements," he hurriedly replied, and rang off. He dropped the phone on the desk, and then buried his face in his hands as a harsh sob was torn from his chest.

Nick thoughtfully dropped the phone back in its cradle, glancing at his watch. It was too late to call Pani tonight and Kelo had had enough emotional trauma for one evening. He would call him first thing in the morning.

It was 400pm the next afternoon when Nick knocked on Kelo's door. When Pani opened it, he stepped inside, his eyes looking for Kelo immediately.

"Where is she?" he asked, noting the couch was empty.

"She is sleeping again," said Pani quietly. "She asked to go to her bedroom after Tunea finally got her to eat a little bit a few hours ago. She took a pain pill and is still asleep."

"How is she doing?"

"She is quiet, not talking a lot, but other than that, normal," he replied. "Come in and have a cup of coffee," he directed, heading for the kitchen.

"Hello, Nick," greeted Tunea as the two men walked into the kitchen.

"Hi, Tunea."

"Honey, would you get us both a cup of coffee, please?" asked Pani.

"Of course."

As the men sat down, Pani began telling Nick of the morning's events. "I took Kelo to the police station this morning, and the therapist both. After your phone call, the police are definitely involved and are keeping the apartment under surveillance. The therapist spoke with her for quite a while, alone. Then Tunea and I spoke with the therapist and she indicated to me that she is a little worried about Kelo's state of mind. She feels that Kelo is hiding deeper emotions that she cannot, as yet, express. But the fact that all of this is coming out is good, and she will be able to finally heal when its all settled."

Nick studied the coffee in the cup. "Her father asked me to give her the letter. I don't know how she will react, but I think he is probably right. Maybe it will help her to know everything."

"Nick, you haven't told us anything about the letter except that Mr. Shaughnessy is her father and the coin must be what O'Halloran is after. Is there more?" asked Tunea, her brow puckered with worry.

"Yes there is," replied Nick frankly. "And I'm sure Kelo will want you to know, but I need to give her the letter first. I hope you don't mind."

"No, of course not," replied Pani. "She is of legal age and the letter belongs to her, no matter how much we might want to save her from any pain it might cause."

"What letter?" demanded Kelo from the doorway, a suspicious frown on her face. "Are you hiding something from me?"

Nicks eyes narrowed as he saw her standing there. Stubborn little girl, she was supposed to be

off that leg! He instantly got up and swept her up into his arms.

"What do think you are doing out of bed, little one?" he asked, a dangerous edge to his voice as he walked to the couch with her.

"I'm tired of being in bed and I feel much better. It hardly aches at all anymore and I can tell a lot of the swelling has gone down already," she retorted hotly at his arrogance.

"Something else is going to ache pretty soon if you don't change your attitude, little one," he said firmly, setting down on the couch with her on his lap.

Kelo looked at him, her temper on high simmer. The man was too much! "You know darn well you aren't going to spank me when I'm hurt, so stop threatening me all the time," she hissed in a furious whisper, glaring at him.

He gave her a mocking grin. "I see you have accepted the fact you are going to get one when you are well."

She let out a furious gasp and clenched her fists, opening her mouth for a blistering reply.

Nick took instant advantage and his mouth closed over hers, taking, demanding a response as his hand slid into her curls at the back of her head, holding her close. When two fists landed in his ribcage he grunted and lifted his head, surprised as he noted her eyes were swiftly changing to the amethyst color he recognized so well. He managed to jerk his head back just before her fist swept past his chin.

"Don't you ever do that to shut me up!" She gritted through clenched teeth. "I'm not going to swoon at your feet like some 17th century maiden just because you kiss me!"

For a brief instant, Nick Gorman was stupefied! His feelings were very mixed. He wanted badly to turn her over and blister her little butt; and yet he wanted to kiss her until she did indeed swoon. But he also felt the urge to laugh at her audacity to punch him, all at the same time! He settled for chuckling and holding her little fists inside his own large ones. "Kelo, Kelo, my little spitfire, what am I going to do with you?" He asked amused at himself. You bring out feelings in me that even I don't understand at times. "I don't know whether to spank you or kiss you half the time, but I do know this. I love you all of the time." He looked into her eyes, fascinated as he watched the amethyst fade back to the bright blue as her ire wore down.

That simple sentence lowered Kelo's defenses like nothing else could. As her temper cooled and she gazed into his shimmering eyes, she realized she was falling in love with him too. And it scared her. But it felt so good at times like these. She leaned up into his lips, seeking their warmth against her own, allowing herself the wonder of the feelings rushing throughout her body as he deepened the kiss. A small moan escaped as her arms crept up around his neck and her body moved closer to his, seeking his comforting embrace. Why did it feel at this moment in time that all was right with her world?

Chapter Nine

The sound of a throat being cleared broke them apart and they realized Pani and Tunea had walked into the room. Pani grinned as two heads swiveled to look at him, twin expressions in both pairs of eyes. Yes, it looked like love was in his little girls future and he couldn't be happier for her and Nick. Now if she would only realize it herself.

Nick knew was time to show Kelo the letter and he unbuttoned the pocket on his shirt and took it out.

"Before you get all mad because this letter is opened, honey, realize that it was opened at the request of Mr. Aaron Shaughnessy himself, and I read it to him over the phone," he stated calmly, handing her the letter.

As she took it and studied the outside of the envelope he explained, "One of Nuk's workers found this in the old sorting room down behind the baseboard. It was written by your mother and mailed to him, but it obviously never got there. He wanted you to read it, and...he hoped you would have more compassion for him than he did for Molly."

He rubbed her back gently. "Would you like to be alone?" He asked her softly.

Kelo held the envelope, her hands beginning to tremble. She looked at the concerned and loving faces around her and shook her head no. She felt safe here. Surrounded by people who love you is the best place to be she decided.

She took the pages out of the envelope and the key dropped into her hand. She looked up at Nick enquiringly.

"It explains the key in the letter," he said softly.

She put the key back into the envelope and settled herself against his broad chest and began to read. Tears began pooling in her eyes as she read the words her mother had written twenty years ago. They trickled down her face as Molly's heartache touched her own heart. She finished the letter and laid her hands in her lap, staring at it. How awful for her mother she thought. And how awful it must have been for her father to hear these words twenty years too late! Just from Nick's relayed message, she could read between the lines.

Michael O'Halloran had wreaked havoc in their young lives and torn them apart, his obsessive madness staining their love. And finally, it had destroyed her mother. Yes, that man had much to answer for, and if it were the last thing she did, she would make him pay.

She leaned over and handed the letter to Pani. "I want you both to read it," she whispered. Then she leaned against Nick and sighed as his arms embraced her, offering her his warmth and comfort.

There was silence in the room as Pani gruffly cleared his throat and handed the letter to Tunea. When she finished, tears were trickling down her face as well and she sniffed, handing the letter back to Kelo.

"Your father is coming to Hawaii, little one. He has made all the arrangements and will be here on Saturday," said Nick gently. "He's coming to see you, if will allow it. He said to tell you that whatever you decide, he would not be leaving Hawaii with the coin. It belongs to you."

"There's no need for me to keep the coin," stated Kelo flatly. "And yes, I want to see my father. I can't hold what O'Halloran did to him and my mother against him. They were victims of an

insane man." Her fists were clenched and her voice was deadly, "He will pay for what he did, I'll see to it!"

Concern sprang up in Nick's breast as he heard the vehemence in her voice. Just what did she think she was going to do? "Kelo," he began, a warning edge to his voice, "I hope you are not planning on trying to take O'Halloran on personally. I won't allow it, it's much too dangerous to even consider."

"It's not your place to allow or disallow anything, Nick Gorman," she stated baldly, her eyes flashing. "We aren't married yet, and even if we were, you still couldn't tell me what to do!"

"You can't take on a mad man like that," Nick ground out. "You may be an expert in Karate, but you are not trained in police work. Besides, he probably will have a gun and you have to be a trained operative to go up against a gun and win with hand-to-hand combat! And we may not be married yet but I am telling you in no uncertain terms, get that idea out of your head!"

He watched as her eyes turned that amethyst color that warned him she was about to get physical.

"And if you try to hit me again, I don't care if Pani and Tunea are sitting right there, I will turn you over and pull those sweats down and blister your bare butt everywhere it's not bruised!" His eyes glittered dangerously as he challenged her.

Unfortunately, Kelo was incensed and too out of control to listen. She was beyond furious that he had the audacity to actually threaten her in front of her parents! As she drew back for a roundhouse punch she heard her father's stern reprimand.

"Keely Leani, don't you dare!"

Tunea gasped in shock!

But it was too late! Keely Leani did dare, and swing she did! She put all her spitting indignation and fury into that punch, and if it had connected, it might have broken Nick's jaw! But Nick was too quick and caught her little fist in his own big one with a grunt as he felt its force. He picked Kelo up bodily and laid her down over his lap, being as careful as possible not to bang her left side. He grabbed both her wrists behind her into one of his hands while she struggled like a wildcat cursing him with every Irish curse she could come up with. As he yanked her sweats down to her knees, he saw Pani in his side vision get up and take Tunea out of the room.

When Kelo felt her whole body become suddenly airborne she realized she had miscalculated. She hadn't thought Nick would actually spank her for a long time yet and she had taken advantage of the fact. When she landed face down over his lap, her wrists both taken in Nick's tight grip, she began to fight. As she felt her sweats yanked down she saw the grim look on Pani's face as he took Tunea by the hand and pulled her out of the chair. She realized her parents were leaving her to her fate! She began to curse and struggle but Nick was far too strong for her. There was nothing she could do to stop him.

Nick began to land hard careful swats on her rounded bottom, working down the right side and top of her thighs and carefully working back up the left side, making sure he did not get too close to the bruising, although it was down her hip and not into the crest of her buttocks at all. He really didn't want to give her a very long spanking; just enough to calm her down and let her know he meant business. Her initial wild struggle settled into yelps

and kicking legs as he steadily paddled her backside, turning it to a nice red.

Kelo was determined she would not give him the satisfaction of making her cry as she ceased her wild struggles, but the painful spanks were making her jaw ache from clenching it. It wasn't long before her bottom cheeks and thighs were on fire and it was getting harder not to beg him to stop. She cried out and kicked her legs at the knees, her feet pounding up and down into the couch. He didn't seem in any hurry to stop though, and she knew she couldn't hold it in any longer.

"Please, Nick," she cried, a breathless sob escaping her chest. "Please stop, it hurts, oh please, stop!"

At her plea he stopped and rested his hand against her burning rear. "Are you going to hit me again?" He growled.

"No, I won't hit you, I swear," she returned, tears in her voice. "Please let me up."

"Are you still going to be mad at me if I let you up?" He asked sternly, not sure she wouldn't resort to slugging him again. When she didn't answer, he figured she needed some more. He began slapping her cheeks a little harder, turning them a bit deeper red.

Kelo fought hard as he began spanking her again. Blast it, this was really starting to hurt she realized. But she couldn't let him win...could she? Well...maybe she could, after all! She finally couldn't keep the sobs back any longer and she collapsed over his lap, crying and pleading, "No, I won't be mad and I won't hit you. Please Nick, please let me up. I promise I'll be good!"

She was sure by now that she could roast a marshmallow on her butt! It was beginning to look

like she might have to control her temper around Nick after all! He gently slid her sweatshirt up and picked her up, putting her down onto his lap. She winced as her bottom came into contact with his hard thighs. She sobbed into his shoulder, all thoughts of hitting him totally gone.

Nick held her while she cried, but he didn't attempt to soothe her too much. She had a very volatile temper and he wanted her to know that it was most unacceptable. After she calmed down a bit, he stood up, taking her with him and into her bedroom. He laid her down on the unmade bed and drew the covers up to her breast.

"I want you to take a nap," he said firmly. "I love you, little one, but your temper is out of control too much of the time. You lay here and think about it and I expect an apology later when you wake up." He kissed her on the forehead and left the room.

Kelo turned to her right side, the tears still trickling down her cheeks. She certainly felt like she was five years old. She rubbed her backside ruefully. Spanked and put to bed for a nap. Her feelings were all confused and she was tired, but somehow, her body felt relaxed and peaceful, no longer uptight and furious. She yawned and decided she would think about it later, and with a few last hiccupping tremors, she fell asleep.

Nick softly closed the door and returned to the couch, turning the TV on before he sat down. He didn't know what Pani and Tunea would think, but he had done what he felt he had too. He sighed wearily and ran his fingers through his wavy brown curls. He really would like to have curled up beside Kelo, but it wouldn't be appropriate with her parents here and besides, he really wanted her to feel

punished. There would be other kinds of spankings in the future, but when it was serious, he didn't want to comfort her with sex afterwards. He wanted to keep the two clear and separate.

Pani walked in and sat down in the chair by the couch, studying Nick as he watched the TV. He could see the set of his jaw and knew the younger man would not like him to question his decision to paddle his daughter. But he didn't intend to do that. Nick would be nursing a broken jaw if Kelo had connected and he had been right to correct her.

Nick could feel Pani studying him, but he refused to look at him. Kelo was going to be his wife and he would do what he thought was best. He knew on a fundamental level that they were meant for each other and he knew Kelo was beginning to be aware of it. When she had said, "we're not married yet," she had given herself away, even if she didn't realize it.

Finally Pani spoke, "She is a handful, isn't she?"

When Nick realized that Pani didn't intend to question him, he turned to face the older man.

"Yes she is," he replied evenly and a look passed between the two men that both instinctively understood. Pani was giving her care and keeping to Nick, and Nick was accepting it.

They were silent until at last the older man spoke softly; "Tunea and I are going to go over to the house for a while. We want to look through Molly's things and see if we can find the music box. I remember what it looks like. Kelo used to carry it with her everywhere, but I have not seen it since Molly died. Kelo has never mentioned it or talked about it either. Do you think you could order in some Chinese or something for you and Kelo? I

want to take Tunea out to dinner before we go to the house."

"Of course," replied Nick. "I'll find out what she wants when she wakes up. I'll be spending the night here if you and Tunea want to stay home tonight."

Tunea came into the living room as Pani stood up. Her manner was a little cool towards Nick and he knew she wasn't very happy that he had spanked Kelo. But he was courteous as he urged them to enjoy dinner and have a nice evening at home.

"Call me if you find the box, okay, Pani?" Nick asked as they went out the door.

"I will," grinned Pani, amused by Tunea's cool attitude. Once they were outside the door, he turned to look at her. "What's wrong, my dear? You were awfully cool to Nick in there."

"I don't approve of him spanking her when she is hurt," said Tunea bristling.

"I'm sure it didn't make him very happy either, but he had to do something short of hog tying her until the bruises fade," replied Pani placidly. "Besides, if I really thought it would hurt her, I wouldn't have allowed it. You know that."

"I don't know if their relationship will survive. Kelo has such a temper!" She clucked disapprovingly.

"I seem to remember another young lady who used to have an appalling temper." His brown eyes twinkled at her. "And I do believe she was cured for the most part." He laughed when Tunea blushed at him, her frown disappearing.

"That was years ago, you'd never do that now." She laughed up at him, her eyes sparkling.

"Don't be too sure," he murmured. "If you tried to do what Kelo did tonight, we'd have to start all over again, wouldn't we?" He grinned wickedly.

She blushed again. "It might just be worth it," she murmured to herself as a memory flashed into her mind. "Yes, it might just be worth it." She flashed him an impudent grin as she preceded him down the stairwell.

An hour later, Nick was still seated on the couch when the door opened and Nuk and Melissa walked in.

"Hello, Nick," said Melissa a smile curving her soft lips. "Where's Kelo?"

"She's taking a nap right now."

"How is she doing?" Asked Nuk

"She's pretty tired, but she's doing okay." Nick replied. He quickly brought them up to date and let them read the letter Kelo had left lying on the couch.

"Poor Kelo," murmured Melissa.

"At least she knows O'Halloran is not her father and that must make her feel better," mused Nuk.

"Yes," said Nick, "but it's still all a shock to her and the emotional strain tires her out."

"I'm going to go check on her and get a shower," said Melissa, heading toward the bedroom.

"You'd best hurry, woman, if we're going to be at Latino's by 7:00pm." called Nuk after her.

"Yes, dear," replied Melissa saucily, sticking her pink tongue out at Nuk.

Nick watched the byplay, amused to see the scowl on Nuk's face.

"You better watch it, young lady!" growled Nuk.

"Or what?" Melissa slung back over her shoulder, her laughter tinkling as she closed the door on the men.

"Looks like you've got a young lady that needs a trip over your knee," said Nick, chuckling.

"We're not doing that anymore," said a disgruntled Nick as he eyed the other man.

"What do you mean?" Nick stared curiously at him.

Nuk ran his hand through his dark curls and said exasperatedly, "I mean Melissa has decided that we can't do that because she's afraid it's too violent." He knew it sounded weak to Nick as he watched him arch a sardonic eyebrow.

"And you're agreeing to this?"

"I don't feel like I have much of a choice," he responded glumly. "I don't want to lose her. I love her, but ever since we decided this last night she has suddenly become sassy and impudent, like she is testing me to see if I'll stick to our agreement." Suddenly he brightened. "I intend to fix her little wagon tonight, though. I'm taking her car keys for a week so she'll have to walk to work. It's only a few blocks and it will teach her not to leave them in the car with the doors unlocked," he said with a self-satisfied grin.

"Oh?" replied Nick smoothly, a wicked grin on his face. "And you think she will just hand them over?"

"If she doesn't then she will be grounded and not able to go to the movies with her friend, Sandy, on Friday night!"

Nick choked back a laugh as he tried to be serious. "And you think she will just stay home and be good just because you say so?"

"If she loves me she will!" replied Nuk, looking suspiciously at Nick's face as he tried hard to keep his amusement under control.

Nick failed miserably. He threw back his head and laughed, much to Nuk's consternation.

"What's so funny?" Nuk growled, slightly offended.

"I'm sorry, Nuk," he replied, still chuckling as he brought himself under control. "It's just that I'm amazed you agreed to that."

"Well, what would you do then?"

He eyed the younger man thoughtfully. Nuk's face indicated that he seriously wanted to know his thoughts on the subject.

"I've looked a long time for a woman like Kelo," he began slowly. "She is a wonder to me in every way. Strong of character, courageous, able to stand on her own two feet, fiery and independent, yet yielding when she knows she has no choice left. If I let her treat me with disrespect she will walk all over me." He paused for a moment. "I've always known this would be a part of my marriage and I can't live any other way. If I really thought Kelo totally objected to it, I would still insist. I would give her every opportunity to avoid going over my knee, but the end result would be the same if she refused to listen. She has a choice. She doesn't have to go there if she will behave herself. But it's been my experience that women have to know where they stand and how far they can push."

He looked shrewdly at Nuk. "I don't know Melissa very well, but I sense beneath that calm, feminine exterior lays a very determined young woman; one that is used to having her own way. You've just told her she no longer has to worry about the one thing that will keep her a little off balance. My guess is that she is most definitely testing your resolve now that the limits are erased."

He grinned at Nuk's concerned face. "I predict she will laugh in your face when you try to take her car keys and ground her. I can't tell you what to do, but if it were me, I would spank her anyway. If she really loves you and doesn't want to lose you, she will come back, even if she walks away for a while. If you're not willing to do that, then you must ask yourself, can I live this way? If the answer is no, then someone has to give. That's for you two to decide."

Melissa slipped into the bedroom, chuckling to herself at the outraged expression on Nuk's face. She tiptoed over to Kelo just as she opened her eyes and stretched.

Kelo grimaced a bit as she rolled over to her back. Her bottom was a little tender but not like last Saturday morning, she thought ruefully. She looked up at Melissa. The girl was grinning like the cat that got the cream!

"What are you looking so smug about?" she asked grumpily.

"Is your hip pretty sore still?" Asked Melissa sympathetically, sitting down on the bed.

"My butt aches more than my hip," Kelo replied ruefully, remembering Nick's earlier

words. He had made those words come true she reflected.

"Don't tell me he spanked you again," gasped Melissa in indignation. "You are hurt! How dare he do that to you?"

"I lost my temper and almost broke his jaw," she replied, ashamed of herself. "If his reflexes weren't so good, I would have succeeded."

"Kelo!"

"I know, I know," she retorted. "I paid for it though."

"But if he hurts your hip more though, that's barbaric," she exclaimed.

"He didn't touch my hip, Melissa," said Kelo dryly, " he roasted my cheeks pretty good though."

"I can't believe you let him do that, Kelo," protested Melissa. "Why didn't you stop him?"

"Just how do you propose I do that?" asked Kelo, starting to get irritated. "He's a lot bigger and stronger than I am!"

"Just tell him you never want to see him again if he doesn't quit. It worked for me. Nuk has agreed not to spank me anymore." She tossed her head defiantly. "He doesn't want to lose me."

Kelo looked at her friend, considering her words. Melissa was only a year younger than her, but she was pretty spoiled and immature. It was one of the reasons Kelo had always looked out for her. She needed taken care of.

Kelo felt like she had always been old. Maybe that's why she accepted Nick's authority so easily. She knew she was half in love with him and she'd be darn if she gave him up over a few spankings. They just weren't that important in the whole scheme of things. She just didn't like being restricted by a bossy man, but they'd work it out she reflected. She didn't know at what point she had begun to trust him, but she knew she did. It was a part of her and she knew in her heart that she could never respect a man who would always let her have her way. She needed someone who was stronger than her to lean on and she had never found anyone that had the iron strength she instinctively knew she needed. Not until she had met Nick that night on the beach. He hadn't backed down from her, but issued his own challenge instead, his green eyes glittering in the moonlight.

And then he had bested her with little effort. She had surrendered to his superior strength and skill, unconsciously knowing inside her that here was a man she could lean on when she was weak.

Her eyes narrowed as she took in Melissa's belligerent attitude. "So Nuk has agreed not to spank you anymore, huh?"

"Yes, that's right," Melissa stated baldly. "I told him I couldn't live with that violence and I didn't want to give him up. He told me we'd do it my way because he didn't want to lose me either." She refused to acknowledge that he'd actually said *try it* her way; that was neither here nor there. She had gotten what she wanted and she intended to see that it remained that way!

Kelo had a feeling Melissa was due for a rude awakening. Remembering Nuk's strong bearing and masculine pride, she knew that Nuk was a man who was comfortable in his own skin. He might give in for a while, but she highly doubted that it would last for long. Probably about as long as the first confrontation, she thought wickedly. But time would tell.

"I'm going to get a shower," said Melissa uncomfortably, when Kelo didn't comment on her announcement. "Nuk and I are going out to dinner. What are you going to do?"

"I don't know yet," yawned Kelo. "Would you ask Nick to come here? I need to get up and I know if I try to hobble in there on my own he'll be peeved all over again." Dratted man she thought.

"Sure, I'll let you get to the bathroom first while I get my robe," said Melissa heading out the door.

Chapter Ten

A few minutes later she was once again ensconced on Nick's lap while Melissa was in the shower. She burrowed into his chest and yawned. Why in the world was she so sleepy she wondered, her eyelids drooping. She listened as Nick's chest rumbled under her ear while he talked to Nuk about the Little League team that Nuk coached. She was content, even if her bottom was a little tender. She drifted off to sleep.

Nick held her tenderly, planting little kisses on the top of her head occasionally when she would stir from time to time in her sleep.

Nuk and Melissa had left about thirty minutes ago. He grinned as he remembered her attitude when she came into the living room. Nuk had not been happy because Melissa had taken forty minutes to shower and change, leaving them only fifteen minutes to make their reservation. She had merely tossed her head and replied she was well aware of the time and if they lost their reservations, well, she didn't like that restaurant anyway. It had been his idea to go there. Then she had flounced out the door leaving Nuk standing there, a dull flush creeping up his face at her rudeness and inconsiderate attitude. Heaving a big sigh he had glanced at Nick. He had acknowledged the sardonic grin with a rueful one of his own and went out the door after his recalcitrant fiancée. Nick was afraid there was a certain young lady in danger of going over a knee before this night was over. And she certainly was asking for it in his opinion!

Pani and Tunea had gone through all of Molly's things and the music box was nowhere to be found.

"Where could it be?" Tunea wondered.

"I don't know," replied Pani. "I haven't seen Kelo with it since Molly's been gone. It must have disappeared when she was killed. But what did she do with it?"

"Its possible we might never know."

"That's true, honey, its entirely possible," said Pani thoughtfully. "Kelo may know the answer and not realize it. Only time will tell I guess."

They went into the family room and Pani slipped in a movie Tunea had wanted to watch.

"Come here woman," he growled as he sank down on the overstuffed sofa and patted the cushion beside him.

Tunea located the remote and sat down beside her husband, snuggling in with an ease that spoke of years of practice. She relaxed with a sigh and yawned as the credits came up. Most likely, she wouldn't make it through the movie, she thought. She was pretty tired and all of this excitement was draining on ones emotions. She felt her husband's chest expand beneath her cheek as he yawned and she knew he was in the same condition. Can't think of a better place to be than right here, she thought, as her eyelids drooped.

"That was delicious," sighed Kelo, licking the last of the crab Rangoon from her fingertips. She settled back on the sofa and surveyed the mess on the coffee table. She was suddenly glad she didn't have to clean up! She hated cleaning, such a waste of valuable time!

Nick looked fondly at the tiny sprite beside him. "I see you're not going to be cheap to feed," he murmured, a mischievous grin lighting his face. That's the fourth crab you've eaten.

She glared at him in mock indignation. "A true gentlemen does not make fun of a lady's appetite."

"I do believe you out ate me," he replied, teasing her.

She stuck her little pink tongue out at him, ignoring her first impulse to hit him, even if it was only in fun.

"Uh uh," he said warningly. "Do you know what happens to little girls who stick their tongues out?"

"Nothing of course," she answered impishly, her eyes lighting up.

"That's not true," he drawled, a devilish glint in his eyes. "They either get spanked or kissed, take your pick!"

Kelo sighed in consternation, putting her hand to her forehead in a mock swoon. "Oh deah, Ah just cain't ducide, suh. One is just as bad as thu othur!" She collapsed in giggles at the look on Nick's face.

Nick growled and scooped her up, giggles and all, onto his lap. "Naughty southern belles get both!" he answered with a mischievous grin. "But I'll settle for the kiss for now." His mouth swooped down on hers, his lips hungry and demanding. His tongue lightly licked the inside of her lips, probing, seeking entrance to the moist sweet cavern. Kelo returned his kiss with heated fervor, delicious sensations running along her veins, her senses swimming as she forgot to breath. He lifted his head and stared into her beautiful eyes. "I'll collect the spanking when we have time for total privacy," he whispered, his eyes promising delights she was not aware of yet.

Suddenly the door burst open and Melissa stormed into the apartment and then slammed the door behind her. She ran to her bedroom and slammed that door as well!

Nick and Kelo looked expectantly at the front door, waiting for Nuk to appear. When he didn't,

Kelo said, "I need to go to her Nick. She is really upset; I have to find out what happened. Can you carry me in there?"

Nick looked at Kelo thoughtfully. "Did she tell you that her and Nuk had decided there would be no spanking in their relationship?"

She nodded her head affirmatively. "But I can't imagine someone like Nuk accepting that. He's just too...too...male, is the only way I can think to put it," she replied earnestly. "But she seemed to think it would work just fine."

"Then you don't have a problem with it?" He asked curiously, really wanting to know.

She looked at him, considering the question. It was not in her to lie about something, but at the same time she didn't just want to give him free gratis to spank her anytime he felt like it and think it was okay! Finally she spoke, "Getting a spanking for my temper is something I've grown up with. Pani has always put me over his knee for about as long as I can remember. So I'm used to it, if one can ever get used to it," she said wryly. " But Melissa has never been spanked and it's really hard for her to accept."

She looked askance at him as he grinned. "Don't go getting the idea that you can just throw me over your lap any time you feel like it!" She was mollified slightly when he put both his hands up in the air as if to ward her off. "I have to confess, Melissa is pretty spoiled. She is used to having her own way and Nuk has largely indulged her up to this point. The fact that he intends to do something that *she* has decided she doesn't want has thrown her into a tailspin."

She grinned at Nick. "She used to watch that dumb John Wayne movie all the time and sigh at

how romantic it was for a man to do that. But when Nuk actually paddled her bottom, she threw the movie in the trash!"

She giggled as Nick arched his eyebrow. "I told her earlier tonight I couldn't see Nuk agreeing with her, but she seemed to think that's the way it would be." She shrugged her slender shoulders.

"Hmmm...", he rubbed his chin, considering. "Maybe I should talk to her, do you think that would help? Maybe Nuk has a hard time getting his feelings on the subject across to her. I know he did tonight when we were talking."

"Maybe," said Kelo. "I don't suppose it would hurt. But would you do me a favor? Take me to the bathroom and get my robe off the corner of my head post so I can get a bath please? I'll soak while you guys talk."

"Okay sweetheart, up you go," he stood up with her in his arms, laughing as he acted like she weighed 300 pounds!

"I didn't eat that much," she protested.

"Those empty food cartons say differently," he teased as he carried her to the bathroom.

He pushed the door open with his foot and put her down beside the tub.

"I can manage from here, thanks."

"You're welcome." He kissed her nose. "I'll go get your robe for you." He walked out of the room as Kelo pivoted on her right leg and bent down to turn on the water in the tub. She reached for the scented bath salts on the back of the tank and dropped a generous helping into the running tap water, their gentle lavender scent filling the air. She couldn't wait to get into the over sized tub and soak away some of the aches and pains and feel clean again. She heard Nick come in behind her.

"Do you need me to put you in the tub?" he asked hopefully, his eyes glinting as he handed her the robe.

"Uh, no I can manage, thank you!" she replied, hanging onto the waistband of her sweats in case he got any ideas!

"That's too bad," he murmured wickedly. "Let me know if you need any help getting out."

Kelo heaved a sigh of relief as he left the bathroom, closing the door behind him. He may have gotten a good view of her naked bottom when he was spanking her, but that didn't mean she was ready to be nude in his arms yet! She quickly slid out of her clothes and into the rush of the soothing hot water. Aahhh! That felt so good. She laid her head back on the bath pillow at the end of the tub and luxuriated in the sweetly scented water.

Nick knocked softly on Melissa's door. When she didn't answer, he opened the door a crack and saw Melissa face down on the bed. It was obvious from her heaving shoulders that she was crying. He pushed the door opened and walked in, and then sat down beside her on the bed.

"Would you like to talk about it?" He asked quietly.

Melissa rolled over when she heard Nick's voice. She had thought it would be Kelo, but she remembered Kelo wasn't supposed to be up on her leg. She eyed him through her tears. Maybe it wouldn't be bad to have someone to talk to. Maybe he could explain why Nuk was being so stubborn!

"Nuk and I sort of broke up," she sobbed, putting her arm over her eyes.

"Why?"

"Because I won't let him spank me anymore!" She exclaimed, sitting up.

"I see."

"I don't like it!" She stated vehemently. "I think it's violent and I don't want it in our lives!"

"So you ended your engagement permanently?" He continued in the same quiet voice.

"Not exactly. Nuk was just really angry tonight and he issued an ultimatum."

"Why did he do that?"

"Because I kicked him in the shins at the restaurant," She answered, the tears still rolling down her cheeks.

Nick arched his eyebrow and looked at her unhappy face. "Why would you do that?"

"Because he had the nerve to try to take my car keys, and when I disagreed, he tried to ground me! Can you believe that? I'm not a child! He can't do that to me! I got so mad I kicked him under the table," she retorted hotly.

Nick swallowed his mirth as Nuk's face came into mind. He could just imagine what Nuk thought as his prediction came true. "And you think that's okay to kick him? Isn't that violent? I thought you didn't like violence. Or is it only okay for you to use it, but not him?"

He could tell by the look on her face that she understood his reasoning but did not want to accept it. She played with her fingers, refusing to meet his gaze.

He decided to try another tack. "Melissa, Kelo tells me you are the assistant manager of a day care center, is that right?"

She nodded her head, still not looking at him. "As such I expect you've seen some pretty spoiled kids there haven't you?" Again, she nodded.

"Tell me about one of the worst tantrums you've seen since you've been there."

Melissa instantly pictured little Anita Denning. "Well," she began, "one day Anita got mad at Harry because he wouldn't let her have the red crayon. He had been using it and she was okay with sharing, but when he was finished he refused to pass it on to her. I remember she tried to grab the crayon from Harry, and when he dodged her, she socked him in the jaw! Harry started screaming and then other kids started crying and I had to grab Anita because she was still going after Harry.

Mrs. Dayton, that's the owner, took the red crayon from Harry and told Anita she couldn't have it because she had been so mean to Harry. Anita jerked away from me and started slapping at Mrs. Dayton and stamping her feet and screaming like crazy! It was awful! Mrs. Dayton finally just held Anita's hands until she calmed down, but she was really mad! She said it was too darn bad they didn't have the right to..." Melissa paused suddenly, looking up at Nick, instantly comprehending where this was going.

"Didn't have the right to what?" asked Nick smoothly, watching her face closely.

She flushed and looked away.

"Finish the story, Melissa," demanded Nick sternly.

"Didn't have the right to spank the kids anymore because it was the fastest way to cure that kind of behavior," she finished sulkily. She fidgeted under his steely gaze.

"I don't see a lot of difference between the two stories you just related to me."

"But Anita is a child, and I'm not," she declared sullenly.

"No, you're not a child, but you are acting like one." Nick finished smoothly. "If you act like a child,

then I think a child's punishment fits the crime. It's your choice. If you don't act that way, then you won't have to worry about getting spanked will you?"

"But I don't like getting spanked," she wailed desperately, "it hurts!"

"It's supposed to," he said gently, "otherwise it would serve no purpose."

"Well I can't do it!" She sobbed. "I just can't."

"Can't or won't"

"All right then, won't! Nuk says until I come and ask him for the spanking I deserve, he's not taking me anyplace public."

"Why would he say that?"

"Because I poured wine in his lap at the last restaurant we went to," she sniffled. "But he deserved it!"

"If he deserves all this physical abuse, then I believe he's right in thinking that you deserve a spanking for it," growled Nick, eyeing Melissa with a stern glare.

Melissa glanced up at his set face. Nick looked like he was ready to toss her over his knee right then and there!

Involuntarily, she put her hand up as if to ward him off. "Don't you dare!" she whispered, scared at the knot in his smooth jaw line.

"Just be thankful you're not my fiancée," he interjected biting. "Because if you were, I wouldn't wait for you to come to me." He turned around and walked out the door, closing it behind him.

Melissa didn't realize she had been holding her breath until he walked out the door. Whew, she thought. He really looked like he was going to blister her butt for a minute. Poor Kelo, she

thought. I'm glad Nuk's more manageable than that!

It was finally Saturday morning and Kelo and Nick were getting ready for Pani and Tunea to pick them up in Pani's van to go to the airport.

"How do I look, Nick?" asked Kelo anxiously. She was nervous and apprehensive about meeting her father and wanted to look her best.

Nick appraised the beautiful girl standing before him. She was wearing a light blue, sleeveless cotton sheath and white, flat, leather sandals. She would have preferred wearing a heel, but she didn't want to put any strain on her hip. The doctor had given her a clean bill of health yesterday morning, and removed a week's restriction on the diving and Karate classes. She would be able to go back to work on Monday since the swelling was completely gone. The bruising would take quite a bit longer to disappear, but he was satisfied that the interior tissues looked strong and undamaged.

"You look beautiful, as usual," he replied, his voice husky. She had a purple hibiscus flower pinned in her hair and her long black curls fell in shining profusion down to her waist.

She blushed at his frank appraisal. "You don't look too bad yourself." She drank in his masculine build, the hard muscles beneath the white polo shirt, tucked into navy blue chinos. The white offset the smooth brown of his skin and the look in his eyes made her stomach do flips.

"Pani is here," called Melissa from the window. She came over and gave Kelo a quick hug. "Good luck, Kelo," she said sincerely. "I hope everything goes great with your Dad."

"Thanks, Melissa," she replied, returning the hug. "What are you doing today?" Kelo looked with

concern at Melissa's pale face. She had been moping around all week and her and Nuk's relationship was getting more strained all the time. When Nuk was over he didn't appear to be faring any better than Melissa. He had staunchly refused to take her anywhere in public again until she asked for a spanking and she would *not* budge. So they were at a stalemate.

"He said he wanted to go out on the boat today and I told him I would go, but now I don't feel like it anymore," she said glumly. "I think I'll just stay at home."

"When is he picking you up, Melissa?" Nick asked.

"Anytime now, but I'm not ready, so I guess I just won't go." She walked over to the couch and flounced down on it, folding her arms. She was still in her robe at 10:00am and that was not like Melissa.

Kelo looked worriedly at Nick. He understood her look, he knew the couple was in trouble, but he had done all he could. He had talked with both of them and they were both being stubborn. He shook his head at her look. They went to the door and opened it to go out, and met Nuk on the other side, his finger poised to ring the doorbell.

"Good morning, Nuk," they greeted him cheerfully.

"On your way to the airport, are you?" He asked, looking beyond them for Melissa. His eyes narrowed when he saw her sitting on the couch with a pout on her face and still in her robe.

"Yes," replied Kelo, aware of the direction Nuk was looking. She saw his face turn grim when he saw Melissa.

Nuk turned back to Kelo. "Good luck with your father, Kelo," he said softly, taking her hands and giving her a peck on the cheek. "I hope it turns out the way you want. I'm looking forward to meeting him soon."

"Thanks, Nuk," responded Kelo, noting the sadness in his eyes. "Hope you two have a good day. I'm sure we'll see you guys later."

Nuk went in and shut the door behind him. He walked over and stood in front of Melissa, his hands on his hips, his brown eyes studying her sulky face. "Why aren't you dressed and ready to go?" He asked softly, trying to keep his irritation under control.

She shrugged her shoulders, her unhappiness evident on her face. "I just don't really feel like going boating after all."

"Did you consider calling me?" He asked a little tersely. "I've got the boat all ready and a nice picnic lunch prepared. I thought we could go to Garners cove, it's totally private and we can swim and have lunch there."

"Sorry," she replied offhandedly, staring out the window, a hint of tears in her eyes.

Nick sighed and studied her. He knew she was unhappy, he wasn't too happy these days himself, but he really didn't know what to do about it. He had issued an ultimatum and he refused to back down on it. He had thought she would be happy to be going out today, but apparently not.

He sat down beside her on the couch and took her hand. "Why don't you go get ready? Put on that new swimsuit you bought last week, the hot pink one that looks so great on you and we'll just relax and enjoy the sun, okay, honey?" He entreated, rubbing her cool fingers between his

warm ones. He put his other hand under her chin and turned her to face him. There were a few tears on her lashes and his heart went out to her, even though his resolve remained firm.

"I have to get a shower first," she said, perking up a little at his compliment. She gave him a tremulous smile as she thought about the fresh sea air and the tropical beauty of the little cove. Maybe it was what she needed.

"That's my girl," said Nuk, pleased with her response. He ducked his head and planted a quick kiss on her smiling lips and then stood up, pulling her with him. He turned her in the direction of the bathroom and landed a playful swat on her robed buttocks. "Don't take too long," he warned.

She gave him a scowl as her hands flew back to cover her bottom and she said, "Don't do that! I hate it when you do that!" Then she stomped off to the bathroom, not even glancing back to see his reaction.

Nuk tamped down his frustration at her haughty attitude. As she disappeared into the bathroom, he turned and walked to the TV. Picking up an action movie he hadn't been able to finish watching last night, he put it in the slot. When it wouldn't go in, he pushed eject to pop out the tape that was in it. As he grabbed the ejected tape to set it aside, he saw the title, *McClintock*, and frowned.

He remembered watching that with Melissa about two months ago. She had thought it was romantic, and he remembered wondering why John Wayne had waited two years to spank Maureen O'Hara in the movie! But Nick had told him that Melissa had thrown it away a week ago, right after he spanked her the first time. He said Kelo had

seen her throw it away. So what was it still doing here?

Chapter Eleven

Nuk slipped the tape back in and fast-forwarded it to the bedroom scene. Turning on the TV, he watched as the tape began to play. Hmmmm...there was John Wayne, confronting his wife in the bedroom...his wife running away...then John Wayne rolling up his sleeves as he followed Maureen O'Hara all over the town. After he caught her and spanked her, he thought it was interesting that it appeared she intended to stay with her husband after all. He quickly turned the tape off and hit rewind, and then he put the action tape in and returned to the couch. His eyes were on the TV, but his mind was on John Wayne.

What if he were asking too much of Melissa to have her come to him? Maybe she just couldn't quite humble herself enough, but would respond if he took matters into his own hands and made the initial decision for her? He had thought he was doing the right thing, but their relationship was getting worse and neither of them was happy.

Nuk knew they couldn't go on much longer like this. Even if he gave in and removed his ultimatum, he truly felt it would destroy her respect for him as a man and the leader of his future home. He brows furrowed thoughtfully.

Maybe he should take a leaf out of John Wayne's book and let her decide whether she could live with the fact that is was going to be a part of their marriage. Just go ahead make the decision for her, because he already knew, he couldn't live with hers! They had tried it her way and they were both confused and unhappy. Now they would try it his way and see what happened! His mind made up,

he heaved a sigh of relief and felt lighter and happier as if a great burden had been lifted.

Nuk looked down at the white shirt he had on. Okay, so it wasn't a western shirt, it still had long sleeves just rolled back to his forearm and only a few buttons over the tank underneath. It would be shed once they were out in the sunshine on the beach, but it cut the cool morning wind off the ocean for now. He could still give each sleeve a few more rolls! He grinned. If she wanted romantic, then he would be happy to supply it. And knowing how angelic she had been all week, he thought wryly, he wouldn't have to wait long for an opportunity! He would have to curb his irritation until they got to the cove though. There were plenty of places there for a nice romantic spanking to take place, and the making up should be wonderful, provided she didn't announce they were through when he let her up!

Melissa turned the shower on and adjusted the spray to a comfortable temperature. She slid her robe off her shoulders and reached into the pantry shelves for a clean towel. She laid it on the tank and then stepped into the shower.

As she showered, she thought about Wednesday when she had finally taken the tape out of the trash. She just couldn't bring herself to throw it away and she was disgusted with herself for watching it again yesterday while Kelo and Nick were gone to the Doctor's office, and then again early this morning. She just didn't understand her feelings. Why did she still enjoy the tape? The spankings Nuk had given her had completely convinced her that this was not for her, especially after that belt swat! It just hurt too much! And he actually expected her to come and ask for that?

When hell freezes over, she thought! How can it seem romantic, if the reality isn't like that at all?

She felt sorry for Kelo, and for some reason she couldn't explain, she envied her at the same time! Melissa shivered under the warm stream as she recalled Thursday morning.

She had gotten up late for work, and was rushing around like a chicken with its head off, trying to get ready. Her temper was already short from another confrontation with Nuk the previous night, and she hadn't slept well. She couldn't find her handbag with her car keys in it and her frustration was out of control.

Suddenly she remembered that she had dropped it at her feet when her and Nuk had sat down on the couch, and it must have gotten kicked underneath. So she had stomped into the living room, and was down on her hands and knees when Nick had come in and asked her what she was doing. She had exploded and said something to the effect that any idiot with half a brain could see she was looking for something under the couch, and if he couldn't help, then at least don't get in the way!

Nick had grabbed her arm and jerked her to her feet, his face set in that same look Nuk had had just before she went over his knee! He had told her she needed an attitude adjustment, and he knew the best position to put her in to achieve it! At that moment, Kelo had called from the bedroom and she had hastily apologized, putting her hand up to ward him off as she did. He had let go of her arm, but as she backed away he had warned her if she ever spoke to him that way again, he would paddle her butt until she couldn't sit for a week! She had believed him, and ran for the relative safety of her bedroom!

At least Kelo knew where she stood, she mused. With Nuk she didn't know anything anymore, only that she could not bring herself to do as he wanted, and ask him for it.

Something was going to have to give. She had been seriously thinking about breaking up with him. Neither of them was happy, and if he were going to continue to issue these humiliating ultimatums, then she never would be happy.

An hour later, Nuk was bringing the boat into Garners cove and throwing out the anchor. They would use the rubber raft to get in to the beach. He was aggravated at Melissa and barely restraining his temper. She had come out of the bathroom almost as sullen as she had been when he had arrived that morning, and her attitude had still not improved. She had been sulky when he asked her to help with the tie-off ropes, and instead of standing in front of him at the wheel like she usually did, she had sat alone in a deck chair staring out over the ocean.

He threw the rubber dinghy over the side and lowered the picnic basket into it. He motioned her to climb down the ladder, and then he followed her down.

Melissa watched Nuk as he rowed the dinghy to shore. There was a knot along his smooth cheek and he was quiet as the muscles in his arms rippled beneath the white shirt, sending the dinghy skimming smoothly across the waves. She felt a surge of physical attraction as she always did when she watched him move. The muscles in his solid thighs moved beneath the material of his snug fitting jeans and his feet in white canvas deck shoes braced themselves against the dinghy floor. She trembled as she remembered herself over those hard thighs. He was looking at her with an

enigmatic gaze, and she wondered what he was thinking.

Nuk was watching Melissa as he rowed; his jaw ached from the strain of holding in his frustration with her. He saw the flash of desire in her eyes before the unhappiness once again marred her dreamy expression. If nothing else, he would remove that pouting unhappy look from her face today, he promised himself. She might tell him they were through, but at least he would know he had done all he could to save their relationship. They could never survive like this. One of them had to be the leader, and Nuk was not a follower. He never would be in any affiliation with a woman. He loved Melissa with every fiber of his being and he didn't know if he would be able to find anyone else who stirred his emotions like she did. But if she couldn't be happy with him, then he had no right to ask her to stay in an unhappy marriage.

Nuk rowed the dinghy up as far as he could onto the beach. Then he helped Melissa out and finished pulling it up to where the tide couldn't wash it out. As he started picking up things out of the dinghy to carry he looked around for Melissa to get some help. She was walking up higher on the beach without even offering to carry anything!

Grimly, he headed up the sandy slope with his arms full. He came to a stop about six feet behind her and tersely said, "I could use some help here."

"Looks like you're doing fine to me," she replied mockingly, as she turned to face him.

That was it, Nuk decided! Enough was enough! It was show time! He dropped everything in his arms on to the ground. Then pinning Melissa with a hard stare, he started to slowly roll up the shirtsleeve on his left arm. "I've had all I'm going

to take from you, Melissa Ryan," he bit out, still rolling his sleeve. "You've dumped wine in my lap, kicked me in the shins, tried to slap me, insulted me, and behaved like a spoiled brat all week."

Melissa's mouth dropped open as she watched Nuk and listened to him talk. The hard chiseled planes of his jaw were firmly set as he growled out his words in a low and dangerously quiet voice. His brown eyes were deadly serious as he started to advance towards her. She began to back up. "W...What do you think you're doing?" she squeaked, afraid to hear the answer.

"I think you know exactly what I'm going to do," he responded firmly, continuing to advance as he started on the right shirtsleeve.

"You..you can't! You said we would do it my way!" She was backing up faster as Nuk began to gain on her.

"What I said was, we'd try it your way," he said sternly, "and we did! It hasn't worked, so now we're going to do it my way! And that means you've got one heck of a spanking coming!"

"No," gasped Melissa as she spun around and started running for the path into the forest.

As she entered the shady coolness of the trees she glanced behind her. Nuk was not running, but he was coming at a steady pace, his eyes gleaming with intent.

She turned and continued running, her heart beating faster. Suddenly she tripped over a tree root; and went sprawling and undignified...face down. She instantly turned over and saw that Nuk was gaining on her very quickly.

She began scrambling backward on all fours. "Can...can we talk about this," she pleaded desperately.

"The time for talking is over," replied Nuk, his face resolute as he continued at that same nerve-racking pace toward her, his arms swinging back and forth with an easy grace. His forearms were brown and muscled and his sleeves had been rolled up above his elbows. He looked like a man with a purpose and nothing was going to keep him from carrying it out!

Her heart sank as she realized he was indeed through talking and she scrambled to her feet and continued to run. Bursting out of the forest greenery, she raced toward the cliff and stopped abruptly, suddenly remembering it was a sheer drop off for a hundred feet. She was trapped! She whirled around looking from side to side, realizing there was nowhere to go except back down the path. But there was a very determined, very male figure just coming off that path, and headed straight towards her!

"Nuk...please...don't do this," she begged, edging to the right where the boulders were leading into the rocky hill. It would be a hard climb, but it led back to the beach on the other side.

Nuk had anticipated her possible flight into the rocks, and with a feral grin began moving to cut her off.

"I am going to do this, Melissa," he mocked. "I'm going to paddle your little bottom until its bright red and you can't sit comfortably for the next two days!"

"Nooooo," she wailed turning tail to run, but Nuk was too fast for her. She hadn't taken ten steps before he had her. He swung her up into his arms and she pushed at his broad chest, desperately kicked her legs and trying to get down. But it was no use...Nuk was just too strong for her.

He carried her a few feet to a good-sized boulder and then using the small boulder beside it, he propped his left foot up on it and neatly flipped her face down over his thigh. She was kicking and fighting him for all she was worth, but she couldn't keep him from sweeping the elastic waist shorts down, taking the bikini bottoms of her swimsuit with them. Then he yanked her upright and pivoted to sit on the bigger boulder and swept her face down across his left knee, pinning her legs with his right.

"This is what's going to happen to you every time you act like a spoiled brat from now on," he said decisively. And he began to slap her bottom with hard fast spansks that resounded in the cool morning air.

"Oooowwww," wailed Melissa, trying to kick out and twist away from the punishing swats that were landing on her smooth pale buttocks.

"You can't do this, do you hear me...you can't do this," she howled desperately as his hard palm smacked into her cheeks with unerring accuracy.

"I am doing this, darling," he replied stoically, "and I intend to keep on doing it until you've learned a good lesson in behavior!"

"No no no," she screeched, the pain becoming unbearable as the heat built up. She was convinced that her butt would surely burst into flames at any second!

Suddenly she burst into tears and sobbed, "please Nuk, please stop, I can't stand it, you're killing me! Oh god, please stop!"

"Are you ever going to hit me again?" He asked, the spansks continuing relentlessly.

No..never," she vowed fervently, "never...I promise...please stop!"

"Are you ever going to kick me again?" The swats kept coming.

"NO...NEVER," she promised, almost hysterical.

After several more smacks Nuk stopped and laid his palm on her burning cheeks.

"Guess what?" He said, conversationally. "Your bottom matches your swimsuit."

Melissa was astounded. How could he talk normally when she was sobbing her heart out and praying he was finished? Suddenly she felt him shift his left knee up, exposing and tightening the skin at the junction where buttock met thigh.

"Just a few more to make sure you remember this for awhile," he murmured and he started spanking that tender area with very hard slaps, quickly turning it bright red.

Melissa cried and howled at this new punishment and vowed she would never ever strike out at Nuk again! At last he stopped and pulled her upright to sat her on his lap. She cried and cried as he held her, offering her the comfort of his warm chest and shoulder.

As Melissa sobbed heart brokenly, the awful knot that had been in her chest all week slowly dissipated. She was a mess, her bottom burned and hurt and she could hardly stop crying, but she began to feel at peace. The heaviness that had been weighing down her spirits lifted as the cleansing tears continued to stream down her cheeks.

"I've b...b...been so a...awful, Nuk," she sobbed into his shoulder. "I'm s..s so s..s..sorry!"

Nuk let out a big sigh as he heard her heartfelt apology. He had been so worried! He had taken a gamble, hoping that this was what she needed, but what if it hadn't been and she had decided to leave

him? He chased away that bleak thought. His arms tightened around her. "Its okay, darling, I forgive you," he said softly. He tipped her chin up and looked into her watery eyes. "I love you," he whispered, kissing her nose.

She put her arms around his neck and buried her face in his shoulder. "I love you too," she said tremulously. "Please, promise me you won't ever do this again," she said earnestly, looking up into his face as she lifted her head.

"I won't promise you that, darling," he stated, his eyes serious. "I don't intend to ever let it go this far again. Nick told me how you treated him last Thursday and you're just lucky Kelo intervened. You know you haven't been happy all week and neither have I. So, no, I won't promise that I won't spank you. If I think you need it, I will paddle your little bottom the bright rosy red it is right now. Its up to you, behave yourself and you won't end up over my knee." He looked at her face, watching for her reaction to this declaration.

It was time to decide, thought Melissa. Now is the time to walk away if I intend to at all. She thought of how miserable she had been all week. She thought of the movie she hadn't been able to throw away. Wasn't it funny that Nuk had rolled his sleeves up just like John Wayne? She pictured him walking toward her, his intention plain and desire surged through her like a hot licking flame as she realized that she loved him too much to walk away. Like Kelo had said, the spankings only hurt for a little while, but heartache lasts a lot longer.

"Well," she replied to Nuk's firm statement, "since I don't want to end up over your knee, I guess that means I'll just have to behave won't I?" She smiled up at him, her heart shining in her eyes.

"I guess so," replied Nuk huskily, bending his head to kiss her softly on the lips. "I guess so." And he slowly deepened the kiss.

Aaron Shaughnessy ducked his head and started down the steps from the airplane. As he reached the bottom, he lifted his head and swiftly surveyed the crowd. When his eyes came to rest on the tiny figure in the blue cotton sheath, his heart caught in his throat, and for a split second, he was twenty years old again. "Molly," he whispered brokenly, his eyes never leaving her face as she advanced towards him.

No, not Molly, Kelo, he reminded himself, coming back to the present. He moved towards her, trying to gage his welcome. He searched her face intently, hoping for a small indication that she would receive him with some degree of warmth. They both stopped within a few feet of each other, assessing one another's intentions. She looked almost identical to Molly from a distance, but up closer, Aaron could see she had the same eyes he did, eyes that were amethyst right now, just as his were. "Kelo?" he whispered hoarsely, a question in his voice.

"Yes," she whispered, tears pooling in her lovely eyes. She realized she was holding her breath as she waited for her father's next move. She looked up at him, taking in the dark wavy hair, streaked along the temples with gray, the small neatly clipped mustache, and the amethyst eyes, just like her own. Impulsively, she sent him a shy smile as she let out a small sigh.

He dropped the bag he was holding and held out his arms, inviting her in if she would come.

She came. She wrapped her arms around his waist and laid her cheek against his chest.

Kelo's heart was full as she stood in her father's embrace. She had seen his lips whisper Molly, when his searching gaze had found her, and she realized he must have truly loved her mother.

Aaron closed his eyes and savored the moment, holding his daughter tightly within the circle of his strong arms, the sharp ache of regret washing over him as he thought of the years they had missed together. "Thank you for seeing me," he said, huskily.

"It wasn't your fault or my mother's either," replied Kelo softly. "I can't hold Michael O'Halloran's evil against you." Then her voice hardened as she looked up at him. "He'll pay for that one of these days," she vowed fervently to him.

"The authorities will handle him," stated her father, instinctively sensing something amiss in that avowal, but not knowing his daughter well enough to know what it might be.

They turned to greet the others and Kelo introduced everyone. As Aaron shook hands with Nick, he assessed the young man who wanted to claim his daughter. He hadn't been a father very long yet, but he already felt protective and possessive. He had done a lot of thinking since last Monday night, and he was desperately hoping to be a part of Kelo's life in the future. He intended to enjoy his grandchildren, if they would allow him.

Nick returned his frank appraisal, noting the square jaw and determined light in the older man's eyes. He had done some checking on Aaron David Shaughnessy, and he liked what he had learned. He knew he was a guardian for two young men whom he had taken responsibility for as orphans, and had his hand in more than one charitable organization

for children and wayward youth. It was a shame he had never had any of his own, it seemed he would have been an excellent father.

Aaron had done some checking of his own, and found that Nick had excellent credentials, was a sound businessman, and was highly respected in the Maui community. As he perused the strong lines of his face and felt the firm grip of his hand, he was pleased to see the open and direct gaze from his green eyes. Satisfied, he dropped his hand and swiveled to meet Pani's handshake. He apprised the man who had been his daughter's father, envying him those twenty years he, himself had lost. He acknowledged Pani's gentle nod, with one of his own, instant understanding and respect passing between the two men, father to father.

He took the hand Tunea held out to him and held it firmly clasped it in both of his. The love and kindness shining from her golden eyes told him she had been a wonderful mother to his child. "Thank you for sharing your heart and home with Kelo," he said, his voice husky with emotion as he swallowed the lump in his throat.

"She is my daughter," spoke Tunea softly, that one sentence saying everything that needed to be said. "We all look forward to getting to know you."

"So do I," he returned, his gaze sweeping around the little group and finally resting on Kelo. He smiled at her, a dazzling smile filled with promise, and Kelo could certainly see why her mother had lost her heart to this man. For an instant, her eyes clouded over as she once again promised herself fiercely that O'Halloran would pay for his treachery.

Nick saw the fierce look that came into Kelo's beautiful eyes for just an instant, and knew at once

what she was thinking. He gave her a warning look and she flashed him a beatific smile. Dratted man, she fumed to herself. How was she supposed to ever get away with anything if he already knew what she was thinking?

Aaron caught the exchange between Nick and Kelo and smiled in amusement. He had a sudden feeling that Kelo was a lot more like her sassy mother than just in looks. He had had to take Molly in hand more than once. It was obvious things were not going to be boring here in Hawaii! He picked up his bag and the little group began moving as Pani ushered everyone towards the terminal.

They were soon chatting and laughing like old friends as they loaded up in Pani's van and drove through Honolulu, pointing out sites of interest and getting to know one another. They arrived at Kelo's childhood home and unloaded. Kelo and Nick were bickering amiably as they all trooped into the house and Tunea handed out orders like a drill sergeant. Once seated at the kitchen table for a late lunch, the group began the process of really beginning to learn about one another. Pani and Tunea regaled Aaron and Nick with an amusing array of Kelo's childhood escapades, much to her disgust, but she took the ribbing with good nature.

Chapter Twelve

What was he doing here? Michael O'Halloran slammed his fist down on the dashboard of the blue sedan parked a discreet distance from the house. He had watched through his binoculars as the group had descended from old Pani's van, and been shocked to recognize Aaron Shaughnessy. It could only mean one thing! His old nemesis was here for the coin!

O'Halloran didn't know how Aaron had found Kelo, or where the coin was, but he knew Shaughnessy must have discovered somehow that he had stolen it, and had finally found out where it was after all these years. In the two years since he had been back on the island, he had not found a trace of it.

Brooding, O'Halloran went over and over it in his mind, that day he had came after Molly. But try as he might, he had not been able to remember anything that would give him a clue. The bitch had hid it well, or she had passed it on to Kelo. He frowned.

It was obvious Kelo had some sort of trauma problem; every time she saw him, she flipped out, even after 9 years. He had searched old Pani's home and Kelo's apartment numerous times, but had not found it. The police were watching Kelo's apartment now and he couldn't get in there anymore.

He was pretty sure they might suspect he was still alive, but he had gone to great lengths to establish an identity for himself here, and he would be long gone before they finally figured it out. Even Kelo didn't recognize him in his role as Lars Gunderson, city employee.

He had revealed himself on the path last week, hoping to finally find out something...but even if they were looking for O'Halloran, they would never connect him with Gunderson.

No, he mused. He felt reasonably safe for the moment. The question was, what was Shaughnessy doing here if the coin hadn't been found? Unless he had somehow realized that the brat was his? Why would he come all this way for something like that? O'Halloran grunted disgustedly.

No, he must be here for the coin, and that meant it was time to get serious. He had waited all this time to get his hands on that coin, it was worth a half a million dollars, and he already had a buyer. It was time to get something a little more convincing. The brat he could handle, but Shaughnessy was a man. He needed to get a gun...and he knew just who to contact, he thought as he started the car and drove away.

Inside the house, Nick, Pani and Aaron had moved into the family room after a long leisurely lunch. Tunea and Kelo were quickly clearing away what little mess there was after paper plates were tossed, and putting the food away.

"So Kelo doesn't remember anything about the music box?" Aaron asked musingly.

"No," replied Pani, and I know she used to carry it with her everywhere. She used to like to listen to the sound of the music as the dancers spun around."

"Well, we know the coin was in the box, although I never knew it had a false bottom when I bought it for Molly. She must have discovered it later."

"How much is that coin worth, Dad?" asked Kelo, walking into the room with Tunea. "I might

want to buy me that boat I've been wanting," she teased.

He looked at her, realizing that she could not have any idea of the value of the coin. Nor would anyone else in this room, most likely. His heart swelled with pride at her casual use of the name Dad. He had asked if she could bring herself to call him that and she had said she would be delighted.

"Ohhh..." he drawled slowly, his eyes twinkling, "I think it's present value is around a half a million by now." He chuckled at the stunned expressions on the quartet of faces surrounding him. "I think you could buy a boat for that," he teased back.

Nick was the first to recover. "I think it's the first time I've seen you at a loss for words, little one," he retorted pulling Kelo down onto his lap in the overstuffed chair he was sitting in.

"I couldn't possibly accept something that valuable," protested Kelo, looking at her father. "I had no idea it was worth that!"

"It's just a coin, Kelo," said her father quietly. "It would give me pleasure for you to have it. I'd like to take you to Ireland some day soon, and show you all the things I've collected through the years. Much of it, I hope, will be yours someday to keep or sell as you choose. They are just belongings that I have enjoyed having in my possession, nothing more."

Kelo met his clear candid gaze and realized he meant what he said. He was not a man of avarice, but a collector of beautiful things. But those things didn't rule his life. "Thank you, I'd like that," she replied honestly.

"Kelo," began her father after a brief silence, "do you not remember the box at all?"

"I remember the box, I just don't remember what happened to it after Mother died," she replied, a frown marring her smooth brow. "I remember I had it that morning, playing with it in the garden. I remember hearing a car pull up and running into the house with the box in my hand. Then the door flew open and O'Halloran burst into the room. Mother had told me I was to run and hide and never let him have it. But..." She paused, her eyes closed, concentrating. "I remember running to the patio door..." again she paused, her body beginning to tremble slightly.

"You don't have to do this, honey," said Aaron tightly. "If it's too painful, I don't want you to relive it over and over."

"It's okay," she said, her voice husky. "We need to find that coin. Until now I've never understood why he kept coming back after all these years. It's the value of it that's keeping him here, and as long as it's out there, he won't give up. He's waited this long to get it, he'll keep coming back." Her voice dropped to a whisper as Nick's arms closed tightly around her.

"Do you remember the tune that it played?" Asked Aaron curiously. "I've heard it said that music can often jar memories.

"Not really," Kelo said thoughtfully. "Do you?" She asked, looking at Pani and Tunea.

They shook their heads negatively. "I remember it was a pretty tune," said Tunea, "but I just don't remember what it was.

"Do you know what it was, Aaron?" Interjected Nick, his gaze on the older man.

Aaron sighed heavily. "Yes, I do. It was *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*." He closed his eyes and laid his head back on the chair.

"Molly and I had been to the Galway Arts Festival and we found the music box in an antique shop. She fell in love with it and I couldn't resist buying it for her. We were just coming out of the gift shop when a sudden down pour began and we huddled in the doorway of the shop and listened to the tune as she opened the box."

He smiled in memory of Molly giggling and announcing that it was appropriate at this time because they were waiting for a rainbow to signal the end of the rain. He opened his eyes, staring at the floor but seeing nothing. He was reliving that day in the doorway with the beautiful young girl of his memory. He had let Molly down, he thought bitterly.

The others sat quietly watching Aaron, knowing he was thinking of Molly as his lips curved in a tender smile. Suddenly he looked up at them, his eyes bright with unshed tears as he condemned himself. "I told her there would always be storms in our life together, but that after every storm, I would always be there, just like the rainbow." He paused to swallow the painful lump in his throat. "I let her down," he said bitterly. "When the worst storm of our life came along, I left her alone." He rose up out of the chair and went to the patio window, gazing out into the garden, silent tears glistening on his cheeks.

Kelo got off Nick's lap and swiftly crossed the room to put her arms around her father.

His arms closed tightly around her and he rested his cheek on the top of her head, accepting her comfort even though he felt he didn't deserve it.

She lifted her head and looked up into his eyes. "You never counted on a hurricane, Dad," she said

gently. "They destroy everything in their path and don't leave rainbows."

He felt oddly comforted by her comment, and he flashed her a rueful grin. "How did you get so wise, darling?"

"Must be an inherited trait," she answered with an encouraging smile. They stood in companionable silence while he regained his composure.

Nick and Pani chatted amiably with Tunea chiming in from time to time and it wasn't long before the painful moments had passed. Aaron and Kelo walked back to the others, Aaron's arm around Kelo as he chuckled at something she said. Suddenly Kelo gasped as her left hip banged up against Aaron's leg when he directed her towards Nick.

Whirling to face her, his eyes concerned, he asked, "What's wrong? Did I hurt you?"

"No, no," Kelo quickly reassured him, laughing. "It's just my left hip, it's still pretty sore if I bang it just right."

"What happened?" He asked, taking his seat while Kelo sat down carefully on Nick's lap again. So Pani explained the woodland path and their suspicions about O'Halloran kicking Kelo.

"You could have been seriously hurt," exclaimed Aaron, frowning at the thought. "What were you doing on that path anyway, if it wasn't the one everyone used?"

Bother, thought Kelo as she heard the tone of his voice and saw the frown. He may not have any children but it didn't take him long to learn that...*you've been up to something haven't you...*voice! It must be in bred in all men, she thought disgustedly. She tried really hard not to pout and feel like she was five all over again as Nick

heralded her father with the embarrassing saga of her dive. She sneaked a look at his face as Nick ended the tale. He was glowering at her with the same look Pani used to give her when she had been up to no good.

"So," he responded silkily, "you ignored your diving teacher's instructions and ignored Pani's command to stop." He folded his arms and looked sternly at her. "And by doing so, put yourself in extreme danger. I certainly hope there are repercussions coming from this behavior, gentlemen," he said looking at Nick and Pani. "If not, as your father, I certainly have a good idea." There was an all too familiar steely glint in his eye that Kelo didn't like.

"What do you mean?" She asked suspiciously, afraid she knew the answer already.

"A trip over my knee for a good sound paddling, is the first thing that comes to mind."

At Kelo's gasp of indignation, Nick and Pani burst out laughing.

She opened her mouth to reply, and then to her consternation, realized she couldn't think of a single response! Her respect for her newfound father wouldn't allow her to lose her temper, and it wasn't Nick making the threat, and Pani had already passed the job to Nick, so she closed her mouth without making a reply.

"It's already on the agenda, Aaron," replied Nick, still chuckling at Kelo's discomfort.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Aaron tersely, still glaring sternly at Kelo. "Otherwise I would certainly have to schedule it myself."

Kelo got up from Nick's lap and stomped towards the patio window. Maybe some time in the garden would cool her temper. But first, she turned

to face the infuriating males in her life. With her hands on her hips and a scowl on her face she asked sarcastically, "Just how old does a woman have to be before you consider her too old to be spanked?"

"Never too old...doesn't happen...always a possibility..." were the trio of answers that assailed her ears. Throwing her hands up in the air in exasperation, she opened the patio doors and stepped outside, then slammed it shut behind her. Stalking over to the bench by the goldfish pond, she sat down muttering about overbearing men. She sighed and looked into the water at the fish swimming around. She wondered how Nuk and Melissa were doing.

Three days later, Kelo and her father were browsing through the shops at the market square. It was a fun place to come, but there were not that many things that were actually made in Hawaii. A lot of the shops carried junk for the tourists, inexpensive souvenirs that said *made in Hong Kong* or *Taiwan* on the bottom. But if you were willing to spend the time, you could find some authentic crafts.

"There are roadside stands along the coastal highways that have other handcrafted items, Dad," said Kelo, "if you want to drive around there. Also, the Polynesian Culture center has a wonderful pageant they perform in the evenings, with lots of authentic island dances and homes on display. We should go there one evening!"

Aaron smiled at the enthusiasm on his daughter's face. Just being with her was all he needed, he thought. These last three days had been totally wonderful. If only the shadow of O'Halloran was not hanging over their heads, he

thought uneasily, glancing around him. Between Nick, Pani, Nuk and himself, Kelo had not been without a male escort since her accident. She was starting to get a little testy, and had complained she was getting cabin fever! So he had agreed to walk downtown with her since it was only about eight blocks from her apartment. Her job had given her the rest of the week off to totally recuperate and enjoy the time he had to spend here with her.

The market was a busy place, and there were a lot of people on the streets. He felt pretty safe as long as they stayed together. He didn't think O'Halloran would risk exposing himself in front of witnesses. They really should head back to her apartment though, he thought. For some reason he felt uneasy.

Kelo was thoroughly enjoying herself. Getting out into the fresh air and among people again was great! The strain of waiting for something to happen was about to get the best of her, and when that happened, she usually lost her temper. When they were finished here, they were going to walk along the beach and she would show her Dad how clear the water was. She loved the ocean. You could see your feet when you looked down, even if you were in up to your waist! She hadn't been able to go swimming yet because she was embarrassed at the bruises on her hip, but they were fading fast. The vitamin E and aloe in baby oil was really helping. She rubbed it into the bruising two or three times a day.

She probably shouldn't be in such a hurry for the bruises to disappear, she thought ruefully. The faster she healed, the sooner Nick would have her over his knee blistering her backside. She wasn't looking forward to that! I wonder if there's any way

to talk him out of it, she mused. Probably not! Not that she wasn't going to try of course; you can't blame a girl for trying!

She glanced at her Dad. He was making a purchase, a dolphin made completely out of shells that were native to Hawaii. The shop owner was looking for a box with padding to put it in. She'd wanted run over to the stand where they made the sweet and sour pork while he waited, she loved that stuff! She turned to tell Aaron where she was going but he was busy talking to the shopkeeper. She fidgeted impatiently. She didn't understand why they were all wrapping her in cotton wool. She was well able to take care of herself. She had been patient thus far, but she had just about had enough. She glanced at Aaron, and then back at the pork stand. It wasn't that far away. He'd see her when he finished and looked around. Her decision made, she headed across the market place, her stomach rumbling in anticipation.

Aaron accepted the change from the shopkeeper and picked up his box. He turned around to speak to Kelo and his heart skipped a beat! She was no longer standing behind him. He looked around frantically, his eyes darting here and there, looking for her tiny figure. He walked in an ever widening circle, searching, but she was nowhere in sight. Maybe she went back to the oyster stand where they sold the pearls straight from the oyster. She had mentioned wanting to get one of those. He hurried away down the right side of the square, his jaw clenched. If she had wandered away deliberately, they were going to have a talk! If not, he shuddered. He didn't want to think of the implications of that.

Kelo picked up her paper bowl with the sweet and sour pork and turned around. Construction workers on their lunch break, waiting their turn for the succulent pork, hemmed her in. They smiled in admiration and moved aside as she made her excuses to get through, returning their smiles.

When she stepped outside the circle and started toward the stand where she had left her father, she stopped short, instantly concerned that he was no longer standing there. This is just great, she thought. She realized that all the men behind her must have hid her from his view, and now he was looking for her.

Oh no, she groaned to herself. He was going to be so mad! Never mind him...Nick would be furious when he heard. Her bottom tingled. Suddenly she wasn't hungry anymore and she threw the pork in the nearest trashcan. But where was her father? He didn't know his way around and he would be worried. She began to hurry, walking up and down the wide aisles of shops, searching for his yellow polo shirt.

For thirty minutes Aaron walked all over the square, up and down the aisles looking for Kelo. A tight knot of fear had grown in his chest and he took out his cell phone to call Pani and Nick. He didn't think she would return to the apartment alone, and he was afraid his worst fears had been realized. O'Halloran must have grabbed her!

Wait! There was a glimpse of black curls and lavender clothing through that group of people. Pocketing his cell phone, he hurried towards the stand he had already passed twice before, and as the crowd cleared, he saw his daughter dropping an apparent purchase into the over sized bag on her shoulder.

Shopping? He thought furiously! He had been searching desperately for her for thirty minutes and she was shopping? She had agreed to stay right by his side and she had taken off without a word to him...to go *shopping*? Just wait until he got her home! There was going to be some serious talking going on and it would be hand to bottom if he had anything to say about it! He strode forward and grabbed her by the elbow and spun her around.

Where could he be, thought Kelo worriedly searching the crowd? As she neared the music shop a display on a box caught her attention...one that had not been there before. It was a beautiful music box made of teak and inlaid with mother of pearl. A pretty tune was coming from the box but she didn't recognize it. What had her mesmerized were the figures dancing on the pedestal. They spun round and round, and dipped and swayed, just like the figures in her music box.

Entranced, she watched the delicate figures so like the ones she remembered, and as they danced, a picture of herself watching those same figures flashed into her mind. She had been watching her figures when she heard the car pull up and heard her mother tell her to run and hide. To hide the box and never let him have it. Her mind moved in fast forward as it skipped past the painful memory of her mother in O'Halloran's cruel grasp, and she saw herself hiding the box. He would never find it there, her five year old self thought. He'll never find it! Never...never...never.

Are you all right, miss? The rumbling male tones of the shopkeeper had Kelo glancing up into a concerned face. His brow was furrowed and his eyes full of alarm as he ask again, "Is everything okay?"

"Uh...y-yes." Kelo stammered. "I'm fine, really. That box, it just reminded me of something." She took a deep breath and cleared her throat. "How much is it?"

He named a price and she dug into her bag and handed him some bills. Still slightly dazed, she took the change and the box from the shopkeeper, and dropped them in her bag. Suddenly, she felt her a tight grip on her elbow, and she was spun around to look into the furious eyes of her father!

"Where have you been?" He ground out between jaws clenched from the effort of controlling his temper.

"I..I..I." she stammered, unable to think of a reply that would diffuse his obvious wrath.

He began to propel her forward and out of the crowd, heading back down the streets toward her apartment. She was having trouble keeping step with him as he moved her along at a very rapid pace. She wanted to explain, but it was all she could do to breathe and virtually run at the same time!

It only took a few minutes to reach her apartment building before he ushered her in the door and up the two sets of stairs to the second level apartment.

"I can explain..." she began as her trembling fingers put the key in the lock and opened the door.

"Save it," he barked out, grasping her arm once again as he walked her inside and shut the door behind them.

Now that the shock from the music box had wore off and they weren't moving at a breakneck pace, Kelo began to get irritated herself at his highhandedness. And at the fact that he had cut off

her attempt to explain! Just who did he think he was anyway?

"Stop it, Dad!" She commanded, jerking her arm out of his grasp and placing her fists on her hips. As he turned to face her, she realized that he really was in a snit! His usual good-humored demeanor was replaced by a look of incredulous fury on his face.

"Why did you run off like that?" He bit out, glaring at her. "You promised to stay right by me if I took you out and what do you do? You decide to go shopping on your own! Do you realize how worried I was when I turned around and you were gone? I looked for you for thirty minutes! I was just getting ready to call Nick and Pani when I saw you at that music stand. You had better have a very good explanation for this, young lady, or I am going to put you over my knee and paddle your butt until you can't sit for a week!"

That did it. Kelo had had enough coddling and spanking threats to last a lifetime in the last week and her Irish temper boiled over.

Chapter Thirteen

"What in the bloody blazes makes you think you can waltz in here after twenty years and tell me what to do? I am sick to death of overbearing, domineering, hardheaded men who think I need to be treated like an idiot without a lick of sense, and can't fight my way out of a paper bag!" Kelo's eyes were blazing just like her fathers and snapping right back at him.

"I am your father, that's who!" He replied tersely, his voice going deadly quiet and a warning light appearing in his eyes that Kelo chose to ignore. The fact that he suddenly appeared totally under control was a detail she overlooked. When she was angry, she let it all out, verbally, emotionally...and physically if she got the chance! But Aaron had learned a long time ago to focus his anger, it kept your opponent off guard.

"I don't care if you're the pig-headed, barnacle breath, bastard spawn of St. Paddy himself," she shrieked, her fists clenched at her side, "*you can't tell me what to do!*" Her last exclamation was stamped into the floor by a tiny foot, her challenge issued.

"*I can and I will!*" He stated firmly, his temper well under control, but not diminished. With that he grabbed her hand and pulled her the few feet to the couch, while Kelo struggled and cursed at him. As he sat down, he pulled her down with him and over his lap, ignoring the verbal abuse she was spouting at him and her kicking, flailing arms and legs.

"Let me go, you can't do this!" She screamed at the top of her lungs, trying to scramble off his lap.

He didn't answer but began slapping her backside in steady rhythmic spans, burning

through the thin cotton material of her lavender shorts and panties.

Kelo kicked and bucked frantically as the blistering spanks landed on her bottom, each one feeling like a dash of scalding hot water. Nick and Pani had nothing on her father, she thought frantically, the reality of her situation finally searing through her backside to her brain. When would she learn to control her temper? "Owwwwwww," she howled, as the steady onslaught didn't show any signs of being over.

"You have an appalling temper, young lady, and an awful mouth." He lectured her as he continued to crack his palm down over and over on her stinging rear-end, ignoring her yelps and wails.

"It's time you learned to control it." He continued relentlessly, holding her wiggling hip firmly in his left grip so she couldn't get off his lap.

Kelo was in deep distress! "Please, Dad, I'm sorry!" She wailed, tears rolling down her cheeks. Her anger was quickly dissipating as the hard swats replaced it with searing pain.

Aaron had a reputation that his nieces and nephews would have been happy to relay to Kelo, had they been given the opportunity. Nobody sassed Uncle Aaron, because when he put you over his lap, you wouldn't be getting up anytime soon! Much to the dismay of his wards as well! A fact, Kelo was becoming well acquainted with in her current position!

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

The swats continued to fall until Kelo thought she could not possibly stand another spank without fainting. She was a sobbing mess, her apologies and pleas to do better were being ignored. Oh God, she prayed, please let it end! "Daddy," she begged,

unconsciously reverting the childhood version of Dad. She was sure her bottom cheeks would actually be sporting blisters by now, even through her clothes.

As Nick walked up the hallway to the door, he heard Kelo's plaintive wail and realized that she must be in trouble! He opened the door a crack and was met by the sight of Kelo face down over her fathers lap, her feet pounding the couch frantically as she howled and pleaded with her father to stop. He pulled the door shut and retraced his steps to go get something to drink. They needed some privacy. It hurt him to hear her anguished pleas but he was pretty sure she had done something to earn it.

"That kind of language and temper will always get you in trouble," Aaron assured Kelo, finally pulling her upright and sitting her in his lap. "I can only assume the stress you have been under has triggered this reaction, but you have to learn to control your temper and focus it to make it work for you, not against you. I know you're a black belt, honey, but if your Karate classes have not taught you control, then they haven't been worth their money," he declared.

He held her, letting her sob as her head rested on his shoulder. He couldn't believe how much he had grown to love her and how fiercely protective he felt of her. She may think she could take on the world, but she didn't know how ill prepared she really was. Men like O'Halloran didn't play games...they played for keeps!

His arms tightened around her as he relived the awful fear he had felt for her when she had disappeared. Even if she ever got the chance to confront O'Halloran, her inability to control her

emotions would be her undoing. She just didn't realize that!

Finally Kelo's sob quieted, and she hiccupped a few breaths as she finally relaxed.

"I'm sorry Dad, I shouldn't have lost my temper," she said softly gazing up at him through teary eyes. I didn't take off intentionally, I just went to the pork stand to get something to eat, and didn't realize all those construction workers had come up behind me to block your view. By the time I got my food, you were gone. I looked for you too, but I couldn't find you."

She heaved a big sigh. "I didn't mean to worry you," she said shyly. And I know I have an awful temper. It's about the only thing I've gotten spanked for, and it looks like it isn't getting a lot better right now." She looked at his eyes shining down at her and the still stern mouth set in that firm line. "How did you get to be such a hard spanker?" She complained with a smile, standing up to rub her buttocks. "That was worse than Pani or Nick either one!"

"I've had lots of practice," he grinned, relenting to her good humor. I have two wards and seven nieces and nephews to practice on, plus my younger sister. Your mother had a pretty good temper too!" He laughed as he saw her surprised look. "You come by that Irish temper quite honestly, my dear. But like the rest of us, you must learn to focus it and make it work for you."

"You sound like my karate instructor," she said ruefully, sitting down carefully in the chair by the couch."

"He was right. In a dangerous situation, if you allow the other person to needle you into losing

your temper, they will have the advantage. You must learn to concentrate."

"How did you learn so well?" She ask curiously.

"I used to box some," he answered, not mentioning he had been the best in the Galway competitions when he was younger for a number of years.

Kelo could read between the lines though, and the power in that right arm spoke louder than words!

"If you didn't plan to go shopping, what did you buy?" He asked curiously.

Suddenly she remembered the music box. She picked up her bag where she had dropped it on the floor and dug around in it. She pulled out the cardboard carton and opened it, taking out the teak music box. She sat down beside her father and opened the lid. Again, she watched the little dancers, entranced by their movement. Then she looked up at her father. "I know where the music box is hidden now." She said softly.

O'Halloran sat in his car, watching Pani's house. They were all there; he had seen them go in. He had to get a hold of Kelo, but how? She always went back to her apartment every night, but never unescorted. How could he grab her? She knew where the box was. The bitch. She was so protected all the time that he couldn't get near her.

He had been watching them at the market yesterday, but there were so many people he was afraid to try anything. Besides, she hadn't shown any sign of getting the box for Shaughnessy.

Detectives had come to his home earlier this evening and ask him if the police could have access to the grounds because of some personal developments with a previous tenant. He knew

immediately what they were talking about but had feigned puzzlement. He said until he knew what it was about and was assured that nothing would be stolen, he didn't want to agree. It had just been a ruse to put them off.

After calling the chief of police, the detectives then told him a previous tenant had lost something there and wanted to find it. He explained that they would not be in the house itself, only on the grounds. Reluctantly, he had agreed. They could have access tomorrow morning after he was gone to work. Anytime after 10:00am he had told them.

So now he was faced with the dilemma of how to get the box first, or steal it after they retrieved it. At least one thing was solved; she must know where the box was! He pondered on, his hatred for Shaughnessy and the brat that had ruined his life, simmering.

He had known his patience would pay off eventually. He had moved back to Hawaii a few years ago and set up his cover as Lars Gunderson. He had then rented the house at 1803 Maple two years ago, when it had come on the market.

He had searched and searched the house from top to bottom, and found nothing. He had searched the grounds as well, and the cellar, but he hadn't seen her hide it before the sirens in the background had screamed. He had had no choice then but to leave his precious coin behind. Running his car over the cliff had been a stroke of pure genius, he reflected. With his death, the police had closed Molly's case and the brat had been adopted out to Pani and Tunea.

But he had kept his eye on things, and intended that his patience would be well rewarded. If it hadn't been for getting in trouble on the island and

having to leave, he wouldn't have spent seven years in a mental hospital in Los Angeles. After he had fled Hawaii hidden on a supply steamer, he had disembarked in LA and promptly gotten into trouble with a no good whore. The damage he had done that whore had resulted in his admittance to a mental ward for evaluation. She had deserved it though, the rotten bitch.

No matter, he was here now, and this bitch would pay! So would Shaughnessy, he vowed, before he left Hawaii for good with the coin.

Kelo was once again ensconced on Nick's lap while Pani, Tunea and her father were all discussing her misadventures of the morning. She wiggled a bit uncomfortably as she settled into a better position on Nick's hard thighs.

"What's the matter, little one?" questioned Nick, amused at her wiggling. "Sore bottom?"

"Yes," she replied, her eyes shooting daggers at him.

"Should have behaved yourself then," he murmured unsympathetically. "It's a good thing your father paddled your little behind, or I would have."

"I didn't do it on purpose," she hissed indignantly, trying to keep her voice down. She didn't want Pani and Tunea to know she had gotten a spanking that morning from her father. It was humiliating enough to know that Nick had heard her and not interrupted! She didn't want her parents to know as well!

"Oh no," she groaned, realizing suddenly that Aaron was actually telling them about her loss of temper and how he had spanked her for it! She had hoped he would leave that part out. She hid her face in Nick's chest as she felt the flush creep into

her cheeks. She was so embarrassed! It was bad enough to have to go through the experience, without having to relive the story.

"Daaad," she whined, lifting her head to glance at her parents. She could tell by the look on their faces that she would find no sympathy there! When Pani sent her a glare, she folded her arms and pouted, refusing to look at anyone. To her consternation, they all chuckled at her posture. How humiliating! "Can we change the subject, please?"

Nick finally took pity on her and began a discussion about the plans for tomorrow. They agreed they would all go in Pani's van together after picking up Nick and Kelo tomorrow at her apartment.

"Well, well, the gangs all here," sneered another voice, as it's owner stepped into the room from the sliding glass door off the patio. "Don't anybody move or I'll use this." The owner of the interrupting voice was holding a magnum 44 pistol with a silencer.

"O'Halloran!" Gaspd Kelo, her face going pale as Nick's arms tightened protectively around her.

"Yes, my dear," he mocked with an evil grin. "You've certainly led me a merry chase for the last twenty years. But now that you know where the box is, you're going to get it for me. So get up and come over here, and you too," he said, pointing to Tunea. "If you don't," I'll shoot one of these men. Your choice." He pointed to a spot about six feet from him for the women to come to.

"Now, see here, O'Halloran," said Aaron, standing up and facing the other man. "You can't take these women out of here like this!" From the look on O'Halloran's face, Aaron realized he was

mad with greed and revenge. He shuddered, remembering that he had left Molly with this man. He wouldn't do the same with Kelo, he vowed. "If its money you want, we'll get it for you."

"No, Dad," Kelo cried hastily, getting up from Nick's lap. Nick got up behind her, his hands on her elbows. He had no intention of letting Kelo go. But Kelo was scared for her father. O'Halloran had already killed her mother; she didn't want to lose her father too.

"There's only one thing I want from you, Shaughnessy, and that's to see you die for stealing Molly from me." He pointed the gun at Aaron.

Kelo watched in shock as the deadly snick of the silencer sounded in the quiet room when the gun went off. She saw her Dad crumple to the floor, blood pooling under his head.

"NOOO!" She screamed, trying to get to him. But Nick pushed her behind him, trying to protect her.

"You're next, unless you let her go," he snarled at Nick. Kelo darted out from behind Nick, holding up both hands at O'Halloran as if to ward him off. Tears were trickling down her cheeks.

"I'll come with you, just don't hurt anyone else," she choked out, glancing at her Dad again, praying he was not dead. She was deathly afraid the mad man would shoot Nick or Pani next.

"Kelo, no," said Nick urgently, reaching for her. But she kept her body between him and O'Halloran, while backing away from him.

"I'll be all right, darling, you'll see," she pleaded with him, praying he wouldn't try anything. She couldn't let O'Halloran kill him. She backed up to the spot O'Halloran had designated.

Then O'Halloran threw some ropes to Tunea. "Tie these two together, and make sure they're nice and tight, because if they follow us, they'll be dead."

Tunea was pale and trembling as she took the ropes. Nick and Pani looked at one another, their faces grim. It was all Nick could do to stay put, but he knew if he moved, O'Halloran would shoot him or Pani, and they wouldn't be any good to the women dead. He glanced at Aaron. He couldn't tell from here if the wound was serious, or a graze.

There was no evidence of anything on the floor except blood. That was a good sign. Head wounds tended to bleed a lot but not necessarily cause a lot of damage. Hopefully, O'Halloran would not check to see if he was successful in attempting to kill Aaron.

He turned around so Tunea could tie his hands together, and then stood with his back to Pani so the two of them could be tied together. Obviously this meant O'Halloran was going to leave them alive, and where there's life, there is hope.

"On the floor and on your stomachs," snarled O'Halloran. They obeyed. "Now tie their feet together and then tie their feet to the rope between their hands. I want to make sure they can't get the ropes loose with their teeth."

He then looked straight at Kelo, his eyes leering as he perused her trembling figure. "I want to make sure we don't get interrupted before I finish my business." He licked his lips suggestively, blowing a kiss with his left hand to Kelo. "They'll get loose I'm sure, but we don't want it to be anytime soon, do we, doll face?"

If Kelo's face could have gone any whiter, it would have. It was obvious what O'Halloran

intended to do. Which meant he would probably hurt or kill Tunea so she couldn't interfere.

On the floor, Nick stiffened in outrage. His heart leaped into his throat as O'Halloran made his evil intent clear. He planned on brutalizing Kelo! Now he wished he had at least made a play for O'Halloran. He couldn't have shot all of them at the same time, and if Kelo had a chance to use her skills to save the rest of them, then it would have been worth his death. If only he hadn't waited!

Tunea looked at Pani's face as she finished tying the ropes. He was pale and grim but he smiled encouragingly at her. "Don't worry, sweetheart," he whispered. "We'll come for you. Stall him as long as you can." He felt intense anger to see her pale face, her eyes huge with fear and her hands trembling badly as she tied the ropes.

"All right, that's good enough," commanded O'Halloran. "Now get over here."

Her knees shaking, Tunea crossed the floor and came up to O'Halloran. She gasped as he grabbed her arm just above the elbow and pointed the gun at her right side.

O'Halloran looked at Kelo. "Now, sweetheart, I hear you've been taking karate classes," he sneered derisively at her. "That doesn't bother me too much, but I'm a careful man. So just to make sure you don't try anything on me, I'll be keeping *Tunea* here, right at my side. One wrong move, and I'll blow her away." He motioned Kelo out the patio door. "Out the door, doll face and through the garden to the back gate. Don't try to run unless you want this bitch to die on the spot."

Kelo did as she was told, pausing at the patio door to glance back at Nick and Pani. It might be the last time she ever saw them. The anguish on

her face tore at Nick like a knife in his stomach. He remembered the last time she had paused at a patio door to watch the fate of a loved one at the hands of O'Halloran. He prayed she would be strong enough to withstand the emotional impact she was going through. "I love you," he mouthed at her. Her amethyst eyes huge in her white face, Kelo turned and walked out the door.

As soon as the trio got out of sight, Nick and Pani began pulling at the ropes. Tunea had done a good job on them.

"We can't get a hold of anything to work on the knots and we can't stand up with our knees bent up our back," Nick said tersely, frustration evident in his voice.

"I know," replied Pani grimly, trying to twist around to see if there was any room to do anything. "He sure knew what he was doing with these ropes."

Nick looked around the room. There had to be a way to do something. The phone! Maybe they could get it off the receiver.

"Pani, we need to knock the phone off the receiver. Can we work together and knock over the coffee table behind you?"

"We can try," said Pani hopefully. You try to wiggle backwards and I'll try to wiggle forward. It's a couple of feet away, but if I can get my head up against it, I can knock it over." So Pani dug his chin and shoulders into the carpet while Nick tried not to be a hindrance because he couldn't do much to help. Finally, after a few minutes, Pani had his head up against the coffee table and he turned to grip the edge with his teeth. He ducked as he pulled the whole thing over and the glass of soda, the lamp and the phone all came sliding off.

"Damn," he muttered as the lamp fell between his shoulder blades. The glass bounced off his brown curls and splashed everywhere, and the phone fell off the receiver as it hit the ground.

"Okay, another foot and I can reach the phone," he told Nick, breathing heavily. Soon he had it in his teeth by the antennae and flipped it over. Pushing the on button with his nose, he waited for the dial tone. Nothing! He looked at the receiver. No lights!

"He must have cut the phone wires, Nick," growled Pani, "there's no light on the handset or the receiver. Now what?" He heard Nick mutter an expletive.

From Nick's end of the twosome, he could see Aaron on the floor. They should see if he was unconscious or dead. If he wasn't dead, maybe they could wake him up.

"Let's go back the other way so I can check on Aaron. Maybe we can wake him up," said Nick hoarsely, realizing that the minutes were ticking by quickly. It took a few minutes of hectic wiggling and scrunching, but soon Nick was at Aaron's head. He was lying face down and Nick laid his ear against his back to see if he could detect a heartbeat. Yes, his body was warm and there was a heartbeat. He sighed in relief. He wasn't dead yet!

"A little farther, Pani," he instructed, both men breathing heavily from the exertion. They scooted up a little further until Nick could reach Aaron's head. He nudged his head against the back of Aaron's, the blood feeling sticky on his chin. No response. He nudged again.

"Aaron, are you all right? Wake up Aaron, we need you," he pleaded urgently, the fear evident in his voice. He looked desperately around him, his

eyes darting here and there looking for something, anything that could help them. Suddenly he felt a small movement and heard a groan. Aaron! He was waking up!

"Aaron, wake up, man," he commanded urgently. "You've got to get up! O'Halloran has taken Kelo and Tunea and we've got to get the police and follow them. Get up, man!"

Aaron stirred, waking up slowly. He felt like his arms and body were so heavy that he could not move them. He heard Nick's voice from far away. It sounded urgent, like he was in trouble.

Can't think. Mind is hazy and unclear. Slowly he began to open his eyes, the light seeming to glare much too brightly. He was lying on the floor and his head hurt. There was something sticky under his face. He lifted his head slowly and turned it sideways, and came face to face with Nick! *What was he doing on the floor?* His lips were moving, urging him to wake up.

"That's it, Aaron, wake up! We need you to untie us. Can you get up?" Nick continued to talk to Aaron, urging him further into consciousness.

Finally, Aaron lifted his hands to his head as the fog began to clear. He saw the fear on Nick's face and he remembered.... O'Halloran! He sat up, his head swimming.

O'Halloran had shot him! He looked around. The girls! Kelo! Kelo and Tunea were gone. That meant he had taken them. His heart leapt into his throat and his stomach clenched at the thought of Kelo in that maniac's control.

"You've got to untie us, Aaron," urged Nick, the fear threatening to take control as the minutes ticked by. "He's got Kelo and...he's going to hurt

her Aaron, if we don't stop him," he said thickly. "And maybe kill them both."

Rage tore through Aaron at Nick's words. O'Halloran had robbed him of a lifetime with Molly, the woman he had loved and now threatened his only child. The child that had been denied him for twenty years. "Not if I can help it," he vowed, getting unsteadily to his feet. He looked at the situation Pani and Nick were in; realizing the tangle of knots would take too long to unravel. He walked as quickly as his shaking legs could carry him into the kitchen and returned with a large butcher knife.

"Hold still," he commanded, his hands trembling as he began to cut through the ropes that were binding the two men. Soon they were getting to their feet, tearing the ropes off as quickly as possible.

"Do either of you have a cell phone?" Asked Nick glancing at his watch. They were about twenty minutes behind O'Halloran.

"Yes," said Aaron heading to the bedroom on the first floor. "I'll get it and meet you at the car."

Nick and Pani ran out the front door. Running to Nick's car, they jerked open the doors on the jeep Cherokee. As Nick started the car, Aaron was just coming out the door, dialing 911 as he did so.

He opened the door to the back seat and quickly climbed in, slamming the door.

"Go," he commanded Nick, "we don't have a moment to lose."

"911," Came a voice from the cell phone as he held it to his ear.

Chapter Fourteen

"Pull the car around to the back," ordered O'Halloran. "Wouldn't want the neighbors to see you now, would we?" He grinned his evil leer at Kelo as she drove behind the house at 1803 Maple Street. He had put Tunea between them in the car with the gun pointed at her breast. There was nothing she could do but obey his instructions to drive.

"You'll never get away with this," she said tightly, trying to control the fear that was threatening to consume her. Aaron had told her she had to learn to control her emotions and not let the enemy upset you. She was desperately trying to follow his advice. She might be the only thing to stand between him and Tunea. She vowed fiercely to herself that she would protect her. Even if she had to distract him with her body long enough to gain an advantage, then so be it. She brushed away all thoughts of her and Nick. She couldn't afford to be distracted.

"Sure I will," bragged O'Halloran. "When I'm finished here, I've got a speed boat stashed away all fueled and ready to go. Before long, I'll be in international waters and no one can touch me!" He opened the car door and backed out, pulling Tunea with him.

"Get out!" he ordered Kelo. "Walk ahead of me to wherever it is you've hidden the music box, and no funny stuff. I won't hesitate to kill her."

Kelo opened the car door and got out. Her knees were trembling and she took deep breaths, trying to stay focused. Slowly she walked toward the hillside where the cave cellar was located. She looked back at Tunea, concerned at how white her

face was and her short gasps for air. Hang in there, Mom, she thought, glancing at O'Halloran. She stopped in front of the cellar door and motioned to it with her hand.

"It's in there," she said, trying to delay the inevitable.

"So open the door, doll face, what are you waiting for?" Mocked O'Halloran. "Your knight in shining armor? I wouldn't waste my time if I were you, he isn't coming."

At her flash of anger he poked the muzzle into Tunea's ribs. "Open it!" He barked.

Kelo grabbed one of the double doors and pulled it open so it lay back against the hillside. Then she looked in. "It's too dark to see in here," she said.

"There's a light switch on the right side of the door," O'Halloran replied. "Turn it on!"

Kelo felt around for the light switch and flipped it on. There hadn't been one here when she was a child. Someone had put it in since then. She stepped inside and waited.

"Move on in," commanded O'Halloran, pushing Tunea in, then following her. "Now shut the door and lock it."

He kept the gun trained on Tunea as Kelo followed his instructions. The lock didn't look like it had been there all that long. She looked around the cavern, noting the changes in the walls and picturing it from her childhood.

"Now get it, and make it snappy, I don't have all night," he snarled.

Kelo walked over to the wall on the right side of the cavern. She frowned as she walked along it, trying to remember. She had only been five, and the boulders were covered in lichens and the rock surfaces had changed some in twenty years.

"What's taking so long?" Ground out O'Halloran. "If you're trying to stall, forget it!" He pushed Tunea in front of him. "You have five minutes to produce it," he snapped, "or I'll shoot her somewhere that won't kill her, but will definitely cause pain." His dark blue eyes gleamed with purpose and his thin features seemed haunted. He pointed the muzzle at Tunea's legs.

"Wait," cried Kelo, horrified that he would really shoot Tunea like that. "It's changed some and I'm trying to remember...I was only five."

Her hands were frantically searching along the rocks, looking for the loose stone she had discovered as a child. She had played in the cellar quite a bit and had leaned up against a stone that shifted slightly under her weight one day. Upon exploring it, she found she could remove it and a small cavity was behind the rock. She used to hide things in it all the time pretending it was a treasure pocket.

Her hands and fingers moved swiftly over the rocks, trying to gauge the height she would have been at when she was five. She bit her lip in concentration, desperate to find it before the time limit was up, but wanting to delay as long as humanly possible without endangering Tunea.

Suddenly she felt a rock shift and she glanced swiftly at O'Halloran. He was watching her like a hawk, and noted that her fingers had stilled.

He grinned. "Found it, didn't you?" He asked the obvious. "Well, open it...now!"

She began to move the rock about the size of her palm back and forth, working it out of the fissure. Then, glancing back at O'Halloran again, she slid her hand in and felt around.

Yes! She had been sure that it was still there, among other small items, childhood trinkets. She carefully lifted the box out and held it up to the light. It was still in good shape because it was made of eighteen carat gold. She brushed away the dust and dirt that had filtered into the ridges on the round top and then lifted the lid. The old music box still worked and the thin reedy sound of *Somewhere over the Rainbow* came tinkling out. The little figures danced and swayed, just as she remembered, only jerky from non-use.

"Get the coin," he demanded, not interested in the music or the dancing figures. "I want that coin!"

It was then that Kelo noticed the keyhole. The lid itself was like a small dome that opened to the dancing figures situated on top of the actual ball of the music box. But the entrance to the ball itself had a keyhole. Something Kelo had never worried about as a child...she had only been interested in the dancers. But the key her mother had left Aaron was at home...in her apartment! She had not even thought about it until now. She felt like her tongue was glued to the roof of her mouth as she looked at O'Halloran's impatient face. "The key," she whispered, her face pale, "I don't have the key!"

"What?" He answered suspiciously "What key?"

"The key that mother left to the music box. You have to have a key to get inside. She left it for Dad, but I don't have it, it's at my apartment. I didn't even think about it until now." She tried to control the apprehension in her stomach. She was trembling again, praying he would not turn on Tunea.

He studied her for a moment, gauging her sincerity, and then he spoke. "Bust it open with that

rock. I want to make sure the coin is in there before I leave this island," he snapped, his eyes glowing with greed.

Kelo quickly bent down and placed the box on the ground. Picking up the rock she had taken out of the cavity, she hit the box hard several times and it popped open. Picking it up, she felt around in the bottom half of the globe, searching for the small hidden slot her mother had spoken of. Suddenly the very bottom of the box slid out like a small plate, separating itself from the rest of the box. In the plate laid the gold coin, gleaming on a bed of red velvet.

Kelo gasped as she stared at the rare piece of money that had caused so much heartache and trouble. This was what O'Halloran had killed her mother over, and possibly her father as well. And now he intended to harm her and Tunea!

She picked it up and her hand closed over it...she looked up at O'Halloran. He was smiling in satisfaction, his eyes glued to her hand. Suddenly he lifted the gun and brought it down on the back of Tunea's head and Kelo gasped again as Tunea sank to the floor, unconscious.

With his evil intent clear in his eyes, he began to advance on Kelo and she backed up until she felt the storage table at the back of her buttocks. He had the gun trained on her and he moved it to his left hand so he could lean down to retrieve a wicked looking knife from his boot. "Now we are going to have a little fun, doll face, just you and me. Just like Molly and me used to." he leered hungrily at her, greedily drinking in her trembling form.

Kelo desperately wished she had on something more substantial than the thin white shorts and button down yellow shirt.

"Sit on the table," he rasped, his voice filled with hot lust.

She slowly slid up on the table and her legs dangled off the side. She watched him intently, so scared she could hardly breath. She had to control her fear! Watch him, her mind screamed, watch for an opening...concentrate!

With a gun in one hand and a knife in the other, she knew she was not prepared for this situation...but she would try. Surely God would give her a small break, she thought, refusing to give in to the numbing fear. She pictured Aaron's stern visage in her mind. Concentrate, Kelo...she could hear him saying it to her, and she responded.

O'Halloran brought the knife down between her knees, slowly pushing one knee to the side, his lusting eyes watching her reactions. He pushed on the inside of her other knee forcing her knees apart. "Keep spreading 'em, baby, I'd sure hate to have to cut you."

Forcing herself to breath deep and slowly, Kelo obeyed. He moved in between her knees, cutting off her ability to kick him in the private areas.

"Now, put your hands behind your back and lean back on the table, keep your palms flat," he instructed, his eyes narrowing slightly as the motion thrust her breasts out to strain against the buttons.

Kelo felt so exposed and she was trembling, but she kept the gun and the knife in her peripheral vision as she watched his face, watching for something, anything. She could feel the coin beneath the palm of her hand.

O'Halloran licked his lips and raised the knife. He slipped it under the first button, slicing through the threads and popping it off. Kelo gasped as it fell off...then the second button, and then the third.

Her lacy yellow bra was exposed to his avid view as the shirt fell open to reveal her creamy flesh. He made short work of the fourth and fifth, his breathing becoming raspy as his fervor increased. He pushed the sides of the shirt aside so he could get a full view of her sweet curves. Then he slid the knife up between her breasts and cut the material, the bra falling away and exposing her breasts to the cool air. She whimpered with fear, as he ran the knife blade slowly over one nipple, breathing hard as he watched it pucker. God she was beautiful, he thought. Maybe he'd just take her with him instead of killing her when he was finished. A man could get used to sights like these.

"Put your hands over your head," he said hoarsely, watching as she slowly obeyed him. He pressed his knife up against her throat, and then moved in close to her body. He dropped the gun and grabbed her wrists, holding them both in one hand. Then he dropped the knife and reached for the elastic waistband of her shorts. The sight of her naked breasts had his manhood straining painfully and he couldn't wait to see all of her, to take her and use her to slake his hunger.

It was the opening Kelo had been waiting for. Without a weapon, she was a match for him, in spite of being half his size. She reared her head back and brought it forward with all the energy of her pent-up fear, crushing into his nose. When he reeled back, she lifted her legs and brought her heels down into his lower back, jamming them into the kidneys. With his grunt of pain and surprise, his grip loosened on her wrists and she brought her elbows down in front of her and then rammed them up under his chin. This forced his head back and shifted him away from her. Quickly placing her

palms on either side of her, she bent her knees and brought them straight up...and then kicked out as both feet planted themselves in his chest.

When he scrabbled backwards, off balance, she hopped off table and began punching him in the face and chest, dazing him. Then she whirled around and brought her foot into his stomach, knocking the wind out of him. As soon as he hit the floor, dazed and gasping for breath, she straddled him. Her right arm coming back as she prepared to deliver the blow that had broken bricks in the tests for her black belt progression.

Suddenly the door flew open and in burst Nick and Pani. With a brief warning glance at Nick, she jutted the heel of her hand forward, prepared to end this. Her adrenalin was flowing, fueled by rage and the need for revenge.

At once Nick understood what her intent was, he knew all too well what would happen if she followed through. It would send O'Halloran's nose crashing into his brain, killing him instantly.

"NO!" He demanded. "No, Kelo, don't." He continued as he saw her pause and look at him, deadly intent in those amethyst eyes. "You've won, little one, " he said, his arms outspread to hold back the rush of police officers into the cave. "You don't want to do this."

"But I do want to do this, Nick," she said evenly. He killed my mother and my father and maybe Tunea. He intended to kill me. I said I'd make him pay and I will." She turned back to O'Halloran.

"No, Kelo, I'm here," came a gravelly voice from behind Nick as her father walked a little unsteadily into the cave. "You don't want to sink to his level, honey," her father entreated.

"And Tunea will be fine, Kelo," said Pani, helping his wife to sit up.

"What about us, little one?" Nick asked softly, knowing the decision would have to come from her. If he could reach her, he would stop her. But then they would never know if she would have killed him or not.

Kelo's eyes narrowed as she heard Nick's words. She knew exactly what he was talking about. If she chose revenge, their relationship would never be the same. It would destroy it, and probably her humanity as well. She hesitated, looking down at the man that had caused so much pain and anguish.

Even in her anger, she couldn't allow O'Halloran the satisfaction of knowing he had destroyed all of them in a more real way than even death. She looked at his face...it was still dazed as he looked up at her, daring her to do it.

She brought her arm back and her hand came crashing down. Then she looked at the others and saw the shock on all their faces but Nick's. Nick was grinning, his eyes gleaming in appreciation and love. She slowly got to her feet when he came towards her. Pulling the two sides of her shirt together, she promptly fainted as Nick swept her up into his arms.

He turned as the police came into the cavern. "She just broke his jaw," he told them all, grinning in relief as he held her close to his chest. "I think he deserved that, how about you?"

One week later, Kelo and Melissa were sitting on the deck of Nick's beach front home, enjoying the sunshine and the waves lapping along the shore. It had been a hectic week for Kelo, making statements to the police, trying to work a little here and there and visiting with her Dad. Now it was Friday

afternoon and Nick had flown them all over to his home on Maui for the weekend.

Aaron had not wanted to be separated from Kelo, and she had spent most of the week at Pani and Tunea's. As a result, she had not seen much of Melissa. Nick had told her that Nuk was now a happy man, but she hadn't had an opportunity to talk with her friend.

"So what happened, Melissa," asked Kelo eagerly. She knew that Nuk had spanked her friend, and they were now back to their old selves, but like all females, she wanted the good stuff! "I thought you had definitely decided not to have spanking in your relationship?"

"Welllll..." began Melissa, her eyes twinkling mischievously. I guess Nuk decided differently." She then told Kelo all about their boating adventure last Saturday and how it had ended. Kelo giggled uncontrollably at the image of Nuk rolling his sleeves up like John Wayne, and relentlessly pursuing Melissa all over the island.

"And do you know what, Kelo?" Melissa leaned a little closer to Kelo and checked to make sure no one was coming out the patio doors.

"What?" Whispered Kelo, looking around.

"Nuk even bought an entire western outfit, complete with leather vest and boots just to come after me with when I've been a brat, he says."

Both girls burst out into gales of laughter.

"I wonder if I could get Nick to do that?" Kelo replied wickedly. "It might be fun!"

"What might be fun, little one?" drawled a lazy voice behind her. Both girls whirled around to see Nick just stepping out the patio door. They looked at each other and broke out laughing again.

"Keeping secrets are we?" It was good to see her beautiful face lit up with laughter, the salt air off the ocean blowing her lovely curls back. She had been through so much. He wanted to relax with her this weekend and just enjoy one another's company. Right after they took care of their unfinished business, which was the reason he had come looking for her.

Ken had flown them all over in the chopper earlier that day. and they had eaten a late lunch and toured Nick's home.

"Its just girl stuff, Nick," teased Melissa looking up at him as he rubbed Kelo's shoulders. "Nothing you would be interested in."

"Hmmm!" He looked at their saucy grins, knowing whatever they had been talking about, it had definitely included him, because he had heard his name mentioned. Well, he'd let it slide for now. "Nuk is looking for you, Melissa. He said something about wanting to go into Maui."

Just then Nuk opened the door and stepped out. "There you are," he said, grinning at Melissa. "How about coming into Maui with me?"

"Sure! I need to pick up a few things I forgot to bring with me."

"How could you forget anything?" Teased Nuk. "It felt like you had the kitchen sink in your suitcase as it was."

"For your information..." Melissa's voice trailed off as she and Nuk went inside, squabbling amiably.

"Walk with me?" Asked Nick quietly, holding his arm out to Kelo.

She got up and put her hand through his arm. She was pretty sure what this was about. It was time to pay the piper and she wasn't looking forward to it, but she wanted to get it out of the

way so they could enjoy the rest of the weekend. She didn't want to have to worry all weekend about when the penny, or in this case, the hand was going to drop!

As they walked down the steps and onto the beach, she realized that this would be the first time she was not pitching a hissy fit when she got a spanking. Did she want this to happen? No, she reflected. But she knew if Nick let her off and didn't follow through on his promise, that she would lose respect for his word. She sighed. It was going to hurt, and she didn't have anger to get her through it. For the first time she felt scared inside and nervous. She could feel her palms beginning to sweat a little bit.

Nick was feeling pretty lousy. He really didn't want to spank her, but he had promised and he couldn't go back on his word. She had to know she could always rely on him to do as he said he would. He led her to the boathouse and opened the door.

Every one else was taking a nap and he had asked Nuk to take Melissa out so they could have total privacy. His house had privacy, but he wanted her to feel totally secure and know that no one would witness or overhear her embarrassment. Besides, he had to be a little harder on her this time and it was hurting him, knowing that.

He ushered her inside and she looked around her with interest and trepidation. There was an array of fishing and boating equipment hanging on the walls and sitting around. He led her to a cozy conversation area with a leather couch and a coffee table and a few stuffed chairs. There was a desk near the window that had maps and papers on it and charts hanging on the wall behind it.

Nick let go of Kelo's hand and walked to the desk. Opening it, he took out a small wooden paddle, made of oak. It was only a quarter inch thick and shaped in an oval.

Kelo's eyes grew large as she saw the paddle in Nick's hand. Her knees begin to tremble and she licked her lips as he returned to face her. She had never been spanked with anything but a hand thus far in her life and she didn't know what to expect.

"What's that for?" She squeaked, fear making her voice tight.

Nick laid the paddle on the sofa and took both of her cold hands in his. "I'd give anything right now not to have to do this, little one," he said in a hoarse voice. "I love you so much and you have been through a lot since we met, but I am a man of my word."

He forced himself to remember Kelo diving off that cliff, and how his heart had skipped a beat when she disappeared. He couldn't afford to let it pass. She had to understand that she couldn't let her explosive temper put her in danger, just to make a point. "When you dived off that cliff, you were in a snit. You were angry at me and your father and you let your anger destroy your good judgment." He tipped her face up to look into her eyes.

They were slowly changing color, a tribute to her emotional state, but he knew she was not preparing to hit him. "You could have died doing that, and I think you know just how close you came, don't you?" His voice had grown stern and his face resolute as he waited for her reaction.

"Yes," she whispered, tears beginning to pool in her eyes. She knew full well how close she had come. She'd had the mud on her nose to prove it.

"I'm sorry, I should have listened to you and Pani. I was only thinking of myself." She dropped her head and dug her sandaled toe into the rug on the floor.

Nick sighed with relief. At least she was definitely sorry. That meant he didn't have to be as hard on her as he'd thought. "I glad you realize that," he said quietly. He sat down on the sofa and pulled her between his thighs. He reached for the waistband on her denim shorts and unsnapped it.

Kelo trembled as she felt her shorts sliding down to her knees. She had the grace to look sheepish when Nick arched an eyebrow at her bodysuit. She had worn the light blue suit hoping it would shield her some, but she knew the thin knit material would be scant protection. It would however insure a bit more modesty, she hoped.

"Holding out on me, little one?" Nick looked at the suit, trying to choke down the urge to laugh. "It won't do you any good, you know that, don't you?" When she blushed at his question, he continued. "When we are married you won't get away with that at all, but since we're not, I'll let you keep it on." His green eyes shimmered as he studied her face.

Tears were trickling down her cheeks and she mutely pleaded with him to change his mind. But she wouldn't put it into words. She knew she had scared him and Pani both to death and that this was going to be the result. She had known it when she jumped from the cliff. Pani had never let her get away with a major temper fit and she had put herself in danger as well because of it. It looked like Nick was going to be just as strict about it as Pani and Aaron had been.

Nick picked up the paddle and put it down on his right side. Then he patted the couch beside his right thigh. "Put your knees here and bend over my lap," he instructed gently, helping her to lay flat over his hard thighs. When he had her positioned the way he wanted, he put his fingers under the edges of the bodysuit and pulled it up her back, exposing her buttocks as he material stretched into the cleft between her cheeks.

Kelo gasped and looked over her shoulder at him.

"I told you this wouldn't do you any good," he warned, his eyes glittering. He patted her clenched buttocks and said, "Are you ready?"

"No," replied Kelo in a trembling voice. "I'm never ready for this, but I know you're going to do it anyway."

"I know you've never had a paddle used on you before, but I want you to remember this spanking the next time you're tempted to throw yourself headlong into harm's way because of a temper tantrum," he declared firmly, his hand resting on her bottom. "I'm going to warm you up with my hand first and then I'm going to give you thirty swats with the paddle. I think that should be sufficient for your first time."

Kelo was very nervous. When Nick began landing stinging swats on her bottom she was surprised that they were not very hard, but he covered her entire bottom pretty well, which wasn't hard to do since she was so small.

When he began to get a little harder she began to whimper a bit, starting to get uncomfortable as the sting and burn built up slowly until she felt like her whole bottom was lightly burning. Then he stopped.

She felt him slide his hands under her thighs and adjust her body at an angle and was surprised to feel his leg slide over both of hers.

"What are you doing?" She asked, glancing back over her shoulder.

"You'll see," promised Nick. He didn't figure there was any reason to tell her ahead of time what she was facing. He grabbed the pillow at the end of the couch and pushed it into her hands. Then he picked up the paddle. "Hold onto to that pillow, little one. Don't put your hands back because I don't want to hit them with the paddle. If you do, I'll just move to your thighs and I guarantee you won't want that," he warned her.

What am I getting into here she thought. Exactly one second later, she found out.

Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack! Smack!

The paddle bit into her buttocks at a fast and firm pace. It only took a few swats before she realized what she had indeed gotten into.

"Yeowwwww!" She squealed, coming unglued. She bucked and twisted frantically trying to get away from the scalding hot swats that were peppering her bottom cheeks. She burst into tears by the tenth swat and knew she was dying by the twentieth. "Oh god, please stop, you're killing me, stop!" She wailed and cried as he continued to swat her quivering buttocks each swat as hard as the one before.

Nothing had prepared her for the burning painful sensations that were throbbing in her backside. This was nothing like a hand spanking!

Just when she thought she would surely faint, he suddenly stopped..

"Is it over? Please say its over," she begged, sobbing her heart out as she lay over his lap.

"Its over, little one," soothed Nick, as his hand rubbed and stroked her punished cheeks, easing the fire and ache he had created. He kept her there until she calmed down and then he lifted her and cuddled her on his lap. She was still shaking and trembling all over and he just held her in his warm embrace, tucking her head under his chin as she cried.

"I will never ever lose my temper again," she vowed fervently to him and herself. She heard his chest rumble beneath her ear as he chuckled.

"Don't make promises you can't keep, little one," he smiled as he tipped her chin up to look at him. Her eyes were wet and the amethyst was slowly fading back to the normal blue she usually wore. He wiped the tears off her cheek with his thumb. Then he placed his warm mouth over hers, comforting her with his lips.

"I can be very determined," she murmured circling his lips with her little pink tongue. "And that paddle is a very good motivator," she declared. "I don't ever want to go through that again!"

Nick threw his head back and laughed. "I don't ever want to do that again either, but I will if I have to," he promised, his eyes twinkling. "Would you like to go swimming?"

"As a matter of fact that sounds like a great idea," she laughed up at him. "Maybe it will cool me off a little!"

"There's some swimsuits in the changing rooms, take your pick. Meet you at the beach in ten minutes."

"You're on!" she replied excitedly, scrambling off his lap.

Ten minutes later, she was dressed in a red, one-piece swimsuit and running out to meet Nick as

he waited for her. The sun was beginning to set, sending its red streaks blazing across the horizon. The water was cool and inviting, and Kelo heaved a big sigh as she waded out to her waist. She lifted her arms and linked them around his head as his hands slid beneath her bottom, holding her up in the water as he waded in a little deeper.

He smiled at the red swimsuit she had chosen and looked at the red horizon. Chuckling, he patted her bottom beneath the water and said, "Hawaii is certainly looking red tonight, isn't it?"

She wrinkled her nose as his corny joke, but she had to agree! Giggling, she replied, "You're an idiot!" Then she leaned back and looked him up and down, giving him a considering look.

"What are you thinking now," he growled, seeing the mischievous look on her face.

"Ohhhh," she drawled, "just thinking about what color of cowboy hat to get you!" She burst into giggles at his perplexed look.

"Cowboy hat?"

"It's a long story," she replied, her eyes twinkling.

"Well, we've got all the time in the world, little one, all the time in the world." He bent his head to claim her lips.

"Yes," she breathed huskily, "I'll kiss to that." And she did.

