

TRANSPLANTED

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By

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ku'ualoha hoomanawanui  
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To *Umma* and Helena, my mother then and now

To Linc, thank you for not belonging

and

To Professor Howes, thank you for being there when no one else was

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

W. Craig Howes

Jade Moon Jones

*Fucking cunt.* The words were soft and distant in her head. She stood frozen beside his body. It was strange that she could hear the words, but couldn't remember the sound of his voice. It had been a little over two years since she'd last seen him, and it made sense that violence had reunited them, though Tim was the victim this time.

Her acceptance letter from the Bureau and her decision to go to Quantico had been the last straw. He'd told her that if she did not learn to obey him, they couldn't continue. She remembered sitting in the cockroach-infested pickup. She shrank from him as he berated her with his illogical arguments, expecting her give in to his unreasonable demands. Though his words blurred into each other and became indistinct, her ears still rang loudly. Like a child held captive in a classroom, her mind wandered. She stared fixedly into her hands in her lap. Her fingernails were different lengths.

When he noticed she wasn't looking at him, he got belligerent. She soothed her rising fears with a silent game of counting. He'd called her a "bitch" thirty-six times. She wondered how long this one-sided argument would last. She fantasized answering him.

*Bitch? I'm a bitch? Why don't you go fuck yourself? Go find a dog to fucking obey you, you psycho bastard.*" But she knew better. There were many things she wanted to say, but it wasn't worth the risk.

She tried to regain her focus, but it was no use. Even in the face of danger, she couldn't stop amusing herself. Playing with words in her mind told her to put a "leash" on her "roving" thoughts. She was impressed, and had to bite her upper lip to suppress a smile. She winced at the pain. Good. He'd probably mistake it for a quiver. She knew there was no way in hell he'd ever get a dog. He hated animals.

Once, a stray cat had found its way to the plate lunch he'd left on the lanai railing. He had gone inside to wash his hands, and when he got back, the cat was hovering over the styrofoam plate. Without hesitating, he yanked its tail and whipped it into the air. It screeched when it landed in the thorny bougainvillea bush, which shook violently as its bright fuchsia blossoms swallowed the cat's black coat. Silence. She never saw the cat again. Tim bragged that he'd hurled the cat so hard that the thorny, overgrown branches had probably ripped it up. Another time, he had trapped a stray and drenched it in hair remover. He was sad that he'd let it go without seeing the results.

People laughed when he told these stories, but his audience was usually a captive one—workers or tenants on his father's ranch, or his own tree trimming employees. Their laughs were either an obligation, or had an underlying motive. They humored him to get on his good side. After all, his father was a self-made millionaire in Waimānalo, with almost ten full acres of land that hosted dozens of workers and tenants. His father's connections got them the only street lamp on the road, and everyone knew it.

She'd told him she didn't like these stories, and expected he would stop. He didn't, telling them even to people he didn't know well. A few times, his lousy judgment cost him a client, when he'd shared his stories with animal lovers. Rather than taking the blame, he wrote them off as animal fanatics. Was he clueless, or was it he just didn't give a shit? His devil-may-care attitude frightened yet fascinated her. She warned him, and worried about what others were saying behind his back. She had heard some of the workers talking stink, but she never dared tell him. She kept telling him that people might get turned off, but he didn't believe her, so he just never changed. The conscience most adults had never told him to shut up.

Isolation on the ranch influenced her judgment and thinking. He acted as if she was the abnormal one, and the lie slowly seduced her. He playfully mocked her in public, and told his family she was afraid of her own shadow. They accepted his behavior as normal, and acted accordingly. Trying to make sense of his thinking, she forced herself to believe that deep down inside, he really was a good person with a good heart. She said this on a daily basis.

He joked that he had been raised by a pack of wolves, as if he was the only normal one in his family. This made her hopeful. Maybe he *was* really normal, and he really did have a conscience. But he acted the same as the rest of the family. No one ever apologized for anything.

Somehow, this made sense to her. What didn't was her irrational fear of leaving. The family had once embraced her and bent over backwards trying to impress her. They were now an allied enemy, planting seeds of doubt in her head. Now she was inferior to him. It had been the exact opposite before. Only when she was on the verge of leaving did they beg her to stay. This only lasted a short while.

One day, he shocked her by bringing home a dog for his two children, who she didn't know existed until eight months after they began dating. The puppy was only a few weeks old and taken too soon from its mother. It instantly bonded with her, following her to her car and whimpering whenever she left for school or work. When she returned, she had to be careful, since the little ball of fluff could barely be seen in the tall grass as it ran alongside her car.

Tim wouldn't let her bring the puppy into the house. He said animals were unclean. The puppy would whimper in the dark. She would go outside on the lanai to

comfort it until it fell asleep in her arms. She had to do this nightly, often sitting for hours with it.

Soon Tim was jealous of the dog. She knew this, but she lavished attention on it even more. During one of their many arguments, he stormed out the front door and stumbled over the tiny puppy sleeping at the doorstep. Furious that he'd lost his footing and slipped, he picked up the six-inch ball of fluff and hurled it thirty feet into the dark Waimānalo night. A soft thud was followed by a sharp cry. She scrambled out the door and ran into the darkness to find her puppy. It took an hour. She found it wet and huddled between a pile of bricks and unmixed cement powder, hiding near the unfinished swimming pool in a swamp of rainwater and toads. She put the dog under her shirt to keep it from shivering. Without a word, she walked past Tim and into the house with the dog. Its hind leg sprang up when she placed it on the bathroom counter. She gave it a warm bath and dried it with the bath towels, knowing that Tim would say something later. She didn't care.

The dog limped for weeks. She wanted to take it to the local veterinarian to check for broken bones, but Tim insisted it would be fine. He told her the puppy's leg was sprained and would heal on its own. He said the office visit to the vet would be a waste of money. The wound never entirely healed, but soon the puppy was prancing around in the tall grass again.

Tim had shared a strange story with her years earlier about his birth mother, who he called his "natural mom." His mother lived in Enchanted Lake in Kailua, after his parents had gotten divorced. Through the divorce settlement, his father won full physical custody, but Tim, his fraternal twin brother Tom, Jr., and older sister Tracie were court

ordered to visit with their mother every other weekend.

On one of their visits, when Tim was about ten, he and Tom ventured out into the back yard. It was a lush green landscape which opened up to the lake, and served as a kind of outdoor refuge for them. Early one morning, they found a pile of two-by-fours that had been dumped by a construction company. The wood had long, rusted nails protruding from both ends. They hurled the two-by-fours into the lake, seeing who could throw the fastest, most, and farthest. After about an hour, they went back into the house to watch television.

The movie *Orca* had just begun. He was mesmerized, until a wave of panic overcame him when he remembered he had thrown the two-by-fours into the “ocean” in the back yard. Terrified that the long nails in the planks would sink to the bottom and puncture Orca the whale, he rushed to his mother’s bedroom and woke her. He told her that Orca would be hurt badly or die, and that she had to call someone to remove the planks from the “ocean.”

His mother had been in a deep sleep. She lashed out at him, then wrestled him face down into the carpet. She pinned his forearms under her bent knees as she sat on his back. She rained blow upon blow down the back of his head. When she finally let him up, he could hardly catch his breath. But he was no longer crying.

He couldn’t remember where Tom or Tracie were when this happened. The story trailed off, and he never spoke of it again. But times like these made him seem so vulnerable and fragile. It almost made sense why he yelled out “fucking cunt” or “fucking bitch” at inanimate objects when he got cut, scraped, bruised, or anything beyond his control. As for his “natural” mom, when his wealthy but stingy father refused



Tim a loan, he reached out to her, but when she refused him as well, he never contacted her again, writing her off on his eighteenth birthday. It wasn't surprising that his father made "I told you so" comments even though he had also denied Tim.

\* \* \*

Tim always got what he wanted. At least, that's what he believed. When he decided he wanted her, his relentless pursuit left time for little else. He was a newly hired bus boy at Andrade's, the upscale waterfront restaurant in downtown Honolulu where she worked. When he first met her at the new hire orientation, he couldn't take his eyes off her. Later, he would always find reasons to go near the podium where she was stationed. He made numerous strides along the thoroughfare fronting the restaurant. The other busboys teased him that he had worn a path in the flooring, but Tim didn't care.

She couldn't really look elsewhere, because she had to face the entrance Tim passed through. When he became more confident, he would try to say something clever in passing. She wasn't the slightest bit interested in him. She thought he was unattractive. His wide forehead, with deep, furrowed lines, made her think of a Frankenstein-ish Jack Nicholson. When he carried the heavy bus trays loaded with tableware, his pink flesh would turn ruddy, and his sharply upturned nose made him look piggish. A gold double rope chain with crucifix tangled in the thick chest hair which strayed through the spaces between his uniform's buttons. Stubby legs and a thick build made him seem shorter than his actual six feet. And the brown polyester-blend gabardine slacks and pirate-ruffled cream shirt that made up the uniform didn't help either.

The first time Tim made a remark, she was surprised by his thick, pidgin accent. She had assumed that he was probably stationed in Hawai'i and working a side job at the

restaurant, like so many military personnel did. She hadn't expected that he would be a local boy from Waimānalo. The haole face together with a local accent grabbed her attention, and the fact that she had guessed wrong about Tim bothered her. She was usually on the mark when it came to guessing people's ethnic backgrounds, even in Hawai'i, where it was common to meet someone with five ethnicities in their bloodline. She usually guessed at least half.

What also drew her attention were the many phone calls from a desperate-sounding woman who didn't seem to care what others would think. The woman, who said she was "Chris," called three times—twice the first night, and again the next. Because answering the phone was part of working the front, she had taken all of the messages for Tim and delivered them, assuming he would return the calls.

On the first night, when she had handed him the message, he looked like a fat Cheshire cat with a smoothed, straight crease between his lips. His smile grew from temple to temple and flattened his reddish face when he saw she was making a beeline for him. Something about his smugness bothered her. An hour later, Chris called again. She walked down the disability ramp leading to the kitchen to find Tim. It was none of her business if the two were fighting, but Tim's cool, nonchalant attitude began to irritate her. To calm down, she told herself that he probably just forgot to call Chris back the first time.

The next evening, as she set up the podium with grease pencils and seating charts, someone walked through the tall, etched koa doors. The setting sun peeked through as they opened and shut briskly. She stopped squinting only when an elongated silhouette cast a shadow across her face, blocking the sun for a moment. When her eyes refocused,

she saw it was Tim.

She quickly bent downward, as if checking on the stash of toiletries, hand soap, paper goods, and menus stored below the podium that she had looked over earlier. She stayed squatting down until she was sure he had gone to the bus station. She wanted to avoid contact with him and dreaded more phone calls from Chris.

At about a quarter to eight, when there was a lull in the seating, she checked on the women's restroom. The supply of toilet seat covers that the managers called "ass gaskets" was in order. She restocked the toilet paper in each stall, checked on the soap dispensers, and wiped down the counters and basins. When she returned to the podium, Paul, the manager on duty, was no longer there. She saw him across the lounge having a soda at the bar. All reservations for 7:30 p.m. must be in. She could relax until the next group of reservations started coming in.

The restaurant was well-known for its top-notch seafood, and its bar was popular with the locals as a trendy spot to hang out and listen to live music. The indoor saltwater pools, filled with papio, slipper lobsters, and stingrays were a spectacular sight for tourists and restaurant patrons, who posed nearby to capture photos with the live sea creatures as a backdrop. The dining room offered front row seats to Kewalo Basin's beautiful sunsets and brilliantly lit cruise ships that decorated the waterfront nightly. The window tables had a long history as the celebratory place of marriage proposals, birthdays, graduations, and retirements.

Over the clang of cutlery and wares being cleared off tables and the loud ongoing buzz of conversation, she could hear the band playing the beginning chords to her favorite song by Kalapana, which echoed through the smoke-filled lounge. The singer

did a good job of singing “The Hurt,” but Mackey Feary’s velvet voice was so difficult to match.

*Oh, you say you’re mine*

*And I believe you every single time*

*Even though they say you’re not my kind*

*I just can’t believe you’d lie*

She lingered at the podium, pretending to tidy up. She really loved the song, and this would allow her to hear all of it. As she sorted the drawers and wiped down the phones, the light on line one blinked red. She picked it up. It was Chris again. The song began to fade into the background.

She politely told Chris that she would leave the message with Tim. She kept it short, and perhaps her tone put Chris off a bit since she no longer sounded like the pleading, desperate woman from the day before.

Heading towards the private banquet room where the boys congregated during down time, she found Tim sitting at a table folding dinner napkins. He looked up and flashed her a smile. She glanced down and immediately noticed a large gap between his two lower front teeth. Definitely unattractive.

“Hi, Tim, can I talk to you?” The other busboys, emphasis on the *boys*, got quiet, apart from a few snickers.

“Yeah, what’s up?”

“Can we go outside?” She pointed to the outer bus station near the banquet room exit. “Oohs” and “ahhs” erupted from the room.

“Sure.” He followed her out to the bus station and winked back at his audience.

They responded with thumbs ups and high-fives to one another.

“Tim, your girlfriend called again tonight. She said it’s urgent that you call her back.”

“She’s not my girlfriend.” He grinned.

“She sounds really desperate. I told her I gave you the messages last night. You didn’t call her?”

Tim grinned again. How could he manage a smile when Chris seemed so desperate on the phone? He seemed unconcerned, detached.

“Look, I don’t know if you know this, but personal phone calls are not allowed here. I didn’t want to sound like I was in your face about company policy last night, but you can totally get busted, even suspended, if you receive calls during your work shift. If it’s not an emergency, Paul can be a real asshole.”

“Yeah, so I heard.”

“Maybe you should call her back.”

“I’ll tell her not to call again.”

“You mean you’ll call her now?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay. I hope everything’s okay.” She headed back to the podium.

Forty-five minutes later, Chris called again.

“Hi. Are you the girl I spoke to and left a message for Tim earlier?” She sounded irritated.

“Yeah, that was me. Did he call you?”

“No, he didn’t. Did you tell him it was urgent?”

“Yes. I did. In fact, I asked him if he was gonna call you back and he said ‘yeah.’ I figured he’d have called you by now. I’m the one you left messages with the other night, too. I told him that it sounded important and urgent.” She was glad to get this information off her chest.

There was a long pause. Perhaps she shouldn’t have said anything.

“Hello?” She checked to see if she was still there.

“He still hasn’t called me back.” Chris said softly.

“Look, this is really none of my business, but I don’t want you to think I haven’t been giving him the messages, because I have. To be honest, I could get into trouble with the manager. I was just trying to help. I don’t know what more I can do besides keep telling him to call you back.”

“I’m so sorry. I never thought about getting you into trouble. I really need to talk to him, but I don’t want to go to the restaurant and look like I’m stalking him. I’m sorry for getting you involved, but can you *please* ask him to call me again?”

“Can you hold the line? If the manager picks up, tell him you’re holding for a guest. I’ll have Tim answer from the kitchen.”

“Thank you so much. I really appreciate this.” Chris sounded relieved.

“Okay, hold on. Don’t hang up.”

She headed down the disability ramp to the kitchen on a mission. Tim wasn’t there. She looked across the restaurant’s split-level landscape and caught a glimpse of the waiter Tim was partnered with for the evening. She walked briskly toward the banquet room, where she found Tim talking to the other wait help. She stood at the entrance. Tim looked up and saw her. She held an imaginary phone receiver to her head.

Tim frowned. She gestured for him to come over. At this, the guys jeered and whistled as he made his way towards her. This was sickening. Immature men, in their pirate getups. And Tim seemed to enjoy it.

“She’s on the phone. Take the call in the kitchen.”

“What? *Who?*” He asked in a hushed voice.

“Chris. She’s on the phone.”

“What does she want?”

“Why don’t you ask her?” She was irritated at being involved—and that Tim was still standing there.

“Fuck. I told her not to call here. I can’t believe she called again.”

“Did you call her back earlier?”

Tim didn’t answer.

“It sounds really important.”

Silence.

“I asked her if it was an emergency. She said it’s not, but close to one. She called three times before this. Why didn’t you call her back?”

Tim didn’t answer again.

“I promised her I would get you on the line. I don’t want your girlfriend to think I’m not giving you the messages.”

“She’s not my girlfriend.” Tim smiled. The earlier wave of panic that had shown itself across the cracks of his forehead disappeared.

“Well, *whatever* she is, *whoever* she is, she’s waiting on line one. If she’s saying it’s urgent, it *must* be.”

“It’s not.” The smug look on his battered face made her uneasy.

“Go to the back office in the kitchen and pick up the line from there. I told her I was going to get you. Just make sure you don’t stay on too long because the line lights up at the front desk phone too.”

Tim remained silent, staring at her. He made her nervous. Then he smiled, shaking his head as she walked away. She expected to hear his footsteps closely behind hers, since the podium was on the pathway to the ramp that led to the kitchen. But she didn’t. Turning around, she saw Tim’s back as he returned to the banquet room. She immediately followed him and found him back in the same chair folding napkins. Furious, she announced loudly that his girlfriend was on line one. That would teach him to fuck with her.

The boys taunted, “Ooh, busted!” He got up, red-faced, and walked quickly towards the podium. He picked up the receiver and hung it up without saying a word, then walked hurriedly past her towards the banquet room, avoiding eye contact. She reached out and grabbed at his elbow.

“Hey, I know it’s none of my business, but you should really call her. She’s been waiting for days to talk to you.”

Instead of telling her to butt out, he stared at her face, then down towards her necklace. His eyes paused at the white gold diamond cross pendant for a brief moment, and then went further down her chest. He smiled without saying a word.

“Tim, she’s gonna call back. I don’t wanna keep promising her that you’re gonna call her.”

“Don’t.”



“So what, then? Are you gonna call her back or not? I’m gonna be the one who has to answer the phone again. I don’t want to be involved. Take some responsibility!”

“It’s not important. Trust me, it’s not important.” He seemed confident.

“You said that already. Look, what if it *is* an emergency?”

“Trust me, it’s not an emergency.” He seemed so sure.

“How do you know?”

“Because.”

“Oh, so you already know what she’s calling about?”

“No.”

“No? Then how do you know it’s not an emergency? What if it is? Your girlfriend sounds desperate and you don’t even seem to care.” She was now totally involved—she couldn’t stop herself.

“Then she can call 9-1-1.” His deep, loud laugh unnerved her.

“What a creep,” she thought to herself. The look on her face must have told him this, because he stopped laughing immediately.

She wanted to smack him across the jaw, but held back. And besides, her mouth always did a better job than her small fists did. She knew how to put people in their place with her sharp tongue.

“And she’s *not* my girlfriend,” Tim reminded her. As if this information mattered.

“Oh, I see. Well, what if she’s calling because she’s *pregnant*?”

“*Pregnant*? Huh? Did she say that?” Tim suddenly looked worried.

“No, but what would 9-1-1 do for her if she tells them she’s pregnant?” Her

sarcasm made his smirk disappear.

“Did she *say* she was pregnant?”

“Don’t know. Don’t care. That’s *your* business and *your* problem. Maybe you would know by now if you had called her back.”

“Nah, she’s not. Cannot be.”

“‘Cannot be,’ huh? And you’re sure about that, huh? And how would you know this if you haven’t called her back yet?”

“Because she’s not. I know she’s not.”

“Oh, really?” She was now seething.

“Yup. Trust me, she’s not. She’s just being a psycho bitch. There’s no emergency.”

“*Psycho bitch*, huh?” She hated him.

“Yup.”

“Well, did you sleep with her?”

She knew she was investing way too much in this asshole’s concerns, but his smugness made her beyond testy. She didn’t like him, and she hated what he was calling a woman he obviously had a relationship with. She knew by now that most “psycho bitches” were usually the byproduct of some jerk.

Tim was speechless as he stared at the petite 5’4” Korean girl. He seemed to be impressed with her forwardness.

“Hmmm. So, she’s not your girlfriend, huh? And she can’t be pregnant either?”

“Nope.”

“So, if she’s *not* your girlfriend, it’s *not* an emergency, and she *can’t* be pregnant,

then I wonder why she keeps calling. Must be something pretty urgent.”

“It’s not.” Tim smiled.

“Really? And you know this because—”

“She’s not.” He interrupted.

“Well, I’ve got news for you. If you sleep with someone, you can get her pregnant.”

Tim looked down at her cross pendant, smiling. He didn’t reply. She felt hot blood rush to her face. As she headed up the stairs to the podium, she muttered under her breath.

“Fucking asshole.”

\* \* \*

*When I was just a little girl,*

*I asked my mother, ‘What will I be?*

*Will I pretty? Will I be rich?’*

*Here’s what she said to me . . .*

At bedtime, her mother who she lovingly referred to as “Umma,” often sang this song to her. When she got to the “que sera sera” bit, Umma always nailed the “r”s with her heavily Korean-accented English. Umma was her first true love and best friend, who sometimes betrayed her.

The first betrayal had been when Umma left her in the care of “Harmony,” her mother-in-law who she mistakenly assumed would not mistreat her own grandchild. After all, when they lived in Korea, Harmony had showed no signs of cruelty towards her older granddaughters, especially around Umma’s family, so they received the nurturing

they needed. The girls were also already school-aged when the family arrived in Hawai‘i, so they didn’t have Harmony’s anger and frustration directed at them.

Umma’s own mother had died of a stroke when Umma was just fifteen and Umma’s father lovingly doted on her and her brothers. When he remarried, he even chose a woman unable to bear children, to prevent Umma and her brothers from being mistreated. So Umma simply assumed that all families were loving and supportive.

In Hawai‘i, Umma became the first victim of Harmony’s abuse and assumed her role as the subservient daughter-in-law. But at a huge cost. By age thirty-two, Umma had lost most of her hearing and doctors couldn’t figure out why. Some said it was because of frail health. She had lost over thirty pounds in the first three years of immigrating to Hawai‘i while working as a hotel housekeeper in Waikīkī. Others said it was from inner nerve damage so deep that it was neither visible nor detectable despite medical advances. Still, others blamed heredity. Umma, though, believed her deafness was caused by the constant berating and screaming of her overbearing mother-in-law.

Umma had always dreamed big. In Korea, at a time when it was uncommon for women to attend college, Umma’s affluent family made her a rare exception. But in Hawai‘i, that precious college diploma was flushed down the hotel room toilets she cleaned largely to escape the nightmare of a mother-in-law. Dreams of becoming a grade school teacher were dashed when it became clear that the hearing loss was permanent and would increase with age. Withdrawn and depressed after this devastating news, and desperate to escape Harmony’s wrath, Umma listened to her well-meaning friends and applied for work as a part-time hotel housekeeper.

The ringing in Umma’s damaged ears had been a constant reminder of her

disability, so when the hotel called to tell her she'd been hired, she beamed at her youngest daughter with eyes that had come back to life. At the hotel, her friends told her that there was a shine to her and that she looked "alive" again. The temporary housekeeping job stretched from the planned six months into eighteen long years. Besides, the hotel provided excellent medical benefits for the entire family—something her husband's job didn't.

What Umma didn't know until years later after Harmony had died, was that she hadn't been the only victim of the woman's fierce temper. Assuming her youngest child was safe in her mother-in-law's care, Umma had no idea that her daughter's wailing was actually a cry of fear, rather than a complaint about being left behind. Every morning, she had to distract her tiny daughter so that she could make her getaway to work. Her three-year-old would stand on the dining table, hands bracing the window as her tiny face peered between jalousies, cheeks stained with tears. Umma would sit in the car and wonder if there was something wrong with her youngest child. It was abnormal to be so attached. She had no idea that as soon as they left the driveway, the toddler standing atop the dining table would be sprawled on the floor, rattled from a blow to the head.

*"Shi-ku-ruh! Shung-nu-ma!"* Harmony swore and told her to shut up. Her parents were gone and her older sisters were already at school. There was no one to rescue her. So she cried and screamed, kicked and bit, even though she knew what the consequences would be.

Some of the neighbors may have sensed something was wrong, and might have even wanted to help, but they were afraid of getting involved. Mr. and Mrs. Horiuchi, who lived next door, bowed to Harmony on their way to work. When Harmony would

sigh and shrug at them in a knowing way, they seemed sympathetic. They had two children close in age to Harmony's grandchildren, and they knew what it could be like to deal with an unruly child. They had even witnessed the child on her knees in her pajamas, crying and banging on the front door. They barely missed a step on their way to the car, always avoiding eye contact. Although the small girl would sometimes be locked out for hours, even the gardeners would pretend they didn't see her. So she had to learn how to survive.

She mistakenly assumed Umma and her father knew about the abuse, but allowed it because she somehow deserved it. Later she learned that their inattention to the bruises, cuts, and scrapes that marked her body, then faded, and then reappeared, was because they thought she was in a tomboy phase. But the abuse also left invisible, but more permanent marks.

Umma grasped to make sense of her daughter's abuse by saying that it was probably because she resembled her paternal aunt, who they later found out had also been abused by Harmony. Or perhaps Harmony had been under a lot of stress from the hardships of moving to a new country and did it as a way of coping. She even said they should feel sorry for Harmony because she had not been well-liked. Whatever the reason, it was obvious to her that the kind, cookie-baking grandmothers were on T.V. shows. Real-life ones screamed and hit.

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Umma also accepted some responsibility for her own misery because she had been partially responsible for the family's move to the United States. But her husband had been a true victim of circumstance—or at least it seemed that way. Because he grew

up apart from his family, he had not experienced the love Umma had from her family. Harmony's brother-in-law, the older and only sibling of her husband, had been a high-ranking military officer whose wife was barren. Because Harmony's son was the only male offspring to carry on the family lineage, filial duty forced her to give him up to her in-laws.

During the Korean War, Harmony's brother-in-law commissioned a beautiful European style mansion where she and her husband lived with her son and in-laws. When her son was about two years old, Harmony gave birth to a daughter and they moved away shortly afterward, leaving her firstborn with his adoptive parents. The longing Harmony felt for her only son left a huge void. She compensated in part by lashing out at her daughter. This went on for years, but her son never knew—or didn't notice. As a result, his sister's stories about him were always peppered with backhanded compliments or sarcasm, fueled by her resentment at being abused.

As if to make up for the loss of having given him up as a child, Harmony took extra care in providing him with expensive suits and clothing as an adult. Spoiled and unmarried at thirty, he was by Korean standards well past marrying age. His sister said he had been one of Korea's top three eligible bachelors in his prime. He was also a bit of a playboy, and in no rush to settle down.

Life in Korea for him was far from miserable, and he was more than satisfied with it. After a brief stint at law school, he'd found his niche in broadcast journalism. His success was unrivaled in the Korean Broadcasting Station's newsroom, and the nation embraced him as the Peter Jennings of Korea.

Only later did his youngest daughter understand the significance of the black-and-

white photos housed in dozens of photo albums and boxes at home. They revealed that he'd rubbed elbows with high profile politicians, diplomats, and even celebrities. There was even one photo of her young father holding a microphone up to Richard Nixon at his first inauguration as President of the United States. While growing up, she looked to her father as just her dad, but even in Hawai'i they would sometimes have to stop because someone asked him for an autograph.

Harmony had been desperate for grandchildren and spent three years scouring the cities and countryside for a suitable wife for her son. Already thirty, he seemed to have no real intentions of getting married. Day after day, she brought home pictures of eligible women. Uninterested, her son sprawled on the sofa, tossed each photo back onto the coffee table as quickly as it was handed to him. But on the day Harmony brought Umma's picture to him, he reportedly sat up, inspected the studio picture for a several minutes, then made a beeline for his coat and said "let's go."

Having finally caught his attention, Harmony worked quickly, campaigning fervently to convince Umma's family that he would be a good match because of his celebrity, even if journalism wasn't considered a traditional profession. At the time, Umma had already received more than a dozen proposals, and was being courted by a doctor. This didn't stop Harmony. If anything, it sparked a competitive fire in her that put everyone on edge. Unrelenting, Harmony visited Umma's home every day for months. Eventually, Umma's family caved in and accepted the offer.

The move to the United States had been the rare combined effort of Harmony, Umma, and her sister-in-law. They had not consulted the girls' father about pursuing an American Dream, and by the time he'd voiced his concerns, it was too late. They had



already sold the house and submitted the paperwork necessary to immigrate. His sister sponsored the family's move to Hawai'i since she had already immigrated and become a naturalized citizen, thanks to her arranged marriage to a Hawai'i-born Korean. Harmony had paid a matchmaker, apparently wanting to put geographic distance between her daughter and the man she was in love with in Korea. Harmony had controlled her daughter's life well into adulthood and was now controlling her son's.

The girls' Korean American uncle, a car sales executive at one of the biggest dealerships in town, barely said more than a sentence to them whenever they visited their aunt's house in Nu'uano. He seemed indifferent about their visits, but hardly ever allowed his younger daughter Grace to spend the night at their house, fearing she'd catch cold or get sick. He didn't speak Korean, and he didn't have much in common with anyone from his wife's family. His own mother lived downstairs in their grand home. She was rumored to be as abusive to her daughter-in-law as Harmony was to Umma.

As for the girls' father, he spent most of his adult life in Hawai'i being taken advantage of. He tried his hand at several odd jobs in painting and construction. The work was brutal for someone with no labor experience. Knowing he faced a dead end in physically challenging fields, he attended classes at Honolulu Community College to gain certification for general maintenance. He found employment at the non-union Outrigger Hotels as a maintenance technician, but continued attending evening classes to eventually become one of only two licensed Korean electricians in Hawai'i.

Perhaps because of his media background, everything for him was always about presentation and making an impression. As a result, he tended to put everyone else first before considering the feelings of his own family. Even at his youngest daughter's

birthday celebrations, she had to wait until her uncle, aunt, and cousins had served themselves, and wait for the table spinner to stop at her. Occasionally, guests outside of the family would insist that because she was the honored person, she should choose first what she wanted to eat. Her father dismissed such nonsense by saying it didn't matter.

Another time, when they went to Dr. and Mrs. Kim's home for Christmas in Kāhala, her sisters were given cards with money, while she received a porcelain china tea set. Her cousin Grace received a bright blue mu'umu'u, but disappointed, Grace began crying during the party. All of a sudden, her tea set was in Grace's hands and the dress was in hers. Her father told her to thank them for the dress. Though she felt like crying now herself, she knew better. Mrs. Kim promised to bring another china tea set to her. But when she asked about it later, Umma kept telling her "*bumbye*"—a stupid word she hated, and that she'd once thought was Korean.

Umma sometimes followed her father's lead in putting others before their own children. The second betrayal from Umma had happened when she was about eight. Umma had given her a miniature lacquered jewelry chest etched with mother-of-pearl design, complete with vanity mirror. She fell in love with it immediately, but a few days later, Umma took it back and gave it to Grace because she had forgotten to purchase a birthday gift for her. Umma promised to replace the chest with another one, but as the weeks passed, whenever she asked about the chest, she was told "*bumbye*." Clearly, it meant "later," or "maybe," as she'd heard it often when asking for something. She eventually forgot about it, only remembering it years later, when she saw it collecting dust in a storage room at her aunt's house. She was tempted to take it back, but knew it had never really been hers. Umma had met her obligation to others, but hadn't kept her

promise to her own daughter.

Her aunt and her Korean American cousin also became sources of pain. Her father showed no signs of knowing how much his sister still resented him, speaking affectionately about her while she complained about him to anyone who would listen at church gatherings or outings with other Punahou School moms. His youngest child, though, felt the effects. When she was about five, her aunt had taken her to a luncheon at China House Restaurant at Ala Moana Shopping Center. She was introduced to a table full of unfamiliar faces as “the daughter of my good-for-nothing brother.” She wanted to hide under the tablecloth as the ladies squirmed uncomfortably at her aunt’s remark. Draping smiles across their faces, they darted their eyes away. She adored her father, and didn’t understand what her aunt meant. But she felt the sting.

After a while, she learned that she apparently was good-for-nothing too. When she was six years-old, her aunt took her and Grace to a special Korean opera performance. At Kennedy Theatre, they met up with her aunt’s best friend and her ten-year-old daughter Melanie. Melanie had brought nail polish in her purse and convinced her to paint her nails during the concert. Sitting in the dark, they giggled softly, relying on the limited stage lighting to guide their inexperienced hands as they took turns painting each digit. Grace, who was six months older than her, held an index finger to her lips and shot a disapproving look at them. Grace later said that her mother hadn’t intervened because she felt her niece didn’t know better manners. This remark not only made her feel inferior, but also made her wonder if her aunt had said anything about Melanie, whom she often boasted about, as if she were her own daughter.

Her aunt's abusive treatment became fully obvious to her when she turned eight.

After attending service at Korean Christian Church in Liliha, they'd returned to her aunt's beautiful Nu‘uanu home nestled in the foothills off the Pali Highway. It was always a treat to visit. Koa bastions supported the upper deck of their two-storey, four bedroom, two kitchen, three-and-a-half bath home, complete with hard wood floors, manicured Japanese gardens, and a family dog. She envied her cousin’s pink carpet and custom wood carved princess furniture, and the breathtaking mountain views from her picture windows.

While her aunt prepared lunch, they roller skated downstairs on the cement deck. When her aunt came downstairs to collect them, she stopped for a moment and peered closely, as if examining her.

“Do you know you can neh-vah be preh-jident of United States?”

She thought her aunt was asking a riddle. Was it because she was too young? Or perhaps it was because she was a girl. She didn’t know. She shook her head.

Her aunt walked toward Grace and pulled her close.

“But you see, my Grace, she can be anything she wants. Even preh-jident of United States. Do you wanna know why?”

Now she was even more confused. Grace was hardly a year older than she was, and also a girl. But she knew from past experience that her aunt's questions usually led to a monologue, so she didn’t answer.

“Well, you see,” her aunt continued, “my Grace, she is an Ameh-ree-cuhn cee-tee-zen. And you—well, you are just immigrant.”

The words cut like a knife. Even at eight, Grace liked to distinguish herself from her immigrant relatives as someone assimilated to Hawai‘i culture and western ways.

Since Grace's father didn't speak Korean and had also grown up with local kids, his daughter's exposure to the language was limited except for the times his wife spoke to other Koreans in their presence. Grace blended in with the Americanized kids of local D.O.E. teachers who sent them to Japanese school, as if trying to prove they hadn't forgotten their roots. Years later, though, the irony became obvious. While her Korean aunt and Korean American cousin were trying to blend in with the A.J.A.'s, those same families were for the most part desperately trying to find acceptance from the haoles who'd interned some of their parents in camps during the war.

Her aunt never accepted the idea that her youngest niece was capable of anything. Even after she had graduated from high school, a typical phone conversation between her and her aunt went like this:

“Is your mother home?”

“No.”

“Is your father home?”

“No.”

“What about your sisters?”

“No.”

“Okay. I'll call back.”

She always found out the reason for these calls was because plans for a family gathering had been altered, but her aunt never considered her trustworthy enough to take a message.

\* \* \*

She remembered sitting in her father's lap, watching *Gilligan's Island*, while Umma cooked in the kitchen. He would look admiringly at his daughters, and shout to

Umma almost daily: “Don’t we have the best-looking girls?” This was one of the memories she’d had of her father being nice.

The family photo albums had many pictures of just the two of them. She would always be on his shoulders with a McDonald’s apple pie clutched in her hand. If the apple pie was missing, Umma would explain that she’d probably already eaten it, or that her father hadn’t taken her to get one yet.

A small stuffed rabbit with wired ears, in red pinstriped pants and a powder blue tuxedo coat with tails, much like a character from *Alice in Wonderland*, sat on her dresser. She had been on her father’s shoulders at Moanalua Shopping Center when they had passed by the Kress Store. The rabbit was high up in the window. If she hadn’t been on his shoulders, she never would have seen it. She stopped her father and pointed. He took her into the store and got her the rabbit, then went to McDonald’s to get an apple pie.

But many memories of her father were clouded by his yelling and swearing at Umma. Once upon a time, long ago, according to Umma, the marriage hadn’t always been this way. Umma said her husband had doted on her in the beginning of their marriage. Umma believed Harmony’s influence had negatively impacted them as a young couple. She said Harmony was probably jealous, which might have been why she was more forgiving of her husband’s emotional abuse than of her mother-in-law’s.

Growing up, she remembered lots of yelling and arguments between her parents and Harmony. Her father came home drunk quite often. When he didn’t come home, Umma would pack all three girls into the car, and drive around Ke‘eaumoku late at night. Most of the time, they found him. The times they didn’t, she and her sisters would hear

the late night sound of crickets as they climbed out of the back seat of the car while they watched Umma fumble with the keys at the door. Those nights left her feeling scared and helpless.

\* \* \*

He was tall, athletic, and very handsome. She was only four, but she knew she was destined to marry him. There was a lot to be learned from an older man, and she watched him every day to gain a better understanding of who he was.

Troy was six. His family lived in the same Salt Lake complex as hers. Because her apartment was perpendicular to the roadway, and because the walkways were narrow between the buildings, the set up was ideal, providing her a discreet way to stand guard behind the glass sliding door, watching for any oncoming road and foot traffic, and especially for signs of Troy. She made countless treks across the pea-green carpet to the kitchen, where two white curtains were drawn against the rear glass door. She would peek through the opening where the two drapes met, slightly rustling the fabric. She never wondered if her silhouette might be visible.

The wooden RCA blared *M\*A\*S\*H's* theme song "Suicide is Painless" and faint chattering in Korean could be heard by passersby. If she was lucky enough to catch Troy passing, she would hold her breath and stand very still, hoping to mask the pounding of her heart. Once he cleared the walkway, she would peer through the dining room's slightly opened jalousies and watch him until he disappeared to the other side of her home. Initially that was her only glimpse of him, but with time, she mastered seeing him twice. After he passed the dining room, she would count seven seconds, then run to the next window, continuing to watch him until he was no longer visible. She perfected her

timing and choreography. Only she could do the “window dance.”

Her sisters attended the same school as Troy and his older brother Sol. As a preschool dropout, she didn't have many friends in the neighborhood. The girls her age who didn't attend preschool were only interested in stupid dolls. The big kids in the complex ruled. The younger kids followed them and did what they were told. At kickball and shambattle games, they watched from the sidelines.

Every day after school, the big kids played ball behind her apartment until the sun set or their mothers called them in for dinner. Surveillance at the sliding glass door began at 2:30 p.m., just before her sisters returned home from school. As soon as she saw the outline of the pair, she frantically ran to the bathroom to get herself ready for the big game. While they were completing their homework, she went into a frenzy of preparation.

She was somewhat obsessive. Idiosyncratic hair brushing—fifty times to the left of the part, fifty times to the right. Symmetrical motions when brushing teeth. Counting chews before swallowing. Tallying steps from point A to point B. The need to have things placed back in the same spot from where they came. Her sisters concluded that she was a weirdo, but not a brat.

The only thing they had in common with her apparently was a love for kickball and shambattle. She had appointed herself the official runner to fetch the ball when it went out of bounds. She also considered herself the foreman who represented the younger kids. She didn't know if anyone else shared the thought, but it didn't matter. She was the one with sisters in the game, so she expected reverence from everyone in the little kid forum, and especially those younger or new to the neighborhood.



If the ball flew or ricocheted toward her, she would instinctively cradle her head under her elbows, but then immediately gain back her composure in front of the others. Then she would run to retrieve the ball as fast as she could. She wanted to impress Troy, to show him how fast she could run. When sprinting to the ball, she would fantasize that Troy was the team captain, and that he had chosen her to play alongside him. After returning the game ball, she resumed her seat along the sidelines—the sidewalk, actually—with the younger kids.

Troy paid her no attention unless she took longer than usual to retrieve the ball. The few times it had happened, he would yell at her to hurry up. She never took it personally. She assumed his frustration was from the game and not at her.

The older kids rested when she was chasing the stray balls. They lay on the grass, panting and heaving, trying to catch their breath. Troy would be the only player still standing—back hunched over, arms straight, hands on knees, neck outstretched, and razor sharp eyes watching for the ball's return. His beet red face and wet, pokey hair made him look like an angry hedgehog. He would glare at her aggressively, almost as if ready to attack. She didn't care. She knew she wasn't to blame for the ball going out of bounds.

One day, though, her sisters finished their homework before she was ready. She told them to go ahead and that she would meet them there. Thinking this was just another one of her episodic moments, they left her behind. She returned to the bathroom and checked that every strand of hair was in place. She brushed her teeth, then her tongue, as her sisters had shown her. Determined to make a grand entrance, today she would show Troy what he was failing to appreciate.

She went to her bedroom and shut the door. She stripped off the clothes draped on the extra dining chair stored in her room and tossed them onto the bed. She then dragged the heavy chair into the closet, bracing it against the closet doors. Climbing onto the back of the chair, she reached up to the highest shelf for the shoebox which contained her prized pink slippers which were given to her as a birthday gift. Though a defiant tomboy, these pink pretties somehow appealed to her. The buttery-soft suede petals of the oversized flowers adorning the thong straps on each side made her heart race. The tags were still attached, and the box smelled of rubber cement glue.

She snuck into the living room. Umma was in the kitchen cooking. Reaching into the black lacquer *chang*, the Korean hutch adorned with mother-of-pearl etching, she stole the scissors she was not allowed to touch. Locking her bedroom door, she cut the tags off and stepped into the slippers. She stared at her reflection. Cousin It from the *Addams Family*, dressed in khaki Dickies and pink slippers, stared back. She was ready.

When she reached the field, the teams had already been chosen. The children's pecking order was based on athletic ability. The strongest and best boy players were the most revered. This meant that Sol and the other boy were always the team captains. After a five-time *jun-ken-po*, the winner made the first selection, then alternated with the other captain until all of the good boy players were chosen.

The next picks were from the "not-so-bad" girls category. Sol always chose her oldest sister first. He liked her and everyone knew it. She was proud that her sisters didn't belong to the "leftovers" group. These kids were only slightly bigger than her, but because they were older, they were allowed to play. She pitied the "leftovers," without really having any understanding of what pity was. Though not even a leftover yet, she

believed she was respected because her sisters were.

While the politics went on among the big kids, she was caught in a whirlwind of planning the debut of her pink slippers. But no one seemed to notice she was there until the ball went out of bounds. Everyone waited for its return, but she didn't budge and remained by the edge of the grass. She sat near the prisoner's den behind Troy's opposing team with her legs outstretched, showcasing her slippers. She knew Troy would eventually be beamed by the hard-flying ball and fail to catch it as he often did. Sooner or later, he would be held captive near where she was sitting. Finally, Sol ran past her after the wayward ball.

As the game went on, some of the other kids her age took turns running after the stray ball. Each time one of them ran past her, she felt annoyed that they were so eager to take her place and shine in the spotlight. She kept waiting to hear something about her pink beauties, but she didn't.

After a while, the buzz began to wear off. Troy didn't notice her or her slippers. The den was still empty and no one paid her any attention. The sun was high and hot on her head and back. She swatted at the gnats flying into her nose and eyes. Finally, she moved to her usual shady area on the sideline with the younger kids. No one said anything. Troy still hadn't noticed her. Perhaps he was shy or embarrassed. She had never really spoken to Troy, except in her mind. She had only heard his voice a few times, when he was arguing with the older kids, or yelling at her to hurry up when retrieving the ball.

She was extremely shy, especially with the older kids. She only spoke to her sisters, and even then, only if Troy wasn't nearby. If her sisters spoke to her and heads

turned in her direction, she only nodded yes, shook no, or shrugged an I-don't-know. She didn't have the courage to say anything, in fear of sounding idiotic to Troy.

The game continued on, but she grew restless, since her slippers had still gone unnoticed. She stood up, stretched her legs and returned back to the prisoner's den. Just then, Troy got beamed in the back and was captured by the other team. He winced as he walked toward her. She smiled at him, but he looked away. She admired Troy from behind. His hair glistened, like the black lacquered coffee table and hutch Harmony had brought from Korea. The game went on longer than usual, but no one on his team made a rescue attempt, despite his shouts to throw him the ball so that he could counterattack from behind. He grew restless, shaking his head and spitting into the grass. Then it happened. When he turned toward her, she was sure he was going to say something about her slippers.

“Wot?! Wha’chu looking at? No look at me, stoopid,” he said.

At first, she didn't feel the sting of his words since she was too overcome by the shock of his acknowledgment. Then a low, guttural growl came from his diaphragm as his contorted face turned into shades of pink, then crimson.

“Wot? You cannot speak English? I talking to you, dummy.”

She didn't answer. Fear, then panic struck. Her once outstretched legs with slippers dangling were now bent at the knees close to her chest.

She felt as if the red rubber ball had stung her face with a heavy blow. Pins and needles traveled to the nape of her neck and her hair stood on end. Her sisters were miles away, enthralled in the game. Troy had been forgotten in the prisoner's den and left to rot. Only the younger kids heard Troy berating her. He was on a roll.

“Eh, stoopid. I wen ask you one ques’chun. You no unnastand English? You bettah ansah me. No stay ova hea. Go by da little keeds. You no b’long ova hea.”

She still didn’t answer.

“You really stoopid, yeah?”

The crowd of little kids watched and listened as Troy pummeled her with his words. She could sense their shock and fear, but hers was more profound. She knew they were probably smiling inside. The primping she had done, and her pink slippers, hadn’t gone over well.

Frozen, she stared down at her lap. Finally, she spoke.

“I’m not stupid.”

“Wha’chu sed, stoopid? No tink you can make anykine and stay whe’eva you like? Go ova dea, I said!” He motioned towards where the younger kids had been before they came to watch.

She kept her head down.

“I said ‘go!’ Scram! Beat it! You bettah go, befo’ I kick yo’ ass!”

She jumped to her feet and went in the opposite direction away from the game. She headed home—at first walking briskly, then sprinting at full pace. The tears she had fought for what seemed an eternity now streamed down her face. Some teardrops fell on the pink petals of her slippers. The clouds of dirt she kicked up on the way home muddied the straps, a brownish gray staining the leather’s pink finish. By the time she reached the screen door, she was sobbing uncontrollably. Fury burned through her chest.

She charged into the kitchen and interrupted her mother’s chopping of vegetables.

“*Umma! Umma! Ba-lee-wah!*”

At first, Umma was frightened. She looked closely for signs of injury or blood. When she couldn't find any, she held her closely, comforting her. She hugged Umma back tightly and took in a long breath of her scent—the same one permeating the closet of dresses where she often hid when Umma was away. Umma soothed her, gently stroking her hair to calm her down. When she could finally speak, Umma listened intently to the tiny voice in broken Korean. Then, wiping her hands on her apron and untying it from her neck, Umma took her by the hand and flung the screen door open with full force.

They headed back to the ball field.

*“Yeh-neh-dur-ah! Ba-lee-wah! Chib-u-ro ba-lee-ka!”*

She had unleashed a dragon in Umma. Her sisters immediately complied and abruptly walked off the field even though they had no idea what had happened. Obediently, they walked behind Umma without speaking. A soft hush stirred among the crowd of shocked kids. They had always known the girls' mother to be pleasant and soft-spoken. As Umma headed home with the three of them in tow, she looked back to see Sol shove Troy. Some of the other kids had told him what Troy had said to her earlier. When they reached their home, no further words were said. Her sisters took out the Monopoly game, and played until Umma finished preparing dinner. Her father came home shortly after. Even though it seemed like a catastrophic event to her, no one said anything to him. Dinner was pleasant. Her sisters talked about their day at school and their friends, apparently having forgotten the episode on the ball field.

She saw Troy sometimes in high school. He hung out with the other Japanese boys in auto mechanics classes and car clubs. When they passed each other in the hallways, he would always smile at her, but she walked quickly past him, careful

to avoid eye contact. Her pink slippers left her feeling ashamed, but he must not have remembered.

She didn't see Troy again until several years after high school. When visiting her parents one day, she saw him tucked under an orange Toyota stained with grease marks across his arms and shirt. He rolled out from under the car and sat up, flashing a wide grin. She coolly looked away. Not in her league. But she did notice that he had grown facial hair and a beer belly to match.

\* \* \*

When she began puberty, her developing breasts and menstrual period seemed to make her father distance himself from her. She no longer sat in his lap or jumped into bed with him in the early morning hours to cuddle in his warmth. Her father was hardly home now and often out working or drinking with his friends. She argued with Umma quite often. When Umma changed to the less physically demanding night shift at the hotel, she began staying out with her friends late at night knowing Umma wouldn't be able to control her. While her father disapproved of her comings and goings, he was never around to stop her. He said she was hanging out with low-class kids, and that her older sisters had known better. She thought this was interesting, since her friends were from the neighborhood and theirs were from 'Iolani and Punahou. Wasn't it his fault, then, for allowing the family to live in Salt Lake and not in a better district?

Although many of her friends began having sex with their boyfriends early on, she stayed out of relationships. Unsure of herself, she soon began questioning her relationship with God and her purpose in life. She called herself a Christian and attended two churches—one American, the other Korean, but she often found herself at odds with

Sunday School teachers. Disliking the hypocrisy at church, her high expectations of others soon got the better of her and she stopped going altogether.

Schoolwork. That was easy. She'd even been one of the guinea pigs for the Gifted and Talented pilot program they launched at her grade school. But in middle school, things changed. Favoritism and cliques among D.O.E. teachers and their co-workers' kids became obvious. She, along with other students, were removed from advanced classes to make room for teachers' kids—and waitlisted even though more deserving than the D.O.E. offspring.

Her first cigarette was in the sixth grade when the new girl taught her and her friends how to French inhale and look cool doing it. At fifteen, her first taste of alcohol had been a stolen sip of her father's Crème d' Menthe, kept in the black lacquered hutch in their living room. Then it was Root Beer Schnapps, followed by Bacardi. In high school, her best friend turned her on to pot. Unlike the other girls, she preferred it to drinking, although she didn't like falling asleep and having to ask friends what she'd missed the night before.

She actually waited a long time before her first experience with sex. She was nineteen, but she'd met him during her junior year at Moanalua High. He was a senior and the football captain at Mililani High School. She wasn't interested when they first met, but he pursued her. Her friends kept saying she was a fool not to respond to his advances, but she didn't find herself attracted to the pretty-boy looks, long wavy locks, and chiseled chin because of his over-the-top self-confidence. But she finally gave in. They looked right together.

They dated for about a year, without doing anything beyond kissing. He would



skip his last class, drive to Salt Lake, pick her up, and then take her down the one-mile stretch of Ala Ilima Street to her apartment. His puppy dog demeanor made her mean. Though she didn't intend to be cruel, sometimes she was. She would tell him not to come, but since he was friends with some of the Moanalua football boys and hung out with them on the weekends, if she was being a bitch, he made the most of his drive and hung out with his football buddies.

When they finally had sex, it was after she graduated high school. It had been her decision. He had asked, but never forced her. He was about to go back to college on the mainland. They went to his house when no one was home. His father worked as a contractor for the Army and was traveling all the time. His mother lived in Korea with a new husband.

Though a menacing six-foot two and a hefty two-hundred-twenty pounds, on the inside, her boyfriend was a softy. He was so excited when she agreed to go to his house. She had never seen him entirely naked, and hadn't really known what to expect. When she first saw him, shock was her initial response. His huge body had a tiny, Vienna sausage of a penis. But she was a virgin, so even that Vienna sausage hurt her. A lot.

The non-stop flow of blood and the red carpet stain didn't seem to bother him. He got a pail of soapy water and scrub brush and cleaned up the blood from the white carpet. It hadn't been what she'd expected. She'd gotten A's in her health and guidance sex education classes, but thought that the placement of the penis was much like a hot dog in a bun. She didn't know it penetrated into the vagina.

That was the first and only time she had sex with the football captain from Mililani. Then she met Allen, this time a former football captain from 'Aiea High

School. Again, she hadn't been interested, but she seemed to attract exactly what her father had warned her to stay away from. Many of her friends' fathers told them to stay away from certain races or ethnicities, but her father told her to stay away from guys with fat necks. Since she hadn't taken her father seriously for years, she didn't ask him what he meant by it. Years later, her sister translated. He'd wanted her to stay away from jocks.

Sex with Allen was better and more fun. Though he wasn't as attractive as her first, his sexual prowess made up for his looks. But he she was mean to him too, often fitting him into her late night outings with girlfriends, being dropped off at his apartment for a late-night fuck, then leaving in the morning. But she soon left him, and didn't look back.

By twenty-one, she seemed to have gained a confidence that was lacking in her younger years. But it was built on sand. On the surface she was carefree, but she remained troubled. At one point, she had sex with someone who had been an admirer since middle school. By high school, she knew that many girls worshipped the surfer dude she had rejected so many times. So she made him another conquest, having casual sex with him from time to time, but cutting him off when he got too clingy.

\* \* \*

She had been dating Eric for a long eight years. She had met him right after they had graduated from high school the same year. The relationship was good, but Eric's indecisiveness cost them a lot of money and time, which she no longer felt she could afford. When they were younger and partied, his lack of ambition was not a problem. They were young and in love, and that was all that mattered. She figured they would

wind up on the same page about goals later.

She was still in love with him when she had taken the second restaurant job at Andrade's. Eric had been voted Mr. Pearl City in his high school when he was a junior. This made a lot of the seniors envious because he had surpassed them in athletics and popularity. And Eric's exotic mix of black and Filipino did turn heads. When they had gone on a trip to Los Angeles to visit her sister, a girl in line for the restroom mid-flight had asked her if she was traveling with *the* Eric Lansing, dreamboat of Pearl City High School. When they arrived in L.A., two young black girls pushed her into the railing. They grabbed Eric by both arms, asking "Where you been all my life?" She waited patiently as Eric tried to free himself from their iron grip while remaining polite.

She had to get used to women's reactions, even though she sometimes felt like a movie star's wife. At the beach, she heard the soft gasps from women when Eric would emerge from the ocean onto the sand. His symmetrically perfect body, dripping with sweat and water, made women ooze at the sight of him. It was funny that women could lose self-control so easily.

But, she wasn't so bad herself. Eric would catch men looking at her, and say, "Whoo-hoo, he *likes* you." Then he'd turn to the guy and say, "You can look all you like, but she's coming home with *me*." She would playfully slap him on the arm. So when Eric told her that the Portuguese guy at her new job liked her, it was in a matter-of-fact way, rather than a jealous or threatened one. But Eric's comment had puzzled her. She didn't know who he was referring to. There were no Portuguese guys working at the restaurant. But that was before she'd heard Tim speak. She was also surprised. She'd always been able to sense when a man was interested in her, but she hadn't with Tim. If

Eric had not mentioned the Portuguese, she never would have noticed him.

In time, Eric was becoming irresponsible and picking her up later and later from work. Sometimes she would wait until one in the morning. The restaurant was often empty and the closing manager would offer to take her home. But she refused every time, not only because of her pride, but because Eric was driving her brand new Acura. Yet, here she was, stuck at work without a ride.

Every night, he would speed up the private driveway to the restaurant and apologize profusely, making up excuses for why he was late. The guys would still be out on the grass and offer him a beer. At first, she would stare him down, as if daring him to accept. He knew better. They would argue on the way home and she would say that he would not be taking her car again. But she knew that the next day, he would work her until she relented and gave him the keys. He would promise to show up on time, but wouldn't. This situation lasted through her final semester at U.H.

Tim had been watching this struggle, and timed his entrance. At first, he would invite her out to the "beer garden," a makeshift area near the restaurant where the guys would meet up after their shift. She would refuse, telling him that she had a lot of reading to catch up on, and would wait for Eric in the lounge. Of course, she also couldn't stand the pig-nosed asshole. Had he forgotten their clash over his girlfriend, or whatever he called her? He was an idiot.

But after the manager closed down the restaurant, it was embarrassing to still be sitting alone in the brightly lit lounge. Sometimes, even the cleaner was done, so the lights would have to be shut off and the restaurant locked up. Then, she had no choice but to gather her things and walk outside, and sit waiting along the moss rock wall in the

dark. Some of the guys would invite her to come to the beer garden, but she would refuse, and sit alone waiting. Some even offered her a ride home. She told them she had a ride coming. Most of them seemed sincere and genuine. They never asked about Eric's tardiness or stuck their nose into her business. Instead, they asked her about what high school she went to, or who they might know in common.

At first, Tim would join the group of guys inviting her to the beer garden. After she would refuse, he would stay by her side and sit with her when the other boys left. This made her very uncomfortable. She couldn't stand him, but she tried to be as polite as possible. After all, they did have to work together. Tim would tell her it was unsafe to sit outside by herself and convince her that she should come join everyone else in the beer garden. This concern for her was confusing, but it did make her think less negatively of him.

She found out later that she was the only hostess invited into the beer garden and was soon recognized by the wait staff as "one of the guys." When her two hostess counterparts were jealous that they hadn't been invited, even though they had been working there longer than her, she somehow felt special. She no longer lingered in the bar area waiting for Eric to pick her up. At the end of her shift, she would grab her school bag and purse and head out to hang with the guys.

Eric never seemed to mind her being around other men. If he did, he never showed it. In fact, he would often jump out of the car and have a few with the guys before heading home with her. His tardiness and excuses, and her acceptance of it all, actually led her to forge closer friendships with the guys. She was still irritated at Eric, but became more tolerant of his behavior and less concerned about his whereabouts.

With time, Tim also became less freakish to her—even interesting. The pug face and wrinkles didn't seem as awful, and although there were many guys in the beer garden, Tim would always seem to find a moment to have a discreet conversation with her. He would ask her about her classes, and what she was working on. He asked about Eric, as if he was worried he was in some kind of trouble. His concern was a welcome change when Eric didn't seem to give a fuck. What was up with him, anyway? Another woman? Gambling? Just losing track of time, as he had so often claimed? She would ask these questions aloud as Tim sat by her side, listening to her complain about Eric's fuck-ups. These conversations could go on for hours. After a while, she and Tim were often the last ones left in the beer garden.

After several months, Tim broke his silence and told her about the drugs. Everyone at the restaurant knew about it because Benson, one of the older waiters who was a small-time dealer, had sold drugs to Eric before. At first, she didn't believe it. Why would Tim say such a thing? And after making such accusations, how could he still act as if he was cool with Eric when he finally arrived in the beer garden night after night? Why hadn't any of the other guys said anything to her? She began questioning Tim's motives. Was he trying to get her and Eric to break up? She became angry at everyone all at once, her heart beating loudly and furiously as her mind raced, asking herself if Eric could be involved with drugs.

Tim said he had decided to tell her because of their friendship. He was convincing when he told her that he didn't want to see her hurt, and that he felt that he needed to tell her the truth about Eric. This explained the coil-shaped cylinders which kept appearing everywhere in the apartment. They weren't really from the stove fan, as

Eric had claimed. She now realized they were filters for his glass pipe.

When Eric got out of the shower, she gasped when she saw how bone thin he had become. She hadn't noticed because she had been so busy working two jobs—eight shifts in a seven-day week—and taking fifteen course credits, which was three more than a full-time student. She had been on a mission to graduate by the spring semester. By the time she did, Tim had gained her trust, and a solid friendship or what appeared to be one, formed. Now he took her home regularly after work.

She told Eric it was over, and she slept on the couch for the remaining three months of their lease. Eric continued to get high, and took her car whenever and wherever he wanted. Every night, he would stumble in the door and she would pretend she was asleep, never knowing where he came from, who he had been with, or what he had been doing.

On the way home one night, Tim stopped near the Burger King off University Avenue. He parked in an abandoned driveway, and asked her to kiss him. She was shocked, and then angry. Without a word, she jumped out of his pickup and started walking with her backpack full of books and her uniform. Tim ran after her and apologized. He said he was just joking. She didn't believe him, and kept walking. He ran back to his parked truck and followed her until she ducked into an alley that led to a different street. She didn't care if it was 11:00 p.m. She wasn't going to be a victim of acquaintance rape, or date rape, or whatever they called it now.

She was panting heavily when she reached the glass lobby doors. Tim pulled up behind her, jumped out of the truck, and apologized profusely. He said he had finished his shift before her and had had too many beers in too short of a time. He hadn't meant

what had happened. He wanted her to accept his apology. She had smelled beer on his breath, but he hadn't seemed drunk on the way home. Right now, though, getting inside was the only thing on her mind. She had a presentation the next morning, and needed to prepare for class. She accepted his apology, and told him that she would talk to him later. He wanted to know if she was scheduled to work the next day. She said no. He wanted to know when her next shift was. She said she wasn't sure, but she'd see him at work soon. She made her way into the lobby, got into the elevator, and heaved a huge breath of relief.

\* \* \*

As time passed, Tim managed to make his way into her life. The neglect she had experienced with Eric was now replaced by Tim's total attention. He would bring her flowers, provide a sensitive ear, or offer a strong shoulder when she was hurting over her breakup. Now that she had graduated, she spent more time reflecting and missing Eric. Tim filled some of the void.

The first time she and Tim had sex was eight months into their friendship. He invited her to his place for a barbecue. She was scheduled to work that evening, and Tim was off. He also invited Travis and Michelle, who both worked at the restaurant but were also not scheduled to work that evening. Tim had insisted that he didn't want to be left alone with the couple for too long, and had convinced her to come straight to his place after her shift in her work uniform instead of going home to change. She felt out of place in her charcoal gabardine skirt and flight attendant-styled floral blouse, complete with built-in bow sash at the neck, but since it was only her co-workers who would see her, she felt less embarrassed. When she arrived at Tim's place, the guys were outside



drinking beers and Michelle was in the kitchen prepping steaks and cutting vegetables.

Late in the evening, while Travis and Michelle cuddled on the sofa, she sat quietly on the loveseat, watching Julia Roberts as the terrified wife in *Sleeping with the Enemy*. Tim was sprawled on the carpet in front of the television. He motioned for her to come near him, but she shook her head. He got up and sat next to her. She became uncomfortable. Tim sensed it, and lay back on the floor.

Travis and Michelle had dozed off on the sofa. She sighed aloud and said she was sorry to ruin the evening, but it was a long drive from Kailua back to her apartment in town. She didn't want to fall asleep while driving on the dimly lit Pali Highway. Tim sat upright immediately and whispered he needed to tell her something before she left. He led her down the dark hallway leading to the bedroom and closed the door.

“Is something wrong? Did I do something?”

“No, not at all. I had a really nice time. I just don't like driving when I'm tired. I've been doing that a lot lately and I'm scared I'm going to fall asleep at the wheel.”

“Then stay over.” Tim said.

She paused for a moment. He had never asked her to stay over before. A few times, she had fallen asleep while visiting with Travis and Michelle, but she always left when they did.

“I can't. I don't have anything with me. I have to work in the morning and don't have my brunch uniform. I can't go to work in this.” She tugged at the dinner uniform she was still wearing. “It's too hectic to leave here in the morning, go home, and get ready. I don't want to go in to work late and stress about it.”

Tim grabbed her elbow and gently sat her down on the corner of the bed.

“Do you know how I feel about you?”

“I think so.” It was the only thing she could think of saying.

“Do you have any feelings for me?”

“I don’t know.”

She lied. She didn’t want to get into this right now, especially with Travis and Michelle in the living room. Tim sat silently next to her. The moon shone through the light-colored floral drapes, and she caught a glimpse of his defeated face.

Suddenly, she felt sorry for him.

“I mean, I know how I feel and I feel really close to you. But I don’t know what you’re really asking me.”

She lied again.

“I’m asking you if you like me.”

“Of course I like you.”

“No. I mean, do you *like* me?” He stared at her. “I mean, do you think you could ever have feelings for me as more than a friend?”

“Tim, it’s super late. Can we talk about this tomorrow?”

“No. I want to know *now*. I’d rather you just tell me the truth than keep me hanging.”

“Hanging? You feel like I’m keeping you hanging?”

“No, not like *that*. I just feel like I’m just hanging around like an idiot. I feel like I’m waiting for you to decide on whether you like me or not.”

“I *do* like you, Tim, but I just got out of a long relationship. We were together for eight years. It’s only been a few months since Eric and I broke up. I don’t know if I’m

ready to jump into another relationship. I don't want to get involved with someone until I am fully over him. It wouldn't be right."

She started crying softly. He moved closer to her, and stroked her hair as he held her. He didn't seem to mind her wet face and slowly began to kiss her. As she pulled away, he kept holding her gently and whispering, "It's okay." She stopped crying and watched Tim with his eyes closed, continuing to kiss her wet face. She wondered if he minded tasting the saltiness of her tears.

He placed his hands over her blouse on both of her breasts. *Thank God for padded bras*, she thought. She was impressed by Tim's dexterity, undoing all five buttons without fumbling. He reached behind her and quickly undid her bra with the same ease. Her mascara had painted black vertical lines down her cheeks, but he whispered to her how beautiful she was. This calmed her and made her feel better. As he lay on her, she could feel his hard penis in his jeans, pushing against her thigh. This was it.

He said that he wanted to make love to her. "Make love"—did people actually say that to each other in real life? Suddenly, he got off the bed and turned on the light. Extremely self-conscious of her nakedness and tear-streaked face, she asked him to turn the light off, but he ignored her. Before she could relax, Tim took his shirt off and unzipped his jeans. He was standing before her in a French-cut bikini with pink and purple paisley print. *What the hell?* But the shock of it didn't last long, since he quickly shucked them off to the side. The large, pink penis with a small head looked strange compared to Eric's dark-toned and proportioned phallus. But when he entered into her, she managed to forget about the deformed pink penis along with the ruddy face, pig-nose,

and gap tooth for a moment and enjoyed the physical feeling of being with a man.

Before they were finished, there was a loud banging on the sliding glass doors in Tim's bedroom. He immediately covered his crotch with his hands and ran in the direction of the doorway. He turned the bedroom light off and jumped back in bed. Putting his finger on her lips, he whispered for her to stay put. She was bewildered and couldn't help looking out towards the draped glass doors.

When she saw the silhouettes of a woman and small girl, she panicked, groping in the darkness on the floor for her clothing. She quickly dressed without worrying whether anything was inside-out. Tim disappeared down the hallway. She charged after him, but he turned, grabbed her, and pushed her into the guest bathroom. Pushing the toilet seat down, he sat her on it, kissed her, and told her to stay put.

She was beyond frightened. She couldn't just sit idly in the unlit bathroom. She could hear her heart pounding through her chest. She contemplated crawling into the bathtub and hiding behind the drapes. Then she realized how silly the whole situation was. As she shook off the fear and went to turn on the light, she heard a loud bang, followed by glass shattering, a woman screaming, and the sound of flesh being slapped and punched. She opened the bathroom door and stuck her head out into the hallway. A lamp was in pieces, with shards of glass strewn across the living room floor. Tim and the woman struggled on the carpet as if on a wrestling mat. He grappled her and put her face down into the carpet, slowly applying pressure to both arms, crossing them behind her back. He looked up.

"Call 9-1-1," he said calmly, but panting for air.

"You fucking bitch! Fucking whore! I am going to fucking kill you!" She saw a

pair of scissors on the floor that the screaming woman kept struggling to grasp. It was then that she noticed the large gash in Tim's arm, the blood flowing freely down his elbow.

“Bring me the phone.”

Out of breath, his face was a pale, blotchy pink. He grunted heavily as he struggled to stay upright on the woman's back, pinning her under him. She stared at the two of them, and suddenly she thought of Tim's story about *Orca*, and his birth mother sitting on his back, delivering blow after blow. As if under a spell, she picked up the cordless phone and handed it to him while the woman continued to yell at her. As Tim made the call, she was silent, but her mind was racing. *Is Tim married? Is that little girl his daughter? What the fuck?!*

The police entered the apartment. An officer helped the woman to her feet. No handcuffs, no restraints. The woman was calling some of the officers “uncle,” and others by their first names. Instead of taking her into custody, one of the officers led her toward a parked car where the small girl was standing on the driver's seat. Though the woman argued with the officer for a while, she finally got into the vehicle and sped away. Why did the police let the woman leave the scene after breaking into Tim's home and stabbing him with scissors? Now she was really confused. And what was with the young child placed in a car in the middle of the night by the side of the road while her mother attacked Tim?

While Tim spoke with the officers, she quickly gathered her things and headed to her car. None of the officers stopped her. She just wanted to get home. He glanced in her direction, but couldn't break away from the police. It was three in the morning. As

she drove out of the brush near the beach, Tim's neighbors were craning their necks to see what the commotion was. The police car lights in her rear-view mirror faded into tiny blue specks until they disappeared. She didn't want to think about what had just happened. How could she face him at work? Then she remembered Michelle was not scheduled for the brunch shift. She frantically called her on the drive down the Pali, making no mention of what had just happened. She apologized for calling so late and got Michelle to agree to take her shift in just a few hours.

A couple of hours later, she received a page from Tim. She ignored it and put the pager back into her purse. She fell back asleep, into a weird dream about driving down steep hills and gaining high speeds, and then not being able to apply the brakes. The constant jolting of the out-of-control dream made her even more exhausted than before she went to sleep. It was 11:00 a.m., and she felt as if she'd stayed up all night watching a movie marathon. She checked her pager. Seven new pages from Tim.

She wasn't ready to talk to him. She felt awkward, uncomfortable, and even embarrassed—more for Tim than for herself. She decided to lay low for a few days, offering up all her shifts to Michelle, who happily took the whole week. He continued to page her, but she never responded. When she returned to work on Sunday for the dinner shift, she told herself to act as if nothing had happened. As soon as she parked, Tim was there.

“Hey. What's up with you? I've been trying to get in touch with you all week. Didn't you get my pages?”

“Sorry. Right now's a bad time. I have to clock in. We can talk later.” She walked quickly past him.

Throughout her shift, she avoided eye contact with Tim. As soon as she seated the final reservation, she punched out and rushed to her car in the upper parking lot of Kaka‘ako Park. The moment she activated her keyless remote, Tim got out of the car parked next to her.

“Why are you rushing out of here? I thought we were gonna talk.”

She didn’t respond.

“I think we should talk. Don’t you?”

“I wanted to make sure my car didn’t get locked in the parking lot. You know City and County guys are always coming before closing time. I didn’t want to get towed.”

“Well, don’t you want to talk? I want to explain everything to you.”

“Okay. Let me move my car down to the restaurant and I’ll meet you back here,” she said, without making eye contact.

As she drove away, she was tempted to keep going until she got home. *I don’t know what to say to you. I feel so awkward and stupid. I can’t even look you in the face.*

After parking, she changed into her slippers and walked back up towards the beachfront. She followed the loose asphalt path to Kaka‘ako Beach Park’s ocean side seascape and terrace. The moon was high and hundreds of stars lit up the sky. The air was balmy, and the surf’s rhythmic pounding against the rocks was soothing.

Tim was sitting on the rock wall. She sat next to him.

“Fuck. I’m fucking embarrassed. I just want to say sorry for the shit that happened. I had no idea things were gonna go down the way they did.”

For several hours, they sat on the rock wall, with only the sound of the ocean

breaking silences between them. Tim told her about his ex-girlfriend Lynne, with whom he had a two-year-old daughter and a newborn infant son. She tried to hide her surprise that he had kids, but it was too much for her. She had been talking to him for over eight months, and thought they had a solid friendship. But he neglected to mention that he had children.

He said they had broken up and that he didn't know she was pregnant with another child when he left. He said Lynne was pregnant when he first started his job at the restaurant, but because he didn't believe the child was his, he'd denied the baby up until the day he was born and hadn't said anything to anyone. He seemed proud to tell her this. He talked about the baby, but what about his two-year-old daughter? Her mind attacked with question after question. When had he found time to spend with his firstborn? He had always been with her after work and on his days off. Did they live on O'ahu? Why were there no pictures of his daughter in his apartment—no toys, or hints that there was a child in his life? Or was he hiding these things so she could come to visit at his place? What kind of person would try to hide the fact that he had children? Was he ashamed? And was the "Chris" who'd kept calling the restaurant months earlier actually Lynne, who'd stabbed him with the scissors?

She wanted to ask Tim everything, but kept silent as he talked on and on. Her head was spinning as she tried to make sense of this person who now seemed a stranger to her. Tim said that Lynne had attempted to commit suicide and that she was emotionally unstable. They were high school sweethearts when Lynne got pregnant her senior year with Kona, his daughter. He was three years older than Lynne, and at nineteen, he didn't want the baby or the relationship because it had become too intense



with fighting and arguing. Lynne's decision to keep the baby made him leave.

"So, were you *ever* going to tell me?"

"Of course. I just . . . I just fucked up. I wasn't thinking. I didn't think you'd give me a chance if you knew I had kids."

"How could you judge me without even telling me first?"

"I'm sorry. I fucked up. Please don't hold this against me. I really want to be with you. I wasn't thinking. I was being stupid."

She finally asked him the question.

"So, that girl 'Chris'—the one who kept calling the restaurant, was that Lynne?"

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

"That girl that kept calling for you. She said her name was Chris. She left you message after message at the restaurant. You kept blowing her off and wouldn't return her calls. Don't you remember? Last year."

Tim looked upward, as if trying to remember.

"Oh. No! *Hell no!* *That* chick was really a psycho!"

Instead of being put off by this comment, she felt a sense of relief. Maybe his story about Lynne and his kids was true. If he had been with Chris a year ago, then he couldn't have been with Lynne. Tim sensed her tension was wearing off. He suggested that they grab something to eat. They jumped into his Honda and rode down 'Āhūi Street to Ala Moana Boulevard. On the dashboard was a picture of Lynne on a hospital bed with a baby in a blue beanie and Kona standing next to her. The photo had handwritten scribbles across the corner. It said "Dear Tim, thank you for coming to the hospital. It was nice to see you. Thank you for the roses. Love, Kona, Chad, and Lynne."

Another confirmation. Tim seemed to be telling the truth – except for the fact he had kids. She began letting her guard down. She asked why Lynne was so upset at seeing her if they had been broken up for such a long time. Tim said that Lynne had never wanted to end the relationship, and believed that they were still together. He said that as a last-ditch effort, they had tried to make it work for a few months. But then he found out she was pregnant again, and her constant jealousy and insecurity made it impossible.

She asked why the police acted strangely when they came to the apartment. Why hadn't they taken Lynne into custody? He then told her a stranger story than the one about *Orca*. Lynne's mother had had an affair with the lieutenant of the Kailua police station. Lynne grew up thinking that her father was the man her mother was married to. It was only later that she learned that he was not her biological father. All of the children before and after her had the same father, and she was devastated. This caused a huge rift between mother and daughter.

Lynne's resemblance to the police lieutenant was uncanny, and although she had nothing to do with him personally, she took full advantage of the fact that she was his biological daughter. Lynne was untouchable in Kailua.

A week later, in the beer garden, Lynne showed up with both kids. Tim was beaming with his son Chad in one arm, and daughter Kona holding his free hand. He showed them off to his co-workers, but didn't dare come her way with the children. After Lynne's car vanished down the road, everyone began talking all at once to Tim. Jokingly, some said that he couldn't have been a very good dad if he never told anyone he had kids.

This should have been a valuable lesson for Tim, but it wasn't. Instead of taking responsibility and admitting his mistakes, Tim bragged that he had denied both his daughter and the baby up until the day they were born. Finally, she pulled Tim aside and scolded him for being such an insensitive ass. She told him what was being said behind his back, but he didn't care. He only seemed affected when she forced him to think about what would happen if his kids became aware of it when they got older. He finally listened.

\* \* \*

Her attraction for Tim was different than it had been for Eric. Tim was the exact opposite of her ex in every way. Though he lacked looks, Tim's drive and determination to become successful was something new to her. She was used to providing and making ends meet with Eric, but with Tim, things were different. When they first began dating, she didn't mind that Tim asked her to borrow money now and then for his new landscaping business. Unlike Eric, when Tim got paid, he made sure to pay her back.

Tim knew his bus boy job was a dead end. He'd tried a semester at Kapi'olani Community College, but didn't finish. School wasn't for him. He sat down and wrote out what he could do with limited funds and no education. He believed the key was creating a business for people who would need his services on an ongoing basis. He narrowed it down to landscaping. And he didn't let his inexperience with yard service hold him back. He was never ashamed to ask questions of strangers about how they succeeded in the business. Sometimes, he asked things that most people only wished they had the nerve to ask, and surprisingly, most of the successful business owners were glad to share their insights and trade secrets. Some even gave him old equipment they no

longer needed. He networked with others in the business, and soon became a known face and name in the landscaping trade.

After a year of business, Tim decided to shift to tree trimming. Constantly being underbid by the Filipino men who drove from house to house with their weed whackers, Tim knew it was time to literally set his sights higher. The only real tree trimming competition he had were the Tongans and Samoans, masons by trade, who moonlighted as tree trimmers.

Tim had always been afraid of heights. He was not slim and limber like most tree trimmers were. He had also witnessed tree trimmers free falling through the air and heard the crisp snap of their bones when they landed. While this was his biggest fear, he knew that tree trimming was where the money was, and believed his white skin would be an advantage in getting contracts.

Tree trimming equipment was expensive, but his father always said it cost money to make money. Tim started by renting big trucks and heavy equipment for his jobs, even though the rental fees took up a large part of the profit. Tim needed big money that she didn't have to loan him, so he asked his father, but was quickly turned away. His father warned him of liabilities and lawsuits. Tom added that the market was already saturated by Tongans and Samoans, and that Tim's inexperience and overhead would cost him. Despite their efforts to discourage him, Tim ignored them. She was the only one who had believed in him, and supported his dream. She helped him with drafting and typing up all of his bids, and created his ad for the yellow pages.

Tim had often called his father a racist—as if he wasn't one himself. He believed the Polynesian tree trimmers intimidated most of the little Japanese women in Mānoa,

and were not trusted by the haoles in Kailua and Hawai‘i Kai. This was a myth, since the two other long-time tree-trimming operators were white, elderly men who ran their businesses from behind desks, while employing Samoans as their foremen. Though most customers may have thought the foremen were the owners, no one seemed concerned about race or ethnicity as long as the job got done for a reasonable price. Only Tim seemed to be consumed with his whiteness as a key to success. He would also drop names of his father’s associates as if they were his own to get jobs in the affluent neighborhoods.

Relying on his father’s contacts, he “gently trampled,” as she put it, on people in his way. He didn’t underbid or make specific remarks about his competitors, but strategically placed doubt to undermine the competition. He always suggested that character was the most important thing when hiring a tree trimmer. The older customers especially liked this. Tim was good at acting as if he had customers’ best interests at heart, and early on, even she was swayed by his talk about trustworthiness and ethics. She swelled with pride at his earnestness. But in time, she found that his actions contradicted his words and that he was full of shit.

Tim was not exactly a pillar of the community. He dumped his logs illegally along the gulch, and then blamed it on someone else. He had stolen plants from the nursery on his father’s property in Waimānalo and planted them on his jobs. The owner of the nursery, Tim’s father’s tenant, had wondered about the missing areca palms and plumeria trees. He knew Tim had diversified into a tree business, and had recently purchased a spade to remove and transplant trees, but never directly accused him. As for Tim’s father, he suspected that Tim had taken them, but he never questioned him. After

all, the thirty-horse barn on the same property had been built with stolen wood from a lumber treatment plant twenty years earlier.

The barn no longer held animals, but served as a storage facility for the top kayaking business in Honolulu. It was brimming with fiberglass and plastic vessels worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. One day, she walked into a deep discussion between Tim and his parents, who became quiet in her presence. She got the hint and left the room. When Tim returned to the back cottage, he admitted to her that he and his friends had stolen two kayaks from his father's tenant. All of the tenants had begun speaking to one another, comparing similar instances of missing property. When the kayak owner called the police, Tim's stepmother advised him to get rid of the kayaks immediately by loading them onto one of his unmarked flatbed trucks at night, and to set them loose at Waimānalo boat harbor. This was the kind of family Tim had come from.

The Tongans and Samoans also knew Tim. On the surface, they were friendly, but resentment grew as Tim somehow always seemed to find a way to win bids and snatch away the contracted jobs from smaller-owned and operated Tongan and Samoan businesses which had been doing tree trimming for years. They depended upon the work as stable income and couldn't understand how a new competitor could so easily steal away business they had gained through years of building relationships with their clients.

Talk began to surface that Tim was actually targeting his less-suspecting, less white Polynesian counterparts. Similar in culture, but proud of their differences, the Tongan and Samoan tree trimmers joined together to run Tim out of the business.

While Tim's tree services were priced higher than other companies, he paid his workers the same wages as his Polynesian competitors—and his workers had very often

been Tongans and Samoans. They spread word quickly that he was greedy and two-faced. Eventually, his crew began to leave one by one. Some made simple excuses for their departures. Others just stopped showing up. Because many of the seasoned tree trimmers were of Tongan or Samoan descent, Tim encountered difficulty hiring competent and experienced workers. Due to a limited pool of candidates, he wound up hiring young boys from the Windward side who were down and out and desperate for work. Inexperienced, but willing to take on the risk of injury, many had not worked for months because of arrests for drugs, D.U.I.s, or other legal issues. Tim told her he was uneasy about having workers with criminal records around his home where he ran his business, but said he had no choice but to hire them.

Later on, she learned that Tim himself had a criminal record for “banging” cars. When he was seventeen, Tim had been caught and convicted of breaking into cars and selling the stolen valuables. As the ringleader, he passed the property on to his gang of shady friends to sell and split the profits. Most of them came from poor families in the Waimānalo homesteads, and when they got caught, they weren’t as lucky as Tim, whose father got his record expunged. The others were left to fend for themselves, and many couldn’t find stable work, thanks to their prior arrest and conviction.

Now that she had been living with the family for almost two years, they were less cautious in her presence when talking about Tim’s past. In fact, his stepmother and father seemed to brag that Tim had spent the night in jail without calling anyone. The punch line was that Tim’s father had always told his sons that if they were thrown in jail, they should never call him. Tim took this literally and didn’t. The family stayed up all night looking for him, worried about foul play. When one of his father’s associates

tracked Tim to the Kailua police station, his father bailed him out, but his friends were left behind in the cell.

Training a new crew to trim trees cost Tim time and money since he had to do it himself. Liabilities and small thefts increased. While he suspected the new hires, he didn't outwardly accuse them since he needed the help. Once, they were even brazen enough to take \$800 and then put the empty wallet back under the driver's seat of his truck. Most of the boys didn't have driver's licenses—either revoked due to D.U.I.s or never had one in the first place. Tim still allowed them to drive his company vehicles, but only the cars and small pickups, since none of them could have obtained commercial driver's licenses.

Tim's other option was to hire military personnel stationed nearby at the Marine Corps base in Kāne'ohe. They were a much more disciplined and mature lot, but only available to work on weekends, and sometimes not even then if they had military drill. On those weekends, the trucks sat idly in the lot. Time was money for Tim. The jobs during the week were often backlogged, or ran into the late evening hours. This compromised the quality of work, and made it dangerous at night. His reputation with his clients was at risk, and he worked sixteen-hour days with Vika to get most of the jobs done.

\* \* \*

She came home one day and found bloody tracks all over the carpet and a sock drenched with blood on the lanai. Blood was smeared on the tiles of the bathroom floor, and a heap of blood-soaked towels were in the bathtub. She ran into the main house on the property. No sign of Tim. She had called his phone over and over again. No answer.



She called Vika, his foreman. Voicemail. She then called Aaron, a military hire. He said Tim had injured his foot badly and left the job site early.

She called Castle Medical Center, but Tim wasn't in the emergency room and hadn't been admitted to the hospital. She followed her gut and jumped in her car. She found Tim's truck parked outside of the Waimānalo Health Center, a clinic used primarily by low or no income families. Tim used to say his father was so tight with money that he "squeaked" when he walked, but Tim was too. He just didn't recognize it. She found him inside with a doctor who had given him a tetanus shot, and was telling him he needed to get x-rayed and checked for nerve damage at a full care facility. Tim asked for painkillers, and acted as if he would head to Castle Medical Center.

Once in the parking lot, he grabbed onto her shoulder and braced himself. With each hop, he let out a pained grunt. He told her she would have to drive, and to call Aaron to bring one of the climbers to get his truck home. As she headed down Kalaniana'ole Highway towards Castle Medical Center, he told her to turn left onto Kumuhau Street and go home to the ranch. She tried to convince him that he needed urgent care, but he wouldn't give in. He refused to go to the hospital because he didn't want to pay the exorbitant fees. They didn't talk much for the rest of the drive. She knew better than to ask a lot of questions or irritate Tim while he was in pain.

When they got to the ranch, she drove over the grass and parked as close to the door as possible. Tim winced as he got out of the car. She quickly ran to his side and helped him up the stairs and into the back cottage where they lived. She gently sat him on a chair and brought a stool for his injured foot. The thick gauze the doctor had wrapped around it was already bloody after the less-than-five minute drive from the

clinic. Afraid to look at the wound itself, she silently looked at Tim.

Before they could say anything to each other, a loud lyrical boom of Fiji's cover of "Sharing the Night Together" by Dr. Hook blared from outside.

*I'm feeling kind of lonely, too*

*And if you don't mind,*

*Can I sit down here beside you?*

She looked out the window and saw one of the young boys driving Tim's pickup, with Aaron driving a boom truck following closely behind. Aaron walked up the stairs and knocked. She let him in.

"Hoo! Boss! How's it going, man?" He asked in his thick southern drawl.

"Fuck, I never thought in million years I'd ever feel pain like this shit."

"That was fucking crazy, dude! You looked like fucking Tarzan rappelling down that fast. Holy shit!"

"Yeah, that was probably the best time I would've clocked if it hadn't been for that fucking pile of rebar I didn't see."

"Who the fuck would've seen that shit? Where do you think it came from?"

"Probably some assholes dumping shit they didn't want to pay for at the landfill. Fucking idiots. What's even more fucked up was the rust on that shit. Did you see it?"

"No, boss. I just heard a weird fucking crack when you landed. I saw you standing there for a long fucking time."

"The grass was covering the spikes. That rebar pierced right through my fucking boot. Lucky it missed the main bone."

"I knew something was wrong. When I picked up your truck, I saw your boot in

the bed with that gaping hole, dude. Fucking stigmata!”

“No shit. Lucky it never pierced all the way through my foot. Now I know what Jesus felt like.”

He looked up above the television at one of the dozens of crucifixes his father had put up throughout the house, including the bathrooms. Tim quickly drew a cross from his forehead to chest and ended with a kiss to his fingers, as if he was being watched.

As the two conversed, she listened intently. According to Aaron, Tim had screamed at the rebar, hooting that it was a fucking cunt over and over before freeing himself from the rusted metal. With adrenaline rushing, he ran to his truck and sped away. Tim took the story from there. Initially, he drove to Castle Medical Center’s emergency room. A nurse tried to sedate him, but Tim wanted to know beforehand what the charges would be. She said she couldn’t say for sure, but that his foot needed immediate attention. He demanded the price first. When she told him it would be at least \$300, he told her she was crazy, and headed to Waimānalo Health Center. He talked about the rebar as if it was a woman, and the nurse as if his injury was her fault. But this wasn’t new. She’d already come to grips with the fact that she had fallen in love with a textbook misogynist.

Tim’s mother was the second wife of his unfaithful and abusive father. He’d been married to Myrna up the street for over thirty-five years, and they’d had six children. He had no meaningful relationships with any of them or their children. Tim knew some of his half-brothers because they came to the ranch from time to time, asking for money or help from their estranged father. Many of Tim’s nephews and nieces were older than him. Myrna’s children hated their father’s second family. Tim, Tom, and Tracie

believed they were special because their father chose to keep them, and not the others. Isolated on the ranch, they were taught to limit their conversations with anyone outside the home.

When his father married a third time, Tim was only four years old. After his mother left, Tim and his siblings were taught to call her “Stupid,” as if it were the real name of the woman they were never really given a chance to know. Their father’s money and status made it difficult for their mother to see them aside from the court scheduled visits. They only had a few memories of her coming to visit with birthday presents. His stepmother threw them away, unopened, in the trash after she left.

Wife number three was a strange woman. Thirty-two years younger than her husband, and younger than all of his first six children, she met him while vacationing in Hawai‘i from Maryland with her parents. Though younger than Tim’s father, Leslie’s parents approved of her marriage because of his money. She enjoyed recalling how Tim’s father had described her—a glorious trim blonde, sitting in the audience at Don Ho’s show. Tim’s father was a good friend of Don Ho, and had sent some men to Leslie and her parents, inviting them to meet Don backstage. She never mentioned that Tim’s father was still married to Tim’s mother when she met him. She fondly recalled her career as a “stewardess,” not a flight attendant. She carried a picture of herself in full United Airlines garb, and rarely hesitated to show it to people. Since then, though, she’d gained a hefty eighty pounds and was barely recognizable in the photo.

When Leslie insisted that she stay over at the ranch in Waimānalo when she and Tim first began dating, she thought this was a nice gesture. Later on, though, she figured out it was because Tim had gotten a D.U.I. and his driver’s license was suspended.

Leslie just wanted her to drive Tim into town instead of him driving illegally and risk getting caught by the police. She became suspicious of Leslie for other reasons, too. She noticed that when she was at school, her belongings were rifled through, or not in the same place she had left them. Leslie would also traipse around the house with just a tee and panty on in front of the entire family. While everyone was seated at the dining table, Leslie would sometimes stand behind Tim and stroke his hair. Once, when she came home from work in the evening, she found Leslie sitting on the sofa picking blackheads from Tim's back as he sat on the ground, tucked between Leslie's legs. Another time, when she and Tim were watching television, Leslie forced herself between them on the sofa and began stroking Tim's chest hair. One morning, while they cooked breakfast, Leslie grabbed Tim's buttocks and made a comment about what a "nice ass" her stepson had.

It was a strange environment, but apparently normal to everyone else. She told Tim several times that Leslie's behavior bothered her, but it usually escalated into fights, so she stopped. When Tim's children became closer to her than anyone else in the family, including Tim, Leslie warned him that his ex-girlfriend Lynne might accuse his new girlfriend of molesting the children when she bathed them, so only a family member should do it. She was surprised when Tim said he told Leslie she was being ridiculous. She thought Leslie was grotesque. Even Lynne had never once accused her of mistreating the children.

\* \* \*

It was only when she heard Tim say "obey," as they sat in his pickup that her crying halted and her frenzy stopped. "*Obey?*" *Who the fuck did he think he was?*

Wiping the blurred tears from her face, she looked long and hard at him. For the first time in years, she saw him again as the unfamiliar, unattractive guy at the restaurant. The ruddy complexion, the wide, deeply furrowed forehead, pig nose, and short tongue that made him lisp had always been there, but were no longer hidden behind a mask of denial. The tiny little teeth jumped up and down as the odd gap kept moving, but she only heard sounds and couldn't make sense of the words that he was saying. She stared at him for a long moment, memorizing the ugliness and filing it away forever.

“Obey? You want me to ‘obey’ you?”

“If you can't obey me, then this isn't going to work.”

She took a long breath, carefully preparing her words.

“You mean like when you say I can't use the phone to talk to my friends, or that I have to watch what you want to watch on T.V.? Or that I can't go to visit my mom just to get my mail because I take too long to get home? You mean like how I'm supposed to get to Waimānalo from wherever I'm at within thirty minutes and drive like a fucking maniac at eighty miles an hour so that you don't get pissed? Stuff like that?”

“What the fuck are you talking about?”

“You may call me a ‘bitch,’ but I am not your fucking dog! I'd tell you to get one, but you'd probably kill it, you asshole!”

“What the hell is wrong with you? Lower your fucking voice.”

“FUCK YOU!!!” She shouted at the top of her lungs and slammed the pickup door without looking back or caring who might hear.

\* \* \*

She stared into his dead eyes and then looked down. He had some crumbs from

his sandwich embedded in the Hitler-like moustache he was so proud of. She didn't tell him. He was about to meet an important potential client, and she wanted him to look like a fool.

They headed to his pickup. She hated going with him to do estimates. Her job was to engage the client in conversation and to find common ground so that Tim could be hired. She was merely an accessory or more like a whore being pimped to “seal the deal,” as he put it. They drove past Kāhala Mall down Hunakai Street and onto Kāhala Avenue. Multi-million-dollar mansions lined the beachfront. As instructed, he dialed the code into the intercom, then drove through the heavy iron gates down a neatly tiled driveway. Passing a coral-colored guest house, they continued on to the mansion, complete with infinity swimming pool. The surf pounded in the background. The air was cool.

They were surprised when a young Japanese male, hardly of legal age, greeted them.

“Hi. You are Puanani Landscape?” His English was rough.

“Yes. I'm Tim.”

“I am Koji.”

She extended her hand to shake his.

“*Nihonjin desu ka?*”

“Oh no. Sorry. I'm Korean.”

“Ohhh. So sorry. You look Japanese.”

“Haha! Yes, many of my customers at Tanaka of Tokyo think I am Japanese.”

“Ah, so you work at Tanaka of Tokyo. So, you must know my friend Chiemi.”

“Yes! She is so nice. She works at the one in Waikī Shopping Plaza. I am at King’s Village.”

“Ohhh. Small world, yeah? Maybe I will come to visit you some time at King’s Village. I have never been to that one.”

“Yes, please come by.”

Watching the exchange, Tim remained quiet. Ordinarily, she would have been nervous talking with a male in Tim’s presence, but she knew what his expectations were. Her being “Oriental,” as he put it, would be key to his getting the job.

“Okay. I can show you to trees and grass.” Koji led them to the back.

The back yard was immense, with a large iron gate fronting the ocean. The palms swayed violently, compared to the ones in the front of the house on Kāhala Avenue. The tradewinds picked up speed through the back where the property was sandwiched between neighboring mansion walls. The ocean was a menacing deep charcoal with dirty foam on its surface. The view was blurred by an overcast grayness. It began to rain.

She was cold, and ducked under an overhanging ledge to stay dry. Tim and Koji continued to walk from tree to tree and hedge to hedge around the perimeter. They stopped under a mammoth banyan tree to the left of the rectangular infinity pool. Tim hadn’t left her the keys to the truck, so she crouched like a forgotten dog while he followed Koji around like a small child. While tucked away from the rain, she noticed that a bright green mold had created a three-foot perimeter around the house, and crept up the sides of the walls. The same tinge of green bordered the swimming pool, littered with leaves and brush. From Kāhala Avenue, the mansion was a large and opulent structure, but close up, the paint was chipping, and overall, the property looked dismal.



Tim and Koji made their way back to her.

“Ohhh. Sorry. I should have let you stay inside.” Koji said.

“No problem. I’m okay.”

“No. No. Please. Come inside. I will get you towel.”

They walked up the stairs to a huge entrance of marbled pillars and tile. The living room was elaborate, with a winding staircase and baby grand piano. But overall, the house didn’t seem to be lived in.

“Wow. You have this huge place all to yourself?”

“Haha! Kind of. Mr. Kawamura owns. He have many places in Kāhala, but live in Jah-pahn. I only take cay-ah of home.”

“Oh.”

As they walked through the house, Tim remained silent. Koji brought them plush towels with the price tags still on them.

“I am student at H.P.U. I major in Finance.”

“Oh. I’m a student, too. I go to U.H.”

“What is your may-jah?”

“I actually have a double major. English and Speech.”

“Speech? You like to talk in front of people?”

“Haha! Oh no. Not that kind. The Speech Department has all kinds of concentrations. Mine is about communication, but they couldn’t call it ‘Communications,’ because the journalism and broadcast majors already used it.”

“Oh. I see. What do you communicate?”

“Well, it’s actually different. When I was doing my prerequisites, I took a Speech

151 class, and we had to stand in front of everybody and do a speech. But when I took another class that I thought was going to be easy, it was about why women wore makeup and padded bras, why men wear toupees—you know, wigs—and why they put lifts in their shoes to make them seem taller. It was interesting. I declared the second major because I wanted to study deception—when people lie, or trick others into seeing them another way from what they really are.”

“Ahh. Interesting.”

She could see Tim’s pained face behind Koji—a signal she should shut up and get the ball rolling.

“I am only Finance, but it is hard. Wow. Two may-jahs. It must be very difficult for you. You have interesting background.”

Silence.

“So, I’m glad I got to meet you and see how rich people live.” She smiled.

“Haha! Not me. Mr. Kawamura is rich.”

“Well, maybe we can talk again—if you decide to use Tim for your trees.”

“Oh. Yes. I will use your company.”

“Oh? That’s great!”

Tim’s furrowed brow now relaxed. She could hear the *cha-ching!* clanging in his head. He winked at her.

“I should write you check now?”

“Oh no. Not until we are done with the work. No payment now.”

“You can start now?”

“Uh. Tim?”

“Actually, I’ll have to get my equipment and crew to come out. This is a big job. I don’t think me and the guys will be able to start until tomorrow.”

“Oh. Wednesday is bad. I have class all day. Hmmm. Maybe I tell maintenance man let you and your workers onto property and you can start. Okay?”

Koji held up his hitchhiker thumb.

“Yeah. That would be good. We can start first thing in the morning.”

“Okay. What time you can come?”

“We’ll be here by eight.”

“Maybe you better come after nine. Neighbors might complain too early.”

“Okay.”

Koji turned towards her and bowed. She bowed back and shook hands with him. He walked back up the marbled steps, into the moss-covered mansion.

As she walked with Tim towards his pickup, he put his arm around her shoulder.

“Good job, babe. But you fucking talk too much. Next time, keep it short.”

The job turned out to be hairier than Tim had expected. Because a large banyan blocked out most of the sunlight, the palms had snaked in weird twists and turns to find it. So while at least a hundred feet, most of the twenty-two coconut trees had a bizarre five feet of spiraled trunk at their base. One huge tree ran oddly parallel to the ground, thanks to the obscured sun. Each of the crowned heads had at least a dozen rows of fronds, filled with overripe, dark brown fruit. They hadn’t been trimmed in years, and because the previous homeowner hadn’t cuffed the trunks with aluminum, there were bound to be rats in the heads. Finally, shoreline conditions made the limber trees flex in the wind at treacherous angles, like fully loaded slingshots. Most of Tim’s boys didn’t

know how to spike up a tree, and Aaron was at his daytime duty with the Marine Corps in Kāneʻohe. So Tim and Vika had to do the trimming.

The excitement of getting his foot in the Kāhala neighborhood had blurred Tim's thinking. He had underbid, but he knew he still had to do a good job if he wanted to work on more of Mr. Kawamura's properties. This was a potential goldmine. Since the owner was hardly ever in Hawai'i, Tim felt he could get the little Jap Koji to pay whatever he put on the invoices.

But no amount could solve the unexpected delays and hurdles. Tim's only over-center boom truck broke down, and would be in the shop for at least two weeks. But he needed to get started, despite the rainy weather, so he rented one. Then two of his workers got sick, and Vika got stung by a centipede. He didn't know he was allergic and spent three days in the hospital. Most of the coconut treetops were also rotten, making them even more unstable and dangerous. Since they were top heavy, it was too risky to lop off their heads with a chainsaw. The walls and the pool below could be damaged by heavy debris falling from such a high altitude.

Tim, Vika, and Aaron all had firsthand experience with startled, mongoose-sized rats bouncing out of the palm fronds and onto their hard hats. But Tim had a very close call when a rat bounced off his hat and landed in his shirt. His spikes loosened from the tree trunk, and he skidded about seven feet before managing to catch himself. But his newly formed nipples, damaged during another slip months prior, had been completely rubbed off again. It would take another two months for the scars on his chest to heal.

The huge coconut tree that ran parallel to the ground for a hundred feet looked like a peculiar art form or a new wave bench. Tim had convinced Koji to remove the

rotten trees and to transplant the healthy ones in front to other Kawamura properties, away from high winds. Koji agreed but said Mr. Kawamura wished to keep the parallel one, and simply have it pruned.

The tree's head was loaded with humongous coconuts, rows of heavy fronds, and throngs of flowers. At first, Tim straddled the trunk and worked his way up through the fronds with a cane knife. But the leaves were thick, and harder than cutting through plastic. An hour later, it seemed he hadn't made much progress—the crown was still monstrous. The pile of trimmings was at least three feet high. Sweat dripped profusely down into the opening of his shirt, onto his back, and under his armpits. His face was wet, with salty perspiration stinging his eyes. He wanted to lie back to catch his breath, but knew that wouldn't look good with his crew and Koji on site. Besides, he was strapped to the tree, and there wasn't enough slack. It would be too much of a hassle to undo the buckling and carabiner under the trunk.

Two hours passed, as Tim sawed away at the stubborn fronds. By now, he was covered in soot and white fly powder. His shirt clung to him, and sweat marked a thin line down the tree trunk. Tim then noticed several fronds had mold at their stems—a telltale sign of rot. He reached in with his glove and found a large, gaping hole. He signaled to one of his crewmen to get Koji. Tim was relieved. Now he could tell Koji that the tree had to be removed rather than pruned.

Koji called Mr. Kawamura to tell him the bad news while Tim waited patiently. He sat for fifteen minutes straddled on the trunk, hands on his hips, as if bracing himself before a bull ride. He was finally able to catch his breath and had an excuse for stopping. Koji returned from the house and gave Tim the go-ahead. Tim was happy. The cost of

removing and dumping the logs would add to his profit, and besides, he was getting rid of a tree that was rotting anyway.

He called out to Vika to bring him a chainsaw. He balanced a pair of yellowing plastic goggles on his nose, and placed yellow foam plugs in his ears. After yanking the pull rope several times, a puff of black smoke rose from the motor, and the deafening whirring drowned out his thoughts. He cut deep into the center of the crown. Nothing happened. The head was so enormous that his short blade did hardly any damage. He cut the surrounding fronds with quick and methodical strokes to get closer to the base of the crown. He rhythmically drew back and plunged forward, as if paddling a canoe. The chainsaw got caught in the crown a few times. It was thicker than he anticipated. He then tried cutting into the rotten hole he'd found. The chainsaw got caught again. Finally, he managed to lop the tree's head off, with one quick motion.

Before he could react, he found himself catapulted backwards like a scene from *Scooby Doo*. He was still straddled to the trunk of the tree, as the pliant shaft whipped violently to and fro, thirty feet in each direction, with no sign of stopping. Instinctively, he crossed his legs around the trunk. The tree slammed into his face, breaking the visor off his hard hat, and continued to pummel him while he tried to hang on. His forehead stung as the tree pounded him in the face over and over again. His chin and mouth were grazed, and his nose began to bleed. His workers watched, mouths open, as their boss ping-ponged back and forth.

When the tree finally stopped, it was standing straight, as if it had never changed its stance in search of the sun. Every muscle in Tim's body was bruised. In shock, he could barely make sense of what had happened. Luckily, he had strapped himself to the

tree. If he hadn't, he would've been thrown across the clearing, and probably killed. Scrambling down the hundred feet of trunk, he unhitched himself. He wiped at the blood on his nose with his shirt and became angry. He started up the chainsaw again. With deliberate motion, he cut through the trunk without checking clearance. It fell with a thunderous crash onto the rented boom truck.

“Mother-fucking cunt!”

\* \* \*

The call from the F.B.I. had in some ways been more unexpected, and the timing couldn't have been worse in terms of her own stability. As the man from Human Resources at the Virginia headquarters talked, she shifted her weight from foot to foot, the phone attached to her head, staring down at her shoes. She tried to remain focused, but couldn't believe that she had seriously been considered, let alone wanted, for the position. She rehearsed in her mind how she would break the news to Tim. She didn't know what to feel, but the anxiety made her body shake. Luckily, he called to say that he would be a few hours late.

The first person she called about the F.B.I.'s offer was her mother. Umma was ecstatic, asking every question imaginable, and wanting to know when she would be leaving for training. She didn't tell Umma that she hadn't accepted the position yet because she wanted to discuss it with Tim first. This would make Umma apprehensive, since she hadn't accepted Tim as easily as her father had. He had warmed to Tim simply because Eric was finally replaced. As for Umma, she disliked Tim. In Korean, Umma her and said Tim had no manners when he put his feet up on the expensive glass top black lacquer coffee table embellished with mother-of-pearl. After dinner, he would

often lay himself out on the sofa, and Umma would say in Korean that he had no class. No younger Korean would remain lying down when a senior entered a room. Umma knew that Tim's father had accumulated a fortune. But Umma came from a wealthy family of her own, and said that money didn't buy class. Umma said that Tim was nothing short of an animal.

Still, she was kind to his children, and even watched them from time to time since Tim's parents said they were done raising kids, and refused to babysit their grandchildren from him. Umma wanted her daughter to be happy, but her sharp maternal instincts told her that Tim was far from being good for her.

\* \* \*

When Tim initially asked her to move in with him, she laughed—she had never wanted to live anywhere but town. But his pleading finally made her give in. The move to Waimānalo was difficult. Shima's Market, the place identified with the “boonies” when she and her girlfriends would cut school and drive to the other side of the island, was now in her back yard. Tim called her a “townie,” and laughed when she said she missed the comforts of living in the city. He joked to his friends that she was Lisa Douglas from *Green Acres*, and would break into a jig, singing the wrong words: “Green acres is the place to be, fa-a-a-arm livin' is the life for me.”

She felt more like a prisoner than a Hollywood star. She had always come and gone as she pleased. Tim had even said her independence and free spirit when they'd first become friends had been a turn on. But she soon found that his words were always double-edged. A simple outing was now an ominous task. Jealous and controlling, Tim wouldn't even allow her to go to the beach in Waimānalo.



During the day, he often called her to ask for directions when trying to find his way around Honolulu. Only later did she realize that it was his way of checking on her. He called the home phone. If she didn't answer, he called her cell phone, then told her she was using up valuable cell minutes and make her call him back from the house phone. At first, she considered Tim as thoughtful and sweet. Much later, she figured out that he made her call him back from the house phone so that the caller I.D. would verify she was calling from the ranch.

Then, one day, when she was cleaning her car outside, she forgot to take her cell phone with her. He called her repeatedly, becoming so upset that he left a job in the middle of the day. She had just showered and was blow drying her hair, so she didn't hear his truck outside. He burst into the house and grabbed her by the hair. One hand tangled in her long tresses, he dragged her down the long hallway and slammed her face and side of her skull into the doorjamb of the bathroom several times. Then he yanked her to the stairwell, pushed her across the threshold, and kicked her down the stairs. She landed on her back, her dress up over her head. Dizzy, she heard a loud ringing in her right ear. She was scraped and bleeding, with loose asphalt embedded in her elbows and knees. Her face and her scalp were bruised.

Swearing violently, he accused her of leaving the house. He said her car's engine was still hot from being driven. She said she had moved her car to the front driveway to wash it. He ran back into the kitchen, grabbed a Bud Lite from the refrigerator, charged down the stairs, and smashed the bottle against her windshield. Then he grabbed her in a chokehold, pulling her right arm behind her. She tried to tell him to stop, but the intensity of the pain was so severe that the words couldn't come. He wouldn't let go and

kept applying pressure until her shoulder snapped. She screamed.

Tim's sister Tracie heard the commotion, ran toward them, and begged Tim to stop. When Tracie shrieked that he had broken her shoulder, he let go. In shock, she reeled in pain. Without a word, he walked back into the house, and locked himself in the bedroom.

She couldn't drive herself to the hospital, so Tracie took her. On the way to Castle Medical Center, Tracie coached her on what she should say to the doctor and nurses. Crying quietly, she didn't respond to Tracie. When they got to the admissions desk, the intake counselor quizzed her about the injury. Before she could answer, Tracie informed them that she had taken a spill down the stairs. When they called her in to the emergency room to be examined, Tracie sprung out of her chair, helped her get up, and stayed with her as the doctor examined her. Tracie tried to answer the questions, until the doctor motioned his nurse to come to his aid. He told Tracie that she was interfering, and that she would have to wait in the lobby. The nurse escorted her out.

At this point, the doctor asked her to tell him the truth, but she'd been in a similar situation a year ago when her primary care physician told her that the injury to the back of her thigh didn't look like the impact a step would make, but instead what a size ten-and-a-half shoe might do. Like then, her pride and denial wouldn't let her admit that she was a victim of abuse. Besides, domestic violence only happened to ignorant women who let themselves be victims. She wasn't like them. So she stuck to Tracie's story, and spoke very little.

They did a series of tests, and cleaned and dressed her cuts and bruises. The x-ray revealed that her shoulder bone had been fractured. The doctor gave her a long and

knowing glance. He said help was right around the corner if she wanted it. She thanked him and rushed back to Tracie in the lobby. On the drive back, Tracie interrogated her to find out if she had incriminated her brother in any way. She remained silent.

Back at the ranch, Tim's car was gone. The fragments of brown glass still sat on her car's wipers and on the nearby asphalt. A spiderwebbed crack marked where the beer bottle had hit the windshield. The sun had dried the beer into a weird pattern that looked like two praying hands. Since she could barely lift her arms, she didn't attempt to pick up the broken remains of the bottle. With eyes on the ground, she headed to the back cottage.

She took some painkillers the doctor had given her and lay down in the creaky bed with the large crucifix overhanging the headboard. The loud ringing in her ears made her dizzy, but the painkillers kicked in, and she drifted into a deep sleep. When she awoke, it was past 7:00 p.m. Alone in the dark cottage, she wasn't sure if she was hearing crickets or if her ears were still ringing. She got up slowly. Her injuries made her wince. When she used the bathroom, she saw her battered face in the mirror. She wanted to cry, but there were no tears.

It took almost two weeks before she could leave the house without any obvious signs of injury. The day after, Tim had showed up with two dozen roses and a card. When Tracie had told him she was indeed cleaning her car and never left the ranch, a sense of something like guilt hit Tim, and he seemed to want to atone for his sin. He doted on her, helping with everything. He bathed her and brought lunch home to her daily. He seemed sincere in his outpouring of regret, apologizing over and over again. He called it a misunderstanding, saying he didn't know what had come over him. But he

couldn't stop himself from saying that if she had just answered the phone, this never would have happened.

Her hearing never fully recovered, and when she finally decided to take the job with the F.B.I., the doctors who had administered her initial physical were shocked that her hearing had diminished so profoundly in only six months. Afraid they would probe further, she told them her mother's family had a history of hearing loss, which the doctors seemed to accept as a logical and plausible explanation. But then they gently told her that her hearing loss seemed to be permanent, and that it would prevent her from joining the F.B.I. She walked briskly out of the building and cried in her car for two hours before heading home.

\* \* \*

As part of their reconciliation, she started attending mass with him at St. Anthony's Catholic church in Kailua. She preferred to go to New Hope Christian Fellowship at Farrington, but after attending one Sunday service with her there, Tim put an end to it by telling her that "no fucking wife of mine is going to some holy-roller fucking church." They weren't married, of course, but he felt he owned her. Tim told her that his Catholic priest was "official," while her pastor was full of shit and a crook. He didn't understand why a church with so many people didn't have its own place of worship instead of renting a high school auditorium. He said her pastor was probably pocketing the offerings for his mortgage in Kailua and his children's mainland college educations. When she suggested that some of the money was rightfully his since being the church's pastor was his occupation, Tim exploded with profanities, and said that this was why Protestants were ignorant fanatics. So she gave in, and for a number of Sunday

evenings, they smiled at the families in the pews next to them.

For her, each week became the same bewildering ritual. Because of her hearing loss, she couldn't follow the priest's words. Without Tim's guidance, she didn't know when to sit or stand or kneel during the hour-long service. The structural design of the church often distracted her. The high vaulted ceilings had a wooden frame architecture that seemed like an inside view of Noah's Ark. Elaborate stained glass windows displayed painful details of Christ's life. The long, rich satin flags hanging from the ceiling seemed to change color each week.

A long, rectangular, intricately carved koa table with a woven lace and silk tablecloth sat up front, laden with a large, golden chalice and solid koa wood bowls. She wasn't sure of the symbolic meaning, but she knew the table served as the ritual offering place each week. The priest's opulent silk garb and enormous headpiece were a vibrant white. She counted fifty crystal oblong votive candle holders on display, sparkling and shining as if they themselves were on fire. The accordion doors on each side of the church were made of glass, framed by thick koa borders. Adjacent to the sides and back wall of the church stood three oversized golden drums which looked like cauldrons. They were filled with what appeared to be tap water, though Tim said it was holy water.

The final touch was what she referred to as the "gold bug-spray/defogger." As the priest walked down the aisle, his entourage chanting behind him, she would quickly hold her breath, remembering the first time, when she'd nearly choked from inhaling the pungent smelling incense. The second time she had come to mass, she'd been upset when the priest flailed the wet ti leaf he had dipped in holy water toward her, leaving splash marks on her hair, face, and new silk blouse. When she started to rub away the

wetness, Tim's icy stare stopped her. Clearly, she had committed some unspeakable sacrilege. Tim's claim that her pastor was misusing church funds paled in comparison to the ornately decorated Catholic church. In any case, weekly mass didn't have much effect on how she and Tim got along.

\* \* \*

Her first hint that Tim was an abuser had come from his four-year-old daughter Kona. They were at the ranch, and playing out in the back with Kona's new Barbies.

"Auntie, um, did you know my daddy hit my mommy on her head and gave me an owie?"

She froze and stared into Kona's light brown eyes.

"My daddy hit my mommy and my mommy's head banged my head."

"Oh no! When did this happen?"

"Um, when I was two-years-old."

"Why did daddy hit your mommy?"

"Um, I don't know. My mommy was crying and my daddy was yelling. And when my daddy hit her, she hit her head over here." She pointed to her temple.

"Did you cry?" She asked, not knowing what to say next.

"Um, just a little bit. But I was just a baby, that's why. I don't cry that much now."

She was troubled that Kona could remember her father's abuse of her mother, but also puzzled. They had been dating for two years, and Tim had never shown any signs of abusive behavior towards her. A year later, though, things changed.

The first time he had struck her was just weeks after she had graduated from the

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. Still hosting part-time at the restaurant where they had met, she also regularly waited tables at a Japanese *teppanyaki* restaurant in Waikīkī. During a popular Japanese festival, the owner asked her to pick up extra shifts. On an oversold night, a large party of sixty showed up just before closing, causing her to leave much later than usual.

She called Tim over and over to tell him she would be late. But when she got really busy, she couldn’t manage to call in the final hours of her shift, or to check her pager, which was in the staff room. When she finally left the restaurant, she saw that she had received ten pages from Tim.

The drive to Waimānalo seemed long. When she got to the ranch, Tim’s car was parked near the back cottage, but he was nowhere in sight. Then she saw a faint light from the barn and walked there. She was elated and nervous. She had made \$400 in four hours on tips alone, and she wanted to share the good news with Tim. But she was also afraid that he might be pissed at her. When she slid open the stable door, she saw Tim assaulting his punching bag in the makeshift gym he had created, complete with mirror and boom box blasting N.W.A.’s “Gangsta Gangsta.”

*‘Cause I’m the type of nigga that’s built to last*

*If you fuck with me,*

*I’ll put a foot up yo’ ass*

The loud explosion of profanities was deafening. But her hard of hearing ears didn’t hear the rapping from the barn until she was twenty feet away. The chains from the punching bag rippled rhythmically with each blow, and sweat flew in every direction as his gloved fists attacked.

“Hey!”

Tim didn’t answer.

“Tim!”

Still no answer. He beat the bag, blow after blow, ignoring her.

She turned the boom box off.

“I tried to call you. We got an unexpected group of –”

Before she could finish, he grabbed her by the hair and hit her with an open hand across her face. She fell backward from the footing, and sprained her ankle from the one-foot drop of the barn into the grass. She was wild. She couldn’t believe what was happening. Enraged, she hobbled back up onto the footing and hurled the boom box at Tim. It missed, but shattered the gigantic mirror into hundreds of tiny pieces.

“You fucking bitch! You’d better clean that shit up!”

“Fuck you! You fucking asshole!” She limped out, heading to her car.

Tim went after her and tried to stop her from driving away. But her temper flared beyond control and as she drove off, she barely missed hitting him. She turned on the light in her car and looked into the rear view mirror. A large patch of crimson stained her left cheek, and her lip and nose were bleeding. Her eyes were black raccoon circles of mascara. Her ponytail was loosened and full of grass and dirt, and the *happi* coat she was wearing was streaked with grass, mud, and tiny spatters of blood.

Her mind was racing. She drove to the Kailua police station where Lynne’s father was the lieutenant. But then she hesitated, and turned around. Her pride would not let her seek aid from Lynne’s father, and besides, she wasn’t sure if she wanted to see Tim in jail. Finally, she headed back to Waimānalo instead of her parents’ home. She couldn’t



go home in this condition. Umma would be hysterical.

At the ranch, Tim's car was gone, and so were all of his tree-trimming vehicles and chippers. She was confused. No one could have possibly stolen everything. But when she drove around on the ranch, she saw that the five boom trucks were parked against the inside wall of the barn, a long way from where he usually parked them. And the three flatbed trucks, each hitched with a drum chipper, were parked next to the boom trucks. Tim's car was behind the equipment, but he wasn't in it.

She drove back to the cottage and limped up the back steps. The door was locked. Removing the bottom jalousie, she reached in, and turned the doorknob. Tim was lying on his side, his face flush against the farthest wall. When she got closer, he turned over and sat up, apologizing for losing his temper. When she asked him about the equipment and his car, he explained that he thought she'd gone to the police. Because he had nowhere to go, he hid the vehicles and himself as a last attempt to escape captivity. Almost more appalled now by Tim's cowardice than his abuse of her, she hobbled into the bathroom and took a long, hot shower. Her head and ankle both ached.

Her mistake after that fateful day had two parts. First, she forgave the unforgivable. Second, she tried to forget something that would happen over and over again. With time, the shock factor of being abused wore off. Abusive language, destruction of personal property, and threats of violence became her norm. There were also witnesses. As Kona and Chad grew older, the children became closer to her than to any other adult. They considered her their mommy, and secretly called her this. Outwardly, she discouraged it, but loved it inside. Tim was jealous that the children seemed to love her more than him, their birth father, and whenever his temper erupted,

Kona and Chad stood protectively in front of her. Their loyalty was clear.

Kona's memory of her daddy hitting her mommy faded, replaced by thoughts about daddy fighting with her auntie. Kona had even tried to intervene from time to time, which only further enraged Tim. Because of Kona and Chad, she stayed.

\* \* \*

The worst beating was so severe that she had to stay indoors for a month. He had taken a belt and beat her with the buckle, breaking her skin everywhere. He took a knife from the kitchen, held it to her throat and threatened to kill her. He then cut off her jeans, starting at the ankles, working his way up to her hip, and through her underwear. The new top she was wearing for the first time was sliced by the blade of the knife. Her sixty-dollar bra was shredded. She crouched naked on the living room floor, whimpering for him to please stop, desperately pleading for her life.

Tim ran to the bedroom, and came back with his rifle.

“You want me to stop?! Huh?! You want me to stop?!”

She didn't dare answer.

“Either you die. Or I die. Tonight, someone is gonna die!” He cocked back the rifle and held it to her face.

She could see the faces of all of her loved ones in the background, even though her vision was blurred with tears and blood as she choked on saliva mixed with mucous. Tim's knees were now on her chest, and she couldn't breathe. As she slid in and out of consciousness, she could hear herself telling everyone that if she was found dead, she didn't do it. Then she saw her mother's beautiful face, and heard her own heart pounding loudly.

*Umma, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I failed you as a daughter. I never meant to cause you any shame or embarrassment. I only wanted to make you proud of me.* She lost consciousness while waiting to hear the bang of the rifle.

When she awoke, she was covered in a blanket, her hair glued to her face by vomit, saliva, and blood. Later, she found out that Tim's half-brother Moon had driven up to the ranch and stopped him from killing her. Moon had taken Tim for a drive to Kailua Beach to calm him down.

\* \* \*

They sat in a booth, facing the bar at Tony Roma's in Kāhala. The usual simulcast college sports and NFL highlights and the loud clang of dishes, along with the laughter of sports fans and employees, was noticeably absent. The morning patrons stared at the multiple televisions, all showing footage of the collapsed yet still burning twin towers. News reporters frantically attempted to keep their fellow Americans abreast of the horror and rising death toll that had started while most of Hawai'i slept. Those in Honolulu who worked nine-to-five had only recently become aware of the devastating events.

It was only 11:00 a.m., and she chewed pensively as she tried to focus on the screen. Her mind was still reeling from last night's craziness, and every ounce of her sleep-deprived body was screaming for much needed rest. She pretended to be hungry, for fear of being found out. She felt dizzy, as if she'd knocked back a flurry of Bacardi and diet Cokes. Her hard-of-hearing ears were filled with hair-raising decibels of loud ringing from inside her head. She looked around, and saw horror and sadness on people's faces.

His lisp interrupted her thoughts.

“Those fucking Iranians, or whatever the fuck they are—they make me wanna join the fucking military and blow those assholes to pieces.”

His mouth was coated in barbecue sauce.

“I thought you said you’d never join the military.”

Lack of sleep prevented her from even realizing that she was overstepping boundaries.

“That’s why I *just* said this is the only time I’ve ever felt like joining.”

He stuck his thumbnail into the large gap between his two lower front teeth. The space was large enough for another tooth. Nothing could ever get caught in that chasm. The gesture was a sign that she’d pissed him off. Tense and on edge, she watched silently, as he methodically sucked and chewed every shred of meat off the ribbed bones with the tiny shark teeth. The deep creases in his large, fleshy forehead disappeared then reappeared, in sync with the up and down movement of his large jaw. Australopithecus. The fat, upturned Portuguese nose jutted out of his pink hued face, making his overall appearance piggish. While she looked at him in fear and disgust, for a few seconds, she thought about cannibalism: pork-eating pig. Suddenly, he looked up at her and stared. Her heart began to pump erratically, but she had learned how to disguise her fear.

“What’s wrong with you?”

He was obviously put off by her watching him gorge.

“Nothing,” she lied.

He stopped chewing and peered at her closely with those same black irises she’d only noticed the first time he backhanded her, three years into the now seven she’d been

his captive.

He waved down their server and asked for the check. As they waited, live telecasts showed survivors pleading to the public for help in searching for their missing loved ones. Streams of pictures showed victims who'd lost their lives in the attacks. Some were from Hawai'i. Then Christine Snyder's face was staring at them from seven television screens.

“Holy shit!”

She sat numb, remembering the conversation she'd had with Christine just days earlier. She had called the Outdoor Circle of Friends in Kailua to ask about tree conditions in a low-traffic area. Christine's familiar and friendly voice greeted her. Besides typing out all of his bids, Tim now had her calling Christine from time to time, serving as his personal assistant-slash-girlfriend. He often talked about how he made more money without a college degree than she did, and that she should quit her day job to work for him since school was a waste of time. But he didn't pay her.

Christine was a key member of Kailua's Outdoor Circle of Friends. Tim and Christine had become friends, and he relied on Christine as a steady source of advice. Knowing he was new to the trimming trade, Christine had invited him to an arborist convention—really an urban forestry conference—on the East Coast. After mulling over the cost of the trip, and the benefits of attending the conference, he decided to go. But as luck would have it, a lucrative rush job came up in Mokulē'ia, and he cancelled his plans for the trip.

News of Christine's brave fight to the death as a member of the ill-fated United Airlines Flight 93 seemed to put a stranglehold on him. His jaw froze, exposing

remnants of half-chewed food.

“I can’t fucking believe it! Holy shit! Christine was on that fucking plane!”

“Oh my God!” She too was in shock.

“I was supposed to be on that fucking plane!”

He said this loudly, as if he wanted the others to hear.

“I know. I know,” she said, trying to hear what the reporter was saying.

“Can you fucking believe that that could’ve been me?! Ho-ly fucking shit! It’s a good thing I got that job in Mokulē‘ia! What the fuck?! I would be dead right now!”

Now he was almost screaming, his bib still tied around his neck.

She remained quiet. It seemed as if he was sincerely sorry about the loss of his new friend’s life. She was wrong.

“I’m just glad it wasn’t me,” he muttered softly. The words rolled off his short tongue that had been cut at birth because of a defect. Then his look of shock and horror disappeared. The furrows in his forehead smoothed out as he sank his tiny fangs into a corn-on-the-cob.

His mood had changed, and he seemed to forget he was angry with her. She was relieved. Her mind began racing with thoughts of what would have happened had he been on Christine’s fateful flight. She imagined sitting at the front of a Borthwick Mortuary funeral service room with an eight-by-ten photo of his pugilistic face in her lap. People would be working their way down the aisle to offer their condolences and comfort.

She’d heard of sociopaths, but it was only in Tony Roma’s that she finally realized she was living with one. When Tim declared war on the terrorists, it wasn’t because of a

bigger and nobler cause, or because of his sympathy for the loss of human life. He simply wanted revenge for something that pissed him off. As for his shock at Christine Snyder's death, it wasn't because he truly cared about her, but because of the thought that he might have died. Happiness at not attending the convention erased any concern for the victims. His incapacity to feel compassion for others was fully on display as she sat across him in the booth.

It only took her about an hour to walk away from seven years of abuse and a possible lifetime of torment. Almost immediately, she reached out to Jade Moon, having seen her recently on the front cover of *Midweek*. The story was about her experience in an abusive relationship, and she gave an e-mail address.

She told Jade Moon about her miserable existence. About how she'd been trying to get away, but couldn't. In short, it was the same bullshit that most addicts probably told to anyone willing to listen.

Jade Moon responded the same day.

*you need 3 things. you need to call domestic violence hotline, you need to find sanctuary, and you need to realize that you are strong enough to leave. you are right. no one is promised even one more day of life. what we have is precious and not to be wasted on a person who hurts us. i know what it's like to go back to someone because you think you love them or because you think it's your only option. only when i knew in my own mind that i had to make the choice and that i alone had the power to change my life, did i leave. don't make the mistakes i did. do not tell him you're leaving. do not give him time to adjust. do not let him know where you're going. it can be very dangerous. you need to take action, you need to get back in contact with your friends, and you need to stay*

*firm in your soul.*

*call the domestic violence clearinghouse and legal hotline.*

*i wish i had the number at my fingertips but the only one i have right now is the number for the director. 531-3771.*

*good luck. good life. call or email me and let me know what happens to you.*

*Jade Moon*

She read the e-mail. Then she went to the bedroom and packed her bags. As she dumped the dresser drawers into trash bags, she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. Her eyes were shining. It was the scariest yet most exhilarating moment of her life—a life that was hers.

\* \* \*

When she finally felt confident enough to go out again, she and a friend went to a popular karaoke sports bar on Kapi‘olani Boulevard. The place was packed, and she saw several friends she hadn’t seen in years. Their server was also someone they knew, and the atmosphere was cozy even if crowded. A few drinks into the evening, a leggy, hapa haole server set two Bud Lites on the table for her and her friend. They told her she was mistaken since they had just gotten their drinks minutes before.

“Oh. No problem,” she smiled, “they’re on me. I’m Taylor.” She said her name as if they should know who she was.

“Oh. Nice to meet you. Thanks for the beers.”

“Sure. You’re Tim Reis’s ex, aren’t you?”

She became quiet.

“I recognized you from his photo albums. You guys went to Seattle, right? And



he had tons of pictures from your trips to Maui.” She said this matter-of-factly, as if they were friends.

Janet interrupted.

“Look, I’m sorry. We are trying to have a conversation here. I don’t get out a lot anymore because I have a son now. My time is limited and I’d appreciate it if you let us talk.”

Sure. No problem.”

Taylor winked at her and walked away. The pretty woman’s easy talk had made her uncomfortable. They headed out almost immediately, leaving the bottles from Taylor untouched.

\* \* \*

Derek, Tim’s nephew, was married to Lauren. Lauren’s younger sister Kristen lived in Kailua with her parents, but often visited her sister and brother-in-law at the Meadow Gold cottage in Waimānalo. Both sisters were hapa, with pretty faces, but Kristen was slim and petite, unlike her heavy-set sister.

She had never really considered Tim being interested in Kristen for several reasons. Kristen was a heavy partier who delved in recreational drugs, including heroin and Tim looked down on drug users. Besides, Kristen was also in a relationship with a reputed drug dealer in Kailua. She was therefore surprised when she heard that Kristen was pregnant from Tim.

Months later, she began to receive frequent anonymous calls. She considered changing her number, but felt victimized by having to do so. So instead, she confronted the caller. It was Taylor from the bar! She brazenly explained that she had gotten her

number from Tim's old phone bills, and wanted to know if she had been seeing him again. She said no.

Then Tim showed up on her doorstep asking her for help, and maybe even advice and comfort. She stared at him long and hard through the screen door. Although his brother Tom had been the favorite because he looked most like their father, she now saw Tim's stark resemblance to the old man that she hadn't noticed before. Tim looked worn and old. He pulled open the screen door, and came in without being invited. He hadn't changed.

She remained silent and sat at the dining table. Tim sat on the floor and rubbed his face. He told her about his past year. Taylor had been a "gold digger." She constantly wanted to be wined and dined, and never cooked at home. Tim said Taylor was a "psycho." As for Kristen, he said the petite woman was violent. He claimed he was the victim. He said he broke it off when he found a bottle filled with several types of methamphetamines and random prescription drugs while going through her purse. She remembered how Tim used to rummage through her purse when she was in the shower or sleeping.

He suddenly became quiet. He could tell she had stopped listening. She looked up at him and heaved a sigh.

Finally, he explained the real reason for the visit. He said he had come to warn her that Kristen was going to have her subpoenaed to testify that she had also been abused by Tim. He said he and Kristen had been in a heated argument a few months back and that he had "accidentally" broken Kristen's nose when he elbowed her in the face while sitting in the car. He had tried to get Kristen to drop the charges and fabricate

a story that she had fallen down and broken her nose, but she wouldn't change her mind.

As if trying to gain an ally, he also told her that Kristen had recently begun working at the Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and had illegally and unethically accessed her files. Kristen had told Tim the details of her calls to the counselor. Now his comment years ago that she had fucked up his chances of winning custody of Kona and Chad made sense. She'd had no idea that the counselor was required by law to report her details of Tim's abuse to family court. He said Kristen had also become empowered by many of her co-workers and blamed those "fucking bitches" for alienating Kristen and said they should mind their own business. He said Kristen was a bitch for pressing charges after only being with him for a less than a year, and in a weird twist, he turned to her and thanked her for not pressing charges on him throughout all of the fights during their seven years together.

Her head spun with all of the details. He was pathetic and now pleading for her help. He asked her to say he had never hurt her if she was subpoenaed to testify in court. He was afraid that he would lose his business and his home.

She only recalled seeing him afraid three times. The first time, he foolishly tried to impress her and a friend by running all of the red lights on Ward Avenue. When he saw the blue lights of the two police cars blaring in his rear view mirror, he cowered, saying "I'm going down. I'm going down." Arrested and booked for drunken driving and reckless endangerment, his bail was set at \$1000. She had to wake several people in the middle of the night to ask for help in making Tim's bail. Even with his prosperous business, he typically failed to repay some of the people who had helped bail him out.

The second time she had seen him afraid was the when he had hit her for the first

time in the barn. When he thought she had gone to report him to the police, he tried to cover his tracks by hiding his tree trimming equipment and vehicles behind the barn, and hid in his bedroom. When she returned to the ranch alone without the police, he had a strange, but relieved expression on his face.

The third time she had seen him afraid was now. But she had heard enough. She stood up and Tim immediately followed suit. She turned to him and said that she had not pressed charges out of plain stupidity and that there was nothing to thank her for. Tim fell silent. She said that if either Kristen or Tim involved her again in their affairs, she would be sure to report Kristen's violation of her privacy and help put Tim behind bars.

She never heard from either one of them again.

\* \* \*

She'd been sitting in the same spot for at least twenty minutes, on the incline of Keolu Drive. The Chevron station which was less than two miles away would take an eternity to reach because of the bumper-to-bumper, mile-long row of cars in front of her. At least a dozen police cars, an ambulance, and three fire trucks blazed past on the narrow embankment down the road. The blaring sirens flashed by in a blur of blues and reds in different decibels, leaving her hard of hearing ears ringing more than normal.

Her tank was almost empty and she couldn't risk running out of gas, so she turned the engine off. A crowd was gathered at the foot of the hill and people near her were getting out of the cars to see what the commotion was. At first, she was hesitant about leaving her vehicle unattended in the middle of the road, but her curiosity got the best of her, and she scrambled down the hill with the rest of the crowd.

Yellow tape surrounded the perimeter of a home located just up from the

shopping center. News reporters in a mismatch of shorts, jeans and even slippers, topped with formal suit jackets or business aloha shirts, were being filmed from the waist up.

She eased her way through the crowd to see what the commotion was all about.

It was then she stared at the bullet wound near Tim's left temple. She knew his body had been there at least an hour since she had been sitting in her truck for that long. His eyes and mouth were open, as if shock had terrorized him before his final breath. The chalk line made a perfect three-inch border around him, except where crimson had oozed from his head, blurring the chalk line near his shoulders. The grooves that seamed his large forehead into even rows, and the thin lips she would trace with her fingertips early in their relationship when he slept were no longer pinkish, but a pale ashy color. His laugh lines were smooth, as if they had never existed. His expression was not the empty, cold stare she had become accustomed to, but a strange emotion she could make no sense of.

She closed her eyes and tried to remember the hollow eyes that she believed led to his hollow soul. Tim had been possessed by his anger. Tom had told her that when they were in junior high, Tim had once chased him through the house with a knife. Tom said Tim's rage was like a blackout occurring. His pupils dilated and darkened the irises of his light brown eyes. She herself had been no stranger to this telltale sign that warned to get a safe distance away.

He had been shot point-blank on the fresh, cemented driveway of his new five-bedroom home. He was still in his tree service uniform and boots. The neighbors said they heard a single gunshot in the middle of the night, but could not make out the fleeing vehicle because of the darkness.

The police apparently took forever to respond to the numerous 9-1-1 calls. The crew seemed to be doing shoddy work in cataloging the evidence. They were more concerned about what to eat for lunch and made jokes to one another as they cased the area. She couldn't help but wonder if this had anything to do with Lynne's father still being in charge at the Kailua police station.

Her heart wasn't racing, her mind wasn't spinning, and the usual panic when things were beyond her control wasn't there. She just felt numb—no sadness, no anger, no fear. Instead, she thought about the unattended truck she'd left parked at the top of the hill. She looked back up the incline to Keolu Drive. People were beginning the return trek to their cars. She followed them.

When she got to her truck, a strange thought struck her. During their relationship, she had never felt indifferent about Tim. There had always been some kind of emotion, often horrible, but never none. She started the engine and released the parking brake, waiting for everyone to board their vehicles. Traffic finally began moving again—and so did she.