

## Chapter 1: Honolulu 1922

Dolores's father deemed her useless when she was seven. Neither he nor her older brother, Pablo, ever said that, but every detail of their leaving told her so. Papa had tried to explain the Hawaiian custom of hanai to her. All she understood was the giving away, leaving her to live with a family not her own.

Papa had completed his work contract on Kauai, but instead of returning to Spain, the place of his birth, Papa came to Honolulu. Five years later, he decided to go to the mainland to look for work and take Pablo with him. In California there would be no one to look after Dolores, so Papa found a Hawai'ian family to hanai his only daughter. Her father said Pablo was smart and strong so even at nine years old he could work as a floor sweeper or fruit picker.

If she were two years older, like Pablo, she might have gone with them. If Mama had lived long enough to teach her to sew or cook, she might have gone, too. Then again, if Mama had lived, they would all still be at the plantation on Kauai, and Dolores would have another brother or a sister.

Her father carried the cardboard suitcase that held Dolores's clothes: a couple of dresses and underthings. Clouds of dust turned her pale legs gray like an awa fish. The air on Oahu smelled of citrusy plumeria. At home on Kauai, on the plantation in Makaweli, the dust was familiar and red, the air scented with sweet pikake flowers. She looked up at Papa and tugged his hand. "Can't we go home?"

Pablo snickered, but Papa said nothing. "Dolores, quit acting like a baby. Papa's explained all this to you a million times." Pablo believed himself two years smarter, but nine was not grown up. She stuck her tongue out at him. He laughed and she blushed, embarrassed to have proven his point so quickly.

Wisps of dark hair stuck out beneath the brim of Papa's straw fedora. He squeezed Dolores's hand. "I worked with Kanoa for years on Kauai, remember? His wife will take care of you, and she has other children for you to play with."

Dolores nodded because she had no say in the matter. The coconut palms swayed in the late summer breeze. Plantation cottages crowded the road, which was bordered by thick tough grass. Taro patches gave way to fields of sugarcane in the distance. The plantation owners used every available inch for their money crops. Workers huddled together where they could. They walked past Portuguese Camp with their beehive forno. Dolores's stomach growled when she smelled the pao duce—Portuguese sweet bread—and the sugary fried dough malasadas. Diamond Head towered over everything, but it wasn't as big as Kauai's Na Pali cliffs.

They approached a tin-roofed green plantation house, raised off the ground to discourage termites. Fruit-laden banana trees arced overhead, and a brilliant pink

bougainvillea climbed the lanai. Scrawny ti plants lined the tin-roofed carport that jutted out from the house on its near side. A rusty truck sat there like it hadn't moved since before Papa was born.

Dolores tightened her grip on Papa's hand, not caring if Pablo called her a baby. Her eyes fastened on a large Hawai'ian woman seated on the lanai. A red hibiscus blossom quivered in the dark waves of hair that fell across her shoulders and down her front. White teeth gleamed in a dark face. Her smile and a graceful wave of her hand greeted them. Yards and yards of fabric, white hibiscus flowers on a blue background, billowed around her.

A piercing howl broke the tension. Dolores recoiled from the wild native boy who screamed as he careened around the corner of the house. Another yelling boy followed, leaped onto the lanai and dodged the wicker chairs. He knocked against the cane table, causing a statue of the Hawai'ian god Kane to rock as if alive.

On the lanai, the Hawai'ian woman's booming laugh greeted Dolores's family and sent the children scurrying.

"Aloha. You must be Noelani," Papa said. He pushed the brim of his hat back and scratched his forehead as he did when he was nervous.

"Aloha," Noelani said. "E komo mai, keiki. Welcome, children."

"Paul isn't staying," Papa said. "Just Dolores."

Paul? Not Pablo? Dolores dropped her eyes to the floor, suddenly shy. Her renamed brother shuffled his feet. She darted a glance at him, but he wouldn't look back. His Americanized name must be something her brother and father had discussed without her, no doubt while they talked about leaving her with a bunch of strangers. She snuck a look at Noelani. How could Dolores convince Papa not to leave her with this stranger?

"Paul?" Noelani asked as she looked at Papa.

"Yes, on the mainland they'll call me Paul and he will be Paul Jr." He straightened his shoulders.

Noelani nodded. "Welcome to my ohana, Dolores. It be big family, blood and hanai, ya?" She grinned as if making a joke.

Dolores smiled, and her brain worked harder than it ever had in first grade. Family meant Papa and Pablo—Paul—not a strange woman with a bunch of children.

They followed Noelani into the house. The Hawai'ian woman moved with an incongruous grace. Her great bulk flowed as if one with its environment. The sway of hands and hips mimicked the motion of breeze and ocean waves. Once inside, Dolores slipped off her shoes and placed them by the door. She glared at her brother until he did, too. The Hawai'ians believed wearing shoes in the house brought bad luck, and she'd need all the luck she could get.

Two windows, open to catch the breeze, flanked the doorway. A fan with enormous leaf-shaped blades spun lazily above her. It wafted a soft breeze over a massive rattan couch that dominated one side of the room. Lurid floral patterns decorated the cushions shaped for large Hawai'ian bodies. A watercolor painting of a palm tree-lined beach hung on the wall. Through an arched doorway, three steps led down to the kitchen. Noelani flowed in that direction and reached into the open shelving for plates. She tapped first to scatter any cockroaches.

"Pupus, ya?" she said over her shoulder as she wiped a plate with a dishcloth.

Papa, Paul, and Dolores stood in the center of the main room. Dolores flipped her skirt to stir air around her thighs. Papa frowned.

Noelani brought a platter of food bites—shrimp and chicken and fish. She also set on the table a koa wood bowl full of poi. Dolores tried not to turn up her nose at the purple paste. Only native Hawai'ians could enjoy it.

"You sit." Noelani insisted. She pulled Dolores's arm and dragged her into a large rattan chair. The girl sank into it until her feet dangled above the floor. Papa and Paul perched on the edge of the couch. Noelani stood by Dolores, hand on the random curls that covered the girl's head.

"I must say, this feels odd," Papa began.

"Mo' betta you leave her with someone who knows you, ya? Kanoa and I, we take good care," Noelani said.

Dolores twisted away from Noelani and studied the roughened skin of the woman's palm, her arms the color of Kona coffee. She smelled of frangipani and rich dark soil.

A slim boy a little older than Paul, clad only in short pants, came into the room and helped himself to the poi. He scooped it into his mouth with two fingers.

"Kaipo, this be Dolores. She stay with us, ya?"

His dark eyes glared at Dolores with no hint of welcome. "Where she gonna sleep?" His tone was as hostile as his eyes.

"Be nice," his mother scolded lightly. She eyed Dolores's suitcase. "This all your things?"

Dolores nodded. She liked to think she had memories of her own mother, who'd died when she was two, but in reality they were other people's memories told so often she had taken them as her own. Pablo said that Papa had actually laughed when Mama was alive. Her mother must have loved clothes. Papa had left her closet alone, and Dolores played among her dresses. Dresses now sold for two passages to California.

A tiny girl with large dark eyes and tangled hair sneaked into the room and took Kaipo's hand. "Leia, this is our new sister," he said. His words dripped scorn.

Leia's gaze bored into her from eyes as deep as the sea, and Dolores's stomach churned. Leia belonged in this place. Dolores belonged nowhere. "No need a new sister," Leia said.

"Show Dolores where she sleep, ya?" Noelani told the children.

Papa handed Dolores the cardboard suitcase and nodded toward Kaipo. Dolores struggled out of the chair. Could she ask Kaipo to help her? He didn't want her there, so maybe he would suggest her father take her with him. But she couldn't find the courage.

Leia ran ahead. Kaipo indicated Dolores should follow her. She felt his eyes on her back as they walked through the small common room. She peeked past a drapery topped with bamboo rings into the room on the left. It was a jumble of boyishness—clothes, bedding, hats, sticks, and rocks littered the room. Kaipo waved her toward the room on the right, holding its drape aside. An open window caught the trade winds that fluttered thin white cotton curtains. Two big beds left very little room to walk around. The heads of both beds were against the wall to prevent demons reaching in the window to cut off sleepers' heads. The foot of the bed faced the opposite wall, not the doorway. That way a night marcher couldn't drag children out while they slept. Dolores took a deep calm breath. At least her new room would be safe.