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Honors Thesis

KEKUAOKALANI:
AN HISTORAL FICTION EXPLORATION OF THE HAWAIIAN
ICONOCLASM

by
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment
of graduation requirements for University Honors

English Department
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ABSTRACT

KEKUAOKALANI: AN HISTORAL FICTION EXPLORATION OF THE HAWAIIAN ICONOCLASM

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This thesis offers an exploration of the Hawaiian Iconoclasm of 1819 through the lens of an historical fiction novella. The thesis consists of two parts: a critical introduction outlining the theoretical background and writing process and the novella itself. 1819 was a year of incredible change on Hawaiian Islands. Kamehameha, the Great Uniter and first monarch of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i, had recently died, thousands of the indigenous population were dying, and foreign powers were arriving with increasing frequency, bringing with them change that could not be undone. With the death of Kamehameha, Hawai‘i’s rulers faced the impossible task of deciding how to move the fledgling kingdom forward. Some, including Ka‘ahumanu, the favorite wife of Kamehameha and new *de facto* ruler of the islands, sought to break with ancient traditions believed to be holding the kingdom back. Others, including Kekuaokalani, the nephew of Kamehameha and keeper of the war god, believed that to break with tradition would bring destruction and a loss of identity. *Kekuaokalani* tells the story of the title character’s journey to deal with the loss of his uncle and defend the ancient faith of his people.

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Critical Introduction

Project Overview

My original statement of intent was “to craft a work of fiction based in Hawaiian history and folklore that contributes meaningfully to a *native* Hawaiian literary tradition.” The work included here represents the achievement of that intent. Though I originally proposed to submit a portion of a novel, I chose instead to write a complete story that, once finished, was about novella-length.

This project grew principally out of my desire to explore my Hawaiian heritage. My grandfather was one of the few remaining full-blooded native Hawaiians. He left the islands for the mainland over fifty years ago in search of a better life. His descendants have remained in the Western United States but maintained their identity as Hawaiians and their connection to the geographic homeland. I am a quarter native Hawaiian and was raised in Austin, Texas, removed from the roots of my Hawaiian heritage. Growing up far from Hawai‘i, I had relatively few opportunities to engage with my Hawaiian heritage apart from trips to the islands, exposure to Hawaiian music and cuisine, interactions with relatives, the occasional luau where I would be asked to perform traditional dances, and, most importantly, the Hawaiian stories I was told. These stories of Maui, of Pele, of my grandmothers and grandfathers offered a window into the world of my ancestors that I wouldn’t have had otherwise. In writing my thesis, I hoped to build upon the cultural and traditional experiences of my youth with research and other immersion experiences and create my own window of sorts, a story that would help me and those like me engage with Hawai‘i’s rich history.

Beyond the personal value of this story, my thesis also contributes to an underdeveloped genre. Native Hawaiian literature, as defined by scholars such as Haunani-Kay Trask, is literature written by native Hawaiians and their descendants. It does not include works whose stories feature Hawaiian settings and themes by authors such as Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Jack London. Native Hawaiian literature was handicapped for over a century beginning in the missionary period (1820-1863) and worsening after the overthrow of the monarchy (1893) until the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s. Today, works featuring Hawai‘i may abound, but the body of literature written by native Hawaiians is small compared to the bodies of literature written by authors of other nations. It is here that I attempt to situate my novella, amid a literary tradition still full of unrealized potential. My goal, however, is not to naively attempt to recover through literature a “pure” Hawai‘i from a time before Western colonialism, but to explore and perpetuate the experience of my ancestors and thereby something of myself.

Beyond simply telling a Hawaiian story, much of my original purpose focused on Benedict Anderson’s theories on nationalism and identity. According to Anderson, a nation is an “imagined political community... imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the *image of their communion*” (italics mine, 5-7). This conceptualization of nation was relevant to my project because by these terms, the “image” of a nation’s identity is created and shaped in part by its distinct “poetry, prose fiction, music, [and] plastic arts” (143-144). As artists and writers create works distinct to their national traditions they shape their nation’s identity and are in turn shaped by it. In

these works, members of the nation discover what it means to be a part of their imagined community. I hoped that by striving to contribute to a native Hawaiian literary tradition, I would become a participant in shaping the Hawaiian national identity and the communion that binds all native Hawaiians together as a distinct people.

While the work I eventually created may accomplish this, I realized during the research and writing process that I am limited by the same colonialist perspective of nationalism and national identity that in some ways I was attempting to overcome. Any attempt at discovering and articulating a “national identity” with any authority would have failed given my dependence on modern Western conceptions of a national identity and my status as someone estranged from the islands. As a result, I abandoned the idea of trying to define what it means to be Hawaiian, and instead focused simply on trying to explore the past in my fiction with greater self-awareness. What became important was not Anderson’s nationalism, but the “communion” he describes with members of the Hawaiian “imagined political community” past and present.

Writing Process

Before ever attempting to write, I knew building authority for myself as an author would be essential to the success of my project. I started by conducting a survey of Hawaiian literature and studying Hawai‘i’s history and culture in books, journals, and digital media. However, it became clear that this would not be enough. Scholar Jonathan Osorio put it succinctly in his landmark essay “On Being Hawaiian” where he said that “Hawaiians must know their language, Hawaiians must know their history, Hawaiians must remain on the land” (23). To aid me in writing my story and in “being Hawaiian,” I followed Osorio’s advice and travelled to the islands in August 2017 where I was able to

visit many of Hawai‘i’s important historical and cultural sites, see and study different Hawaiian artifacts, experience a ride in a sailing canoe, explore the remains of ancient *heiau*, reconnect with Hawaiian family members, speak in person with Hawaiian cultural experts, and generally experience the land in a way that would allow me to represent Hawai‘i authentically in writing. Upon returning home, I also began studying the Hawaiian language in September 2017.

Other experiences which helped me prepare to write my novella with greater authority were my participation in the BYU Luau in November 2017, writing my capstone paper on Queen Lili‘uokalani’s *Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen*, learning Hawaiian language *mele* on the ukulele, and writing an ethnography on the Hawaiian religious concept of *‘aumakua*, in addition to my cultural experiences prior to beginning work on my thesis. While I will likely always have one foot outside the native Hawaiian cultural group, these experiences not only helped me gain important insight that would later inform my story, but they also helped me realize that despite my status as diaspora, I do belong to the native Hawaiian community and have some authority to write within it. Additionally, my participation in each activity has helped me develop connections with Hawaiian teachers and friends that can help me as beta-readers and sources of information.

Even with these experiences, however, I have had to grapple with my limitations as an author. While I may have developed some cultural expertise, I am still no cultural expert. There is much about Hawaiian history and culture that I simply don’t understand, and which would take decades to understand. There is also something fundamentally illogical about the idea of writing a “native” Hawaiian novella in the language of the

colonizer, and yet that is the language I speak and in which I must write. I have also acknowledged already that I have never lived on the islands, I have not “[remained] on the land” according to Osorio, only visited. However, while these limitations are real, my hope is that they will only be temporary. Furthermore, I do not feel that they prevented me from crafting a work of the type that follows, for according to Trask, “Hawaiians who move beyond our island shores do not lose their genealogical definition. Hawaiian literature, by this rendering, is that which is composed by Hawaiians” (168). I believe I and my work fit Trask’s definitions, and furthermore it may be that my insider-outsider perspective is an advantage to more objectively approaching my subject matter.

Writing Historical Fiction

After months of building authority through general research, I decided that the contribution I wanted to make to the native Hawaiian literary tradition would be in the form of historical fiction. I felt that historical fiction offered the most direct opportunities to engage with my cultural heritage, for I wanted to deal with something that actually happened, versus a story of my own invention. When done well, historical fiction can entertain while it educates, and it can inspire new thoughts about the past while asking us to examine our present condition. Furthermore, historical fiction also echoes the recursive nature of oral traditions, which is appropriate given that Hawai‘i was an oral society until as recent as the 1820s.

Writing historical fiction has its unique challenges. Chief among these is maintaining the balance between story and history. Accuracy must be maintained to preserve the truthfulness of the historical focus, and care should be taken when portraying the ideologies, behaviors, speech patterns, environment, and idiosyncrasies of the time.

Otherwise, the benefits of reviving the past in prose are never fully realized, and historical fiction becomes only fiction. The need for such historical sensitivity is only intensified when dealing with historical figures. As Susan Vreeland said, “When fact conflicts with what an author needs a character to do, it's always a sensitive question. There is no universal answer. At times, one must hold one’s ground, and resist the tyranny of fact for the greater good of the narrative, if doing so does not measurably alter history.” Ultimately, each author of historical fiction must determine their preference for historical stringency, aware all the while that blatant inaccuracies and anachronisms detract from the great advantage of historical fiction, which is that it is rooted in truth. Award-winning author William Martin offers great advice in this respect when he says, “I always carry in my head the rule that I should at least be true to the spirit of the history, if not to the letter””(Interview).

An additional balancing act which the author of historical fiction must perform is deciding how much historical detail to include. Historical detail is what captures the spirit of the time, blends the fictional and nonfictional elements of the story together, and ultimately transports the reader to the past. Including too much detail, however, distracts from the narrative and creates a feeling of contrivance. A reader beset by a preponderance of historical fact begins to feel that he or she is reading a historical textbook rather than an immersive story. This balance is what Lion Feuchtwanger is getting at when he says that the “pure science” of history “provides nothing but skeletons. They may at times be very neatly constructed skeletons whose contemplation rewards with a sort of aesthetic satisfaction; but only poetic fantasy can put living flesh on the bones of such a skeleton. (341) Including historical detail is necessary to frame the story,

but it cannot be the story's heart, nor should it distract from the narrative. In *Kekuaokalani*, for example, I combined important details such as where the final battle took place with small details such as how Hawaiians made fire to form the story "skeleton." The real heart of the story, however, comes from my interpretation and expression of Kekuaokalani as a character and the experiences, both fictional and factual, he endures. To that end, I was careful never to impose historical details on my story for their own sake, but to use them to drive forward my narrative about faith and political intrigue.

The difficulty of writing effective historical fiction is not without its rewards. Historical fiction offers unique opportunities to fill in the gaps of history, to answer the questions history can only pose. Through historical fiction the past becomes more accessible. We can experience the world of our ancestors through the narrative interpretation of how they might have felt, reacted, or behaved during a particular historical moment. By re-articulating the past in this way, we are also better able to examine and understand our present condition. According to novelist Sarah Dunant, "historical fiction, like history itself, always tells us as much about the time it is written as the period it is writing about." This is because historical fiction inevitably interprets the past through its present paradigm. It is, after all, told by a contemporary author to a contemporary audience. I do not see this as negative, provided the author is aware of this aspect of writing historical fiction. Rather I agree with Feuchtwanger when he says "I know no more thoroughly exciting satisfaction than to participate, through a great work of fiction, in the lives of people in the past, to make their thoughts my own, their

problems mine, to experience their complex emotions with them, until finally their time and our own merge into a single flowing stream” (342).

One of the most stirring events in Hawaiian history is the Iconoclasm of 1819. I first read of the destruction of the indigenous Hawaiian religion in King David Kalākaua’s *The Myths and Legends of Hawai‘i*, I knew that I wanted to recreate the story in a short work of my own, which I first began in Patrick Madden’s creative writing course during the Spring 2017 term. After finishing the general research phase of my thesis, I realized that this story was in line with my thesis objectives, and I abandoned the goal of writing a portion of a complete novel in favor of expanding this story into a novella. I felt this was appropriate not only because *Kekuaokalani* works well as an interesting historical narrative, but also because of its broader implications regarding identity, modernity, tradition, progress, and cultural convergence, the effects of which still resonate in the present day. In that way, the story of the Hawaiian Iconoclasm remains as relevant as it is poignant. It takes place in one of the most interesting times in Hawaiian history wherein Hawai‘i awakens to the broader world after centuries of isolation, but before colonialism sets in during the missionary period. With the rise of King Kamehameha and the unification of the islands into one kingdom, we also see Hawai‘i independently begin to emerge as a modern nation-state.

Early versions of the story were inspired by works such as Shakespeare’s *Henry V* and Lin Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton*, both works of historical fiction exploring an important historical moment and political figure, as well as Steven Goldsberry’s *Maui the Demigod: An Epic Novel of Mythical Hawai‘i*, a modern tale which draws from ancient Hawaiian myth and legend. As sources for my narrative I looked at works such as

Kalākaua's *The Myths and Legends of Hawai'i*, Samuel Kamakau's *Ruling Chiefs of Hawai'i*, David Malo's *Hawaiian Antiquities*, Mary Kawena Pukui's *Nānā i ke Kumu*, Herb Kawainui Kāne's *Ancient Hawai'i*, and George H.S. Kanahale's *Kū Kanaka: Stand Tall*. The original draft was an exploration of faith and religion. Before ever finishing that draft, however, I felt unsatisfied with the story, and after speaking with a cultural expert about its deficiencies and the historical inaccuracies in the narrative, I realized I needed to explore the historical context of the event in greater detail. For follow-up research I turned to sources like Kuma Hula Nona Beamer; scholars such as Noenoe Silva, Samuel Elbert, M.C. Webb, Stephenie Seto Levin, Richard H. Harfst, and Caroline Ralston; and works such as Abraham Fornander's *An Account of the Polynesian Race*, Martha Beckwith's *Hawaiian Mythology*, W.D. Alexander's *A Brief History of the Hawaiian People*, Ralph S. Kuykendall and A. Grove Day's *Hawaii: A History*, Paul Bailey's *Those Kings and Queens of Old Hawaii*, Richard Tregaskis's *The Warrior King: Hawaii's Kamehameha the Great*, and William H. Chickering's *Within the Sound of These Waves*. Within this additional research I found something of the true spirit of the Hawaiian Iconoclasm, the resulting rebellion, and the actors involved, all of which gave the story its historical grounding. As a result, redrafts focused more on the political implications of the event and such themes as the balance of tradition and progress.

Interacting with History

One of the most rewarding and challenging aspects of writing *Kekuaokalani* was navigating the interaction of history and fiction. Much of my time was spent conducting painstaking research into details as small as how ancient Hawaiian sandals were made in order to recreate a believable world. Eventually, however, I was able to use this research

as much needed scaffolding for my larger narrative. Major events became plot points around which I could flesh out my themes, and historical theories became opportunities for exploration and dramatization. For the most part, I did not contradict recorded history, though I did fill in its gaps and build upon it a great deal.

There are several historical and cultural elements which make their way into the story that are worth mentioning briefly (Other relevant historical/cultural information is recorded in Appendix A).

Indigenous Hawaiian Religion

Entire volumes can and have been filled with explanations and analyses of the ancient Hawaiian belief system and its code of conduct, the ancient *kapu* (*kapu* means prohibited, forbidden, sacred). A few dimensions of the religion I had in mind while writing *Kekuaokalani* were, first, the rules governing food (*‘ai noa*), which include what can and cannot be eaten, where and by whom. The penalty for breaking the *‘ai noa* was death. Reasons given for the existence of the food *kapus* were that items designated as *kapu*—pork, bananas, ulua fish, niuhi, coconut, etc.—were connected to the male gods Lono, Kane, Kanaloa, and Kū, or were often used in sacrificial offerings to these deities. The coconut was considered to be a “body” of Kū, for example, and as such it was forbidden to women.

The *kapu* system also governed the interactions between Hawaiian social classes. Interaction between the *maka ‘ainana*, the commoners, and the *ali ‘i*, the chiefs, was strictly regulated, and often limited. Within the *ali ‘i* class certain chiefs had unique, rank-based *kapus* which governed their interaction with others. Queen Keōpūolani, who appears as one of the ambassadors to *Kekuaokalani*, was one of these, holding the highest

rank of *naha*. She possessed the *kapu moe* (prostrating taboo), which required people to prostrate themselves in her presence, including her husband Kamehameha the Great. The *kapu* relating to chiefs came from the belief that the *ali 'i* were descended from the gods, and that those of highest rank were themselves most divine. All *kapus*, including those governing food and the social classes, was connected to the belief in *mana*, or spiritual power, which could be lost by a transgression of the *kapu*.

The *kapu* system is just one small part of a broader belief system in which there is little separation between humanity, divinity, and nature. Hawaiian gods are not seen as a separate class of beings, and Hawaiians believed that at death, provided they conducted themselves properly in life, a person could be transformed into *'aumakua*, or a family god. Though *'aumakua* were a distinct class of deity from the major Hawaiian gods, or *akua*, these major gods were themselves believed to be the *'aumakua* of the *ali 'i*. *'Aumakua* could manifest themselves in visible and tangible forms such as the shark, owl, lizard, eel, mouse, centipedes, or even rocks, clouds, and plants. This is one example of how the spiritual bleeds into the natural and everyday, and this strong connection between religion and ancestors was one of the original thematic bases for *Kekuaokalani*.

These are only some of many aspects of the religion and *kapu* system which figure into the story. Other examples include the yearly *Makahiki* religious festivals and the ceremonies governing human sacrifice, war, and the construction of a *luakini heiau* (temples associated with war). These two dialectic rites, the former associated with peace, the latter with conflict, are portrayed in the story as condensed versions of much larger and intricate affairs. Also present in the story are the religious protocols attending the death of a high chief. When a high chief died, all *kapus* were temporarily removed

during a period of “defilement” wherein public displays of grief are common. The successor to the deceased chief must be removed from the city until this period is over, after which they would return and reinstate the *kapu*. Of note is that this latter protocol never took place after Liholiho succeeded Kamehameha, so although the *kapu* system is described as being “broken” in Kalākaua’s *Myths and Legends of Hawai‘i* and in my own *Kekuaokalani*, historically it wasn’t broken as much as it was never reinstated. This does not explicitly enter the story for the sake of clarity. A third, less well-known, belief explicitly referenced in *Kekuaokalani* is the idea that gods could be rejected or killed by the living. Kanahale describes this in *Kū Kanaka: Stand Tall* as a “pragmatic” response to gods considered impotent or obstinately passive (77). Finally, the last belief worth mentioning here is that *Po*, the Hawaiian spirit world where the dead dwell, was believed to be under the ocean.

In *Kekuaokalani*, I do not treat Hawaiian beliefs as fiction, but rather as some of the many historical details that find their way into the narrative. Where a rationalist, post-Enlightenment reader might take issue with passing the religious or supernatural off as historical and not fictional, I argue that this is an effect of colonization in writing. The colonizer treats the belief systems of the colonized as unworthy of treatment, dismissing them as superstitious or frivolous. As an author of historical fiction, I tried to treat these beliefs with the same respect I would any contemporary religion. This does not mean that I tried to prove through the narrative the truthfulness (or falseness) of the Hawaiian religion. Rather, I tried to depict the world in which my characters lived as they would see it, while at the same time depicting many of the supernatural events of the narrative in such a way as to not preclude the possibility of non-supernatural explanations.

Historical Explanations for the Hawaiian Iconoclasm

History offers many (sometimes conflicting) explanations for what precipitated the Hawaiian Iconoclasm. As my story evolved, I drew more and more upon these theories to further flesh out the narrative. The first theory has to do with Hawaiian beliefs about *pono*. *Pono* means rightness, morality, and correct or proper procedure. If a Hawaiian ruler was *pono*, then he and his people would prosper, if not, sickness, famine, and misfortune would attend his rule. Silva points out that although Kamehameha was one of the most *pono* rulers in Hawaiian history, Hawaiians continued to die at epidemic rates during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Silva theorizes that Ka‘ahumanu and the *ali‘i* responsible for casting away Hawai‘i’s gods must have observed the foreigner’s immunity to disease and concluded that the foreigner’s gods had greater *mana* and that their own were no longer enough to protect them (28-29). To reclaim *pono* and stop the death, they cast aside their gods, perhaps hoping to rely instead on the foreigner’s superior *mana*. In *Kekuaokalani*, this viewpoint is held most clearly by Hewahewa, the high priest in rank just above Kekuaokalani who collaborated with Ka‘ahumanu to execute the iconoclasm.

Another, more obvious, explanation for the events of 1819 was the effect of the Western ideas in Hawai‘i. At first, the Hawaiian belief system could tolerate the fact that foreigners could heedlessly violate *kapu* without fear of reprisal because they were not members of that same genealogical-spiritual system. Decades of ideological incongruity, however, would have undeniably cast doubt on many aspects of the indigenous religion. The effect of foreign trade and the desire of the *ali‘i* class to accumulate foreign goods also put enormous strain on the normally ordered social structure of the islands. One

example of this was the emerging sandalwood trade with China. To harvest the precious wood, the chiefs sent many commoners into the mountains, often at the neglect of their usual labor, which was also regulated by the *kapu* system. This is one example of how the pursuit of wealth offered by foreign traders was at odds with the native religion and eventually led to the need to eliminate one or the other.

Two other explanations for the iconoclasm are that many Hawaiians, particularly women, could no longer tolerate the burdensome belief system and that under the newly consolidated system, it was politically expedient to do away with the religion. Women under the *kapu* system were the most restricted, and when Ka‘ahumanu came to power at the death of her husband, the circumstances were right for her to instigate the destruction of a religion which many had already begun to lose faith in. Furthermore, after Kamehameha’s rise to power and the consolidation of the archipelago into a single political unit, a religion which sanctioned and perpetuated competition and warfare could no longer be tolerated. If the kingdom was to survive long-term and the monarchy perpetuate, Hawai‘i’s rulers needed to adjust their culture.

Despite the many reasons for the demise of the Hawaiian religion, the iconoclasm of 1819 was far from inevitable. However, Kamehameha all but guaranteed conflict at his death when he created for his favorite wife, the progressive Ka‘ahumanu, the title of regent (which itself is the cause of some debate, though in my story I take the generally accepted view that this did happen according to Kamehameha’s wishes) and bestowed great power as custodian of the war god Kuka‘ilimoku on his staunchly religious nephew Kekuaokalani. This alone ensured eventual, violent conflict. There were also those who stood to lose from a strong central government. Many of the chiefs were seeing a decline

in their power, and when a redistribution of land did not occur after Kamehameha died, as was expected at death of a high chief, many of the would-be rebels were eager for a conflict that would facilitate the restoration of their former prestige. This viewpoint is most embodied in the fictional character 'Aikanaka.

Emergence of the Hawaiian Nation

Although Anderson's theories on nationalism were not an explicit focus of my novella, his ideas as they apply to Hawai'i still found their way into the narrative. In the nineteenth century we see the "artefact" of the nation begin to emerge in Hawai'i as imported from the West. This plays out mostly in the decades after 1819, culminating in the nationalistic reign of King Kalākaua from 1874 to 1891, but it began with Kamehameha the Great and his creation of a modern and much beloved monarchy. The terms I used to describe this new form of government in *Kekuaokalani* are deliberate. For much of the story, the central character does not refer to his cousin Liholiho or his uncle as king or *mō'ī*. As a traditionalist, he does not see the world in these modern terms. Historically speaking, there are many who refer to the high chiefs of ancient Hawai'i as *mō'ī*. However, I believe the term "*mō'ī*" became popular in the period after 1819 where Hawaiian nationalism called for perpetuating the idea that Hawai'i had a long tradition of king-like rulers as opposed to a fractured system of warring chiefs. Harfst supports this when he writes that "'moi' seems to have been an introduction of the consolidation period (1778-1819)" and not a term which Hawaiians used to describe their rulers prior to the proliferation of Western ideas on the islands (451). Hence, the emergence of *mō'ī* both as a concept and a political reality in the form of a centralized monarchy is a major concern of this very historical moment.

Two other details I included relevant to the ideal of Hawaiian nationalism are the image of flags, themselves bedrocks of the language of nationalism, and the ambassadors' insistence on the inevitability of Hawai'i's new modern government, which according to Anderson is one of the paradoxes of nationalism. Anderson describes this latter element as a paradox because although nationalism and modern nations are relatively recent creations, people think of them as ancient and timeless. What the ambassadors don't realize is that their new monarchy may really have come from an adoption of foreign ideas and not from the natural development of an exclusively Hawaiian evolution of government.

Although Hawaiian nationalism is not a fully-realized topic of this thesis, it is nevertheless an important one. Certainly, its many threads run throughout the historical era, and will therefore inevitably run through *Kekuaokalani* as well. It is important to acknowledge also that since Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s, Hawaiian nationalism, including calls for sovereignty, are alive and well today. As an author attempting to speak to this audience this was an issue of which I was keenly aware.

Fact vs. Fiction

While history may be the butter of the author of historical fiction, the narrative is fundamentally his or her bread. In other words, the two work together, but the author is ultimately crafting a narrative, not a history, and like Vreeland said, "at times, one must hold one's ground, and resist the tyranny of fact for the greater good of the narrative." There is much fiction in *Kekuaokalani*, and perhaps chief among these is Kekuaokalani himself.

Tomes of writing exist detailing the events, circumstances, and effects of the Hawaiian Iconoclasm, but relatively little of it gives Kekuaokalani much dimensionality. Apart from Kalākaua's *Myths and Legends of Hawai'i*, most accounts have little to say about the leader of the iconoclasm's resulting rebellion, focusing instead on Kamehameha, Liholiho, or Ka'ahumanu. In my novella I had to take a lot of liberty to create a fully fleshed out character, and in many ways my creation conflicts with how the historical Kekuaokalani comes across in historical accounts, though these accounts themselves sometimes disagree. In my story he is not always, for example, the rigid and unmoving zealot the accounts portray, nor is he necessarily the tragic and pure martyr of Kalākaua's rendering. In many ways he becomes these things by the end of the story, but I wanted my Kekuaokalani to have more of an arc. In the first scene we find him grieving the death of his uncle on a cliffside, immediately after which he leaves his sacred responsibility behind to run to Maui. On Maui, Kekuaokalani struggles to execute his duty as a high priest and punish the unfortunate Wahinepio, his grief and doubt having tempered his former zeal. Furthermore, for much of the first half of the narrative Kekuaokalani is unable to face the responsibility placed on him by Kamehameha as he works through his grief and must confront the reality of his beliefs. Because of this, he is a character that is acted upon more than one who acts. It's not until his whole concept of reality is threatened and he is literally dying that he finally embraces the mantle given to him and takes up what he believes to be his uncle's fight and what certainly is the responsibility of his convictions. It's here that he becomes more of history's Kekuaokalani, though his struggles both internal and external are far from over. By the end of the story he becomes everything his uncle had hoped for in a potential successor

and in the custodian of his beloved war god. This was perhaps the most fictitious aspect of my novella, and it was done to create a more interesting and relatable narrative.

The timeline of historical events is also something I altered to create a more digestible narrative flow. The original chronology of the Hawaiian Iconoclasm and resulting rebellion took place between Kamehameha's death in May of 1819 and the final defeat of the rebels around February or March 1820. In my narrative, events which really occurred over the course of several months take place in quick succession. I did this deliberately to maintain the momentum of the narrative and prevent confusion. However, all the major events are still present in the plot, and I feel this compression does not detract from the essence of history, nor its implications.

A few other elements that are fictitious but which do not directly contradict history are first, everything that takes place on Maui. This section of the story was meant to help introduce themes such as the political machinations of Hawai'i's chiefs, the reality and effects of foreign trade on the islands, some of Kekuaoakalani's backstory and current state, and the human cost of the *kapu* system. Other fictional events include the confrontation with Hewahewa taking place at the famous Pu'ukoholā *heiau*, Kekuaoakalani's violent escape from Kailua-Kona, his subsequent near-drowning and rescue by Manono, the *luakini* ceremony, the injury to his leg occurring in the first battle versus the second, and his vision of Kamehameha in the grove of trees where Captain Cook was killed (though interestingly Fornander makes note of a tree in the area shot through from a cannon on Cook's ship). These are some of the major additions I made to the history in order to craft a narrative from history, though it would be difficult to detail them all.

Several characters were also added to or omitted from the historical accounts. Hua and Wahinepio are characters of my own invention, as is Kaneluaohonua and 'Aikanaka. Kuaiwa is a combination of two minor historical figures, Kuaiwa and Holoialena, who fought with Kekuaokalani and urged him to rebel instead of to negotiate. The only major figure omitted from the story is Kalanimoku, Kamehameha's prime minister and the commander of the royalists during the final battle., whom I omitted to avoid introducing a new character during the final act. There are other minor historical figures as well who don't make an appearance in *Kekuaokalani* for the sake of concision.

One final subtle but thematically significant element added to my story is Kamehameha's *lei palaoa*. A *lei palaoa* was a necklace worn by the *ali'i* that was believed to be a vessel for *mana* and represent a tongue that speaks the law. These were made from a whale tooth carved into a hook-shape suspended on a necklace made from plaited human hair. In *Kekuaokalani*, Liholiho and later Ka'ahumanu wear a *lei palaoa* passed down from Kamehameha. Though it does not receive much treatment in this story (it will appear more frequently in my future plans for this project), I mention that it is made from Captain Cook's hair. This has some basis in historical fact, given that when Captain Cook was killed, Kamehameha was given the Englishman's hair by then high chief Kalani'ōpu'u. The *lei palaoa* therefore represents the foreigners' *mana*, which hangs from the neck of Hawai'i's rulers. It is the symbol of progress and the broader world juxtaposed with the war god, itself as symbol of tradition and purity.

These are just some of the many ways in which *Kekuaokalani* interacts with history. Though there is much that is fiction, I am proud of the historical grounding I was able to achieve in my narrative, not just in the major plot points and characters, but in the

subtleties of the historical and cultural contexts in which the Hawaiian Iconoclasm of 1819 took place. I believe, however, that it is the fictional elements I was able to weave around the history that awaken the true spirit of the story and allow the reader to get at the depth of this unique moment of human experience.

Thematic Considerations

I don't know everything that *Kekuaokalani* means. It is an exploration, not a manifesto. Around the scaffolding of history, I tried to construct a complex, layered story that I hope comes alive enough to be read many ways. What follows is a brief overview of my own interpretations of some of *Kekuaokalani's* narrative themes.

Kamehameha's Legacy

Kamehameha the Great looms large over *Kekuaokalani*. In the aftermath of his death, those left behind must grapple with his complex and contradictory legacy. The historical Kamehameha was progressive, using foreign weaponry to consolidate the kingdom into a single nation-state, and navigating Hawai'i through many radical changes. He sometimes wore modern clothes, formalized trade with foreigners, and instituted laws to protect the human rights of his subjects. He was also, at least in a religious sense, a firm adherent to tradition. He worshipped his gods until his death with such devotion that Captain Vancouver decided against bringing Christian missionaries to the islands out of respect for Kamehameha.

Kamehameha's successors in *Kekuaokalani* each inherit a piece of his legacy. Ka'ahumanu takes up his progressive legacy, physically represented in the *lei palaoa*, and Kekuaokalani takes on the mantle of Kamehameha's legacy as a traditionalist, physically represented in the war god Kūkā'ilimoku, with Liholiho trapped in the middle

of these two opposing forces. Throughout the narrative we mostly see how Kekuaokalani interacts as defender of Kamehameha's faith, though we see glimpses of the work of Ka'ahumanu and the progressive *ali'i*, including the destruction of the *kapu* system and both its positive and negative effects on Hawaiian society. An obvious example of a positive effect is that women are no longer killed for eating coconuts, and an equally obvious example of a negative effect is that the progressive changes are so radical that they precipitate war.

In Kekuaokalani's visit to the grove of trees after his discussion with the ambassadors we see him confront the reality of this dual legacy for the first time. After learning that his uncle did, in fact, appoint Ka'ahumanu as regent, he begins to understand that adherence to tradition might not be the only path forward for Hawai'i, and he experiences a resurgence of the self-doubt he suffered through the first half of the narrative. This culminates in Kekuaokalani's vision of Kamehameha wherein he is shown the *lei palaoa* and the scarred coconut tree, the latter having forever been disfigured by violent foreign contact—much like Hawai'i itself. The tree, however, far from dying, is as vibrant as ever and still fertile enough to be seeding other trees. That this scene takes place in the very spot Captain Cook was killed is meant to further reflect the often-violent convergence of cultures wherein few parties escape unscathed. Contrary to Kekuaokalani's worldview, the past cannot be lived in nor returned to, and all the supernatural and physical elements of this moment combine to indicate the reality that he has inherited a legacy and is living in a world of inescapable contradictions.

Central Question

There is a clear presence of the supernatural in *Kekuaokalani*. We see it first in Kekuaokalani's story of being protected by a shark as a young boy. We see it also when the war god is inexplicably turned to face Kekuaokalani when he escapes from the great hall after his confrontation with Ka'ahumanu, Hewahewa, and Liholiho. We see it again when Kekuaokalani is rescued from drowning by a shark, in the unnatural movements of the war god's feathers, and in Kamehameha's visit to Kekuaokalani.

The reality of the supernatural is the second great truth Kekuaokalani must confront after his experience in the grove of trees. Ultimately, it is this reality that convinces Kekuaokalani of the need to fight instead of negotiate even after he begins to doubt his convictions after his meeting with the ambassadors. This occurs in the thematic climax of the story when Kekuaokalani asks the great question "how does the war god speak?" As ambiguous as this question may be, its true import is meant to question whether Hoapili and the rest of the royalist leaders are capable of perceiving the supernatural and by extension recognize that there is some power beyond their own. It is a well-documented piece of Hawaiian mythology that the war god Kūkā'ilimoku was believed to communicate through his feathers. For example, it is said that if victory in war was assured, the feathers would miraculously stand on end, and we see something similar within the story during the *luakini* ceremony. The correct answer to Kekuaokalani's question would be that the war god speaks of its own accord through its feathers. However, the answer that Hoapili gives, "You are his voice," demonstrates his blindness to the supernatural, a sin which for him is especially grievous given that he was one of Kamehameha's chief counselors and companions in the war of consolidation.

When the question is asked, and the incorrect answer is given, Kekuaokalani realizes that to negotiate would ultimately be fruitless. If Hawai‘i’s rulers cannot recognize a power greater than their own they will never be able to truly understand Kekuaokalani's position. They operate in a world in which man's destiny is entirely in his own hands, and that those in power are free to wield it however they please based on any number of consideration except the reality of the spiritual. We see this same dynamic so often today, in which an unbridgeable gap exists between religious groups who interpret the world according to faith, and nonreligious groups who interpret the world according to human reason. A real-world example of this might be a secular journalist believing that the late Mormon President Thomas S. Monson could have given Latter-Day Saint women the priesthood, versus a faithful Mormon's belief that God has the power to make such decisions and President Monson could not have made that decision even had he wanted.

Progress and Tradition as Destructive Forces

In *Kekuaokalani*, both tradition and progress are portrayed as sometimes-destructive forces. We see the destructive force of progress most clearly in Kekuaokalani's rebellion, but its signs are also shown in the juxtaposition between the lavish village of chiefs on Maui and the impoverished village of commoner's the *ali'i* must walk through from the beach. Modern weaponry is also a key symbol of progress. With the introduction of gunpowder weapons to the islands, death becomes much more destructive and efficient and power is much more easily gained and maintained by those who rule by virtue of these weapons. However, we should recognize that Hawai‘i was more often beset by warfare before the war of consolidation than after. Perhaps the most

tragic portrayal of the destruction of progress is the effect it can have on the family, in particular Kamehameha's family, which is torn apart by it.

Progress, however, is not the only destructive force, for in *Kekuaokalani* tradition also has its victims. Wahinepio is killed for something as small as eating coconut, Manono is barred from speaking up at crucial time in which her insight might have been valuable, a man is brutally sacrificed to consult the gods, and one can only imagine the difficulty of Keopuolani's life where all those to whom she interacts must prostrate themselves before her. As I mentioned before, traditional Hawai'i also experienced constant conflict, the rebel chiefs are just as eager to fight for power and control as are the royalists. These circumstances are certainly unique to the ancient Hawaiian way of life, but they do demonstrate how problematic an inflexible system steeped in unchanging tradition can be.

Inevitability of Progress

The ocean is an important symbol in *Kekuaokalani*. It represents a broader, indifferent universe in which time passes regardless of how you feel. The grieving Kekuaokalani cannot escape the ocean. Its waves beat upon Hawai'i day and night, symbolizing the inevitability of the Hawaiians confrontation with the modern world. The ocean is what brought Captain Cook to Hawai'i; it's what connects the islands of the Hawaiian archipelago to each other and to every other island in the world-wide archipelago. The ocean is constantly changing, and will continue to change, its waves and tides ever flowing no matter what we do. It cannot be fought, and Kekuaokalani nearly drowns in it until he finally surrenders. Ancillary to this are the symbol of cliffs, which represent Kekuaokalani's reticence to move forward into an unknown future, a future

filled with technology and ideas that he does not understand, and a future where his uncle is absent. At Kailua-Kona, Kekuaokalani's only option is to escape into the ocean from a cliff of sorts or face capture.

The ocean is also a metaphysical symbol of the connection between the past and the present. When Kekuaokalani dies at the end of the novella, he feels himself being pulled through the water into the afterlife, itself a never-ending future, just as he was pulled to safety through the water by his uncle in the story he recounts to Hua of his childhood. The ending of *Kekuaokalani* is thus a convergence of past, present, and future. Though it is impossible to recover the past, we are nevertheless connected to the past by the very same ocean which encompassed the Hawaiian Islands thousands of years ago as it does today.

Faith and Religion

One final theme I'll discuss briefly is faith and religion in *Kekuaokalani*, the core of which is not some impersonal and omnipotent doctrine, but the very fabric which ties Kekuaokalani to his ancestors. The best example of this is the war god left to him by Kamehameha, an object which connects him to his uncle and acts as a symbol for his faith. For a time, Kekuaokalani struggles with his faith. In the opening lines of the story we see him searching the ocean in vain for some sign from *Po*, of the continued existence of his uncle, or at least some indication of the world beyond his mortal vision, a world he is not able to find until he surrenders to the ocean and accepts the war god as he is drowning. This moment represents an end to his craving for evidence and certainty and a true beginning to his walking instead by faith. At the thematic climax of the story, it is Hoapili's inability to do this himself that precipitates the final conflict.

Kamehameha had a foot in both worlds. He was the owner of both the *lei palaoa* and the war god, a man of faith and tradition as well as openness and progress. This is why he succeeds where Kekuaokalani fails. This may also be why Ka‘ahumanu and the leaders of Hawai‘i from Liholiho to Kalākaua, ultimately failed as well. They became so focused on becoming like the West that they inadvertently sowed the seeds for their eventual loss of sovereignty.

Conclusion

Historical fiction is one of the most challenging and rewarding genres to write in. I can’t be sure what contribution *Kekuaokalani* will ever make to a native Hawaiian literary tradition, but I am confident that somewhere in its thousands of words is a window to a past by which, though the portal is impassible, we may nevertheless participate in the communion that binds all native Hawaiians together as a distinct family. I have seen through that window myself, even as I also have seen my own reflection in it.

Kekuaokalani

by Alex Keone Kapuni Oldroyd

The breaking of the ocean is a sound that from birth becomes so familiar it is seldom heard. Kekuaokalani could hear the ocean. Its dull roar thundered through his mind no matter how far inland he ran. He had not gone into the water in weeks and today stood alone at the edge of the *leina* just beyond the reach of the spray. Directly below him the water lunged and retreated, churning up and down, but for all its motion it did not move. He watched, eyes rimmed-red, as a large wave beat the black cliff face with enough force to send water above the height of his head. For several moments, the droplets hung suspended in air, sunlight striking them right to cast a rainbow. Closing his eyes, he chanted:

E Manō, come up!

Here is your food, here your fish,

Here is your clothing, here your boy,

Come up, let me see you,

Return and be happy!

As he chanted, a soft breeze carried the mist to him, wetting his face. The salt in the air stung the slashes in his arms. When he opened his eyes, the ocean foamed and spat at him. He waited and watched, searching the water for some sign, for anything but the indifferent surf.

“What do you find in the waves?” A soft voice spoke behind him.

Kekuaokalani turned to find his cousin, Liholiho, standing a few feet away. He looked small, though he was only a few fingers shorter than Kekuaokalani. A heavy

feeling settled in Kekuaokalani's gut when he saw Liholiho was dressed in foreign cloth, a red and gold uniform whose unnaturally shiny knobs reflected the sun into Kekuaokalani's eyes. Over one shoulder he wore the chiefly *'ahu 'ula*, its native red feathers clashing with the unnatural dye of the fabric underneath. Liholiho's full lips and round chin seemed to recede as he observed his cousin. Around his neck hung the *lei palaoa* of his father, the carved *palaoa* tooth suspended by the fair plaited hair of the first foreigner to come to these islands.

Kekuaokalani stood, careful not to turn his back directly to the sea. His own stately feather cape caught the wind and fluttered on his back, its yellow feathers waving against his dark skin. He met Liholiho's gaze. "I cannot see what is in them."

Liholiho nodded in solemn agreement. "Hoapili and Naihe have arrived to accompany us home," he announced. There was an uncomfortable pause as Liholiho waited for a response.

Kekuaokalani tightened his lips and frowned but did not respond. After several moments, Liholiho ventured, "They tell me you volunteered yourself as a sacrifice to heal my father."

Kekuaokalani looked his cousin directly in the eyes. "Someone should have been sacrificed," he admitted, his frown worsening into a grimace. "No matter what he may have said, we should not have indulged him."

"I do not think it would have made a difference." Again, there was silence between them. Liholiho fingered the *lei palaoa* as if trying to rub some strength out of it. Beneath them the ocean continued its dance with the land. At last he broke the silence, "My father is dead. It is time to set down our grief and go home."

“I am not going back.” Kekuaokalani said.

Liholiho blinked, his thick curly hair dripping sweat over a golden forehead that glistened in the tropical heat. “But the time of mourning is over.”

“I am not going back.” Kekuaokalani repeated.

“You have to come back.” Liholiho stammered. “My anointment is prepared for today, and you are next in line to the high priest and the keeper of my father’s war god.”

“I am sorry, little cousin, but I won’t be there.”

“But I need you. I am not ready to rule alone. My father meant for you to be by my side.”

“If we trust the gods, all will be well.” Kekuaokalani said, looking down to the ground.

“Do you trust the gods?” Liholiho retorted.

“Of course.”

“Then why have you been coming up here so often?”

Kekuaokalani did not respond. He merely turned again toward the ocean, appearing more and more as if he were about to cast himself off the cliff.

Liholiho’s fists were now at his sides. “If you will not come, then what will you do?”

Kekuaokalani considered for a moment, looking north. His mind was made up. “*Ho ‘olana*,” he said finally. “I will go to Maui; Manono has not been to her homeland in many years. And perhaps from there we will go to O‘ahu.”

“Maui! What relief do you expect to find on Maui?” Kekuaokalani was surprised to hear Liholiho raise his voice. “You have a responsibility here. What will you do with the war god while I am made chief and you run away to Maui?”

“It will stay in the *heiau* where your father left him. It will be safe in the temple.”

“And what will Ka‘ahumanu think if we do not return together? She was explicit that there would be work for us to do upon our return.”

At this Kekuaokalani faced Liholiho full on. He did not care for his uncle’s favorite wife. “She will wait,” he said, failing to imagine what she had for them to do. “Ka‘ahumanu is not the ruler of these islands, and you should be careful not to let her think that she is.” Liholiho stared at him, waiting perhaps for some further explanation, some satisfactory information for his obstinance. Kekuaokalani was annoyed that his cousin was so impressionable. At last he said, “I’m sorry but I can’t go back. If anything happens, you can trust Hewahewa.”

Liholiho moaned, and turned his eyes to the ocean. He shifted his weight uncomfortably between each leg. Kekuaokalani’s irritation melted into pity. Liholiho looked like a child unsure of himself, not yet old enough to handle his father’s spear. It was not fair to send him back alone, but Kekuaokalani was not ready to go back at all. He stepped forward and placed his hand on Liholiho’s shoulder.

Liholiho drew back. “My father always trusted you more than me,” he said softly, and before Kekuaokalani knew how to reply, Liholiho turned away, muttering an unhappy “*A hui hou*.” As the future *ali‘i nui* of all Hawai‘i trudged away toward the village, he held his head high even as his chin trembled.

“*Mālama pono*.” Kekuaokalani replied too late.

On Maui's southern shores Kekuaokalani was greeted warmly. Even before his double-hulled canoe had reached the beach, he could hear the welcome chant pulling him across the water. His wife, Manono, stood grasping the mast by his side, the familiarity of her native island on her face. She had not been home since her island was invaded and its rulers were either killed or obliged to leave. Kekuaokalani watched her as they caught the crest of a wave and, with a few well-timed strokes, rode it into the black sand. Eyes closed and smiling, she breathed deep the windward air as her dark hair settled lightly across her back.

The bay was filled with people anticipating his arrival. Many wore the red of chiefs; a few were dressed in the priestly yellow. Interspersed among the crowd, their pale skin highlighted against the dark native brown, were a few white men. Kekuaokalani's eyes narrowed at the *haoles*. One was dressed in native robes while the others wore strange garments unusual for the island heat. Many in the crowd carried muskets or pistols, those sticks of fire and death whose power had helped his uncle conquer the whole island chain starting here in Hana.

As Kekuaokalani disembarked, a man dressed in a yellow *'ahu 'ula* stepped forward and began to chant, his voice ringing tones which engulfed the crowd.

Keeper of the war god Kūkā'ilimoku

Kekuaokalani is his name

A flower that wilts not in the sun

Blooming on the summit

Of the mountain, Mauna Kea

Burning there at Kilauea

Above the sacred cliff of Ka'ū

Kekuaokalani is his name

A flower that does not wilt in the sun.

The priest continued, tracing Kekuaokalani's genealogy back to the great chief Keawe as Kekuaokalani and Manono walked up the shore. In front of the crowd was a smiling man wearing an *'ahu 'ula* that reached to the ground and an unusually large *mahiole* that added a foot to his height. The feather cloak and helmet betrayed his position as *ali 'i*, but Kekuaokalani did not know who he was. From his posture, Kekuaokalani could see that the man once had the well-muscled physique of a warrior but that the years of peace had made his flesh soft and overabundant. What surprised Kekuaokalani most, though, were the swirling black tattoos that covered half his body. From head to foot he was entirely black on his right side.

"How out of fashion." Manono remarked to her husband.

"Do you know him?" Kekuaokalani replied.

"His name is Hua. He is a junior member of my father's line, but I do not know him. He was not with those of us who retreated to Moloka'i during the war. He has a treacherous reputation." Before she could say more, the couple moved within hearing distance of the chief. The man smiled and offered his greetings, sharing the breath first with Kekuaokalani and then with Manono. The men and women of both parties followed the example of their leaders, talking and making connections all the while.

"*Aloha* and welcome to Hana! We welcome you, great priest Kekuaokalani, cousin of the new king and nephew of the Great Kamehameha. The twinkling stars form

a heavenly lei which has led you here. Be welcome to this place and find here the fruit of your purpose. Happy youth of Hana rejoice, for the gentle breeze has brought to us greatness from our sister shore!” Hua bellowed. “Come! Let us eat!”

“‘Ae!” Came the general response. The two parties, now one, moved up the beach toward the village. Kekuaokalani, chuckling, whispered into his wife’s ear, “I like him.”

“That is because you are both on the winning side,” she laughed back.

“Are you not also on my side?”

Manono did not respond but took her husband’s arm and gave him a look of mock-indignation. The group passed the canoe hut into the lower village. The dwellings there were shut up, the commoners having secreted themselves in their homes to avoid forbidden contact with the passing *ali ‘i*. Outside one of the houses, a starved dog lay tied and muzzled on the ground, raising its head as they went by. Further along, two men who had not had time to reach their homes lay prostrate on the ground, their thin frames pressed fully into the earth as if they were dead. The group was careful to keep their shadows far from them. As they continued, Kekuaokalani perceived that many houses were abandoned and beginning to decay, and off in the distance there were taro patches that appeared to be only half-planted. He tried not to think too long on any of what he saw, instead admiring the greenness of Hana. At the base of Haleakala, the house of the sun, Hana was truly a coveted paradise.

The path gradually ascended, leaving behind the lower village, until they were atop a prominent rise with a splendid view of the bay. Within a clearing of fruit trees was the village of chiefs where Hua kept court. The houses here were finer, their lashings more ornate and their ridges and gables dressed with a thatching of ferns. Behind one of

the structures, Kekuaokalani caught sight of a huge pile of sandalwood, but his attention was drawn away by the strong smell of *pua 'a kalua*, a great feast having been prepared before their arrival. As they passed into the village, the women of the train separated from the men, heading toward the family eating house. Manono squeezed Kekuaokalani's arm before joining with the female *ali'i*.

Hua led the men to the *hale mua* where they would eat separate from the women and children. It was larger than many of the surrounding structures, though its external appearance was the same. Strands of dry *pili* grass cascaded down the peaked roof to the ground, creating the impression that the structure had grown up from the earth. For all its traditional exterior, however, the interior was crowded with the evidence of foreign exchange. The ceiling had been adorned with an enormous white whaling net. Instead of finely woven *lauhala* mats, much of the floor was covered in those dyed mats of the foreigners that reminded Kekuaokalani of a boar's hide. Ringing the room were various feathered *kahili* standards, and between these were silk hangings from 'Āina Pākē whose fabric shone with a polish Kekuaokalani did not understand, depicting creatures and plants that he had never seen.

Among the other strange objects Hua had gathered, Kekuaokalani recognized a high-backed chair made from a tree that did not grow on these islands, a Russian sword, a small mirror, and a worn drawing of the world. This last object interested him greatly. He had seen many of these maps on foreign ships, and there were a few stashed away at home on Hawai'i. This map, however, was larger than any he had seen before. It was covered in elaborate markings, with lines and images that Kekuaokalani did not know

how to interpret. He wondered why the *haoles* used such things when the heavens already provided everything they needed to navigate.

As he stood contemplating, Hua came up behind. “I am told by the man who gave this to me that we are here.” He placed his black-tattooed finger in the center of a mostly empty space to the left, indicating a small group of circles. He then skimmed over the area all around the spot. “These are Kanaloa’s great waters. Here is America. And here is Vancouver and Cook’s England; it is a small island not unlike our own.” Kekuakalani gazed in wonder at the map. It was impossible to him that the lands which not many years ago had been his entire world could now be such a minor atoll in an archipelago of islands so large they must be impossible to sail around. He wondered why the foreigners ever came here if they had so much land of their own to possess and explore.

As the men sat around the room, several wide baskets of food wrapped in *ti* leaves were uncovered, revealing pork, *poi*, fish, taro tops baked with coconut milk, bananas, chicken, pineapple, octopus, *laulau*, sweet potatoes, breadfruit, and *lilikoi*. Interspersed among the baskets were many calabashes filled with *awa* and fresh mountain water. As Kekuakalani took his place in the middle of the group he noticed several carved statues of Hua’s ancestral gods along the north-facing wall. There were wooden and stone carvings of men grimacing fiercely, and in the center of the display was a wooden owl three feet tall. The statues ought to have been the focus of the room, but instead they were swallowed up by the decadence within the eating house. Many of Kekuakalani’s subjects sat admiring the total display, but to him the sacred space had an unsettling *mana*. He remembered the half-planted taro fields and the starved dog.

Seeing that everyone had entered, Hua stood opposite Kekuaokalani and began, “Welcome honored guests who have traveled from our sister island. Welcome Kekuaokalani, nephew of the Great Uniter and cousin of High Chief Liholiho. We welcome you now to Hana and hope you will enjoy this meal and eat until you can no longer stand.” He laughed, his shoulders and belly heaving up and down. “*Maika ‘i!*”

He took his seat as everyone replied in unison, “*Mahalo nui loa.*” The room bustled as men reached to satisfy their stomachs. Hua took a *ti* leaf and began to fill it greedily with different foods. He pinched a few strands of pork and scooped up a gob of poi, raising the food to his mouth, teeth open wide and tongue hanging out.

“Stop.”

The room went silent and many of the men froze with their hands outstretched. Hua looked up in surprise, the corners of his mouth twitching. A strand of pork fell from his hand. Kekuaokalani remained still and stiff, a hand on each knee. “You have forgotten something,” he said.

Hua looked around the room unsure what to do, his nostrils flaring. Many of the men who had reached for their food wore the same expression, though some, mostly those of Kekuaokalani’s train, wore expressions of disapproval. After a few moments of uncomfortable silence, Hua asked, “What is it, my chief?” There was a tremor in his otherwise deferential tone.

Kekuaokalani repeated “You have neglected something,” and nodded to the stone statues at the end of the room. Hua’s eyes followed in that direction and bulged. He stood up slowly as the others realized the oversight. While everyone watched, Hua crossed the room and placed his *ti* leaf of pork and poi in front of the foremost stone man. Kneeling

awkwardly to earth, he offered a prayer of respect invoking his ancestral gods.

Kekuaokalani bowed his head. Outside a soft breeze blew through the dry pili grass.

Hua—now empty-handed—resumed his position in the group. “Forgive me,” he said bowing his head graciously to all his guests. He slapped his belly and with a jovial sigh lamented, “with an *‘ōpū* this big sometimes there’s just not enough to share with the family gods!” The room erupted in laughter. Kekuaokalani, his back still straight, nodded once and reached for the chicken, *poi*, and sweet potatoes. Hua resumed his seat with an expressionless look as everyone began to eat, to talk story, and to laugh, each bite diffusing the tension.

When the men finished, the sun sat low in the sky. Many now reclined on one elbow, while others lay flat on their backs rubbing their protruding bellies. Those who had not fallen asleep conversed with their neighbors, the activity of the day subsiding as the light outside the *hale mua* dimmed.

Hua had just finished his third full chicken and fell backward with an enormous grunt. He grinned at the happy gathering and then eyed Kekuaokalani who had already long finished eating. The blackness on the right of Hua’s face made the whiteness of his eyes so much more piercing. Just as Kekuaokalani felt that he was being weighed and measured, Hua looked up at the ceiling and casually declared, “It was thanks to me, you know, that your uncle was able to take Maui so easily.”

Kekuaokalani’s eyebrows raised. “How is that?”

Hua continued, not hearing, or pretending not to hear. “Of course, I have paid dearly for my efforts on his behalf. And on behalf of my people. I have been abused,

terribly abused for loving your uncle, and now that he is asleep, well..." As Hua spoke he seemed to catch a glimpse of something far away. He shrugged, letting out a forlorn sigh and propped himself up so as to face Kekuaokalani more directly. "But that has nothing to do with why you are here, no?"

Kekuaokalani did not answer this injunction and Hua nodded, satisfied.

"Come, great priest, let us drink to Kamehameha the Uniter, to a benevolent ruler and patriarch." Without waiting for a response, Hua threw his head back and drained the last dregs of *awa* from a nearby calabash. Kekuaokalani followed. "Perhaps you should set down some memory of him?" the chief of Hana suggested, unimpressed by Kekuaokalani's enthusiasm.

Kekuaokalani met Hua's gaze and then stared at the cup of *awa* in his lap. "When I was a boy on O'ahu, not long after I began to wear a *malo*, I was swimming in the ocean and was carried by a current out into open waters. As hard as I swam, I could not seem to make any progress back toward the shore. I was not afraid, but I was beginning to tire. I saw my uncle start to swim out from the shore, but before he could reach me a huge shark swam up from deeper waters and began to circle me. I thought that it would eat us both alive, but when Kamehameha reached me it swam away. I remember my uncle called me brave, and said he was proud."

"Your uncle was right to praise you. I would have panicked and drowned!" Hua smiled. "I was not surprised to hear that your uncle offered you the war god. Even in Hana we have heard of your wisdom and zeal." He leaned in close and lowered his voice, "And it is no secret that your cousin is not the successor his father had hoped for."

"You are too bold," Kekuaokalani denounced.

“As long as you do not say I am wrong! My chief, I was alive when Cook first came to these islands and I watched as more and more of his kind descended upon us from across the seas. I have watched many of my wives and sons die from their plagues while our priests have been powerless to cure them. I have said my prayers and I have found that the gods listen less and less these days—”

“They are still the gods,” Kekuaokalani interrupted.

“True, true! We are at their mercy, and at the mercy of so much more! You have come here, perhaps, seeking some solace, but it were better for you to return home Chief Kekuaokalani. Your cousin is weak, and there are those who even now murmur discontent. Without a strong ruler by his side, I fear for the continued unity of these islands.” As he spoke his voice rose with fervor, and here it was that Hua delivered his master-stroke, “Yes, it was wise for Kamehameha to give the war god to someone other than his son. After all, that is how he himself first came to power.”

“Be still!” Kekuaokalani commanded.

Hua sat back, not the least perturbed. “Forgive me. Perhaps I have had too much to drink,” he said, smiling.

“Chief Hua!” A voice interrupted. The men turned their attention to the door of the house. Those who had been asleep lifted their heads dreamily to the sound. A guard brandishing a short spear stood at the doorway, his presence darkening the interior.

“Chief Hua!”

“What is it?” Hua replied, stumbling to his feet. Kekuaokalani rose as well.

The guard dropped to one knee and placed his spear on the ground, head bowed.

“Chief Hua, one of the *ali ‘i wahine* has been accused of breaking *kapu*.”

Every blade of grass that made up the eating house seemed to pause and all the men's necks stiffened. "Who is the accused?"

"It is Wahinepio."

"And who is the accuser?"

The guard hesitated. The seriousness of such an accusation hung in the air. "It is Manono of Kailua-Kona."

Every chief in the room sat up, their heads turned toward Kekuaokalani whose gaze was fixed on the guard. Hua eyed his guest with a look of curiosity.

"Take us to them," Kekuaokalani commanded, and the guard rose to his feet along with everyone in the house.

Outside the world was orange, bathed in the light of the low-riding sun. The guard led Hua and Kekuaokalani past the family eating house to a clearing at the edge of the village of chiefs. A murmuring crowd had gathered around two women Kekuaokalani made out to be his wife and someone he guessed was Wahinepio. Flanking them both were two guards, one holding a spear, the other brandishing a wooden dagger lined with shark teeth. As Hua and Kekuaokalani approached, the crowd parted until they stood face to face with the accuser and the accused. Manono stood erect, chin high with a calm expression, the picture of serenity. Wahinepio towered over Manono, a full hand taller and every bit as composed. A shadow began to creep from the horizon toward where the chiefs of Hana and Kailua-Kona were gathered.

"Explain this." Kekuaokalani demanded and the crowd fell silent.

Manono spoke without hesitation. “This woman has broken *kapu*. She has insulted the gods and transgressed our sacred laws. I watched with my own eyes while she consumed that which is forbidden.”

A murmur arose in the crowd.

“This is a false accusation by a jealous woman. The people of Hawai‘i have always envied Hana. I deny it,” Wahinepio retorted, folding her arms.

“Was anyone else there to see it?” No one spoke. “Is there no other witness?” Kekuaokalani asked, turning around the crowd. Nothing.

“There is the witness of the deed, easily proved.” Manono offered. The shadow, which before lay far off, now reached the edge of the crowd.

“What you say is heavy, Manono.”

“I am aware of the demands of reciprocity. Look for yourself and see. If I lie, may my life be forfeited and the lives of my attendants.” Kekuaokalani stepped forward and Wahinepio drew back, her ankles bathed in shadow. There were gasps and cries of “*Aue!*” and “*Kahaha!*” as the proposition hung in the air.

“The law is clear,” Kekuaokalani said at last, “but—”

“If the law is clear, then let the law be fulfilled!” Hua interrupted, looking at Wahinepio with disdain. He stepped up to the two women and took the dagger from the guard. Returning to Kekuaokalani he placed the weapon in the priest’s hands, standing close enough for Kekuaokalani to smell the *awa* on his breath. “Be it done according to the will of the gods and their High Priest.”

Kekuaokalani held the weapon in his hands, the shark teeth embedded therein recalling to him images of the war god he had left behind, its own sharp teeth seeming to

enclose on his mind. Kekuaokalani hesitated for the first time in his life. He did not move as the crowd held its breath in dreaded expectation. Wahinepio, to her credit, stood her ground, but the priest perceived a slight tremble in her legs. Kekuaokalani looked back at Hua who raised his eyebrows, his gaze just as piercing as before.

Hua nodded, his face breaking into a cruel smirk. “Forgive me, high priest. I forget that you are here as our guest.” He seized the dagger from Kekuaokalani’s hands, strode across the clearing in the crowd, and in one swift movement cut a deep line across Wahinepio’s gut. No one moved to stop him.

Wahinepio’s eyes bulged in her head as her intestines poured out of her, sopping onto the dirt, now muddy with blood. She threw her head back and pitched forward, falling to her knees and into shadow. Though tears ran down her face, she did not cry out nor beg for help. She merely fought to hold the guts inside of her. Hua waited patiently before he cast Wahinepio’s hands aside and pulled on her intestines until he arrived at her stomach. Slicing it out of her body, he walked back to Kekuaokalani and delivered the still throbbing organ into his hands, whispering in his ear, “You have neglected something.”

Under all the eyes of the crowd, Kekuaokalani stared at the piece of flesh in his hands. As Wahinepio lay dying at his feet, he took the dagger from Hua’s waiting hand and bit into the stomach, searching inside until he found what he was looking for. Dropping the lifeless, dripping organ to the ground, he raised his hand in the air. In the last remaining orange light, Kekuaokalani held an undigested piece of coconut.

Everyone stared up at the soggy fruit and collectively groaned. Wahinepio lay dying on her face. The sun had now disappeared entirely beneath the great horizon. Hua

turned to the crowd and declared, “It is settled; the woman is guilty. Guards, take her into the woods and bury her far from this place. Be sure she is not found.” Some in the crowd began to weep, some simply shook their heads in amazement and moved off.

Immediately, Hua’s guards left to dispose of the still groaning woman, grabbing her by the wrists and ankles and carrying her away. One guard followed behind, Wahinepio’s guts gathered in his arms.

Kekuaokalani stared at the evidence in his hands, his brow furrowed, and then let it drop to the ground. Hua watched him for a moment and then nodded his head and moved away without a word, leaving the priest alone with his wife. Kekuaokalani crouched down and attempted to clean his hands in the dark earth but it was now too dark to tell what blood was still there. Somewhere in the forest he could hear the soft sad hooting of the *pueo*. Manono approached and wiped his face with the corner of her *pā’ū*.

“It is regrettable,” she sighed.

“It is right,” he replied, trembling.

Manono shook her head in agreement and turned his face toward her. “I am sorry it happened now.” Kekuaokalani nodded but did not respond. Manono stared into his face and considered for a moment, finally casting her eyes to earth and shaking her head. “I am going to sleep,” she said. Then, like a shadow she moved off to the sleeping house.

Kekuaokalani was alone in the dark. Something he did not understand welled up inside of him. He had never before been so unsettled by the execution of his duties as high priest. All around him the *ali’i* of Hana were lighting their *kukui* lamps, creating pockets of silent light. Instinctively, he moved through the village to the edge of a cliff overlooking the bay. In the quiet of twilight, he could hear the ocean breathing in and out.

He closed his eyes for a moment, his breath matching the ebb and flow. He tried to imagine what was under the water, beyond his mortal vision, but all he could see was emptiness. He pressed his eyelids tighter. Soon all he could hear was the rage of the ocean against the cliff, and when he could stand it no longer, he opened his eyes.

There, on the dark silhouette of his native Hawai‘i, raged several fires, visible even across the wide channel. Kekuaokalani gaped at the sight of the far-off flames, flickering like so many orange stars.

A crowd had formed as word spread through the village of the strange lights across the channel. Kekuaokalani stood transfixed, filled with a sense of dread he did not understand. As they watched, a few of the fires dimmed and new fires flared up elsewhere. They shone bright in the dark of total night. The *ali ‘i* wondered aloud whether some rebel chief was making war, or perhaps the goddess Pele was taking revenge on some disrespectful worshippers, or perhaps this was some new expression of the white man’s technology. The scene prompted unease as it defied explanation.

Hua asked his priests what it meant, but they merely shook their heads, mystified. “I will send warriors to discover what is happening,” he declared.

“No,” Kekuaokalani replied. He watched, so mesmerized by the twinkling lights that he forgot the sound of the ocean. He craved certainty. “I and my people will return immediately.”

The *ali ‘i* of Hana watched as the *ali ‘i* of Kailua-Kona moved with urgency to prepare the voyage south. In short order, the canoes were launched and Kekuaokalani left

behind the silhouette of Hua's bulging frame in the torch light, the tattooed half of his body blending into the night so that he appeared only half man.

The winds of Alenuihāhā channel, funneling down from the slopes of Haleakala on Maui and Mauna Kea on Hawai'i, impelled them home. Kekuaokalani's navigators guided his fleet south under a moonless sky. The waves of the fierce crossing were unusually calm, and the canoes seemed to fly under a canopy of white stars above and orange stars ahead.

As the night gently shifted from black to blue, they reached Upolu Point and skirted to the right. Kekuaokalani thought it best to keep to the leeward shore, but he was unsure whether to make for Kailua-Kona to reunite with Liholiho and the court or to stop somewhere beforehand. Soon they would reach Kawaihae, the place from which they had first set sail. Kekuaokalani turned away from the shore. He could no longer make out any of the fires. They had faded well before the company had reached the island, and now that it was morning, he could not tell where the fires had been, or where they might appear next.

"Look!" One of the oarsmen shouted from the front of the canoe as they arrived at Kawaihae Bay. Kekuaokalani stood and peered through the dim morning light in the direction his men were pointing. At the base of a great hill, he could just make out the rows of commoner's houses and the grove of trees that shaded the royal residences. Just above the trees was Mailekini Fort, its twenty-two cannons dominating the bay, and over the whole scene presided Kamehameha's temple, the vast Pu'ukoholā *heiau*, its millions of stones crowning the golden hilltop. It was the most magnificent structure in all Hawai'i, and the last thing Kekuaokalani wanted to see. He had left the place behind,

along with his uncle's war god, hoping not to return for some time. From so far offshore, Kekuaokalani could not make out any of the temple's usual structures. What he perceived instead was an unusual plume of white smoke curling up from the holy compound.

He looked at the horizon toward Kailua-Kona and then back at Kawaihae. He closed his eyes tightly and then called to his steersman, "To the beach!"

Immediately the canoe pitched inland, the crest of a wave spraying the company in a cool salty mist. The tide forced them to land well above the high chief's residences at a beach near the commoner's village. Onshore was a canoe house that, judging by its small size, must be used by the village fishermen. As the men heaved their tired vessels out of the water, Kekuaokalani observed that there was no one in sight.

"Bring me my spear!" He commanded, marking the direction of the smoke and the path upshore.

"My love, perhaps wisdom compels us to wait awhile," Manono said as an attendant brought Kekuaokalani his weaponry. "At least until we have eaten."

Kekuaokalani turned to see that many of his men had collapsed after disembarking, a full night of rowing having exhausted their strength. Some were hungrily passing around calabashes of *poi* and water from the canoes. Few were moving to arm themselves and follow their leader.

Kekuaokalani regarded his followers with sympathy. They had not rested since leaving Hawai'i days ago. He pitched the dense wood of his spear in the orange sand and moved to help the last canoe ashore while Manono distributed food and drink to those too tired to move. It was not long, however, until the plume of smoke at the temple so

clouded Kekuaokalani's thoughts that he took a handful of his best warriors and headed for the royal residences.

Thoughts like visions passed through his mind of his uncle's great army sweeping across all of Hawai'i from these very shores. He imagined the fleet of canoes that descended on every island from Hawai'i to O'ahu until they were all one people. He imagined the cannons and the muskets that poured fire and smoke like thunder from the volcano on everyone who stood in the way. He imagined the face of the war god, his mouth contorted into a violent scowl, eyes gazing down with omnipotent regard.

The men quickly came to the gulch which divided the commoners from the *ali'i*. It was dry season, and the group was able to pass down and over the Pohaukole stream with ease. As they clambered up the other side and entered a thick grove of trees, the royal dwellings came into view. There were scores of finely adorned grass huts, each with its purpose, some long and rounded, others compact and peaked. Among them all, there was not a soul in sight.

Kekuaokalani called out for any present to make themselves known, and after a futile search it was clear the compound was empty. Although it was unlikely that his cousin or any of his retainers would have remained in Kawaihae, Kekuaokalani still thought he might find some of the regional landholders. He turned upland toward the *heiau*, but his view was obscured by the trees. As he considered whether to approach his uncle's temple and the source of the smoke, his dread grew. Instead, he commanded one of his men to search the nearby commoner's dwellings for someone who might offer some explanation.

As the man disappeared through the trees, Kekuaokalani moved to the edge of the residence grounds and was alarmed to see that the smoke had grown thicker since their arrival. It now billowed upward in a black pillar, its source still unknown.

In short order, the attendant returned, leading a sun-beaten commoner. The man wore a robust beard and carried himself with an unsettling amount of dignity. When he stood before Kekuaokalani he bowed his head in respect saying, “I am Kaneluahonua of Kawaihae, whatever you ask, my chief, I will do.”

“*Aloha* Kaneluahonua, I am Kekuaokalani of Kailua-Kona, cousin of High Chief Liholiho and nephew of Kamehameha the Great. What is the cause of that smoke there?” he asked, pointing to the plume.

At the mention of Kekuaokalani’s name the man dropped to his knees, head bowed in respect. Instead of answering, he seemed embarrassed. He hesitated for a moment and then replied, “My chief, have you not heard?”

“I have not. What is it that I am meant to have heard?”

Kaneluahonua did not look up. “The *kapu* is no more.”

Kekuaokalani assumed he had misheard, the wind twisting the man’s words into nonsense. His attendants held their breath. “What did you say?”

“The *kapu* is no more. It is broken.” This time Kaneluahonua looked up, but he did not meet the chief’s gaze directly, hints of fear and confusion in his eyes.

“*Who* has broken *kapu*?”

The commoner from Kawaihae winced, seeming to recognize the difficulty of his situation. Any word misspoken or mistook, any offense given, could be punishable with

death. He swallowed. "It's true my lord. The *kapu* itself is broken. It was broken far from here. Take your men to the temple and you will see."

Kekuaokalani could not believe what he had now undoubtedly heard. He gazed down at the man debating whether to exact some price for this blasphemy. Kaneluahonua again bowed his head, understanding the danger of his words to his life. Before Kekuaokalani could make up his mind, however, the poor man added, "My chief, do not fault me for what I have only heard. At the temple you will find your answers, for the high priest Hewahewa is there."

Kekuaokalani was, for the second time, shocked to hear what he did not expect. At the sound of his mentor's name he looked up in bewilderment at the smoke. He thought he could hear the crackling flames now, as well as the beating of his heart in his chest. "Leave us now," he commanded.

Kaneluahonua leapt to his feet so fast that Kekuaokalani's guards reflexively brandished their spears in defense. He quickly ran toward the village on the other side of the gulch as if afraid Kekuaokalani would change his mind. Kekuaokalani, fist and spear at his side, turned from the departing man and began to ascend the sacred hilltop despite a dread which had filled his bowels for weeks.

The climb up the orange and gold slope was not long, and soon he stood before the great terraced shrine of Kamehameha. He marked the familiar sight of the crossed staffs, each with a white ball atop, forbidding entrance to commoners. He saw also the tops of spears held by the temple guards, but he could not make out the tall idols that normally kept watch over the hallowed ground. With a heavy breath, he climbed up the black and red and brown rocks until he stood atop the *heiau*.

Now upon the temple mount, he was horrified to find that the reason he had not seen any of the temple's structures was because they were not there. The holy sanctuary which he had often entered before his uncle's death was now a charred husk of blackened wood and grass. The pantheon of statue-gods whose names and genealogies he had memorized had been torn down. In place of the oracle tower there was a huge bonfire piled well above the height of a man and fed with the effigies of Hawai'i's deities. Attending the scene was a group of men dressed as priests and chiefs. Kekuaokalani's breath choked in his throat as he realized he knew many of them. He felt a spasm in his chest as he watched one of the men lift a statue of Lono above his head, arms bulging with the effort, and cast it into the flames.

Kekuaokalani ran forward, flanked by his men. Guarding the way were two warriors, slicked with oil, heads shorn, and wearing crimson *malos*. They held koa spears twice their size. "Halt!" They ordered, leveling their spears at the newcomers. The crowd on the temple platform turned in surprise at the command.

Not waiting for an explanation, Kekuaokalani knocked aside one of the spears, smashing his own lighter weapon into the temple of the warrior to his left as his men overwhelmed the warrior on his right. Without slowing down, he jumped onto the most elevated platform where the other chiefs stood surprised by the fierce intrusion. "Explain this!" He demanded, now face to face with the man who had cast Lono into the fire. Kekuaokalani was shocked to realize the man was Hewahewa.

"Kekuaokalani, my brother, how are you?" The high priest smiled, unfazed. He stood just taller than Kekuaokalani, his hairline receding though still black everywhere but at the temples. He wore a white robe tied over his left shoulder and spread his hands

in welcome. The fire behind him formed a flaming halo, and at his feet lay a pile of wooden images, staring up at him agape.

“Hewahewa, what are you doing here?” Kekuaokalani implored again, his own blood ablaze within. Some of the chiefs and priests on the platform chuckled to themselves while others wore disgusted scowls. “What reason do you have for desecrating this sacred place?”

“Kekuaokalani, we have missed you! It is a relief to see you so soon returned from Maui. I would have consulted with you before we acted, but you never returned to Kailua-Kona for your cousin’s coronation.” Hewahewa stepped forward, one hand raised prophetically. “Now that you are here, though, we are glad for your help. The old gods are dead, and we are engaged in the great work of casting them aside.”

Kekuaokalani stared at Hewahewa, eyes blinking in disbelief at so brusque an answer. “I do not understand.”

“Then you have not read the signs, my friend.”

Kekuaokalani paused, unable to grasp the elder priest’s meaning. “I do not understand,” he merely repeated.

Hewahewa nodded once. “I suppose you would not.” He moved to place his hand on Kekuaokalani’s shoulder, but Kekuaokalani drew back. Hewahewa sighed. “Only days ago, your cousin, the new king, broke the sacred *kapu*. Naturally, now that the *kapu* is no more, the gods and *heiaus* cannot survive.”

“And you knowingly permitted such a thing?”

“I advised it.”

Kekuaokalani could no longer hear the fire, could not hear the breeze sweeping down to the ocean, could not hear the groans of the men wounded behind him, nor the beating of the blood in his head. In that moment, he realized the fires they had seen from Maui were from every temple in every village on this side of Hawai‘i. “Are you mad? You, a high priest of the blood of Pa‘ao, attempting something so foolish?” Instinctively, he lowered his spear to keep Hewahewa from coming any closer.

The high priest glanced casually at the harsh point at his chest. “And why should I not attempt it? I am the high priest, and I am not mad.”

He reached into his robe and produced a pistol. Waving it in the air, he continued, “Ask yourself what good is a god who does not hear? What good is a god who does not act? What good is a god who does not know?” He spoke now to the crowd, his voice filling the hilltop. “Even if he is felt, what good is a god who does nothing? Our gods are impotent, and it is my duty to guide our people to some new divinity in this wide world that will cast favor upon us!” He replaced the pistol in his robe and stooped to pick up another wooden god. Indifferent to Kekuaokalani, he turned to face the fire and raised the image above his head, chanting,

There is a casting off,

I am casting thee off!

Let me not know thee again.

Go and seek some other home.

Oh, for some other Helper!

Some new divinity to listen to the sad story

Of thy wasting disease!

“Don’t!” Kekuaokalani shouted, but Hewahewa heaved the image into the drinking flames, sparks and ash billowing outward and curling into the sky.

Kekuaokalani shook now, not with amazement but rage. He gripped his spear in both hands, restraining himself from running the high priest into the fire that opened to him like an all-consuming volcano. Hewahewa turned to him again and spoke “May they save themselves.”

As if signaled by the words, warriors began to surround Kekuaokalani and his men. Some bore stone clubs and others shark-toothed daggers, and at least half held muskets aimed at the newcomers. Kekuaokalani’s men stood back to back, ringed twice over by superior arms. They crouched low, brandishing their own wooden weapons, eyes fierce and wide and prepared to die. Kekuaokalani himself could feel the tips of spears pointed at his back and the hollow barrels of firearms leveled at his head. Someone knocked Kekuaokalani’s spear out of his hand from behind. He let it fall to the ground and signaled to his men to surrender their weapons.

“Do not harm them,” Hewahewa said to his guards. He turned to look at Kekuaokalani and with a solemn expression commanded, “Bring forth the war god.”

Kekuaokalani’s breath stuck in his throat. He had not dared consider what had become of the sacred trust he had left in the now destroyed *heiau*. From among the crowd materialized a young priest bearing in front of him Kūkā‘ilimoku, the physical form of Kamehameha’s god of war. All the assembled *ali‘i* quieted before the idol, regarding with confused reverence the bust of wickerwork more than thrice the size of a normal man’s head. The small red feathers which covered its body stood on end. Its mouth, set with a double row of dog fangs, was distorted into an awful scowl. As the priest

approached, Kekuaokalani fell to his knees, his rage melting into remorse. The war god's large pearl-oyster eyes looked down on him in disdain, its black *kukui*-nut nostrils flaring. Kekuaokalani bowed his head before the object of his dread, unable to meet its gaze.

"For someone so indignant at what I have chosen to do, I am surprised that you chose to leave your charge so carelessly unattended," Hewahewa said. "I am curious why you left it behind."

Kekuaokalani looked up at Hewahewa, wetness beginning to cloud his vision. He opened his mouth to speak but could not find the words.

"I see," Hewahewa said, looking at Kekuaokalani with genuine pity. "We have all suffered greatly under these heavy days. It is as if a great light has gone out of the world and we are left in doubt and darkness. But be assured, my friend, that I have seen a brighter season to come." Hewahewa took the idol from the young priest and considered it a moment. "This god has no more *mana*. It has not saved thousands of our people from sickness and death and should be destroyed." Kekuaokalani clutched at the stony temple floor. "But I will not destroy it," Hewahewa continued, placing the idol on the ground in front of Kekuaokalani. "It was left to you, and you alone shall decide its fate."

Hewahewa gestured to the on-looking *ali'i*. "We will continue to discuss this matter at court with the king and *kuhina nui*." He crouched down and placed a hand on Kekuaokalani's shoulder. "You will come with us now." Without waiting for a response, he raised himself and strode off the platform, stepping over his prostrate and unmoving warriors. The whole company moved to follow.

Kekuaokalani knelt, staring into the eyes of the unmoving war god, himself unable to move. Many of the passing *ali'i* shook their heads at him, whispering and

cursing as they went by. Sensing that he could not be moved otherwise, the guards collected the god from off the ground and compelled Kekuaokalani to rise. He and his men were led to a large beach far downshore from where Manono was waiting for him to return and were each loaded onto a different vessel in Hewahewa's fleet. As Kekuaokalani was swept up again in the vast unknowable sea, he watched as the last of Kawaihae's gods were broken up or burned, their remains left to disintegrate on the barren slopes of Kohala.

When they landed at Kailua-Kona, the sun had made much of its journey across the sky and Kekuaokalani's throat burned. He had recovered somewhat from the shock of the morning's events, but a whiteness began to creep to the edge of his vision and the dull thunder of the ocean boomed in his ears. It was relentless.

Within the bay there were two foreign vessels bearing the banners of their far-off land. He recognized the American pattern, but the other pattern was new to him, simpler. It consisted of many golden flowers on a background of white. He glowered when he saw them, but he grimaced when he saw that the *heiau* that had been at the mouth of the bay had been burned to the ground. He had been born in that temple.

Kekuaokalani was led up the beach to the awaiting Hewahewa. Seeing that Kekuaokalani would not take the war god himself, one of the guards had taken it from the canoe, wrapped it in a soft *kapa* cloth, and now handed it to Hewahewa. Kekuaokalani watched this without expression. "I will go with you," he told the high priest, "but let my men go free."

“Of course. They and you are not our prisoners. You may all do as you please, though I should think Liholiho and Ka‘ahumanu would like to see you.” Hewahewa’s eyes crinkled and a knowing smile played at the corners of his mouth.

“What part does Ka‘ahumanu have to play in this?” Kekuaokalani replied, a quiet realization beginning to dawn. He stood straight, his chin held up and his yellow cape billowing in the late-afternoon breeze.

Hewahewa’s eyebrows raised, and he frowned in surprise. “I suppose you would not have heard. It was your uncle’s dying wish that she be made *kuhina nui* over all the islands. She is now our regent, and rules together with your cousin.”

This information did not surprise Kekuaokalani, though it was as severe as the day’s many other revelations. He was at last beginning to see a logic in all this. He moved off with Hewahewa and the grimacing idol as his men huddled together on the beach.

Kailua-Kona was much greener than Kawaihae, though not as lush as Hana. The entire city had been transgressing the divine laws for days, feasting on the sacred foods, the commoner men now too drunk to do their work and the women still eagerly sucking down coconut milk. As the group made their way to the royal compound, Kekuaokalani saw men and women eating together in the streets and *hale muas* and fishermen lashing their hooks to the roar of laughter nearby. There were commoners who dared to meet his gaze directly, studying him without fear. One impudent man, likely flushed with *okolehau*, even approached and touched a minor chief’s feather cape. His eyes shone with wonder and the offended chief merely grabbed the man’s hands and shoved him to the ground. Kekuaokalani shuddered and kept himself focused on their destination.

The royal compound was not far. It stood on an oblong peninsula that jutted out into the sea, raised up from the ocean on a dais of black lava rock, the water and the city lapping at its feet. At its heart stood a huge hall of wood and stone, mimicking the native architecture but built with the added expertise of foreigners. Flying above it was Kamehameha's banner, a red, white, and blue imitation of the English and American flags. There were other structures in the compound as well, various houses for attendants, cooking, and guests. Many of the court had built for themselves foreign-style homes, the largest of which belonged to Ka'ahumanu. Kekuaokalani knew which roofs leaked in the rain, which of the many trees surrounding the buildings produced the best fruit.

A crowd of priests and other dignitaries had gathered outside the complex walls, abuzz with emotion. Some wore white collared shirts and blue or brown trousers but most wore the *'ahu 'ula* over bare shoulders. The feathered capes made them look like birds, bristling and squawking at a forest intruder. They fell to a quiet murmur as Hewahewa and Kekuaokalani passed into the compound, regarding the two priests with suspicion. Some bowed their heads, and some folded their arms. Kekuaokalani understood their feeling, for it was his own. He sensed their gaze and their expectation at his back.

"How will we survive?" someone shouted as the two high priests stepped up to the door. As Kekuaokalani entered, Hewahewa casually placed the war god outside the entryway, uncovering it and facing it toward the crowd as if it was at guard. They immediately fell dead silent, awed by the image and terrified by its treatment.

Inside the great hall, a group had gathered under the high vaulted ceiling, framed by pillars of thick carved wood. The building was strengthened by a pattern of stylized lashing only known to the chief architect. Around the hall were the *kahili* standards of the

Kamehameha household which had so amazed Kekuaokalani as a boy. Absent from the great room, though, were the massive stone statues of the principal deities Kū, Kāne, Lono, and Kanaloa. Presiding instead over the hall was Ka‘ahumanu. She stood on a slightly raised platform at the head of the room.

Kamehameha’s favorite wife was eating pieces of coconut as she addressed a group of white men sitting together on a finely woven *kapa* mat in front of her, the remnants of a finished meal at their feet. Kekuaokalani’s temples pounded at the sight of them defiling his uncle’s great hall. Off to the side sat Liholiho, dressed in traditional clothing. He took several drags of a calabash that Kekuaokalani doubted held water, his eyes heavier than on the cliff days before. When he saw Hewahewa and Kekuaokalani enter, his face brightened, but just as soon fell into an even more troubled countenance.

Ka‘ahumanu, noticing the newcomers, finished her address to the *haoles* and stood. She wore a coral colored *kihei* and *pā‘ū* made from soft overseas fabric. Adorning her head was a *lei* of yellow flowers, and around her shoulders she wore a red, yellow, and black *‘ahu ‘ula*. Hanging on her neck was Kamehameha’s *lei palaoa*. “Leave us,” she commanded to the gathered foreigners. They obeyed, treading across the smooth stone floor and out into the afternoon sun.

Kekuaokalani was now alone with Ka‘ahumanu, Liholiho, and Hewahewa.

“Dear nephew! What a blessing to have you here. You have missed a great deal. Liholiho tells us you left to find some comfort on Maui. How are you feeling?”

“Ka‘ahumanu, what have you done?” Kekuaokalani asked. He had gathered his cape in his left hand and let it drape over his forearm like a shield.

Ka‘ahumanu frowned, and her round face became motherly. “I’m not sure I understand your meaning.”

“I mean you pretending to share power with the true high chief. I mean you casting aside our sacred traditions. I mean you having manipulated all of Hawai‘i into destroying our sacred religion!” In Kekuaokalani’s rising indignation he felt strength build within him.

Hewahewa was about to speak but Ka‘ahumanu held up a hand, graceful under her nephew’s sudden attack. “Kekuaokalani, I understand your distress and confusion. You have always been the most faithful and devoted among us. It was not by my desire that Kamehameha placed the mantle of regent on my shoulders—”

“When did he do this?”

“It was his dying command.” Ka‘ahumanu declared placidly despite the disrespect.

“What explanation did he give? Who else was there as witness?”

Ka‘ahumanu did not respond for a moment, which Kekuaokalani took as an admission of guilt. “You do not believe me,” she said gravely.

“I believe that Liholiho is my uncle’s rightful successor, and also that my uncle meant for me to stand by Liholiho’s side.”

Ka‘ahumanu raised her chin. “You are welcome to believe as you like. The present reality shall remain unchanged.”

Kekuaokalani turned to Liholiho, “And you cousin, what do you have to say about all of this?” Liholiho stood slightly back with a haggard expression on his face and

a faraway look in his eye. Kekuaokalani's question seemed to bring the world into focus for him.

"I—" he hesitated, and then spoke with a slight drawl. "I only wish to carry out the will of my father."

"Your father left his rule to you, and he left his war god to me, that same god by whose power he united these islands and who Hewahewa and Ka'ahumanu would now see destroyed. You and I were to look after one another, to care for one another and the people. Surely this is not according to your father's will."

"You left me!" Liholiho burst out suddenly, the smell of *awa* wafting from his clothes. "I needed you here, but instead you ran to Maui."

"My husband may have died in the faith of his fathers," Ka'ahumanu interjected, "but at the end of his life he thought it well that a successor should give the subject some attention. Do not be angry with your cousin. Like the rest of us, he has recognized the truth of our condition."

"You have misunderstood my uncle, or else you continue to misrepresent him knowing there are no witnesses to contradict you."

Here Hewahewa interceded, admonishing his pupil. "Kekuaokalani, be reasonable. You must have seen this on the horizon. Ever since the arrival of the first white men, this has been coming."

"And so, all our sacred truth is destroyed to accommodate the *haoles*?"

Kekuaokalani said, turning to his teacher.

“For them no, but for us. When Cook first arrived our people believed he was Lono, and we were taken advantage of because of our ignorance. Has it escaped your notice that the foreigners’ disregard for the *kapu* has brought them no punishment?”

“They are not of our people.”

“But they are of our world, as we are part of theirs.” Ka‘ahumanu added in a voice soft and clear.

“Have you forgotten already that the Hawaiian *ali‘i* owe their authority to the gods? Without them they will be swiftly cast aside.”

“The *ali‘i* are no more.” Ka‘ahumanu said, her voice and her stature rising. Though he would not say so, Kekuaokalani could not help but observe that she bore herself the same grandeur as her husband. “We are not *ali‘i*, but *mō‘ī*, and hereafter we shall rule like the kings and queens of our sister nations across the oceans, not by the will of any slumbering god, but by the strength of our arms and our love for the people.”

Hewahewa nodded his head. “What’s done is done. Be content with the new world,” He said, placing a hand on Kekuaokalani’s shoulder.

“I will not be content!” Kekuaokalani shouted, shrugging off Hewahewa’s touch. “The gods are not some common item to be traded for scraps of metal!” The hall was silent for a moment as the most powerful rulers of Hawai‘i realized for the first time that Kekuaokalani would never see their way of thinking.

Liholiho was the first to break the silence. “Kekuaokalani, please. We are still the same people.”

Kekuaokalani, turned to his cousin, disappointment flaring in his eyes. “I will not let it happen.”

“You will not?” Replied Ka‘ahumanu, eyebrows raised.

“By what authority?” Hewahewa added.

“By the will of the outraged gods whose temples are turning to ashes around us! They will teach me my duty; even should they fail to visit vengeance on their betrayers!”

“Nephew, do not make yourself our enemy,” Ka‘ahumanu implored.

“It is not I who have made myself an enemy,” Kekuaokalani said, backing away from the group in the direction of the door. He had heard enough and would hear no more. With a flourish of yellow feathers, he turned and walked away, his back to the high chief, the high priest, and Ka‘ahumanu.

“Stop nephew, please!”

As he moved toward the fading afternoon light, a shadow fell across the room as four of the royal koa warriors entered the hall. Kekuaokalani continued toward them at a steady pace, looking beyond them to the city and to the clouded peak of Mauna Loa in the distance.

“Stop him!” Ka‘ahumanu commanded, and each of the warriors moved to seize Kekuaokalani. He ducked one man while grabbing the outstretched arm of another. In one swift movement he broke the man’s arm and thrust his head into the wall behind. The warrior collapsed to the ground as two more grabbed Kekuaokalani from behind. As they held him, Kekuaokalani raised both legs to the wall and pushed off hard, toppling the three of them to the ground. He managed to get free of one of the warriors and use his momentum to dislocate the shoulder of the other. Ripping the cape from his shoulders, he wrapped it around the other man’s neck and pulled tight with one arm as he rose to his feet. As the man on the ground thrashed for air, the first warrior moved to stop

Kekuaokalani, who swatted his hands away and sent him reeling backward with a blow to the nose. He pulled hard on the cords of his cape until he felt a pop and the man on the ground stopped moving.

“Kekuaokalani!” Hewahewa shouted. Kekuaokalani turned as his feet were swept from under him by the warrior with the dislocated shoulder. The priest’s skull hit the stone floor with a thud, and for a moment flecks of light clouded his vision. He kicked at the man but was too dazed to locate a decisive blow. As he stared up at the rafters, fighting to regain full cognizance, the first warrior approached with a club in his hands. Kekuaokalani stared up at him, the edges of his profile hazy. Before Kekuaokalani could move out of the way, the warrior raised the club high in the air. As he moved to bring it down on Kekuaokalani’s skull, Ka’ahumanu shouted “Do not harm him!”

The warrior arrested his movement, and in the moment it took for him to decide what to do next, Kekuaokalani grabbed the man’s ankles. He raised his lower body, feet arcing through the air and hooking around the man’s neck. In a burst, Kekuaokalani used his powerful legs to pull the man to the floor. The crown of the warrior’s head struck the ground and he crumpled into a lifeless heap.

Kekuaokalani untangled himself from the dead body and surged to his feet, making for the entryway. Outside, the crowd of priests was in an uproar, shouting at a group of *ali‘i* while the royal guards fought to keep them back as the party of white men watched, abhorred. From around the royal grounds more guards were rushing toward the complex entrance.

On the earth at Kekuaokalani’s feet sat the war god, its terrible visage turned directly toward the great hall. As Kekuaokalani emerged into the light he stopped short

and met the god's fierce gaze. He hesitated, thinking for a moment of leaving the idol behind, perhaps forever. Instead, he covered the god in the *kapa* cloth and placed it under his arm. Though its materials were light, he felt it bear down on him as he ran.

"Somebody stop him!" Ka'ahumanu shouted, following Kekuaokalani out of the hall. The nearby guards paused, looking at the queen in confusion as she pointed to the fleeing priest, now bereft of his feather mantle and bleeding from the head.

Kekuaokalani could not run into the crowd, meaning he could not escape by land. His only choice was the ocean. With what little strength he had left, he ran to the seaward wall. The way was clear, but he only had moments before he was surrounded by more guards than he could fight off. He reached the wall and placed the idol gently on top, scrambling up himself and scraping his knees and elbows on the sharp pumice.

Atop the wall, he was struck by the great force of the ocean, its spray wetting his face, the wind howling in his ears, and the setting sun blinding his eyes. Behind him the guards approached and below him the churning depths prepared to dash him indifferently against the rocks. He stopped, breathless.

The waves pounded the island from all sides, reaching to beat against him as well. A spear flew past, grazing his ear and disappearing in the sea foam. He closed his eyes, took up the idol, and raised his trembling hands above his head. Without looking ahead or behind, he dove.

For the first time in weeks, he was under the water. The waves beat him, and the strong currents danced him about sideways and upside down. He choked on salt water, struggling to maintain his hold on the god and maneuver away from the rocky shore toward the bay. As the sun disappeared below the horizon, a current carried him out into

the embrace of the open ocean. He surfaced, gasping, before the crest of a wave bore down on him again, leaving him momentarily blind. In the tumult, he lost his grip on the idol and felt it drift away at the will of the currents. He surfaced again, and again he was knocked back under the water. His arms and legs, spent from having gone so long without sleep or food, turned to dead weight, and he began to sink even as he tried to kick upward.

As he fell lower and lower, the world began to quiet, the wind and the waves disappearing, the bubbles from his pounding legs floating up and away. His blood slowed. As the light faded, dark shadows appeared before him from deep below. He shut his eyes against the sight, and when he opened them again, he saw the feathered war god drifting away through the water. He swam toward it with what strength he had left, the two sinking as they went. He kicked feebly, his arms flailing. He fought forward, staving off the darkness, kicking deeper and deeper. He opened his hands to grasp the idol, its feathers swaying in the water, just barely tickling his fingertips, but the burning and the weakness in his legs became too much, and the god began to drift away. With one last effort he slashed the water with his legs and caught hold of the idol in his outstretched hands. As if a curtain had been lifted, suddenly the world was full. The physical idol in his hands melted away, in its place, he saw the face of his uncle, old and tired and close to death. He saw the figure of his wife, her long dark hair wafting up around her head, arms outstretched. And, as if from far, far away, with the last of his sight, the world itself now little more than a shimmer, he saw a shark.

Kekuaokalani awoke to gentle rocking. His throat cracked and his head throbbed. He coughed violently and was overcome with nausea as bile rose up to his mouth. He felt every muscle in his upper body contract, jerking him into the fetal position. When the fit paused and his head fell backward, he realized that he was cradled in the warmth of someone's lap. He opened his eyes, squinting against a salted breeze. Above him, her head framed by a heaven of stars, was Manono.

He opened his mouth to speak but Manono placed a gentle finger on his lips. She smiled down at him, tears in her eyes. "Don't." She uttered. "Drink." His body relaxed, and he felt himself come alive again. She brought a small calabash of water to his lips and he opened his mouth, too weak to do anything but swallow. The cool liquid caught in his throat, trying to force itself to his gut. He began to cough again but the impulse subsided and he was able to drink freely. His body began to relax, which only made him more aware of the pain in his head and the dull ringing in his ears. He was lost for a moment in the rocking and the wind and the swirl of his thoughts and the vertigo of the world around him.

Then, all at once he came to himself in a panic. His heart seemed as if it would beat out of his chest, its fierce pounding echoing through his head. "Kū." He moaned. "Kū."

Manono's hands gently cupped his face. "Hush. Do not fear. You had him in your hands." She gently turned his head to the side where he could see the battered image of Kūkā'ilimoku nearby. It had lost both nostrils, several of its teeth, and nearly half of its feathers, but it was safe and it was still fierce. Kekuaokalani's heart slowed and he closed his eyes once more, fading away.

When he came to himself again he still felt the waves and was still swathed in Manono's warmth. "How?" He muttered, eyes still closed.

He heard her voice as if from far away. "We learned from the villagers that you were taken by Hewahewa to Kailua-Kona. When we reached the city, one of your men was waiting in the bay in case we should arrive. He told us what happened and where you were, and we sent men to the royal complex to watch for you. They saw you leave the great hall and run toward the ocean." She paused for a moment, overcome. "I didn't think we would find you. I didn't see how you could survive the rocks. We searched for you with the canoes, but it was so dark."

Kekuaokalani struggled to piece Manono's words into a coherent narrative. He heard her as if from far away. He remembered his escape and his struggle against the ocean. He recalled the overwhelming feeling of surrender and the certainty of death. "We spotted a shark in the water, and when we approached we found you floating on the surface." He felt her wipe one of her own tears off his cheek. She continued, but Kekuaokalani could no longer hear her words. He could only feel the rocking of the ocean and the lightness in his gut. For the first time in a long time, as he succumbed to unconsciousness, Kekuaokalani felt relief.

For four lunar months, Kekuaokalani and Manono made their home in the neighboring district of Ka'awaloa. Daily the disaffected gathered around the high priest as the destruction of the gods and temples spread to the rest of Hawai'i and thence to the whole kingdom. Great care was taken to keep Kekuaokalani's location a secret, and the royal court came to believe that Kekuaokalani had drowned in the ocean, though it was

whispered abroad that he was alive and preparing to fight. By these means he was free to lead the people in observing the *Makahiki* festivals, devoting to the new year's season its customary rituals. Kamehameha's war god, now a beacon of resistance, was put to rest as the people worshiped the peaceful Lono. Amid the general religious demoralization, the faithful stopped their work relinquished the land to Lono to be restored, all the while preparing inwardly for the greater restoration to come.

At the end of the four months, Kekuaokalani and his followers gathered on a green hill overlooking a rocky beach. It was before dawn and the twilight air was cool and clean under the moonless sky. A priest bore a long pole twice the height of a man with a wooden image of Lono at the top. Below the image was a crosspiece from which hung banners of white *kapa*, a feather *lei*, and stuffed pelts of the *kaupu* bird. Kekuaokalani stood before it, wrapped in a red and yellow 'ahu 'ula which reached nearly to his heels. In a voice that drowned out the ocean he prayed:

Behold Lono places the stars

That sail through the heavens.

High resplendent is the great image of Lono;

The stem of Lono links our dynasties with Kahiki,

Has lifted them up, purified them in the ether of Lono!

Stand up! Gird yourselves!

At this the people around the priest and the god responded in unison, "Gird yourselves!"

Lono!

"The image of Lono!"

Hail!

“Hail to Lono!” The shout flowed over the hilltop and into the district. Before its resonance had faded, Kekuaokalani descended to the beach with a train of priests and soldiers and bathed in the cool morning ocean. Once clean, they warmed themselves by several great fires and dressed in fresh clothes. Kekuaokalani then set sail across the water in his double-canoe. Behind this vessel they towed by rope another canoe with a single outrigger and no sail loaded with taro, potatoes, breadfruit, bananas, coconuts, and pork. When the fleet had gone a fair distance, Kekuaokalani cut the canoe loose and set it adrift chanting as he did so. The men watched as the morning winds and ocean currents carried their offering away, and as the sun began to wrap itself around Mauna Loa they tacked back to shore.

They reached the beach just as the volcano’s crown released the day’s first rays of light. Waiting for Kekuaokalani was a large body of warriors armed with spears and lined up as if to oppose him. At their backs the image of Lono cast a long shadow from the hilltop where it stood presiding like a great commander of ceremonies. When Kekuaokalani jumped ashore, a man detached himself from the group and ran to meet him, holding two spears bound at their points in white cloth. As he ran, he hurled one the spears at the high priest. It flew in a perfect straight line and would have struck Kekuaokalani in the chest had not one of his warriors stepped forward from the canoe and caught the spear by its middle. The first man continued forward, kicking up sand as he went until he reached Kekuaokalani. With his second spear he tapped the high priest on the shoulder and stepped to the side. A mock battle then commenced, Kekuaokalani’s

warriors wrestling Lono's men until the god's army was routed and forced to flee from the beach.

There was a general chorus of cheers and several elders began to chant as a group of men dressed in white *malos* stepped forward to perform a *hula* in honor of the dead Chief Lonoikamakahiki. They had barely begun, however, when an unknown canoe approached the shore, landing just by where Kekuaokalani was gathered with his warriors. The vessel carried three men who Kekuaokalani recognized as servants of 'Aikanaka, the chief of Ka'awaloa. They had been part of a network of informants sent to report regularly on the movements of the royal court. He signaled for the *hula* warriors to stop.

Before the canoe had been hauled ashore, one of the men jumped out and ran, splashing through the water and onto the sand, kneeling as he reached the chief. "O great priest, please forgive our disrespect. We come from Kailua-Kona with urgent news."

"Speak," Kekuaokalani ordered.

"Ka'ahumanu knows you are alive. She has been informed of your presence in Ka'awaloa. She has ordered an army of fifteen hundred to capture you and return you to Kailua-Kona."

"When were they dispatched?"

"The order was given this morning."

Kekuaokalani considered this news. Beside him a chief who had come from the windward side of the island advised, "You must leave. Let us depart for Hilo immediately until we have sufficient strength to negotiate." To this 'Aikanaka answered, "He cannot run and hide. We have men enough here to stand against their army." Still another chief added, "There may be no need to fight. Discontent with the king and regent has become

general enough that the royalists must either accept Kekuaokalani's influence at court or risk a popular uprising." So went the discourse among Kekuaokalani's allies.

Kekuaokalani himself stared silently up the beach to the north.

"Silence," he commanded the debating chiefs. "We will consult the gods. Prepare the *mōhai kanaka*." And with that, he turned and walked toward the village, leaving the messenger kneeling in the sand. There was an air of enthusiasm as his consort understood his order and moved to obey it.

Word flew through the village that the season of Lono was now over and that the ceremonies of war were now to be performed. The sun had crossed the sky and hung over the ocean and everyone had gathered at the *luakini heiau*. The women, children, and commoners were gathered outside the temple, unworthy to participate but nevertheless eager to observe from afar the sacred rituals. Within the temple's black stone courtyards Kekuaokalani's *ali'i* were seated in rows before the sacrificial altar, each praying to his favorite god that the protocols might be observed without error. Before the group, at the head of the altar, Kekuaokalani stood dressed in white, bearing in one hand a staff bound with the white *oloa* cloth, and in the other a wooden knife. Behind him a line of priests stood praying in unison.

Everything having been prepared, a man was brought forward through the crowd and placed bound before Kekuaokalani. He was younger than Kekuaokalani, and stood naked as tall as the high priest's chin. He had a look of innocence in his eye.

Kekuaokalani looked down on him and then, addressing the crowd, he raised his staff and prayed:

O Kū, o Lono,

*O Kane and Kanaloa,
Give life to me until extreme old age;
Look at the rebel against the land,
He who was seized for sacrifice.
‘Āmana. It is freed.*

Setting the staff on the ground and taking the knife in both hands, Kekuaokalani declared solemnly, “be it done according to the will of the gods and their high priest.” He then plunged the knife to the handle into the man’s stomach, his heart, and then across the throat, stepping back to avoid the blood. Kekuaokalani watched reverently as the life drained from the man’s body and his strength failed. Before he could fall he was caught by two priests and placed on the altar. Again, Kekuaokalani prayed:

*O Kū! O Kane! O Lono!
O Kū, keep the brightness of the heavens undimmed!
Here is an offering,
Sacred! Sacred! Life!
Life through the chief! Life through the gods!*

When he finished, each of the men in the courtyard raised their hands silently in the air as Kekuaokalani and the temple priest entered the sacred *hale mana*. Inside, the images of those gods who had escaped death watched the two men through eyes of wood, stone, and pearl. At the center of the room, resting impatiently on a dais of black lava rock, was Kūkā‘ilimoku. Its many feathers had been rewoven, and its missing fangs replaced. Kekuaokalani had added to the god a mane of thick yellow feathers running from the crown of the head down to the neck. The two men bowed before the image in

expectation. No birds sang, no wind rustled through the grass of the *hale mana*, no man outside dared breathe, and all was silent. They watched.

In the midst of the void, a tiny yellow feather flew from Kūkā‘ilimoku’s forehead and streamed upward, moving like the mouth of a man talking. It danced for a few moments and then settled lightly on the ground. Pleased, Kekuaokalani and the priest stood and exited the structure. Before the awaiting crowd, hands still raised, the temple priest stepped forward, triumphant.

To those who eat without ceremony,

To those who eat freely,

To those who go about concealing themselves,

To those who go about playing,

The shout is, Death!

So it is; it is silenced.

So it is; it is silenced.

With this final chant, all the *ali‘i* shouted “The ‘*aha* was successful!” and the cry carried from the courtyard to the town and thence to the mountains and the sea, echoing the cause of war.

Ka‘ahumanu’s men came in long columns under the command of *ali‘i* captains and the advice of *haole* mercenaries. Kekuaokalani had placed spies all along the southern road from Kailua-Kona and knew exactly where and how the royalists would come. Part of his army he hid in the forest that ran along the path as it descended the plateau into the district. The other part he ordered toward the ocean, waiting in the lower

elevations by the cliffs. In the midst of the rainy season the land was lush and green, and hundreds of men could secret themselves in the foliage and never be found.

When the royal forces reached the priest's hidden army, Kekuaokalani signaled his warriors to attack. Without ceremony nor warning, hundreds of pieces of dense volcanic rock flew from the forest to Ka'ahumanu's unsuspecting men. It looked as if the land itself were rebelling against the royal army, rejecting them in a fit of deadly black rain. They looked for their attackers as they fell, stones crashing against their chests or necks or foreheads, but all they saw was the forest and all they heard was the chorus of rock whistling through the air. Kekuaokalani's slingers showed no mercy. Their silent barrage continued even as the royal soldiers retaliated with musket fire, shooting blindly into the forest in uneven volleys, the smoke of their weapons only obscuring their vision further. Kekuaokalani's men were safe behind trees or close to the ground, their slings lancing cleanly through clear mountain air. Only here and there one of them fell, wounded or dead.

Kekuaokalani watched from atop a large black lava flow, satisfied with the work of death below. At his side, a *kahuna* held in the air the scowling image of Kamehameha's war god. The high priest and the god had a clear view of the terrain and were well protected by an ancient koa tree. Some of the royal soldiers were attempting to advance into the forest but were cut down before they could reach the tree line. Their blood mixed with the earth and ran down in little streams toward the sea. Their wails of death and frustration mixed with the breeze that blew to and fro across the battlefield.

Among the piles of the dead stood a native captain who had escaped any fatal blow. He was naked except for his warrior's *malo* and a red regimental coat in the British

style which opened to a bare and broad chest. Kekuaokalani watched as this man threw down the musket in his hands and began a *ha'a koa*. The chant of the warrior's dance was obscured by the din of battle, but the fierceness in the man's bulging eyes and the force behind his cries and the strength of his movement inspired respect in the high priest's heart. As the man went, he was struck by a stone in the chest and in the stomach, but still he chanted, his blood now soaking into the coat he wore. He was hit next in the leg, which cracked before the force of a flying polished stone. He fell to one knee but still he chanted until, at last, he was struck square in the forehead and dropped to the ground eyes still bulging, mouth still open wide, but noiseless.

Kekuaokalani signaled for the slinging to stop. Soon the hum of the volcanic stone through the air quieted and all that was left were anguished groans and confused shouts. Kekuaokalani gave another signal and the sound of scores of helmet shells blew from the forest. Their warm tones trumpeted down the mountain slopes to Kekuaokalani's reserve forces and then fell silent. The signal was again given, and Kuka'ilimoku was lifted atop a long pole above the trees, accompanied by another blast of the shells. The war god stared down at the royal army as they attempted to regroup. They gaped back, pointing at the god in dread expectation of what was to come. For the third time, Kekuaokalani gave the signal and for the third time the hum of the shells droned from the forest. A shot came from the royal soldiers and lodged itself in the koa tree. Kekuaokalani's army fell silent, waiting for the next move.

For a brief moment, both armies waited, listening to the sound of the ocean breeze float lazily through their ranks. The clear morning sky was obscured by fat overhanging clouds and from a great distance came the subdued rumbling of thunder. A light rain

began. Sensing an opportunity, the remains of the royal army began to advance, stepping over the bodies of their comrades. As they approached the tree line, the final signal was given.

Each of Kekuaokalani's men shouted in unison, "Hoaaa!" a great war cry whose suddenness startled the advancing men. The royal army stopped its advance, for it seemed that the forest was filled with thousands of warriors. In the rain, the trees seemed to shake with the power of the terrible war god. Kekuaokalani smiled as the opposing army began to break ranks and flee up the path to the north. Though they still greatly outnumbered Kekuaokalani's force, Ka'ahumanu's army was routed.

He took up his spear and club and ran after the retreating men. Weary from their morning march, the royal army could not outpace the priest and his warriors, who began to cut them down in their escape. They chased the men through the rain and the mud, leaving behind them a river of blood and a trail of bodies. A brave few turned and attempted to fight but were brought down. Up ahead there was great confusion as Kekuaokalani's reserve force appeared from the cliffs below and cut off the retreating army. Now finally face to face, both sides fought spear to spear.

As he fought, Kekuaokalani shouted for certain of his men to move here and there, careful to observe the direction of the battle before him as he crushed bones with his stone staff and repelled daring warriors with his spear. Among the noise he heard a few scattered gunshots, but the fighting was done mostly with its traditional tools. All this was according to plan, and Kekuaokalani was pleased that his enemies had retreated before they had bothered to reload. Though the believers were before outnumbered, now

they controlled the momentum of the battle, and soon the royalists must surrender or face certain destruction.

As the company of warriors in front of Kekuaokalani began to retreat to another part of the field, he caught sight of a group of four or five men attempting to escape into the forest. They were led by one of Ka'ahumanu's *haole* advisors. Something began to burn in Kekuaokalani's gut different from the cool rage of battle. "Keawe, Kuaiwa, come with me now!" He shouted to two of his *ali'i* as he ran to pursue the fugitive royalists.

"*Ē ku 'u haku*, leave them, the day is already won!" he heard Kuaiwa call after him, but he did not stop.

He reached the edge of the forest that sloped down toward the sea, the great tumult of the battle fading behind him as he entered the thick vegetation. He followed the trail of torn leaves and broken branches and spilt blood that indicated where the men had gone. His feet beat the ground with a violent energy. He could feel every drop of rain tapping on his skin and falling into his eyes. His hands flexed and unflexed around the spear in his right hand and the stone-topped club in his left. Gone was the cool serenity which had possessed him atop the lava flow. He barely felt it when his *'ahu 'ula* was snagged by the branch of a *wiliwili* tree and torn from his back.

The density of the undergrowth cleared all at once, and he abruptly found himself in the company of his quarry. One of the men had fainted near a huge moss-covered boulder, his companions trying in vain to raise him and continue on. They started when Kekuaokalani burst upon them but immediately crouched low, brandishing their clubs and spears with warrior's instinct. There were three men ready to fight, each girded in the

native *malo*. Behind these three was their white captain, fumbling desperately to reload his pistol.

The four Hawaiians stared each other down, each daring their opponent to make the first move. Altogether, as if in silent communication, the royalist warriors charged Kekuaokalani who stepped back, preparing to butcher them all. Before they could close the distance, however, two spears flew over Kekuaokalani's shoulders and buried themselves in the chests of the outside warriors. Keawe and Kuaiwa had arrived in the clearing.

As his two companions fell, the third royal soldier was struck in the gut by Kekuaokalani's own spear, his face showing surprise at his companions' demise and the arrival of the two *ali'i*. The three men now lay dead in the black and brown earth, the tips of spears protruding from their backs. In the commotion, the *haole* advisor ran, disappearing behind the black boulder. Heedless of any danger, Kekuaokalani ran over the native bodies, stumbling over the rocks and roots in hot pursuit. This man would not escape the high priest.

When Kekuaokalani rounded the boulder, to his surprise, the white man had not continued to flee, but stood waiting, his pistol aimed true where Kekuaokalani now stood. Kekuaokalani instinctively twisted his body as a flash of fire and terror more fierce and loud than any of Pele's great volcanic tantrums poured out of the gun. Its issue, a perfect black sphere, cut across the flesh of his right leg and lodged itself in a nearby tree. Kekuaokalani's momentary shock gave way to an intense searing pain, and the *haole* cursed in a foreign tongue. Recovering himself, Kekuaokalani threw his club at the

man as he turned to run, its stone top bursting open the *haole*'s head in a splattering of crimson the same red as the blood which flowed from Kekuakalani's own leg.

Keawe and Kuaiwa had to help Kekuakalani back to the battlefield where the remains of the royalist army had thrown down their weapons in surrender. Their captains were brought forward and bound, to be taken to the temple and sacrificed ahead of the greater war to come. The remaining men were stripped of their arms and sent back to Kailua-Kona, not half as many as they were when they had come to take Kekuakalani and subjugate the believers. Kekuakalani, again clad in his chiefly cape and now bleeding heavily from his leg, laughed as his men celebrated.

After the victory, many of Kekuakalani's allies were unhappy that so many men were allowed to return home. As prisoners they could have been used for labor to build up Ka'awaloa's defenses or kept as sacrifices to appease the gods for months to come, anything but being allowed to go free and return later as part of a larger army.

"The gods are with us and that is enough. The issue is settled," was Kekuakalani's response. Though many of the chiefs feared that the struggle was still far from settled, they were nevertheless more hopeful now at their chances of forcing a return of the old ways. Many new recruits began to arrive from the neighboring districts, encouraged by word of Kekuakalani's victory. As the news spread, so their strength increased.

On a gray afternoon one week after his triumph, Kekuakalani lay under the roof of a hut within the precinct of the *luakini*. A bearded *ali'i* and a medicinal priest were with him, the latter rubbing the raw rootstock of a taro plant over his wound. The *haole*'s

ball had dug a shallow trough along the top of Kekuaokalani's leg which had split his flesh and required great effort to close. He had been forbidden from walking too much lest the wound tear open. The lethargy of blood-loss and the burning pain he had felt had now largely given way to boredom.

“...Our emissaries to Maui should return shortly. We have also received word of troop movements around Kailua-Kona but the king has yet to deploy another army,” continued the bearded *ali ‘i* from his place on a nearby mat.

“What of the reports of unrest in Waimea?” Kekuaokalani asked, facing the thatched ceiling. Before the chief could answer, one of ‘Aikanaka’s guards called into the hut for permission to enter.

“*E komo!*” Kekuaokalani called, and the guard stooped under the low doorway into the dim light of the grass shelter, offering his greetings.

“Ambassadors from Kailua-Kona have arrived and are waiting in the meeting house, my chief. They wish to speak with you.”

The unexpected news roused Kekuaokalani. He raised his head and eyed the medicinal priest who returned him a stern look. “Return and tell them I will be there shortly,” Kekuaokalani commanded the guard. The man bowed his head and exited the hut. The priest at Kekuaokalani’s leg sighed and reached for a poultice of ripe *noni* with which he coated the wound. That finished, a bandage of *kapa* bark was applied, along with a strict injunction not to be unwise.

Kekuaokalani rose to his feet, his muscles sore from having languished so long. He nodded to the bearded *ali ‘i* and the two ducked out into the cool late-afternoon air. Where before it had been difficult to walk without pain, Kekuaokalani was surprised that

he could move with hardly any discomfort. He quickened from a gentle amble to a slow jog, simultaneously praising the healer's art and cursing his circumspection. It would be another starless night, but he would not spend it corralled in that hut.

When he arrived at the meetinghouse, he was disappointed to find that the ambassadors were not better cared for. They were huddled together in the corner, unceremoniously flanked by two guards, though they had come alone and appeared to be unarmed. Each was dressed in a long *kihei* and *ti* leaf cape still dripping from an evening rain. In the darkness of the meetinghouse he made out two men and one woman with flowing black hair, their faces each obscured by the shadows of thick green *leis* crowning their heads. Across the room, Kekuaokalani's chiefs were gathered, conversing among themselves in hushed tones.

"Honored guests, I hope your journey was not unpleasant!" Kekuaokalani announced as he entered the room. The three ambassadors looked up and the chiefs fell silent. "Leave us. I wish to speak with them alone," he said to the chiefs and guards. The two warriors moved at once to leave, but the *ali'i* protested. "Leave us," Kekuaokalani cut them off.

As the room emptied, Kekuaokalani took a *kukui* nut lamp from beside the entryway and laid it on the ground. He then took a small sharpened stick of hard wood and rubbed it quickly back and forth into the groove of a soft *hau* log until the wood began to smoke and a tiny flame appeared. He blew the flicker until it was large enough to light a roll of twisted *kapa* which he used to light the oil of the lamp. As he performed this work, the three messengers moved to the center of the hall, the two men in front and

the woman behind. Kekuaokalani rose and walked to them, the small pocket of light illuminating their faces. He recognized the two men at once.

“Hoapili! Naihe! It seems Ka‘ahumanu has sent the best!” He set the small lamp on the ground and embraced them both, sharing the breath with his two relatives. He was delighted to see them.

“The best indeed!” Hoapili laughed, his aged round face smiling. Kekuaokalani had always been awed by Kamehameha’s close personal friend and companion in war, and was secretly envious that Hoapili was one of the few who knew where Kamehameha’s bones were buried. Hoapili shared a look with Naihe and the two stepped aside to reveal the female ambassador who stood hidden behind their wide frames. Though Kekuaokalani had seen her on very few occasions, he recognized her face and immediately dropped to his knees, prostrating himself before her.

“Chiefess Keōpūolani!” He exclaimed. “I did not know it was you.”

He heard soft chuckling from Hoapili and Naihe but did not look up, a mixture of reverence and apprehension in his heart. He felt a soft hand reach under his chin and draw his head up. He allowed himself to move but closed his eyes so as not to look the sacred chiefess in the face. “Kekuaokalani,” he heard her speak.

She sighed softly in gentle frustration when he did not open his eyes.

“Kekuaokalani, open your eyes. The *kapu* is no more.” Still he did not open his eyes.

“*Hūpō!*” He heard Naihe playful insult him. His voice had the melodic ring of a court orator. “Open your eyes when your elders tell you to!”

This command at last moved him and he opened his eyes, looking directly into Keōpūolani’s face. She smiled at him, a radiant smile which warmed the gray skies and

the dark interior of the meetinghouse. She had black, waving hair which cascaded down to her waist and made her golden skin glow. Kekuaokalani felt a secret thrill at beholding her. “Kekuaokalani, we have missed you. Kamehameha’s court is not the same without his most worthy nephew.”

This clumsy reunion now concluded, the little group settled to the *kapa* mats on the floor, the light of the lamp at their center illuminating each face. Kekuaokalani was glad to see them, for a time forgetting the pain in his leg and the pain of war which had rent apart his uncle’s house.

“How is Manono?” Keōpūolani asked affectionately.

“She is well. The period of her infirmity ended yesterday,” Kekuaokalani replied.

“So now the flower blooms in the rain.” Hoapili grinned. “It is well!”

Kekuaokalani laughed and winked. “And the coconut tree bends mightily in the wind.” The three men chuckled to themselves and Keōpūolani shook her head, the light of the lamp dancing across their faces.

As the humor subsided, Hoapili blew out his breath. “So much the better that we settle this affair quickly.” He said. “Kekuaokalani, we have come to bring you home.”

Kekuaokalani nodded slowly, expecting nothing less. For a moment, the room sat quiet as he stared into the flame. “And the gods? Are they to return home as well?”

The three ambassadors shared a look. “We are not here to discuss the gods. We are here to discuss the welfare of the people, those loyal to the kingdom and those who will suffer unless we can make peace,” Hoapili said.

“And what of the welfare of the people?” Kekuaokalani replied.

“The people do not want war. They do not want to see their brothers and sons turned against one another. You must persuade these rebels to reconsider or thousands will die.”

Kekuaokalani thought for a moment. He thought of his uncle. “You say that the welfare of the people rests upon avoiding war, yet you leave no option but war. I do not want war. But the body of Hawai‘i is unwell, and I will not persuade against its healing.”

Hoapili frowned, shifting his weight to a more comfortable position. “This is not the place for such talk. Kekuaokalani you must return with us to Kailua-Kona. Let there be *ho‘oponopono*. Let us heal the king’s household and then decide what the future will hold. But first you must let go of the old ways and turn to the people. We will leave the issue of worship to them, and they will be free to worship how they may.”

Kekuaokalani shook his head at this, wondering how Hoapili could be so blind. He looked at the old chief with all the gravity of the sacred mantle Kamehameha had placed upon his shoulders. “You have robbed them of that which makes them *kanaka*. You have severed their connection to their ancestors and the gods. There is nothing left for them to worship, nowhere for their gods to hear their prayers, nothing sacred they can offer. You have cut off their legs and pretend they do not suffer.”

Hoapili closed his eyes and shook his head. The corners of his mouth turned down until his chin had the appearance of a fat brown hill. Across from one another, Naihe and Keōpūolani also wore solemn expressions. “You are wrong, *keiki*.” Keōpūolani whispered. “They awake to a bigger world now and will prosper for it.”

Naihe nodded next to her, his faraway look betraying the wisdom of the Kamehameha's chief orator. "This is not the place for such talk. Kekuaokalani, what will it take for you to return with us to Kailua-Kona?"

"The restoration of the *kapu* and the reconstruction of the temples." Kekuaokalani said flatly.

"We cannot grant it," Naihe replied.

"Then I will not come."

"What, then?" Hoapili broke in. "You will remain here, and we will do battle until these islands are again wasted by war? Think on your chiefs, Kekuaokalani. Many that you have here are not loyal to the people. They say they follow the gods, but they only follow power and possessions; these are their gods. If their power is restored, they will be a tax on our people as they were in the old days. War would reign forever or until some foreign king greater even than Kamehameha comes and makes these lands his own! One king, even a blasphemous king, is better than all the *ali'i* of these islands."

Kekuaokalani's nostrils flared at Hoapili's arguments, but as he turned the words over in his gut he could not help but understand the truth in them, even if to him they were only half-truths. He had seen them for himself. "If you have your king, why is it you follow Ka'ahumanu?"

This seemed to catch Hoapili off guard, his brow furrowing and unfurrowing in confusion. "She is wise, and her husband demanded it fearing Liholiho's weakness."

Kekuaokalani snorted. "I am not so sure," he said. "Why would he have given me his war god if he had intended a different boon for his son?"

"Do not doubt it, *ha'aeo*, I was there when it was spoken."

Hoapili's words soared across the room and collapsed against Kekuaokalani's swelling chest. He had no reason to doubt that what Hoapili said was true, but this truth threatened to undo him. He felt himself shrink and the room grow larger. For the first time since his uncle's death, Kekuaokalani felt something other than worship for him. He broke with Hoapili's gaze and looked up at the interwoven poles in the ceiling. As difficult as this would be to digest, he felt it was still missing the point. "The people are weak without their gods."

"The gods are weak," Naihe responded. "Would you have the people be weak with then? Listen to my chants. For generations our people were a pitiful scattering of warring districts. Then it was we organized into stronger sister kingdoms, whole islands in size, and now we have cleaved together into one great nation. Our people are strong. Their *mana* has been building throughout all history, and it will continue to build, and nothing will stop it. You know it to be true, for that is the great secret of the *Kumulipo* which you chant. From chaos, order."

Kekuaokalani wavered, thinking of the *Kumulipo*, the new year's chant still fresh in his mind. Again, Keōpūolani interjected, balancing the appeals of the two chiefs. "Oh Kekuaokalani, be wise. You may fight with conviction and honor, but you cannot bring back a time which change has erased."

There was a silence as the three ambassadors considered the young high priest and Kekuaokalani considered his own heart. His only reply was, "I do not wish for war."

"Then you will return with us?" Hoapili demanded.

"I must go first and speak with Manono, then I will go back with you," Kekuaokalani agreed solemnly. "But know this, I will never break *kapu*."

The three ambassadors nodded, tension easing from their shoulders. “Very well.” Hoapili said. “We will rest here with you tonight, and tomorrow we will all return together.”

Kekuaokalani led Hoapili, Naihe, and Keōpūolani to a *hale noa* where they could pass the night. After they separated, Kekuaokalani walked through the village toward the bay. It was evening, the light of day now asleep after losing its battle with the clouds. Kekuaokalani arrived at his own sleeping house, its illuminated interior reaching out into the darkness. Manono was waiting for him just inside, but he did not stop. Instead he felt himself drawn to the bay and the soft breathing of the ocean, heedless of the hour and heedless of his wound.

When he reached the beach, he saw a royal double-canoe pulled up on shore. At the top of its mast was fastened Kamehameha’s banner, beckoning him in the breeze, fluttering like a snared bird desperate to escape. He watched the waves roll in and out, flowing forward and then collapsing in on themselves. Through the breaking clouds he perceived the rising moon, its face casting islands of light on the earth and sea. Underfoot he felt the soft, wet sand.

He perceived a faint beating as if from a drum coming from the direction of the *luakini*. Its beat conflicted with the rhythm of the ocean waves in an unsettling dissonance. The longer he stood the greater its chaos became. He could feel the blood pounding in his temples. Waves and drums and pounding. He cast his eyes across the water to the north, past the cliffs of Kealakekua, to the other side of the bay. He saw there

the dark silhouette of a grove of palm trees indistinct from any other, yet he felt himself drawn to it above the din of the waves and the drums and the pounding.

Grabbing hold of one the canoes from the canoe house, he hauled it through the sand and over onto the water. The craft had no sail, only a single outrigger, and would be propelled by the force of his arm. As he guided it over the breakers, the beating of the drums grew louder. The waves, now crashing against the ocean cliffs, grew louder. As he labored across the surface of the ocean, the water pitched him up and down. A cloud moved from before the moon's face, illuminating the irresistible grove, brighter now in his mind than any far-off fire. He paddled faster, closing his eyes. In his head he heard the sound of drums, the sound of waves. He saw the image of Kūkā'ilimoku surrounded by all-consuming fire. Beneath him he felt the toss of the indifferent sea, and through all of this, the paddle, cutting and pulling, speeding him forward and then slowing as he moved it to the other side, moved to cut the water again and pull, faster and louder, louder the beating and breathing until all at once it stopped. His canoe hit the other side of the bay with a soft sandy scrape.

Kekuaokalani opened his eyes. Before him was the silent palm grove, the rays of moonshine cast through its trees creating a constant phantasm of light and shadow dancing together in a warrior's *hula*. He walked up the beach and entered the heart of the thing. Within the mute grove, the trees swayed noiselessly. In the light, they were simple palms, but in darkness they became severe idols scowling down on him in this, nature's *heiau*. He stumbled along, disoriented by the storm of light and darkness until he collapsed to the ground, his eyes tight shut, and his hands held fast to the sides of head. All he could hear was his breathing, as if he were alone in all the wide world, the dark

void of his shut eyes emptier than the dark of any moonless night. He felt nothing, not any pain, not a coldness, nor shame, or grief, or hunger. There was only emptiness. Only solitude.

And then he began to recognize in the vast expanse breathing that was not his own. It was longer and deeper, and in the directionless darkness it reached down from above him. He lifted his head and opened his eyes, blinking in the full moonlight. Before him stood his uncle, Kamehameha. In death he wore, not foreigner's clothes, but the regalia of a chief of Hawai'i: on his head a great-arching *mahiole*, on his back a billowing 'ahu 'uha, over his loins a flaming *malo*, around his neck the *lei palaoa*, in his hand a feathered *kahili*. He beamed down at Kekuaokalani.

Kekuaokalani trembled, staring up into those familiar fierce and friendly eyes. "What have you done?" He implored.

Kamehameha did not answer, but instead reached out a hand to his fallen nephew.

"What am I supposed to do?"

Again, Kamehameha held his peace and maintained his outstretched hand.

Kekuaokalani let his head fall, overcome. His shoulders shook, and he wailed to himself. He wailed through the silent grove until his gut was emptied. Then he raised his head and met his uncle's gaze, the knot in his heart having loosened, and, taking the outstretched hand, he allowed himself to be pulled to his feet as the knot finally unraveled.

Kekuaokalani stood face to face with Kamehameha. The chief reached behind his head and unclasped the *lei palaoa* from around his neck, holding it in front of him. Kekuaokalani saw that it was the same *lei* which he had bestowed upon Liholiho, that sacred and secret artifact which was made from the man Cook's hair and was infused

with his *mana*. Kamehameha held it out to Kekuaokalani and pointed to the edge of the grove with his *kahili*. Kekuaokalani reached out his hand, looking into his uncle's beaming eyes. As his fingers touched the *lei*, the apparition disappeared.

The grove was peaceful now, not only silent but full, its shadows only shadows, its trees only trees. The place was whole, and Kekuaokalani felt that wholeness and made it his own. He walked forward in the direction his uncle had pointed, absorbing the *mana* of the place until he stood in front of a solitary palm tree. The tree was like all the others, its trunk was solid and smooth, its fronds lush, and its bunch was full of swelling coconuts both ripe and unripe. Scattered around it, its fallen seeds had brought forth new trees. At the heart of this tree, however, there was a gaping hole from a cannon-shot. Kekuaokalani put his hand into it, running his fingers along the scarred wood, feeling its emptiness as his leg began to throb.

“Kekuaokalani, my love, why have you fled so far from me?” a canorous voice came from behind. Kekuaokalani turned to find his wife standing in the grove. She was wrapped in a simple *kihei*, her hair spilling over her shoulder and onto her bosom. Kekuaokalani was not surprised that she had followed him.

“I have spoken with Naihe and Hoapili,” he replied, and then added, “and also with Keōpūolani. They want for me to return with them to Kailua-Kona. They have asked for *ho‘oponopono*. ”

Manono did not seem surprised. “What did you tell them?” she asked.

“I told them I would speak with you first.”

“You are a wise man.” She laughed, and he along with her. “What will you do?”

Kekuaokalani did not have an answer. “I do not know. My thoughts are all mixed up.”

Manono nodded, stepping forward to him and placing a hand on his cheek. “You have always been a great defender of the gods, and for that I have loved you deeply. But remember that the gods are more than the *kapu*, they are more than the *heiau* and the *idols*, and more than war. They are our ancestors from Kamehameha back to Papa and Wākea. They are in everything: the breath of the wind, the great ocean, the cry of the babe, the work of the fisherman, even in these trees, all these things which still remain. We must not let them be forgotten. That is my fear, that our chiefs have come to worship the objects and wealth of strangers and that they have forgotten the gods and the people. That is worth fighting against as much as is defending the *kapu* and *heiau*.”

“So you would have me make peace?”

“You are a good man. I think you should follow your gut,” she replied, then added with a smirk, “And I think you should rest that leg.” She grabbed his chin and pulled him down, kissing him. “Right now, however, it is time for you and me to return to the sleeping house. The ridges of Ko‘olau are wet with rain, and not everything can be settled in one night.” And with that Manono led her husband by the hand back across the bay.

The priest and his wife returned to a beach bathed in the light of moon and fire. Manono was the first to arrive, and Kekuaokalani followed only a few strokes behind. There was a commotion onshore when a party of torch-bearing *ali‘i* saw them coming. At their head was ‘Aikanaka, wearing his warrior's sandals. “We worried that you had left us, Kekuaokalani. We could not find you in your sleeping house, and there were two

canoes missing,” he said as the couple reached land. His face was stern, sterner even for the play of the shadows on his face.

“Not so, my esteemed friend,” Kekuaokalani said, grunting as he towed the heavy wooden vessel beyond the reach of the tide. “I merely took a trip around the bay after so many days trapped inside the medicine house.”

“It is well for you to stretch your muscles. A warrior who cannot beat his wife to shore will surely struggle on the battlefield.” Several of the men behind ‘Aikanaka chuckled at this jest but the chief’s serious expression did not change. Kekuaokalani himself did not try to suppress his smile, eyeing his wife’s athletic body with pride.

“Too true, too true! I suppose then I shall have to bring her into battle with me!” He rested his canoe at last in the sand and placed a hand on Manono's lower back. “Come all, the night grows late, and my eyes are heavy.” The two started up the beach toward the village. Above them, the winking stars of *Ke Kā o Makali‘i* had already begun to pour their contents down to the leftward horizon.

“Before you leave us *kahuna nui*, pray, what word from the ambassadors?”

Kekuaokalani stopped, the smile on his lips fading. A crowd had begun to form as more people arrived on the beach from the village. A few held torches, those who had likely been dispatched to help look for the missing priest. Many, however, were simply drawn to the curiosity of the nighttime assembly as word spread that he had been found.

“They wish for me to return to Kailua-Kona to negotiate peace.”

From among the curious crowd there arose a murmur of agitation. Kekuaokalani and Manono’s path back to their sleeping house was now clogged with onlookers, and the whole beach was filled with orange light which only deepened the darkness of the

nighttime shadows. They were surrounded. ‘Akanaka raised a hand, bidding the crowd be still. “And your reply?”

Kekuaokalani looked at ‘Aikanaka and considered the throng, wondering at the depth of their conviction, the words of Hoapili coming back to him. After a week of waiting, the camp was balanced upon the cliff’s edge.

“I will return.”

The chiefs erupted at this declaration. There were cries of anger and shouts of confusion. Some spoke approvingly of the decision while others whispered “treachery,” each debating the wisdom of Kekuaokalani’s decision, its meaning, and what they would have him do instead.

“Perhaps it is best. Perhaps they can be persuaded without bloodshed.”

“These ambassadors are spies, they have come to turn us about so that they can slay us while our guard is relaxed!”

“We should flee to Maui, the chiefs there are friendly to us.”

“No, to war! Kū is with us!”

From amid this babble of opinions stepped Kuaiwa who took up the fervor of the crowd. He stood just apart from the crowd, yet his voice rose as if he were chanting atop the oracle tower. “What is there to be gained through negotiation? Can you remove the roof of the house and declare that the house is whole? If the taro has been struck with *palahi*, can you say that all is well, that the harvest comes and there will be food to eat? *Auē*, you cannot. You must cleanse the house and build it anew. You must root out the diseased plants, lest the whole patch become infected and die and you and your children starve! Our great King Kamehameha changed many things, but one thing he did not

change. He never cast aside his gods, and he never allowed the *haoles* to corrupt his *pono* as his son and the regent have! The only option now is war!”

“Here is wisdom!” Shouted another *ali‘i* in agreement. “We must purify the land of the *haole* and those who heed them. We were strong before they came!”

“Yes! And let us begin with those traitors among us.” ‘Aikanaka barked, looking straight at Kekuaokalani. “Fetch the ambassadors. We will root out their poison here and now!”

“No!” Manono protested, her cry drowned in a chorus of approbation, as several of the torch-bearing *ali‘i* marched up the path to the village. Kekuaokalani cast his eyes about, his breath quickening. For the moment, he held his peace, wary of the passion of the crowd.

“The king and the regent are blind.” ‘Aikanaka continued. “They care only for their own power. Kamehameha respected his *ali‘i*, but they would see us reduced to commoners!” ‘Aikanaka shook his fists at the crowd in righteous-indignation as they decried Hawai‘i’s ruling house.

“Kekuaokalani, you must take the throne, not bow to it.” Kuaiwa declared. “It is said that ‘the chief who prays to the gods, he is the chief who will hold the rule.’ Forget returning to negotiate peace. March instead on Kailua-Kona. Return and restore the old ways, for the gods are with you and they will make you king as they made our ancestors kings!”

“‘Ae!” came the general response, the crowd asserting its approval.

“‘Ae!” added ‘Aikanaaka. “And when you do, you must divide up the land among us as in the times of old!” His words received even more fervent support than Kuaiwa’s.

“What say you?”

Kekuaokalani looked toward the village and the *hale noho* of the ambassadors. He thought about his war god and the *lei palaoa* of his vision and the wound in the palm tree.

“We must—”

“Look!” Interrupted one of the men in the crowd, pointing to the ocean.

Kekuaokalani turned, scanning the horizon for the source of the outburst, glad for some disruption to draw away the emotion of the crowd. Coming across the water was a single-hulled canoe, its dark silhouette cutting through the stripe of moonlight reflected on the water. Kekuaokalani squinted for signs of more vessels but found only one. The mysterious canoe was alone on the waves.

Manono grabbed his arm with her hand and he turned to her. Her dark eyebrows were joined together in a look of urgent concern. As the crowd considered the canoe she gestured toward the village with her eyes. He placed his own hand gently on hers and whispered, “Patience.” She studied him for a moment and then turned toward the ocean.

It was not long before the canoe reached the shore. A few of ‘Aikanaka’s warriors had moved into the waves brandishing their spears, prepared against a possible threat. As the vessel entered the ring of torchlight, however, it became clear that it bore the streamers of Ka‘awaloa. Four men jumped from the canoe and hauled it ashore. As they approached the crowd, they wore expressions of confusion and agitation.

“Welcome home” said ‘Aikanaka. “Your arrival is unexpected but not unwelcome. What news do you bring us from Maui? Speak freely.”

The messengers from Maui looked at their chief and the crowd, their chests still heaving from hours of rowing. It was clear the channel crossing had not been kind to them. One of the messengers stepped forward and spoke. “No one on Maui will come. Word of our resistance has travelled from Lahaina to Hana but none of the *ali* ‘i there will fight with us.”

Kekuaokalani frowned, thinking of the half-tattooed Hua. There were groans and sighs from the gathered villagers, along with a few muffled cries of “*auē*.”

“No matter,” ‘Aikanaka said. “We are strong and there is still time.”

“That is not all my chief. As our canoe passed Keauhou, we saw the torches of an enormous camp on the shore. There is a gathering army there.”

“How many?” The alarm in his voice was apparent.

“It was impossible to tell, thousands. Many more than at the first battle.”

“You see!” shouted an *ali* ‘i over the gasps of the crowd. “The ambassadors are treacherous! They have come to distract us with soft words of peace even as the king’s army comes to slaughter us in the night!” Kekuaokalani calculated how long it might take this new army to mobilize and considered how they might best defend themselves.

‘Aikanaka attempted to assuage the crowd. “Fear not my friends! Fear not! We are strong, and we shall fight them fire for fire. We shall match them in arms and outmatch them in valor. We have been gathering guns from the *haoles*...” As he spoke, there was a commotion at the back of the crowd. The guards sent to fetch the ambassadors had returned. Hoapili, Naihe, and Keōpūolani were shoved through to face ‘Aikanaka and Kekuaokalani. As they came, the *ali* ‘i reviled them, spitting and cursing at them. “Kill them!” They shouted. “Punish them!” In the midst of this abuse the two

elderly men and their queenly companion held their heads high, walking calmly. They came dressed only their *kihei*. When they reached Kekuaokalani the guards forced them to their knees in the sand. Hoapili and Naihe looked up at him, their tired eyes smiling softly. They each took one of Keōpūolani’s hands as the chiefess began to quietly weep.

Naihe spoke up in their defense. “If I may—”

“You may not.” ‘Aikanaka interrupted. “We have had enough from you already.”

The chief of Ka‘awaloa produced a knife from his robes and offered it to the high priest. Kekuaokalani looked at the weapon and scoffed. “This is unwise.”

‘Aikanaka withdrew the weapon. “If you have become corrupted, *kahuna nui*, then I will perform the deed!” He raised the knife above his head, its tip directly above Hoapili’s head. Kekuaokalani kicked sand in his eyes and with the back of his hand knocked the knife into the air. As ‘Aikanaka stumbled back, struggling to see, Kekuaokalani caught the knife and pointed it at the *ali‘i*’s throat.

“The chief who abuses his guests is the chief with no followers.”

‘Aikanaka squinted at him, his nostrils flaring in the torchlight. “So, you are poisoned too then?”

Kekuaokalani threw the knife to the ground where it stuck in the sand, its hilt toward the heavens. “Be silent.”

The high priest turned to the crowd. “I am Keaoua Kekuaokalani. Nephew of the Great Kalani Pai‘ea Wohi o Kaleikini Keali‘ikui Kamehameha o ‘Iolani i Kaiwikapu kau‘i Ka Liholiho Kūnuiākea. I am keeper of the war god Kuka‘ilimoku and High Priest of Hawai‘i. You will all obey me or face the wrath of the gods.”

The chastened crowd stood in awed silence.

Kekuaokalani stepped in front of the ambassadors who still knelt in the sand. He had thought about his uncle and considered the words Manono had spoken to him across the bay. He had thought of Ka‘ahumanu and Hua and the day he escaped from Kailua-Kona. He had thought about the war god’s feathers, and the simplicity of life before his uncle’s death. There was only one thing that mattered now. He looked down at Hoapili and asked, “How does the war god speak?”

Hoapili stared up at him, his hand still firmly holding the tearful Keōpūolani. He thought for a moment and then from the depths of his bowels he answered. “You are his voice.”

“Bring forward their canoe!” Kekuaokalani called.

Hoapili looked up at Kekuaokalani, failing to understand his meaning. “Are we to start then?”

“Yes.”

“You will return with us?”

“I will return. But I will return by land with the believers.”

Hoapili’s head dropped and Naihe shook his head. “So, you cut the navel cord? Must we take back word that Kekuaokalani will have nothing but war?”

“No, honored counselor of kings. Say, rather, that Kekuaokalani, the last high priest, it may be, of Hawai‘i, is prepared to die in defense of the gods to whose service he has devoted his life. If they are omnipotent, as he believes them to be, their temples will rise again upon this land and in the hearts of the people. If not, he is more than willing to hide his disappointment in the grave!”

Manono helped the ambassadors to their feet as ‘Aikanaka and the crowd stood subdued. The royal canoe was placed in the water and the king’s counselor, the chief orator, and the sacred chiefess were loaded inside. The believers watched as the royal ambassadors sailed out of the bay. In the dark of night came the cry of the *alae*, its shriek settling over them all.

Back in the *hale noho*, Kekuaokalani stood naked before his war god. Manono approached, in her hands a calabash of coconut oil. She dipped her long fingers into the container and rubbed the cool liquid on every part of his body until he shone. Around him she girt a *malo* of flexible *kapa*, dyed red, passing it first between his legs, then around the front of his waist, tying it at the back. Its front draped almost to his knees and was embroidered in the angular pattern of the ocean with a border pattern of shark teeth. Onto his feet he tied sandals of *hau* bark, looping the stout cord of plaited *lauhala* over his toes and around his ankles. Across his left shoulder he slung his ‘*ahu ‘ula*, its thousands of feathers falling down his back, golden-yellow with great triangles of red. Upon his head he placed a *mahiolo*, the helmet’s hardened inner gourd perfectly formed to his head, and its yellow-feathered crest arched high above his head. Into its crown were embedded a row of grinning shark teeth. Finally, he took up two powerful spears that fitted his hand’s grip.

Thus armed, he turned to leave, but Manono stood in his path. “Have you no fear of the result?” she asked, gazing up at him.

“I fear nothing.” He cupped her face. “Though the thought sometimes comes to me that the gods are reserving for Liholiho and his advisors a punishment greater than I

may be able to inflict. Should that be so, I am obstructing with spears the path of their vengeance.” He let his hand fall.

Manono held his face and gave him a fierce look. “The will of the gods be done!” she exclaimed. “But, whatever may be the fate of Kekuaokalani, Manono will share it.”

“My brave Manono.” He whispered to her, shaking his head. “I will build for you a *hāli‘i* made of *uluhe* fern from which you can observe the coming battle.”

She clicked her tongue and turned her head, her nose scrunching in irritation. “You may be the high priest of Hawai‘i and the keeper of the war god Kūkā‘ilimoku, but you are my husband. And no husband of mine will hide me under some grass lean-to and command me not to fight.”

Kekuaokalani laughed at this. Or rather, he laughed at himself. He laughed while Manono scowled at him. “Be it according to the will of the gods and the high priestess of my heart.” He said, bowing his head to her until the feathered crest of his helmet tickled her forehead. She scrunched her nose in mock anger but could not stop herself from smiling.

“Ho!” A man called from beyond the entryway.

“Enter!” Kekuaokalani called, still looking down at his wife.

A guard dressed for battle entered. He held a javelin in his hand and had a *mo‘o* pattern tattooed across his chest and arms. “We are prepared, *kahuna nui*.”

Kekuaokalani nodded to him, and the man left their presence. Manono and Kekuaokalani shared one last look of deep understanding. He kissed her on the forehead before collecting Kūkā‘ilimoku, and then they left the *hale noa*.

Outside, Kekuaokalani's warriors were gathered in a great throng more than a thousand strong, armed and ready to march. Under the midnight sky, the torches they carried fanned out like a sea of stars brighter than those fires which months before had consumed Hawai'i's temples. Rising above their heads, born by white-clad priests, were several newly decorated war gods of wood and stone and feathers red, yellow, black, and green, all scowling impatiently for their vengeance. In front of this army were the *ali'i*, 'Aikanaka, Kuaiwa, and Keawe among them, each dressed in the *'ahu 'ula* of their office.

"What is your command?" 'Aikanaka asked.

Kekuaokalani loomed before them, holding the war god in his left hand and his spears in his right. "O my warriors of true Hawai'i, do you see? We go now to war, not against those who have lost their way, but against the unbelief that blinds them. We shall go in secret by the light of the moon, before our enemy has gathered its full strength. We shall march through the night, keeping close to the seashore, and fall upon the royalist camp before they have shaken the slumber from their eyes. We will sweep them before us and then we will march to Kailua-Kona and take the throne! We will rebuild the sacred houses of our ancestors and reinstitute the sacred *kapu*. We are few, but we are not alone, and whatever fate may befall our beloved Hawai'i, it will be according to the gods we serve. Go quick. Fly now before the winds of wrath and justice!"

And fly they did, across Kealakekua ridge and down to the seashore, as if on the breath of Kū himself. They ran, men and women both, their feet pounding the earth so that from afar off they appeared like a black cloud thundering. Each *ali'i* led their company of warriors, and at the head of the believers was Kuka'ilimoku, his pearl eyes gleaming purple and silver and green in the starlight. As the night turned from black to

blue, they came to where the country poured suddenly into the Kuamo‘o lava flats.

Marking the division of the land was an ancient stone wall about breast high, built in the time of ‘Umi-a-Liloa. The terrain was rocky and black as it came to the jagged shoreline, with pockets of arid grass and trees. Here they rested.

As the stars above them began to fade, Kekuaokalani took a few men with him, among them the messengers from Maui, to scout the land ahead. As they crossed the boundary into the *ahupua’a* of Honuaino, the messengers signaled that the enemy camp was just beyond a bank of black stones which jutted out onto the rocky coastal plain, blocking their view of Keauhou Bay. Kekuaokalani ordered one of his men to return to the army and have them brought immediately across the lava field and onto the plain. The moon and stars had now disappeared and the view of the land was becoming more and more clear. The attack must happen soon.

A shot rang out and one of the warriors at Kekuaokalani’s side fell dead. Below them, a royalist scout force had appeared on the plain. More shots followed, tearing apart the quiet morning. A few of Kekuaokalani’s men answered with shots of their own. Kekuaokalani took a sling from the dead warrior at his feet and hurled a stone into an enemy man’s forehead as both sides took cover within the pockets of trees and tall grass.

Apart from the first warrior, none of Kekuaokalani’s men were seriously injured, a few receiving small cuts from rebounding rocks. Those warriors who had brought firearms were awkwardly trying to reload. Kekuaokalani stooped and picked up a jagged stone. He took off his *mahiolo* and peeked his head through the shrub in front of him. The royalist scouts had hidden in an isolated thicket. They would not be able to retreat

without being seen, but soon it would be daybreak and Kekuaokalani's army would lose all element of surprise, if they had not already.

Kekuaokalani had fewer than twenty-five men with him, among them, six *ali'i* whom he ordered to spread out through the grove. As soon as his men had finished reloading their guns, he and the other chiefs shouted as if they were charging and raised their yellow and red feathered helmets into the clear at the end of their spears. As hoped, a volley of musket-fire rang out, most of the bullets passing harmlessly overhead or into the trees. A single shot exploded one of the *ali'i* helmets, its gourd shattering and its feathers tearing apart in a puff. Nodding to his men, Kekuaokalani led a charge out of the grove and across the field.

Halfway to the enemy thicket, Kekuaokalani's men fired their weapons, the priest himself heaving a stone at a musket leveled in his direction. There was scattered return fire, but soon they were upon the royalist scouts.

Kekuaokalani met a thick-muscled warrior who swung at him with the butt of his musket. Kekuaokalani jumped back and caught the man under the chin with the tip of his spear. He thrust forward, and the man dropped his weapon, dead. To his left, one of the Kekuaokalani's *ali'i* was shot in the neck by a pistol. He fell to the earth, eyes bulging, gasping for air. Kekuaokalani threw his spear and struck the killer through the side before he had time to turn.

The royalist force was defeated just as suddenly as it had appeared. In the chaos of the fight, a few had managed to escape the thicket and now retreated across the rocks to the bay. Among them were two chiefs, their short capes flying behind them. They were too far away to chase down before they rounded the bank and came within view of the

royal camp. One of Kekuaokalani's men moved to give chase, but Kekuaokalani ordered him back. They fired their muskets, managing to bring one down, but the two chiefs continued. Kekuaokalani slung at one of them, striking him on the leg, but the man did not fall.

The blue of twilight was now giving way to the gold of morning, and the army of believers had come onto the plain. Kekuaokalani watched as the two chiefs disappeared around the bank. He became aware of the pain in his leg.

"What happened?" Manono asked as she approached with Kekuaokalani's *ali 'i*.

"A scout force," Kekuaokalani said curtly. "We must move swiftly or we lose our advantage. 'Aikanaka, take half the army over the bank and come at the camp from above. The rest of us will sweep across the plain. Go now!"

The order given, Kekuaokalani turned and ran toward the bay, to retribution or to ruin. His army ran with him, half at his back and half up the bank. He felt a small measure of doubt, but the *kōnane* board had been set, and the pieces were already in motion.

The sun had not yet risen when the believers met the royalists. Their camp crowded the bay, a sea of makeshift *hāli 'i* nearly consuming the permanent settlement of grass buildings. The beach was overflowing with canoes large and small, bearing streamers from across Hawai'i. The enemy was not yet fully awake, and those that were saw Hawai'i's gods bearing down upon them, bringing death by spear, by sling, by club, by dagger, by ball. The believers tore through the camp, slaughtering the royalists until they had almost reached the bay itself. Hundreds died with barely a fight.

But the royalists had been forewarned, and they recovered themselves quickly. When the light of dawn broke over Mauna Loa, Kekuaokalani's progress was stalled. He encountered a native captain clad in a blue *haole* uniform. The man wore a pistol on his hip but fought with a *leiomano*. Kekuaokalani brought the spear in his left hand down on the man's head and at the same time thrust with the spear in his right hand. The man caught the thrust and blocked the down-coming spear between the teeth of his club. Kekuaokalani was now exposed, and the man kicked him hard in the leg at the spot of his bandaging. The pain went deep, and Kekuaokalani's leg folded under him.

The man twisted his club as Kekuaokalani went to the ground, knocking away one of the spears. Still holding Kekuaokalani's other spear, the warrior moved to swing the *leiomano* into the priest's neck, but as he did so, Kekuaokalani took the second spear in both hands and yanked. Instead of letting go, the blue-coated warrior pitched forward as Kekuaokalani repositioned the spear to the center of the man's chest. Unable to arrest his momentum, the man fell on the spear, and Kekuaokalani drove the tip out his back.

The man fell to the earth, his breath rasping as he expired. Though Kekuaokalani struggled to stand, he was glad to find that the blow to his leg had not crippled him. All around raged fierce battles, the royalists now offering blow for blow. From his view of the field, Kekuaokalani could see more and more of the royalist army, natives and *haoles* alike, rushing through the camp to the front. Everywhere there was the sound and smoke of gunfire. Kekuaokalani threw the spear in his hand at an oncoming warrior, but then was obliged to duck into a nearby *hāli'i* as a company of three royalists opened fire on him with their muskets. The balls tore through the thin shelter and it collapsed upon him.

As he extricated himself from under the fallen wood and ferns, Manono advanced and shot one of his attackers with a pistol. By her side was one of Kekuaokalani's *ali'i*, who fought another of the men while Manono speared the third. She rushed to her husband and helped him to his feet. He was alarmed to see that the royalists had begun to flank his army. Soon they would not be able to prevent themselves from being surrounded.

It was then that 'Aikanaka arrived on the battlefield, his men pouring over the bank into an undefended section of the camp. This second wave caught the enemy off-guard, and they suffered a great loss of life before they could recover. 'Aikanaka had almost made it to the village before he was repelled, and if the royalists had not withdrawn their flanking force, they would soon have been surrounded.

The battle now raging in earnest, Kekuaokalani marshalled his *ali'i*, directing them into a firm battle line, fighting with them, and watching a few of them die as the two armies reached a stalemate, the work of death indiscriminate among so many Hawaiians. Above the great scene the sun climbed toward its peak.

Kekuaokalani was fighting at the furthest end of the line, almost to the water's edge, when he saw 'Aikanaka fall. The high chief of Ka'awaloa had reinforced the center line as it took heavy fire. Under the direction of their native captains, the royalists had begun to organize themselves in companies three rows deep, blanketing the believers in successive coordinated volleys. It seemed now as if every enemy warrior had a musket, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to approach their ranks before being gunned down. 'Aikanaka had been the victim of one of these deadly volleys, and, without their leader, the center division began to fall apart.

Kekuaokalani finished off a *haole* soldier with his sling and then charged across the battlefield, running over broken shelters and broken bodies toward his center ranks. He ran through a whirlwind of screams and shouts and iron missiles, the soles of his sandals saturated with crimson-soaked mud. He passed divisions of men fighting valiantly under the fierce image of their war god and he felt the great rush of battle.

Fewer than one hundred paces from his goal he took a hard step with his right leg and felt his wound tear open. Before he could look down, his *kapa* bark bandage was wet with blood and he could no longer run without considerable pain. He faltered, but stumbled on, grimacing and shouting for his men to reinforce their comrades. It was too late. Kekuaokalani watched as a division of royalists fixed sharp metal knives to the tops of their muskets and charged forward. His men panicked as they came and scattered. The royalists had broken through.

As they poured into the breach, terror seized Kekuaokalani's army.

"*Ē ku'u haku!* What should we do?" a group of *ali'i* cried to their commander. A few immediately gathered around where Kekuaokalani stood, among them Kuaiwa. Kekuaokalani scanned the slopes of Mauna Loa and Hualālai. If the battle could not be won, it would be wise to retreat into the forests and hills and regroup to fight another day. But as the blood flowed down his leg and into the earth, he knew that he would never make the climb. Kekuaokalani observed his band of followers and the fierceness of Ka'ahumanu's army. The battle must be won today. He tore the front of his *malo* and cinched it around his thigh just above the wound and turned from the mountains to the sea. The water was peaceful in the morning air, its waves brushing gently against the land.

He considered the plain, with its pockets of grass and trees, and beyond that the barren lava fields and the wall just out of view behind the bank of black rock.

“We will retreat to Kuamo‘o and draw them onto the flats. Have your warriors prepare their muskets and slings for a counterattack.” Kekuaokalani instructed his *ali‘i*.

The chiefs nodded and returned to their men as the casualties mounted. Kuaiwa stayed behind. His eyes were heavy, and he was bleeding from the head. He looked at Kekuaokalani’s crimson leg and laughed. “It is well that we bleed for our *kuleana*.” Kekuaokalani smiled and the two men clasped elbows. “My chief, I and my men will stay behind to cover your retreat.”

Beneath them their army began to fold under the royalist pressure. Under the unmerciful and unwieldy barrage of musket fire, even the aged god-bearing priests fell dead, the whiteness of their *kihei* and beards smeared brown and red.

“May the gods accept all we can do for them.” Kekuaokalani said, a slight tremble in his voice. Kuaiwa nodded and moved off to marshal his warriors, his blood-stained yellow cape billowing behind him.

The believers fled as the royalists fired after them. Manono ran at her husband’s side, nearly carrying him around her shoulders across the field. Behind them, Kuaiwa held back the enemy until he was consumed by a gray cloud of gunfire smoke. Kekuaokalani’s army came around the bank and onto the lava flats, crossing nearly to Umi-a-Liloa’s wall. Above them, the old priest still held Kuka‘ilimoku in the air, his elbows sagging.

They stopped, their bodies heaving and breathless. They were not half as many as before dawn, and few were still free from any wound. Their expressions were haggard

but resolute. Near Kekuaokalani was a tall warrior who had carried a woman across the field on his back. He whispered comforting words to her as he laid her tenderly onto the uneven volcanic rock. Kekuaokalani watched as her ragged breathing slowed to a stop and her round face fell to the side. There was musket wound in her abdomen.

The believers organized themselves into lines. Those who still held muskets came to the front and behind them those with slings prepared piles of jagged stones. The wounded who had made it across the field were carried further and placed behind the wall. The black fields were warming under the sun's heat, and soon the sun would be at the tops of their heads. "The day is young still!" Kekuaokalani called to his army. "Hold to your sacred purpose!" Many of the group began to pray.

When the royalists came around the bank they marched in a long column four soldiers wide. They came across the field like a snake, winding through the pockets of shrubbery, beating the earth with their feet in unison. They bore no war god, no image of belief to inspire them. What every man carried was a bag of powder and balls and a musket topped with a glinting blade. When they reached the lava flats, one of Kekuaokalani's musketeers lost his nerve and fired a shot.

"Wait!" Kekuaokalani shouted, but the loud clap startled his tense army, and they released a scattered volley which only brought down a few of the faraway royalists. Those who had been hit were immediately replaced in the column as the snake rushed on unhindered.

As the enemy came closer, Kekuaokalani's men began to sling their stones. As a hail of black rock flew across the field, the royalist column brought forward mats of thick coconut fiber and held them up against the barrage. The stones collided with them and

fell to the ground. When the royalists were within eighty paces, they fanned out into long lines two-deep, shoulders touching, many still holding their thick mats. Kekuaokalani's men continued their barrage as hundreds of muskets were leveled at their chests and the order given to fire. There were a thousand claps of thunder and all around the believers fell. Kekuaokalani's slinging arm was struck, pieces of his flesh and blood smattering the men behind him. He watched as Kūkā'ilimoku, fangs still smiling, was torn apart as if by an invisible hand, the priest holding him collapsing to the ground dead. A few of Kekuaokalani's warriors charged forward, throwing their spears and slings and baring their wooden clubs and knives, but they were soon cut down by a flash of metal or a burst of fire.

“Retreat behind the wall!” Kekuaokalani ordered.

There were shouts and a great scramble as the believers scuttled to the wall while the royalists reloaded. Kekuaokalani's heart beat fast in his ears as he helped Manono over and returned to support one of his warriors who had been shot in the leg. They ran together, Kekuaokalani all but carrying the warrior with his good arm, passing others of his army dragging friends or limping along slowly. Once the man was safely on the other side of the wall, Kekuaokalani spun around to aid the many stragglers. In that moment, he saw the royalist muskets again leveled. As the order was given to fire, Kekuaokalani leapt over the wall, landing on the other side as hundreds of shots slammed into the stones at his back. Those that had not made it over were now silent and still.

Manono rushed to her husband and wrapped a long strip of *kapa* over his arm to stop the bleeding. As soon as she finished, he jumped to his feet. “Reload your weapons

and prepare your slings!” he shouted, turning to see the royalists charging toward the wall, their blades out in front of them.

“Hold your fire until I command,” Kekuaokalani admonished. He waited until they were close enough for Kekuaokalani to see the sweat on their faces. “Now!”

The believers released a barrage of iron and stone, and many of the royalist line fell dead. Kekuaokalani threw a javelin with his good arm, catching a man in the stomach. Those soldiers who had reached the wall were beaten back with clubs and spears until they were forced to retreat. As Kekuaokalani considered a counter-charge, another royalist line advanced and let loose a volley of musket-fire. He barely had time to duck before the iron missiles went sailing over his head. The believers would have to stay behind the wall.

After they had recovered from their first failed attempt, the royalists made another charge and were again repelled. The two sides were now at a standoff, the royalists unable to finish off the army on the other side of the wall, and the believers unable to advance from behind their cover. As the morning turned to afternoon, Kekuaokalani limped up and down the wall, encouraging his people to keep their resolve. His skin felt cool and his vision began to go white.

A young *ali‘i* came running up to Kekuaokalani as he helped fight off another royalist charge. In the young chief’s hands were the battered remains of Kūkā‘ilimoku. The war god had been torn nearly in two, its face split diagonally across the eye and nose. Many of its teeth had fallen away and only one pearl eye remained, staring up at the high priest. As he stared back, the god’s feathers stood on end, fluttering in cool breeze that came up from the sea. Kekuaokalani thought back to the night he was driven from his

home in Kailua-Kona. As he looked at the god, a tiny yellow feather flew from its forehead and danced away toward the sea.

Kekuaokalani hobbled downhill as another volley of musket-fire struck the wall. One of the iron balls hissed past his head, ruffling his hair as it went. He came to where the wall ended abruptly at an ocean cliff. The water directly below him lunged and retreated, churning up and down, spitting foam, its waters white and aquamarine. The sun had now sunken across the great sky, and he looked out across the horizon, wondering where in all of Lono's great domain his *Makahiki* offering had landed.

As he mused, there appeared from behind the wall a squadron of double canoes bearing royal streamers. On their decks stood the *ali 'i* of Kailua-Kona, dressed in British uniforms underneath flowing *'ahu 'ula*. There was a crack of thunder louder than any musket shot, and the cliff exploded under Kekuaokalani's feet. He soared through the air and landed on his back, the pain of his leg disappearing. Over his head a volley of musket fire flew, piercing his warriors up along the wall. Kekuaokalani heard their screams from far, far away. He stared up at the sky as the pain began to quiet. His blood slowed, and as it slowed the world became full. He saw the figure of his dear wife, love in her face, and he felt glad for her presence. He saw a great shark circling through the waves of clouds, the sky darkening now to a deep blue. He felt the blasted remains of the war god melt away in his hands and in their place, he felt the strong grasp of his uncle pulling him safely back to shore.

Reflective Conclusion

Writing *Kekuaokalani* was one of the hardest things I've ever done, as evidenced by the many delays in its creation. I had no idea what I was doing much of the time and could not have predicted how exactly this process would play out because I'd never done this before. Nevertheless, I saw writing my thesis as a unique opportunity to strengthen and be strengthened by my cultural heritage through a recursive process of cultural ingestion and expression, and to that end I worked through my doubts and inadequacies and wrote something I'm proud of.

Fortunately, the reward was more than equal to the price. *Kekuaokalani* is not perfect by any means, but I do think it has exciting potential.

Moving forward, I would like to experiment with adding novelizations of Liholiho's and Ka'ahumanu's experiences to *Kekuaokalani*'s narrative. Combined, I think all three novellas would make an interesting novel that would offer the most in-depth and balanced narrative exploration of the Hawaiian Iconoclasm. My plan is to work at this over the next several years.

According to Kanaka Maoli writer Kau'i Goodhue, "Hawaiians say 'haweo' to refer to a glow of light that makes things visible. It is in the light of knowledge that the darkness and confusion of the past ... are now being destroyed and the heroic deeds of our ancestors are being revealed. The responsibility is now ours to carry on where they left off. From resistance to affirmation, we are who we were" (Ku'Ualoha 90). This is a responsibility that I feel, and that made this project for me more than just an honors thesis. I sometimes wonder if the gradual disappearance of the Hawaiian blood with each successive generation in my family won't prove analogous to the historical decimation by

famine and disease of my ancestors. Or perhaps there is a possibility that I've been able to capture a unique Hawaiian spirit in my novel that can persist in my progeny when my children and their children no longer bear any resemblance to my grandfather.

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Appendix A: Glossary of Significant Cultural/Historical Elements

This is a supplementary list of historical/cultural elements from the story which may be of some interest. It is by no means exhaustive.

Ahupua'a: Traditional socioeconomic, geologic, and climatic subdivision of land. Each *ahupua'a* usually ran from the mountain to the sea.

Alae omen: The cry of the *alae*, the Hawaiian gallinule, at night was an unlucky omen which foretold death.

Fish hooks: According to the *kapu* system, fish hooks must be lashed in total silence.

Governmental "body:" The administrative structure of Hawai'i was viewed like a body, the high chief as the head, the *ali'i* as chest, the *kahuna nui* as the right hand, the chief counselor as the left hand, warriors as the right foot, and farmers and fishermen as the left foot.

Gut: According to the Hawaiian worldview, the bowels were the center of being, similar to how the Western perspective views the heart and/or the mind as the center of a man's consciousness.

Haole: Term for white person. Comes from the observation that when foreigners first came to Hawai'i they did not participate in the usual greeting ceremony or *ha*, wherein two people would touch foreheads and noses and literally share the breath with one another. Hawaiians believed that the *haoles* were without (*ole*) breath (*ha*).

Hawaiian structures: Likely due to the development of the *kapu* system, Hawaiians developed a complex village system which consisted of several structures each with a different purpose. For example the *heiau* (temple, the source of a village's *mana*), *hale ali'i* (house of the chief), *hale mua* (men's eating house), *hale wa'a* (canoe house), *hala noho* (living/sleeping house), *hale pe'a* (menstruation house).

Heiau prior to the iconoclasm: Before they were destroyed, there were believed to be hundreds, if not thousands of temples across Hawai'i.

Ho'olana: "To float—float away." A method of Hawaiian griefwork where a grieving person traveled to another district or island to detach themselves from the dead. Other responses to grief included sharing of memories of the deceased. Hawaiians are also notorious for seeing visions of their dead loved ones.

Ho'oponopono: "Correction." Hawaiian practice of reconciliation and forgiveness

Kahekili II: High chief of Maui who managed to unify the island chain from Kaua'i to Maui before his death in 1794. He was one of Kamehameha's principal adversaries, though some believe he was Kamehameha's biological father. Kahekili was named after Kānehekili, the Hawaiian god of thunder. Because Kānehekili was believed to be black on one side, Kahekili tattooed half of his body from head to foot.

Kahuna nui: “High priest.” Each chiefly unit had its own high priest. When the kingdom was consolidated, Kamehakeha’s *kahuna nui* essentially became the high chief over all Hawai‘i.

Kalo/taro: The single most important plant in Hawaiian culture. It was used to make poi, and the cut raw rootstock could also be rubbed on wounds to stop bleeding. The cut raw petiole was also used to relieve pain and prevent swelling.

Kaona: “Hidden meaning.” It is a unique aspect of Hawaiian rhetoric meant to conceal a deeper meaning or reference within a composition. Oftentimes these references were sexual.

Kaumaha: “Grief, sorrow.” The original meaning of the word “kaumaha” was weight or heavy weight. The idea is that, according to the Hawaiian worldview, grief is like a heavy weight that, when set down is followed by relief.

Kōnane: ancient Hawaiian strategy game similar to checkers played on large carved rock with white coral and black lava rock pieces.

Kūkā‘ilimoku inheritance: Kamehameha inherited Kūkā‘ilimoku from the high chief Kalani‘ōpu‘u upon the latter’s death. Kalani‘ōpu‘u’s son Kiwala‘ō, who was of a higher chiefly rank than Kamehameha, succeeded his father as high chief. Kiwala‘ō was said to have been a weak ruler, and was later overthrown by Kamehameha. Many generations before this, the high chief Liloa had bequeathed Kūkā‘ilimoku on his son Umi, of a lesser genealogy, while giving the government to his more genealogically legitimate son Hakau, Umi would later overthrow Hakau and become one of the most famous and beloved chiefs of Hawai‘i.

Kuleana: “Responsibility.” A uniquely Hawaiian value and practice which refers to a reciprocal relationship between the person who is responsible, and the thing which they are responsible for.

Kumulipo: Hawaiian creation chant which depicts the universe as moving from a state of disorder to order and which includes a genealogy of the Hawaiian royalty.

Leina: Meaning “the leap of the gods.” A leina was a place on each island where the spirits of the dead would jump into the next world.

Mālama pono: Often translated as “take care” or something similar. “Mālama” means to take care of, care for, protect, beware, preserve, maintain, support, and serve. “Pono” means righteous, upright, proper, good/well, correct, careful, moral, just, etc.

Manō: “shark”

Mele inoa: A name chant recited at greeting ceremonies. Kekuaokalani’s *mele inoa* is adapted from the famous *mele inoa* of King David Kalākaua. Other chants in *Kekuaokalani* include a grief chant, a casting off chant, a *Makahiki* chant, and *luakini* chant, all of which were adapted from other sources.

Mōhai kanaka: “Human sacrifice.” There is some debate about who the candidate for a human sacrifice could be. Most believe that this person was usually a criminal already condemned to death, though there are some that claim this is an apologist viewpoint and that those chosen for human sacrifice generally needed to be innocent.

Palahi: Soft rot plant disease.

Reciprocity: Usually a practice applied to gift-giving wherein the acceptance of a gift obliges the recipient to reciprocate. Alternatively, reciprocity also required the return of any injury, which created an “eye for an eye” dynamic in Hawai‘i.

Wahine: “Woman”

Appendix B: Historical Timeline

1736/1740—Kamehameha is born
1778—Captain Cook arrives in Hawai‘i
February 1779—Captain Cook is killed at Kealahou Bay
1759—Maui is consolidated under a single chief
1783—Kahekili, chief of Maui, conquers Oahu
1786—Kamehameha conquers Maui
1786—Arrival of Portlock and Dixon
1786—First contact by the French.
1790—Olowalu Massacre
1791—Kahekili and Kaeo retake Maui from Kamehameha
1791—Kekuaokalani is born (no official record)
1791—Pu‘ukoholā *heiau* built
1792—Captain Vancouver arrives 1st time
1792—Kamehameha conquers the island chain from Hawai‘i to O‘ahu
1793—Vancouver returns
1804-1805—*Oku‘u*, “Hawai‘i’s greatest epidemic,” breaks out
1810—Kaumuali‘i of Kaua‘i peacefully becomes vassal of Kamehameha
1811—Kamehameha moves his court from Honolulu to Kailua-Kona
1817—Russian insurrection and attempted colonization.
May 1819—Kamehameha dies
Aug 1819—Kalanimoku is the first Hawaiian to receive Christian baptism
Nov 1819—*Kapu* system is broken by Liholiho and Ka‘ahumanu
Nov 1819 – Feb 1820—Kekuaokalani’s rebellion
Nov 1819 – Feb 1820—Second, smaller rebellion in Waimea
Dec 1819/Feb 1820—First Christian mission arrives

Dates are based on those found in Fornander’s *An Account of the Polynesian Race, its Origin and Migrations*.

Appendix C: Brief Note on Pronunciation

The Hawaiian language was not given a written form until after the arrival of the Christian missionaries in 1820. When it was created, the aim was to make it easy for foreigners, particularly English speakers, to learn. There are few exceptions to pronunciations rules, as the alphabet was developed to have only one symbol for each sound. Here is a brief guide to aid in reading and pronouncing the Hawaiian names and words in Kekuaokalani

‘Okina (‘)

The ‘okina is a glottal stop. Example: *Ali‘i*, the word for chief, is said “ah-lee-ee.”

Kahako

The kahako is a macron, which lengthens and adds stress to a marked vowel.

Vowels

- a makes a short “ah” as in “above”
- e makes an “eh” sound as in “let”
- i makes an “e” sound as in “easy”
- makes a short “oh” sound as in “pole”
- u makes an “oo” sound like the oo in “moo”

Consonants

All consonants (with the exception of w in some cases) are the same as in English.

Hawaiian W

In some cases, the Hawaiian “w” makes a “v” sound. Example: Hawai‘i, is often pronounced “Ha-vai-ee.”