

ENCHANTED, the powerful sequel to NIGHT PEOPLE, concludes the life-changing search for love, happiness, and fame in the chaotic West Coast of the 1960s in *Things We Lost in the Night*

ENCHANTED

THINGS WE LOST
IN THE NIGHT
BOOK 2

A MEMOIR OF LOVE AND MUSIC
IN THE 60s WITH
STARK NAKED
AND THE CAR THIEVES

LARRY J. DUNLAP

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF NIGHT PEOPLE



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Stark Naked and the Car Thieves

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Author of Amazon Best Seller in Biographies of Pop Artists
NIGHT PEOPLE



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Publisher's Note: The author has attempted to recreate events, locales, and conversations from his memories of them. In certain places, time has been compressed to fit the years this book covers. Interactions between the author and friends, band members, acquaintances, family members, celebrities, and others in this book, etc., are as true as the author's memory recollects. Liberties have been taken with dialogue, as remembering word-for-word what was said fifty-plus years ago is impossible. But the actual events and connections that instigated the dialogue happened, and the conversations convey the truth as the author recalls it. In a very few instances, not material to the story, the author may have changed the names of individuals and places in order to maintain their anonymity. In times of rapid change, however, ensuring all information provided is entirely accurate and up-to-date at all times is not always possible. Therefore, the author and publisher accept no responsibility for inaccuracies or omissions, and specifically disclaim any liability, loss, or risk, personal, professional, or otherwise, which may be incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the information provided in this book.

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STARK NAKED AND THE CAR THIEVES

Photo taken before leaving for Hawaii 1968
Top: Dave Dunn, Leonard Souza, Mickey Borden
Bottom: Mac Brown, Larry Dunlap, Les Silvey

ALSO BY LARRY J. DUNLAP

NIGHT PEOPLE, Book 1 of Things We Lost in the Night, A Memoir of Love and Music in the 60s with Stark Naked and the Car Thieves

Dedicated to my sister
CHERYL MARIE GENTRY
always the smartest one

MY CHILDREN &
my band brothers
DAVID DUNN, MACARTHUR J. BROWN, and LES SILVEY
including Joan Brown & the members of
The Aristocats, The Reflections, The Checkmates,
and
Stark Naked and the Car Thieves

in memoriam
SHERI (SCHRUHL) MOLINE-RILEY
1952 - 2016

Always and especially, my one true thing
LAURIE

Write like you're clinging to the edge of a cliff, white knuckles, on your last breath, and you've got just one last thing to say, like you're a bird flying over us and you can see everything, and please, for God's sake, tell us something that will save us from ourselves. Take a deep breath and tell us your deepest, darkest secret, so we can wipe our brow and know that we're not alone.

— Alan W. Watts

INTRODUCTION

*For information about how this memoir is constructed and the style choices, including—and especially—using quote marks for conversations that happened fifty or more years ago, please refer to the preface of the first book, *Night People*. The same explanation pertains here.*

In August of 2011 I began working on this story of four young men from the Midwest setting out for California in 1965 in an implausible attempt to reinvent themselves as a rock and roll band. It was meant to be a simple written account for friends and family members who hadn't known of our accomplishments as singers, entertainers and musicians in the six years that followed. Our struggles and successes in that era of cultural and historical change had bonded us as close as brothers.

We'd remained in close contact over the 40 plus years since, often reminiscing about our times together, which gave me a good foundation of tales and sketches to work with. In stitching these together with my memories, I was surprised to find that our experience had been much more unique and interesting than even we had realized. I wanted to complete the narrative; I'd begun to wonder if it might be of interest to a wider audience.

While my bandmates and I generally remembered the broader aspects of our story similarly, the devil was in the details. We could not always agree on them. I couldn't relate events other than the way I remembered them, but I realized that if I continued the way I'd planned the implication would be my bandmates agreed with everything I wrote. The solution was for me to tell the band's story *through my eyes*, from my point of view – in other words – a memoir. Memoir is generally accepted as an author's feelings and opinions based on their own memories of an event, or events, over a specific period of time. With that in mind, coupled with what my friends and I remembered in accord, and as much established fact as I could find, I filled seven loose-leaf notebooks, a file drawer, and several gigabytes of computer memory with research.

The longer I worked on the story and improved as a creative writer, the more I appreciated the value of a personal view. Readers would easier relate to the story if I could capably describe the emotions and experiences as I felt them in the story. But there was something I hadn't considered when I began this venture. Authenticity would require me to reveal my personal feelings. I would have to expose my own failures, losses, and poor decisions. The most traumatic events in my life had taken place in my last months in the band. Since then, I'd done my best to push them away into a hidden corner of my mind. I would need to exhume and expose my deepest feelings and, no matter how confused and conflicted I'd been, answer for the questionable actions I'd taken and mistakes I'd made, some of them intensely embarrassing. Because they are as central to the band's story as they are to mine.

In that long and torturous remembering I have come to realize the story has changed again; to what it had always been from the beginning — A LOVE STORY.

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PART I



*If you intend to write as truthfully as you can, your days
as a member of polite society are numbered, anyway.*

—STEPHEN KING

MARIE (Prologue)

One day I will find the right words and they will be simple

—Jack Kerouac

March 25, 1968

North Hollywood, California

I DIDN'T SAY GOODBYE. I shouldered a carry-on bag, and half-carried, half-dragged one of the two cheap pressed-board J.C. Penney trunks I kept everything in, out to the car. Marie had offered to keep the other one for me even though I'd insisted I wouldn't be back. We'd had this conversation before, and I hadn't been able to make it stick, maybe she was counting on that. There were only a few disintegrating paperbacks, some old clothes, used-up toiletries and other odd items in it. It was an easy sacrifice if believing I might return for them made it easier for her.

She'd been my confidant, friend, and part-time lover for the best part of three years. I'd met her after a grant of divorce decree I'd never wanted, arrived from my soon-to-be ex-wife in Indianapolis. Marie's affection and avid love-making had soothed my scorched emotions then. And our continued intimacies had helped blanket the complex stew of emotions left over from the loss of my first love and our two little boys.

I'd slipped into a passionate attachment to Marie, perhaps even a dependency until the disparity between our deeper feelings became awkwardly apparent. I couldn't commit to a long-term exclusive relationship with her or anyone, and told

her so. At first, she'd walked away, but then she'd accepted that when we were together, we were together, and when we weren't—there might be others.

As our musical and performance skills improved and our popularity grew in the East Bay, we signed a year-long contract at the Galaxie in San Francisco's North Beach. She never came to the City to see us, content to spend my off-nights with me in my Berkeley apartment.

I assumed our relationship would fade naturally when the band's fortunes took us south to Hollywood and Las Vegas. Instead, her visits lasted weeks, and sometimes months. She never expressed unhappiness about our circumstances, but I was never unaware of what she wanted.

We couldn't continue this way; I knew that, but I hadn't found a way to break it off. She fit perfectly into the band's little society; the wives loved and approved of her, she was comfortable to be with and our intimacy easy and satisfying—I couldn't bring myself to end it.

A couple of months ago I was driving home in a cannabis-induced melancholic fog from the nightclub where we were playing. I was immersed in one of my favorite eight-track's, *The Mamas & the Papas* second album. This time, John Phillips' *I Saw Her Again Last Night*, struck home and brought me to tears. His desperate and guilty voice singing about a guy seeing a girl he knew he shouldn't, forced me to see my own selfishness, and revealed the insecurity and loneliness I feared without Marie. I couldn't hide from it anymore; I had to let her find someone who could give her what I could not.

After our recent appearance in Las Vegas the time arrived. I'd gotten too attached to an English showgirl from the Lido show at the Stardust whose visa was about to run out. Things had nearly gone too far. I couldn't reconcile my actions with who I thought I was. We'd be leaving for Hawaii soon, two months in Honolulu followed by a month in Indianapolis. It should be long enough to deaden the ache of separation for both of us.

Before I could tell her, Marie brought me her own news: she'd moved from Northern California to an apartment in the San Fernando Valley near the Rag Doll, our home club in LA. She wanted me to consider it home.

Despite tears and incandescent sex, my resolve didn't break, though I'd let it get severely bent. She realized I was serious this time; I meant this to be the end.

She asked me to stay in her apartment with her until I left for Honolulu. It felt like an adult way to bring our relationship to a close, and I agreed. With the amount of fanfare our upcoming record release, *Look Back In Love*, was receiving, the band was busy during the days with meetings, photo shoots, and PR interviews. But in the nights, Marie and I took refuge in usually tender, and sometimes frenzied, lovemaking. And sometimes, in wrapping ourselves in bittersweet nostalgia. Her final request was simple: “Don’t say goodbye. When you have to go, just go. Please. Make it seem like it’s just another day.”

1 THE LEMON TREE

*We live in a world where lemonade is made from artificial flavoring and
furniture polish is made from real lemons.*

—Alfred Newman, MAD Magazine

*March 25, 1968
Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii*

THE NONDESCRIBT NIGHTCLUB tucked into the Diamond Head edge of Waikiki—where Liliuokalani Avenue T-boned Kalakaua at the ocean—was not impressive. But inside the Lemon Tree’s street-side lanai, the late afternoon view oozed with tropical ambiance. Curious breezes frisked past me, anxious to explore the corners and crannies of the building’s single-story interior. Across the street, beyond Kalakaua’s flowing traffic, lazy waves rolled and broke onto a white sand beach. Flowering bushes undulated, and coconut palms soared into a crystal azure sky. I resisted an urge to call Marie and describe the incredible moving picture postcard in front of me. Kuhio Beach’s tingling promise of imminent adventure crept into my consciousness. It made up for many missing amenities.

Earlier, Stan Alapa and his girlfriend, Shirley, who owned the Lemon Tree, welcomed us at the Honolulu Airport. A ukulele band played the aloha song while grass-skirted girls draped us with leis and hugs. We loaded our luggage into a passenger van with help from our new employers. Two jumbo-sized young men, whom the normal-sized Stan claimed were his brothers, filled a matching panel van with our equipment. We were driven to the far side of Honolulu and left off

in front of a ramshackle pile of rooms whimsically named the Surfboard Hotel. Though it seemed likely that a strong wind would blow it away to the other side of the island, it was expected to be our home for the next nine weeks. In its defense, it offered a convenient exit across a narrow alleyway into the nightclub's back door and easy access to the beach. And I appreciated the privacy of individual rooms for each of us. Despite its lack of charm, something about it seemed right for an island adventure. Not all my band brothers agreed.

"This place is a fucking dump," Dave, our lead singer spat out. "No way am I staying here." His luggage lay tumbled at his feet in the cramped lobby. The rest of us had been stashing our bags in our rooms and, at our employers' suggestion, changing into casual beachwear for a welcoming lunch next door.

"What's got your shorts in a bunch, bro?" Mac Brown asked, concern in his gravelly voice. Mac handled our emcee duties and sang lead on our R&B tunes. He flicked a cigarette butt out the door across two narrow steps to the sidewalk.

Les Silvey stalked in, a grimace etched on his deceptively innocent face. Our new bass player, Mickey Borden, followed him. They were both in shorts and tees. I hoped Mickey would work out better than the last two bass players I'd had to contend with, but—so far, so good.

"No TV," Les said, his frown deepening. "This place is a real pit."

"Not even room phones," Mickey added.

Both stood about six-feet-tall, but Les, our guitar player, was dark haired and could have been a male model while Mickey's physique seemed carved out of oak and his pale blond hair hung in a loose Prince Valiant cut.

"Television?" Leonard twisted his rubbery features into a puzzled grin. "You guys are going to sit here watching TV? Look at this place; we're in frickin' heaven."

"Sure, pretty easy for you to say." Les rested his guitar case on a chair arm. "You know people here. You're not staying in this rat's nest with the rest of us."

Leonard Souza did know people here. Before we'd found him drumming behind a topless snake-dancer at Big Al's in North Beach, he'd been stationed here in the Navy for two years. Oahu was a second home to him, and he already looked the part in his flip-flops, swimsuit, and an open Hawaiian shirt. He, his wife, and little Lenny would be staying with local friends for the duration.

“Now wait a minute, you guys. Just hold on.” I waved everyone quiet and glanced at Dave. “Tell us man, what’s bugging you?”

“Bugging me?” he fumed, eyes bulging. “Holy Mother of God! There’s a cockroach the size of a German Shepherd up there—that’s what’s bugging me. I could’ve saddled the damn thing and rode it around the room. Roaches!” Dave glared at us as we struggled to hide our grins. “Roaches and rats, two of God’s creatures I cannot abide. You guys stay if you want, but I’m not spending a single night here. The Surfboard Hotel, what a joke! This place can kiss my rosy red asshole adios.”

Mac scratched at the stubble his face had sprouted between jobs. “So, what you gonna do, man? Rooms are pretty fuckin basic, give you that, but they are what comes with the gig.” His soft drawl spoke of a rugged adolescence growing up in the OTR, Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine, neighborhood. He told me he’d learned to run like the wind; as the only white kid in an all-black high school, he’d had to sprint to and from classes every day. At least, he’d added with a grin, until he’d joined one of the street-corner singing groups around Washington Park.

“Guy at the counter says there are apartments for rent a few blocks from here. He calls it the “jungle,” but I’d rather pay for a place there than stay in this infested shit-hole. Gotta leave my stuff somewhere while I go check it out. And,” Dave’s frustration turned into a challenging glower. “Anybody got a problem with that?”

“Come on, bub,” Mac said, easing him around. He hefted one of Dave’s suitcases. “We’ll drop ‘em in my room. I can handle the sound check. You go on; find yourself a place; that’s what you wanna do.”

We might have preferred playing at one of the flashy, luxurious Waikiki nightspots like the Outrigger or in the International Marketplace nearer Honolulu’s famous tourist beaches, but we’d survived too many rough times over the last three years to let it bother us. With a name like Stark Naked and the Car Thieves, it wouldn’t be the first time we’d had to prove ourselves. Anyway, *Look Back In Love* would be out any day now. *Billboard Magazine* had picked it to jump high on its Hot 100 chart. Our producer, personal managers, booking agent, even the president of Bell Records assured us we had a smash hit on our hands.

At the club, we witnessed a courtesy no other engagement had extended. Our equipment was being manhandled to the stage by Stan Alapa's two humongous brothers, who we'd learned, were Samoan *hanai* brothers—*hanai* being a kind of an informal adoption between local families. A third, slightly smaller *hanai* brother, Dewey, had spread an assortment of local delicacies on a bar looking over the incredible beach across the street. I skipped the raw fish dishes, sticking with fruit, rice, Portuguese sweet bread, and cooked meat on a stick. As the band's leader, I felt an obligation to keep up with the conversation, but I found myself insistently drawn to the murmuring rumble and crack of the surf across the street. I'd discovered the Pacific Ocean's calming influence over me at San Francisco's Half Moon Bay. Despite the spectacular setting, or maybe because of it, a sense of rootlessness rolled over me. I drifted to the stage to release my Hammond B3 organ from its shipping crate.

Dave was back in time for our final sound check. His temper could boil up quickly but, as I'd known since we'd become best friends singing together in high school, it cooled as fast. That evening, with Dave and Leonard sheltered elsewhere, the rest of us settled into our modest accommodations in the Surfboard Hotel. I could hardly wait for the next day to begin

2 ISLAND GIRL

I'm hungry for a juicy life. I lean out my window at night and I can taste it out there, just waiting for me.

—Brigid Lowry, “Guitar Highway Rose”

*March 26, 1968
Honolulu, Hawaii*

I PUSHED THROUGH the hotel’s back door, across the narrow alley, to emerge next to the Lemon Tree’s stage an hour early Tuesday night. Several tables already held customers. I’d been unimpressed by the simplicity of the club, but it probably meant the Lemon Tree was a hangout for the locals living around here. It certainly wasn’t a tourist trap like the fancy resorts on the other end of Waikiki. And, as we’d learned in Las Vegas, there were advantages to playing for the locals. Our audience, if they liked us, would welcome us into their island culture, something I looked forward to.

The nightclub, larger than it appeared from outside, was a plain rectangular box, open on one of the short ends to the street-side lanai on Kalakaua and the beach beyond. The front wall, made of folding panels, could be closed when necessary. The bar was located in front so it could serve the lanai when the wall was open, as well as the room. On the opposite wall was our stage. It was large but nothing fancy. It stood high enough for us to easily see over the dance floor no matter how crowded it became. Along both of the long sides, two rows of wooden columns, set about six feet in from the walls, supported the roof.

The place was nearly full before we took the stage. Though there were plenty of locals, as expected, I was surprised to see just as many blue, green, brown, tan, and several shades of camo, military uniforms. Hawaii was one of the main R&R, Rest & Relaxation, destinations for service men and women serving in Vietnam. The local residents welcomed us wholeheartedly but our music, our very presence, meant more to the soldiers, sailors, and airmen than just a night-long party.

Some drank with a steady precision meant to suppress grim memories and anxiety; they weren't here for our show. But for most of these young warriors, far from home and fresh from the terror and horror of life-and-death struggle, the songs we played made an indelible impression. Every tune stirred vivid memories, if only for a moment, of home, families, friends, lovers, and spouses for them.

By the beginning of our first weekend, we'd become more attuned to the heightened emotions at the Lemon Tree. We'd played in San Francisco East Bay clubs where tensions ran high between Hell's Angels and Mexican locals. This was a different kind of stress brought on by a sense of imminent life-threatening danger. Here, in Honolulu, the war in Vietnam was in-your-face real, not a mainland protest movement you could go home from afterward.

The war's violence was at a fever pitch when we arrived. American forces had been pouring into Schofield Barracks, Hickam Air Force Base, and the Marine base near Mokapu in response to the surprise North Vietnamese Tet offensive two months earlier. It wasn't the peaceful island getaway the incongruous ukulele music and charming flower necklaces at the airport had implied.

After our second set, I surveyed the noisy, jammed to the rafters room, looking for a spot to relax. We'd closed with Otis Redding's rollicking R&B rocker *Can't Turn You Loose*, and the room buzzed in response. In the back, out toward the lanai, I caught a glimpse of someone, a girl, tossing back long, luscious, dark hair in the jam-packed room. Curious, I jumped down from the stage for a better view.

I'd hoped to meet someone here who would help ease my jittery feelings from ending things with Marie. I'd shared so many experiences with her; she'd brought me into the warmth of her family's home in the Decoto barrio near where we'd played in Hayward. She'd helped me develop a taste for her culture's spicy food; we'd feasted on lobster fresh from the ocean in San Francisco—she'd rolled my first joint. Our drawn-out goodbye had been an emotional drain on both of us.

But I'd decided before leaving LA; I wouldn't take the chance of developing a long-term relationship again. It was unreasonable to expect them to work. We lived like nomads, rarely in a town more than a few weeks. I hadn't meant to hurt her and didn't want it to happen again.

On the other hand, and despite appearances, my instincts were monogamous—at least as much as circumstances permitted. From now on I would look for one compatible girlfriend, someone who'd enjoy a straightforward, companionable, and if the vibes were right, physical relationship, for as long as we were wherever we were playing. No expectations beyond that. If I couldn't find anyone, the search would probably still be fun—and the next city only a few weeks away. I would avoid attachments, I promised myself, keep things simple and fun.

I worked my way through smoky and crowded tables for a closer look at whoever owned that sumptuous tossed hair. Walking through the mass of boisterous soldiers here had taken some getting used to. Grinning servicemen jumped to their feet to shake my hand or pound me on the shoulder. I smiled, shook hands, listened to their names, and sometimes shared a hug as I progressed, until . . . my breath caught. I saw her laughing and talking with a girlfriend. I'd hoped she might be attractive, but she was way beyond that. She was an exotic heart-stopping beauty.

Jesus, God in heaven. What should I do? Guys would be all over a girl like her. She's already got somebody in her life; she has to have. She might even be married. Damn it! I hated getting rejected and willed myself to walk away—but I didn't. What if, in a million to one chance, she wasn't? How many times has a sixth sense told you in a glance you've seen someone special, and you failed to get up the nerve to say something? You pass each other without a word and the moment is gone forever. You never get over wondering, what might have happened.

If I walked away now, it would be like that. I wouldn't try later, and I'd hate myself forever. *But she's probably out of my league. She'll take one look and—* Don't think, keep moving. *So what, if it was only a slim chance? What was there to lose? I was just looking for someone to be with while we were in Hawaii. And if this was her, every second lost, I risked losing out to some other guy, even—* heaven help me—*one of my band buddies. Well, in fairness, only a couple of them.* We did have a pact—more guidelines really—going back to our earliest days. As

the leader of the group, I'd insisted we set rules so clashes over girls wouldn't affect the band. If one of us showed interest in a girl, and if she responded, the others would steer clear. So far, it had worked.

But wait, this is wrong. I don't walk-up on a girl without at least an inviting smile. Meeting someone is always more natural. She usually knows somebody where we're working, and I get introduced—that's happened. Or maybe she's a girlfriend of a girl going out with one of the other guys or, sometimes—sometimes a girl has asked to meet me. Whatever I don't. . . I stopped. Here I was, standing like an idiot in front of her table.

She was focused on the crowd behind her as though searching for someone. Her sleeveless teal dress, garnished with large orchid blossoms and bamboo shoots, harmonized perfectly with her golden shoulders and slender arms. My heart slid south, my throat dry as the Mojave Desert.

"Uhhh," I finally croaked out. "Hi. Would you guys be okay with me buying you drinks?"

The cute, smaller girl eyed me suspiciously for a moment. "Guess if you buyin', I take one virgin Piña Colada. I'm Charlene." She turned to the one I wanted to meet, who either hadn't noticed me or, more likely, was ignoring me. "Theresa girl, what kind drink you like?"

Theresa. What an elegant name! It moved effortlessly through my consciousness. Okay, quit it! Just hold on. She's gorgeous, sure—on the outside. She might be mean as a water moccasin, or brainlessly silly, like lights-on-but-no-one's-ever-coming-to-the-door, silly.

"I'm just having Seven-Up." Her voice was low and rich. No matter what happened, I would never forget it. Her huge, wide-set eyes flickered up from under her lids for a moment before flicking off into the crowd again, scanning for someone, anyone probably, who wasn't me. *Oh God, she's truly stunning. . . and she doesn't sound silly. . . Verdict's still out on mean, though.*

I gave the waitress our order, adding a Coke for me.

"Would you mind if I sit with you?" The girls glanced at each other and Theresa shrugged with indifference.

"You're in the band, aren't you?" she accused when I was seated. I was forced to admit it. With a wry twist of her full lips, she dismissed me again, gazing away

uninterested. *Well, no more than I'd expected. As soon as the drinks arrive, I'll make some lame excuse and slink away.*

"I've only been here a few days," I said, needing to fill the awkward pause while we waited. "It was weird, you know, getting off the plane. Had this weird feeling between footsteps. Lifted a foot, and before I could get it down, it was like walking in invisible quicksand."

"You stay island time now," Charlene diagnosed with an emphatic nod. I worried Theresa might get a crick in her neck; she looked away from me so purposefully.

"We've been playing in California and Las Vegas for the last few years. Thought those places were exotic. But this, being here is unreal, almost more than I can get my head around." I glanced toward the dark beach, moonlight rippling over the water less than a football field away. "I mean, look at that incredible beach over there. I hang out there as much as I can since we got here. Have to be careful, I sunburn easily. What's so surprising though, there's almost never anyone there. Sometimes, I go over there at night on my breaks to get away. If I walk far enough along behind those bushes and the palms, the club and traffic noise disappears. I feel like I'm all alone, a million miles away. . ." My smile slipped as I realized how touristy I must sound.

"Good thing I don't moonburn, I guess."

Charlene gave me a dark gaze. "You go over der at night-time, you betta watch out fo dem flyin' cockaroaches. Dey giants, lot bigger den da reglar ones. Big enuff fo carry you away."

Theresa tried to suppress a giggle as she turned to watch me parse through Charlene's dire warning. At least I was entertaining her.

I glanced into her eyes. The centers of her liquid, chocolate pupils swallowed the light. Her tan face, flawless without makeup, maybe a touch of mascara, a hint of eyeliner—maybe, but maybe not—sent shivers tingling down my spine. I silently prayed to any deity paying attention to change her mind and let her like me.

The drinks appeared, and our waitress smiled and said *mahalo*. I reconsidered my inclination to leave and didn't.

"*Pupule haoles*," Charlene said, in a caustic, weary tone. I took a moment trying to make sense of that.

“What’s poo-poo-lay how-lees?”

Theresa hid another giggle behind a slender, cinnamon hand, but it couldn’t hide her generous mouth’s mischievous grin. “A *haole* is a white person.” Her sudden, wide smile revealed her true face, one made for laughter. “Charlene called you a crazy white person.” I couldn’t help but snicker; Charlene sounded like a three-year-old.

“Guess I do sound kinda nutty. You guys could help me fit in here, though, so I won’t sound so deranged.”

Theresa poked her friend. “What now girl, got no mo nothin’ rude fo say?” she taunted her.

Leonard banged a drum too soon. Much as I wanted to sit here entranced, I had to go play music. “Can I come back and talk to you in a few minutes?”

“We have to go,” Theresa said.

Charlene turned to her. “We go stay, little bit more, sistah?” she pleaded. Theresa shook her head vigorously.

“No sistah. Said we must go. Now.”

“Will you come back tomorrow, Saturday night?”

Charlene gazed at Theresa; when she said nothing, Charlene shrugged.

“Don’t know, *haole*. *Pēlā paha*, maybe. Aloha.”

Making my way back toward the stage, I realized I hadn’t even told her my name. I looked back, but they were gone.

3 THE BUS STOP BENCH

If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are.

—Wendell Berry

*March 30, 1968
Honolulu, Hawaii*

E **W**BEGAN WITH some of our more laid-back tunes Saturday night: *Get On Up*, a perky, little R&B dance number done in falsetto; *California Girls*, the Beach Boys' anthem that could have as easily been about Hawaiian girls; *The Way You Look Tonight*, us sounding so much like the Lettermen people had believed we were at Caesars Palace; and then *Comme Si Bella*, an Italian love song Frankie Valli recorded with the Romans before they became the Four Seasons. Our original vocal group in Indianapolis had learned this song's four-part harmony when we were in high school, and I still loved singing it. The title translates to something like "You Are So Beautiful," and for a moment, I thought of Pat, once my childhood sweetheart, now an estranged wife. I quickly put that thought away and wondered instead if the girl from last night would come in.

"Hey guys," Leonard stage-whispered, "we gotta get rockin'." These soldier-boys wanna boogie." Les nodded, and I retreated to the B3. I'd sung the first four songs up front with Dave, Mac, and Les. Dave was lean, and a little over six feet tall. Mac and I, at five-foot-eight, bookended him though Mac was skinny as a post and I was stocky. With Les, our poster boy on guitar at one end, and Mickey the Viking warrior on the other, I thought we made a pretty impressive front line. When we worked like this, it emphasized the four of us from the Midwest as the

vocal core of the group. But for the get-down R&B groove of the Soul Survivors' *Expressway to Your Heart*, we needed the funky sound of the B3. Leonard gave me just enough time to slide onto the bench and rip into the tune, adjusting drawbars and the rotation speed of the Leslie speakers on the fly. We flew through the rest of the set, but by the end, Theresa and her friend hadn't appeared.

Standing on stage with the lights low before the next set, Mac caught me searching cocktail tables filling below us. "Checkin for that smoking-hot babe you was with last night, ain't you? You expectin her to come in tonight?"

"Theresa." I surveyed the crowd. "Her name's Theresa. I'm not sure. Maybe. We sat together for a whole break. That might mean something."

"Saw 'em leavin right after, too. More like you scared 'em off, stalkin 'em the way you did." He laughed, teasing me. "You looked like me huntin on the last day of deer season."

"Yeah. You're probably right." I turned back, disappointed. "She. . . They're not coming back. I must have been too pushy."

"Nope. Guess you musta done all right," His eye had caught something over my shoulder. "She and her foxy little friend are pullin out chairs at a table right now."

I spotted them, settling in nearer to the stage tonight. I grinned at Mac. He smiled and gave me a little headshake. Leonard clicked his sticks, and we were off into our first tune. After we'd cooked through Stevie Wonder's *Uptight*, I sang the McCoys' *Hang On Sloopy*. After playing mainly dance numbers, we closed the set with *Here, There and Everywhere*, one of my favorite Beatles' tunes. We'd learned this magical song just before leaving for Hawaii. I thought the harmony Les, Dave, and I interweaved caught the wistful mood of Paul McCartney's unusual chord changes. His lyrics of how a man can become a better person when he makes the woman he cares for happy held a personal wish for me.

"Hi," I said to Theresa when I came to their table. "Glad you came in." She nodded and turned away. It seemed to be her way of hiding her feelings. Tonight, she wore a beige sundress imprinted with creamy-white hibiscus blossoms, umber bamboo branches, and viridian ferns that accentuated her amber skin. She'd slipped a small plastic watch halfway up her left forearm, and a thin silver ring circled her tanned pinky finger.

Charlene tossed her head in Theresa's direction. "I tink you only like us come back so you can talk wid her." Charlene was a petite, vivacious girl, but she was right. I couldn't take my eyes off Theresa or prevent a silly grin whenever our eyes met. Seeing my face redden, the teeniest of smiles escaped before she gazed away again.

By the time our drinks arrived, the three of us were laughing and teasing the way we had Friday night. All too soon I'd have to go back on stage.

"On my next break," I said, "would you guys like to sit out on the lanai? Might be quieter out there." The roaring crowd of mostly drunk servicemen was ferociously loud.

Charlene offered her own suggestion. "Maybe betta you two do that. I'm stay, make sure dis table no grow legs and walk away."

When I came back to their table, I extended my hand to Theresa, aware I'd be touching her for the first time. She didn't seem the slightest bit nervous when she rested her warm, slim-fingered hand in mine, though she seemed even more preoccupied in avoiding my eyes. She gently withdrew her hand as she stood, and I followed her out to the club's porch-like lanai. In flat, woven sandals, she was only a couple of inches shorter than me.

Not finding a table outside, we crossed Kalakaua at the corner to a bench where the bus stopped. We sat backward on the wooden plank, facing the ocean through an opening between two guarding palms. The river of vehicles behind us separated us from the nightclub as we listened to the lazy rumble of surf creaming against the shore. A breeze slipped by, fluttering strands of her hair, and setting off a sibilant hiss among fingerlings in the palm leaves above. The half-moon had slipped past its zenith. Despite the distant lights of Waikiki and Honolulu, a million stars jeweled the sky. *It's just another night sky to her*, I thought, wondering what I could say to connect with her.

After a few moments, I understood she was waiting, giving me a chance, and I was wasting the opportunity. I had to say something, regardless of what idiotic thing might come out.

"How long will you stay tonight?"

She glanced up from her hands clasped on her lap and smiled out toward the water.

“Why do you ask that?”

Small fluorescent combers rolled up the deserted shoreline before receding away into nothingness. I tried to think of some witty response. Witty can often come out of my mouth more like smartass so— I went with the simple truth.

“Because I’m being stupid, letting time slip away when our breaks are so short. Especially considering how much I hoped you’d come in tonight, so I’d get another chance to talk with you again. And,” I admitted, “it’s the first thing that popped into my head.”

She nodded as though I’d said something profound and paused for a long moment. “I can’t be late. I have to be home before two o’clock.”

“But you can stay until I’m off again, can’t you? I’d like more time with you. I mean, it would take a lot of pressure off trying to be charming in these short stretches.”

She glanced in my direction. “Why would you want to charm a local girl like me?” she said with a gentle, self-deprecating smile.

Without thinking, I answered her simple question with a deeper truth. “I could tell you how breathtaking I think you are; it would be easy because it’s so true. But if I understand what I think— what I hope— you’re asking, it’s because I think you could connect me to the beauty of this incredible place,” I gestured around us, “if you wanted to.

“This will sound weird, but when we travel to someplace for the first time, I’m not comfortable until I can get physically oriented. Sometimes I can do it by walking around outside, but usually, it takes getting in the car and driving around until I can locate myself in the world. I don’t think that’s gonna work here. But sitting here beside you, the way I am right now, I feel, in some small way, I can sense what it’s like to be here.”

Speaking unfiltered truth to someone I barely knew probably wasn’t the smartest idea. Even to me, it sounded a little strange, but I sincerely wanted to connect to the person I hoped to meet in this way. “So, no matter what happens, thanks for that.”

Theresa smiled, nodding as if making a decision. She shook her hair away from her eyes and gazed directly at me for the first time. Her eyes, bottomless umber

pools, searched mine before she turned away with a smile. “I would meet you here—on our bench—on your next break if you like.”

Back on stage, in the only sane spot left in the raving madhouse of fragmented noise and frantic movement that surrounded us, we worked through our setlist. In a rare and special moment during Spencer Davis’s *Gimme Some Lovin’* when Leonard pounded his drums without accompaniment, he found and set a relentless rhythm. Mickey pounced on it with a driving metronomic bass line. I jumped in, staccato rhythm chords reinforcing the groove and setting the stage for Les. His solo didn’t disappoint, shooting us off into a euphoric twenty-minute jailbreak jam. Les signaled me to solo a couple of times, and I danced my fingers across the keys giving it my best and wishing I’d practiced my scales more. The frantic pace fed our reeling warriors fervor to slam-dance across the floor.

Reading the crowd, we followed with *Louie, Louie* and then broke from the list, picking Wilson Pickett’s arrangement of *Land of a Thousand Dances*. We preferred Wilson Pickett’s quicker, funkier beat over The Headhunter’s original recording; this was the song we’d played in the Hayward dive bar days when things got rough at the Town Club. We tried to work ourselves into another wicked jam but somehow squandered the chance and never reached our previous plateau of musical unity. The drunk and disorderly were too far-gone to recognize nuance anyway, we consoled ourselves with knowing that we’d at least helped them dance away their cares for another night.

I clambered through the deafening racket, past the table where the girls had been—now crowded with marines who gave me toothy smiles, ooh-rahs, and hoppy beer breath. Out on the lanai, the extended crowd overflowed onto the sidewalk, where some stayed erect by hanging onto the lanai’s wrought iron railings. Across the street, Theresa waited at the bus stop bench for me.

“Getting pretty rowdy,” I said, walking up, fascinated by how perfectly she fit the moonlit backdrop behind her. “I’m a little concerned for you and Charlene.” We moved to the opposite side of the bench to sit.

“It’s okay. Shirley and Stan and Stan’s brother Dewey watch out for us here. Charlene is under their wing at the bar right now.”

“Much as I wish you would stay, I’m glad you’re leaving. I’d feel terrible if anything happened to you.”

Her face softened as she tried to read mine. “What color are your eyes? I thought they were green at first, but now they seem bluish-gray . . . with a gold ring around them.”

“Hazel. They change color sometimes. I think it depends on the light. My dad’s got a gray eye and a blue one that seems green sometimes; guess mine came out more like that one.”

She let me take one of her hands. The touch of her skin was electric. “Tell me something about you,” I asked. “Do you live around here? What’s your life like?”

She delicately retrieved her hand before she spoke. “It’s nothing exciting. I live on Ewa side of Pearl Harbor in Waipahu, near the sugar plantation, not around here. As for my life, I’m like most people here I guess. We go to the water, to the dances and parties, we surf—”

“You’re a surfer girl?” I imagined her in a bikini on a surfboard. “Do you surf on beaches like this one?” The palm trees above swayed in the moonlight of what I now considered to be our beach.

Her eyes widened as she grinned. “Oh, no. Kuhio Beach isn’t good for surfing. A breakwater across there”—she pointed northwest toward the lights— “makes sure the tourists in Waikiki don’t drown. I go to different beaches closer to my house, mostly at Tracks, near Nanakuli. The people are friendly there, and the surf is almost always good. You can choose breaks where the waves are not too dangerous.”

“Next time we sing *Surfer Girl*, I’ll be thinking of you.”

She smiled and turned away again.

“When will you be back? When will I see you again?”

Her brow furrowed. “I don’t know. Maybe next weekend. I don’t have a car. I can only come when Charlene brings me.”

“Can you give me your phone number? Could I call or meet you somewhere, so I’d have more than a few minutes at a time to get to know you? I don’t have a car either, but I’m sure I can find a way to come get you. I could take you out to lunch or something. You could show me around.”

She hesitated. “No, I can’t give you my number.” That didn’t sound promising. She saw my smile slip. “You can give me yours if you like. I could call you. Would that be okay?”

“Sure. That would be perfect.” I searched my suit’s pockets for the scrap of paper I’d gotten with my room key from our roach hotel. It had the name of the hotel printed on it so she could look up the number.

She took it from me and said, “I have to go now. And you must go play. I haven’t told you before, but I love your music. I love hearing you sing.” She ducked her head and skipped through traffic across Kalakaua. With a quick wave, she disappeared into the crowded lanai near the bar.

4 SANDY BEACH

I must not fear. Fear is the mind-killer. Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.

—Frank Herbert, *Dune*, Bene Gesserit Fear Litany

April 1, 1968
Sandy Beach, Hawaii

ABOUT TEN IN the morning on our first day off, Leonard wedged open my room's paint-cracked and poorly-fitted door. A hint of the ocean's aroma wafted in. "Hey man, you wanna go for a ride?"

My eyes drifted up from the pages of *The Carpetbaggers*, a novel I'd fallen asleep reading last night. I hadn't been awake long, but Leonard, hyperactive by nature, was always up and about before the rest of us. A startlingly wide grin cracked his mournful Portuguese face.

"You've got a car?" I perked up. "Where do you want to go?"

"You said you wanted to see the island. Everybody else seems more interested in sleeping." In a powder-blue aloha shirt, flowered surf shorts, and a puka-shell necklace setting off his dark skin, he looked like he'd lived in the islands all his life instead of just his Navy hitch.

The thought of the inviting tropical setting outside made my dingy little room seem even more dark and cramped. And getting to understand more about this tiny island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean would help me learn more about Theresa. "Damn right I do. Let's go."

Memorizing the page number, I tossed aside Harold Robbins's relentless trashing of movie stars and Hollywood for later. It was getting pretty racy. I laced myself into the hand-made board shorts I'd splurged on from a local Waikiki surf shop. The green, white, and yellow canvas suit was stiff and tight as a second skin, especially snug around the family jewels. I figured wearing my new shorts whenever possible would loosen things down there. I pulled on a red-and-white-striped tee and grabbed sunglasses; stepping into slaps, I was ready to ride.

Leonard waited outside at the curb behind the wheel of a pink 1956 Ford convertible he'd scored from his local friends. Enveloped in another unbelievable day, we drove north on Kalakaua toward Diamond Head, the volcanic landmark on this end of Oahu.

We rode on with the top down, the wind ruffling our hair, drenched in sunlight and warmth. Leonard found a road that took us to a highway around the southern edge of Diamond Head where amazing shoreline vistas flew by my side of the car. I could have ridden like this all day. As we skirted along the ocean, Leonard pointed to the right. "Hanauma Bay. We gotta go snorkeling there while we're here. The guys will love it."

"Snorkeling? Like scuba diving?"

"No, a snorkel is a simple tube thing to breathe through while your head is under water. Scuba takes oxygen tanks, and you have to be certified. Navy trained me in scuba diving as part of my lifeguard training here. But snorkeling is better for Hanauma Bay. It's shallow, and underwater, behind the reef, it's clear as glass; there's no surf to whip up all the sand and junk."

A few minutes later, I stared at massive swells pounding against the beaches below. We'd passed Blowhole a few minutes ago, where Leonard had pointed out how the heavy surf drove into a lava-rock vent and forced ocean water up in a vertical shower. The waves seemed even higher here.

"God, this is dramatic," I said. Just past a sign reading Sandy Beach Park, a rugged dirt track angled off to parallel the beach. "Can we drive by the shore? I can't believe how cool this is."

We bumped along, staring at immense waves cresting white as they lifted, pausing at their peak, before thundering across the empty beach. Only a few cars were parked in the rough swaths cut into the shoreline brush. Leonard maneuvered

into an open spot a few feet from the beach where waves rode in like a herd of gigantic sea animals stampeding out of the ocean.

“God in heaven, will you look at that? I never imagined seeing anything like this.” As the waves roared in, foamy water retreating from the shore forced them into towering, crackling, translucent walls before gravity forced them to disintegrate. Lacy streamers of spindrift lingered behind the collapsing surge. I opened the door. “Let’s get closer.”

Leonard attempted to appear complacent, but I could tell he was impressed. “Those monsters are fifteen, sixteen feet high, maybe more.”

“Look.” Farther down the beach, I spotted dots like raisins in a sweet roll in the turbulent water. “Those flyspecks out there are people’s heads,” I said, astonished.

“Probably Kanaka body surfers. A longboard can get caught in a big wave and smack you on the head. It’s probably safer in surf like this to make yourself flat and ride in on your stomach.”

As Leonard spoke, one figure, another, and then another floated up, stroking the water. Beneath them, a massive watery fist lifted their bodies on its back.

“Kanakas?” I was just able to make out when the embedded riders stopped swimming and stiffened, arms tucked to their sides. Their bodies rose higher, sped faster, until the top of the wave, outrunning its base, caved toward the shore in slow motion. Its passengers fell, lost in the tumbling flood.

“Local Hawaiians, native Hawaiians. Whatever that means—not a lot of genuine Hawaiians anymore. Some locals call themselves Kanakas because they don’t like mainlanders. They say the US turned their islands into a state so they could steal them.”

“There are Hawaiians who hate us? Honestly?”

He nodded. “They can be dangerous. Lotta Navy guys got beat up when I was stationed here.”

I looked along the shoreline to see more bodies riding in to scatter like bits of confetti in a crashing wave.

“Well, what they’re doing is so damned cool, man. I want to do it, too. Got to be such a rush.” I needed to experience how it felt to rise up and fly on the water toward the shore.

Leonard stared at me aghast. “You’re not serious, are you?”

“Of course, I am.” His perplexed expression questioned my sanity. “If they can do it, why can’t I? Leonard, this is water. I used to run the stuff in my bathtub in Indiana. I dance around in showers of it every day. Hell, I’ve even been known to drink it. What’s to be afraid of?” I gazed at the wild scene, entranced by the loud cracks and rumbling crashes of the waves as they smacked the wet sand.

“Do you have any idea of how to body surf? Cause I don’t. I was a competition high diver here—in swimming pools.” The combers kept getting bigger, more dramatic. I was anxious to get out in them before they got smaller.

“Well, any advice at all?” I shouted over the thundering ocean. “Anything you think I should know?”

“Yeah, you should stay on the beach.” Leonard shook his head as he took in the massive surf. “Okay first, you have to be far enough out to catch the waves where they begin, where the ocean is smooth. Otherwise, they’ll be going too fast. The main thing, when you see a wave forming, you need to swim hard. You have to be going as fast or faster than the wave as it gets to you. Once you’re traveling with the wave, you tuck everything in and ride. But man, I’ve never been in anything like this kind of surf. I seriously don’t think you should be doing this.”

Unfazed, my shirt off, I turned toward the water. “Would you bring a towel from the car for when I get back?”

“If you’re going to do this,” he hollered after me, “maybe you should go watch the locals first.” I glanced in their direction. Beach blankets and tatami mats laid out on the sand marked their territory. No, I didn’t want to do that. If I embarrassed myself, I wanted as few people watching as possible.

“I’m only going to walk down to look at the surf,” I said over my shoulder. “I won’t go in if I think it’s dangerous.”

He nodded uncertainly.

At the ocean’s edge, I studied the sea’s retreat as it reared back in towering waves that hesitated, waiting for the salty, white rivulets left behind to catch up, before crashing in front of me and misting my face. The rush of water surged past my shins before slithering back to dislodge the sand beneath my feet. I watched several waves until it came to me in a flash—I knew how to do it. I got it—“grokked it” as Heinlein’s Valentine Smith would say—naturally inferred the way

the mechanics worked. If I ran out along with the retreating water, I could crash through the first wave at an angle and ride out in the swell that formed afterward. Easy.

I dashed forward, following the outrush, before I'd even made the decision. I might chicken out if I thought too long but more important, I felt the timing, sensed the split second when the wall of water would hesitate and weaken, and sprinted to meet it under the hulking wave's rising shadow. At the last minute, not daring to falter, I half-dove, half-jumped into and through the smooth panel of water wobbling in front of me. I didn't fear water. With no anticipation of danger, I only thought about which way the flow of foaming water would go. So far, so good. I rode up in a liquid elevator, the silent wave sweeping me along as it receded into the ocean, rocking me like a baby in a cradle. Kind of cool how the water carried me so smoothly out toward the sweet spot where the waves were born.

I pulled in a deep breath preparing to fight through the next soaring wave, but this swell subsided too, lifting me again until I seemed to be floating on the back of a powerful surging animal. What a creepy thought!

Distracting myself, I thought of Stan, the Lemon Tree owner, encouraging us to surf at the baby beach on Waikiki. A touristy and dumb experience as it turned out. I'd played a lot of sports and thought of myself as pretty athletic, but I'd only managed to get upright on the loaner board for a few seconds, one time. I was convinced, that similar to bike riding, speed would've made balancing on a surfboard easier. I was sure I would have done better in real waves and planned to try it soon, but now I wondered why I shouldn't choose body surfing instead.

The ocean's gentleness out here surprised me, though the sun's rays reflecting off the water in the shoreline's direction glared painfully into my eyes. Except for the muffled sound of surf pounding away at the distant shore, the sea around me was eerily silent. I slapped the water just to hear a noise. A receding wave subtly shifted me farther into the ocean. The view in that direction revealed nothing but an empty horizon. I glanced back to the beach to reorient myself and found I'd drifted farther than I realized. Leonard looked like a tiny mannequin.

Behind me, an incoming swell messed with my equilibrium for a moment. *I should begin body surfing back to shore*, I decided, until I noticed humpbacked

swells still rising between me and where the ocean smoothed out, and the waves originated. It hadn't seemed so far when seen from the shore.

I thought about going farther out; it wouldn't be hard; the water wasn't so wild here. But . . . I didn't like the creepy feeling of the waves silently rising beneath me. The sensation made me suddenly aware there was nothing but water beneath me for a long way down, and, though I tried to shove the apprehension away—maybe not so empty. Creatures swam and crawled down there, probably some of them with sharp teeth. My imagination began to freak me out. I would definitely rather be back on the shore right now. Besides, I was getting a little tired. I should hitch a shorter ride on one of these waves and go back in. Enough for the first day, right?

I was flippering around toward the beach when I caught sight of Leonard's frantic gestures toward where the locals bodysurfed. A surge lifted me momentarily, and I glanced that way. There were no longer any surfers in the waves; the last of them were walking out of the water—leaving me alone out here in this enormous fucking ocean.

Don't panic you idiot, don't panic, as Frank Herbert says in Dune, "Fear is the little death." I had to stay calm, but I needed to get to shore now.

I glanced behind me trying to gauge the billows coming at me and started swimming. The wave behind me rose, and I flew up into sunlight for a moment before the resulting ripple left me behind in gurgling, frothy aftermath.

I tried to set a stroke, swimming ahead of the next giant wave in the set. It rose, quietly lifting me for a moment, before dropping me as I paddled in vain. Even so, I must be closer to shore. As the hump of water flew ahead of me, the following wave billowed higher than the last, its energy massive.

Knowing this might be my final chance to hitch a ride in, I gave everything left of my failing strength to catch the roaring behemoth surging around me. Helpless in the torrent, I rode up and up until the wave suddenly failed to support me. I fell several feet to land on hands and knees in shallow water rippling over a patch of rocky ground. Walls of water twice my height threatened from front and back. Though I was still too far away to see the shore, I struggled to plant my feet for a desperate sprint against the current toward land. Before I could move, a mountain of water drove me into the sea floor, pummeling and somersaulting me in the

chaotic flow like lost driftwood. As the immense pressure passed over me, a reverse action—a wave in front of me, repulsed at the shore—formed for its return to the ocean. I'd fallen into a trough where powerful forces exploding beneath the monster surf pulled me in every direction.

I hoped to snatch a breath at the first hint of sunlight as the roller receded, but the opportunity never came. The outgoing wave caught and tumbled me across the ocean floor. With any sense of orientation beaten out of me in the confused, sand-filled flood, I lost track of which way to struggle toward precious air.

I wasn't going to get out of this.

I was really, actually going to die.

The realization came too suddenly to scare me. Jumbled wisps of emotions swarmed my consciousness: the sting of regret—Pat, our little boys—a sharp pinch of loss; this amazing girl I'd just met; the band. I would become a cautionary joke. I could almost hear Les: "What an idiot, you must have gone swimming with Larry." I grew more light-headed. Knuckles brushed against sandy bottom, and I reached to grip the sea floor with frantic fingers that were ripped away instantly. I was so disoriented, it seemed as if everything around me revolved instead of my body being rolled and turned. I didn't want to die, but I'd spent all my energy. Soon my lungs would force me to breathe seawater. Parts of me were going numb, shutting down, and I was close to losing consciousness.

But something stubborn inside refused to be reasonable. If my rational mind couldn't figure out where to go, my reptilian brain decided going anywhere else beat drowning. My limbs flailed as if electrified. My back bumped the bottom as I was driven down to the bottom again; this time I seized the sandy soil beneath me in a death grip. My toes dug in, my knees locked, and my butt cheeks clenched.

The sand moved, dragging me along wherever the current chose to go. If it ran the wrong direction, that would be it. Out of time, my lungs forced themselves open as the water broke to bright light and open air. I gasped desperately and struggled to my knees. I knew I wasn't safe, not yet—another mounting wave was rushing to capture and roll me out across the sea floor again. I would never survive that.

With rubbery legs and thrashing, lead-heavy arms, I scrambled onto the shore like a mad crab before they gave out. Wicked little wavelets washed mischievously

up to my waist before reluctantly fading into the foam where I lay retching, choking, every muscle quivering. At the last possible moment, the capricious ocean had chosen to let me live.

Leonard hurried to the surf line and dragged me up the beach before throwing a towel across my back and falling beside me.

“You almost drowned,” he yelled into my face as if I’d somehow missed that. I couldn’t answer. My lungs pumped like bellows trying to suck in air. “Didn’t you see the locals getting out? When the Kanakas leave the water, the surf is seriously dangerous.”

Did someone knock Leonard silly? They hadn’t left the waves until I was already way out there. But I couldn’t answer. I lay in the sand, chest heaving, the physical reactions to being alive racking my system.

Sometime later, an hour, or maybe only ten minutes, I choked out, “Why the fuck didn’t they help me? I’m probably nothing but a stupid asshole *haole* to them, but goddamn it, I almost drowned on their goddamned beach right in front of them.”

Truthfully, I didn’t believe for a second anyone could’ve helped me out of that raging flood. *And why should they risk their lives to save mine anyway?* But I wasn’t in a frame of mind to accept responsibility for my own idiocy yet.

“For that matter, what about you? You’re supposed to be a goddamned lifeguard, for chrissake.” That sounded asinine even as the words escaped my mouth.

Leonard sat back on his heels, his head lowered. I glared north toward the local surfers, sitting on their tatami mats now, knowing they must think I’m the stupidest, most idiotic tourist they’d ever seen. Maybe so, but I was one of the luckiest ones, too. I pushed over onto my elbows and stared into the blind, grasping waves. I feared them. I understood their power now; I would never be tempted to go into them again, even little ones. I fell back, gazing into the neon-blue sky.

I didn’t say much to Leonard as he maneuvered us back onto the highway and headed toward the Pali Highway through Oahu’s central mountains. “Fastest way to Honolulu,” he yelled over to me, “way faster than the way we came.”

My disassociated and preoccupied mind ran through what had nearly happened over and over. After a few miles, Leonard broke through my soul-searching when

he slowed to turn off the highway telling me we needed gas to get home. The rough exit took us into Waimanalo, a small beach town of wood-framed buildings that looked like a giant had dropped a Hollywood western movie set into a tropical jungle. He pulled into a station on the corner of a street running down to the shoreline. While he dealt with an attendant insisting Leonard pump his own gas, I got out to ease my tortured joints as well as loosen the stiffened, salt-infused bathing suit painfully chafing my genitals. I'd limped a few steps onto the empty road when I heard shouts coming from the street.

"What?" I called out, shading my eyes trying to make out what the brown man in shorts and a faded, surf-logo Tee shirt was yelling at me.

"I said, get in your fuckin' car, *haole*. Dis no place foh you go wanderin' round."

"Oh." I stood shocked, still not sure if he meant me.

"Guess you nevah heah me den, hah brah? I said, get your fucking ass outta heah. You like get all buss up or wat?"

Conserving as much dignity as possible, I lurched back to the convertible as Leonard put a hand on the door. "Leonard," I thumbed behind me. "I think this guy's got some kind of problem with us."

"Yeah, him and some of his friends." His eyes focused behind me. A rumbling roar caused me to look back. A couple of motorcycles pulled up next to the man, and more were rolling out of an alleyway farther up the street.

We vaulted into our seats and fishtailed out of the station back onto the narrow road out of town. The bikers shadowed us to the highway before turning back.

Leonard glanced at me. "Those are the kind of Kanakas we need to avoid."

Once we were back on the road, Leonard looked for a town called Kailua, where we turned inland on the Pali Highway toward the mountains. He shook his head and glanced my way once in a while as the road bored a path through thick jungle foliage, full of unsettling movement in the gusting breezes. As we switchbacked toward the heights, clouds scudding across the sky created a dramatic checkerboard of light and dark over the leeward side of the island.

Though it was still a sunlit afternoon where we were, the cloud-smothered mountaintop ahead threatened enough for us to stop and raise the convertible's roof. I'd been grateful for the wind and noise making conversation difficult. But even with the car closed up, we didn't speak. I was lost in my thoughts. I'd never

thought about dying before this had happened. What if my luck had failed in those giant waves today? What difference would me dying have made to anyone? What difference does me living mean to anyone? Who would care? What would they think of such a foolish way to go? My parents, my sister. My band-brothers. What about Pat, my boys? *I have got to be better prepared. I can't be surprised like this. I get it: death can come between one heartbeat and the next; everything stops forever without warning. I have to be more aware.* I would never be able to think of death, or life, the way I had before.

The view from the Pali highway of sheer cliffs draped in brilliant, variegated greens broke through my brooding ruminations. The mountain hid its treacherous, jagged rock walls behind delicate, feathered camouflage. The beauties of this island paradise concealed menace at every turn. At any other time, the height alone would've paralyzed me, but after Sandy Beach and Waimanalo's Kanakas, I was flat scared out.

Leonard waved out the window. "You're frickin' lucky you're getting to see this, you know." We gazed down on a cloud top in a distant valley, where rain fell below it in a spectacular, rainbow-producing shower. I wondered what new calamity it was inflicting on the land beneath it.

We entered and exited a pair of tunnels near the top of the Pali, and Leonard negotiated the descending zigzag road through intermittent showers. Foliage, thinner on this side of the mountain, slipped by our windows as we skirted east around Honolulu toward the distant ocean. I sensed Leonard's attempt to read me, his anger gone, long lines carved on his face.

"You do know I couldn't have saved you, don't you? If I'd gone into the surf after you, I would have drowned along with you. You do know that, right?" I nodded dreamily. I knew. I'd never actually blamed him. What had happened was my fault; my lack of impulse control and sheer idiocy had nearly killed me. I should have absolved him then, but soul-seared, still somewhere between this life and the next, I couldn't bring myself to speak.

"I was so scared," he mumbled, glancing toward me as he drove. "More scared than I've ever been for myself. More scared than you, I bet. I was sure I would have to tell everybody—including your new girlfriend—you wouldn't be coming back to the band."

5 LOVE AND DEATH

. . . there is no nakedness that compares to being naked in front of someone for the first time.

—John Irving

*April 2, 1968
Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii*

SKIN SUN-SCORCHED AND SALT-DRIED, body aching from a pummeling to the edge of eternity, I hung on the railing pulling myself up the few steps to the Surfboard's lobby. The desk clerk waved me to a stop to hand over a telephone message: "If you would like to see Theresa and Charlene tomorrow, please call number below." In an instant, my mood changed.

The one good thing about my room was the shower. Not fancy, but scads of hot water. I pushed it to the limit before collapsing across the bed. When I was able to drag myself downstairs to call Charlene on the lobby phone, I got great news.

"Aloha, Larry. Theresa wan know if you like go to hula show at Kapiolani Park tomorrow, den go after to zoo?"

"That would be fantastic. God yes, I would love that."

"So . . . why not you ask Dave come too if he like?" I told her I'd see if he was available. I knew he was interested in another girl, but Dave's attentions rarely lasted more than a few days, it wouldn't hurt to check.

“The park is close, you know, you guys can walk from Lemon Tree. Just go couple blocks Diamond Head on Kalakaua. We goin’ wait for you in front of the grandstand at one o’clock, ah?”

I knew Kapiolani Park was close. My first night here I’d been startled out of bed by shrill screams in the wee hours of morning. I’d rushed down to alert the night clerk of the heartrending wails from screaming children outside. Unconcerned, he explained I was hearing cries from peacocks wandering through the park at night. They still woke me sometimes, but I could usually get back to sleep.

After a quick dinner, I hit the sack, sleeping twelve hours straight before waking stiff and sore in the same position I’d fallen asleep. I managed to get rehearsal pushed back to four, so I’d have more time. And I’d checked with Dave. He thought Charlene was cute, but he’d grown attached to a server at the club named Eileen.

The brisk walk along Kalakaua in the brilliant afternoon worked away most of the lingering physical effects from yesterday. Good, I didn’t want to hobble around in front of the girls and be forced to admit what a doofus I’d been. As I hiked along the sidewalk, my senses seemed to expand, and flickers of electricity rippled across my nerve endings. Cries from the roaming peacocks mixed with exotic bird song and the traffic noise from Kalakaua felt exaggerated, over-vivid, and loud.

Cutting through the park, I thought I’d never seen anything more stunning than how the low-spreading canopies of banyan and pink-blossomed monkeypod trees cast inky shade across the emerald lawn. I seemed to be observing and hearing through an enhanced set of senses. I shivered in the warm sunshine remembering how lucky I’d been yesterday. I couldn’t fully explain my expanded consciousness, but I hungered to embrace the gift of life I’d nearly lost.

Theresa waited near the entrance of the arena, more lovely than ever in a creamy, pale, mid-thigh sundress. Her long, dark hair spread across one shoulder, in motion from the gentle onshore breeze. Charlene seemed elfin beside her in colorful shorts and a twisted yellow halter-top. Her face fell when she realized I was alone. Dave sent his apologies, I told her, but couldn’t make it. I didn’t have the heart to tell her he was interested in someone else.

We chose a vantage point halfway up the bleachers on one side of the three-sided, open-air grandstand. Tourists from all over the world joined families of locals in seats around us. We chattered together until Hawaiian ladies of every dimension, age, and beauty poured out of thatched huts and enclosures on the fourth side of the amphitheater. The women had arrayed themselves in a variety of grass skirts, colorful tops, and leis, most with fresh red, blue, or yellow blooms in their hair. The only thing in common was their broad smiles as their hips swayed in rhythm to a ukulele band. Even the most overweight and oldest worked their posteriors in erotic wiggles.

“I know this is the public cultural center, but . . . uh, this seems pretty—well, X-rated.”

“Most *haoles* notice only the hips,” Theresa acknowledged. “But you should keep your eyes on the wahines’ hands. The hands are telling a story.” There was a kind of symmetry to the way their hands and arms moved, but any living and breathing male’s attention would have gone directly to their swiveling bottoms.

“Do you see the wavy movement of their palms and fingers? That is the ocean’s waves, and that one means an outrigger canoe. They are telling of how Polynesians spread across the ocean.”

“I think I see what you mean.” I knew this was a cultural thing, but the originator of this dance had to have been an excellent marketer determined to make sure the men and boys paid attention to their unwritten history.

“Traditionally, hula dancers don’t wear tops.” She leaned in to speak softly. “So maybe you wouldn’t always watch their bottoms then, ah?”

“What have they got on under those grass skirts?” I asked in the spirit of the moment, knowing what the kilt-wearing ancestors of my Irish island heritage wore—or didn’t. She laughed, a strong lusty laugh I instantly treasured.

“I think I will leave that to your imagination.”

We enjoyed the show for a little while before I asked without thinking, “Do you dance like this, Theresa?” I liked the sound of saying her name. “Can you do the hula?”

“Of course, we learn it in classes about our culture in school. I can also do the *ote’a*, a Tahitian dance. Now that is truly sexy; hips move very fast.”

“Will you dance like that for me sometime?” My face turned red; *why had I said that?* We’re from different cultures. Without consciously meaning to, I might have made a very intimate request.

Her tanned skin didn’t betray a blush, but she glanced shyly away. “I might.”

I was relieved I hadn’t offended her, but I secretly thought to watch her move that way would answer a fervent prayer.

“That would be the best day ever,” I murmured.

After the hula show, the three of us wandered past food booths and tables spread out in a part of the park sheltered by a band of koa trees. Among them grew ferns and bushes filled with thick bunches of hibiscuses.

The scent of kalua pork made it my first choice, and I found some chicken baked in taro leaves, called laulau. Once I unpacked the steaming meat from its leafy envelope, I savored its smoky flavor. Fish wasn’t high on my menu favorites, especially not raw as served in several dishes the girls tempted me to taste. Fortunately, a chunk of toasted butterfish fillet tasted much better than I expected. My taste buds were exploding with new flavors, not every one of them good. Theresa convinced me to try poi—a sour, soupy paste she said real Hawaiians ate at every meal, even breakfast. When I thought she wasn’t looking, I dumped the purple mess into a bush.

We strolled along Kalakaua toward the zoo. I don’t care much for zoos, the caged animals make me uncomfortable, but I wanted to stay near the target of my affection. At times, when it felt natural, we held hands as we wandered through the habitats. Charlene moped along behind. Theresa’s growing warmth toward me kept me with her until the last minute.

When it came time to leave for rehearsal, she gave me her usual “aloha.”

“It’s a little confusing,” I said, stretching out my last minutes with her. “Everyone here says aloha for both hello and goodbye. Seems to mean a lot of other things, too.”

She smiled, and I thought again how much I hungered to make her smile like that all the time. “My Hawaiian grandmother told me ‘alo,’ the first part, is saying, ‘from me, from my center.’” She gestured in a graceful, continuous motion, starting from her heart, up past her mouth and toward me, “and ‘ha’ means ‘the breath of life.’” She shook her hair left and right, away from her face. “Together, aloha means

a willingness to share life with a person, like wishing someone good luck, only much more. More than there are words for.”

I nodded but guessed I’d missed a lot in translation.

“Your grandmother is Hawaiian? Leonard told me there aren’t many pure Hawaiians left anymore.”

“Yes, it is true. I’m hapa Hawaiian, but my grandmother was a 100 percent native-Hawaiian woman, and my grandfather, Portuguese. And I have some Filipino, too, like Charlene.”

“Yeah, dat’s me,” Charlene added. “One pure Filipina girl.”

I couldn’t delay any longer, but I had to ask what I’d wanted to know from the moment I’d seen her again. “Will you come to the Lemon Tree again? Maybe this weekend?”

“I will see if this girl will go.” Theresa glanced at her friend, eyes crinkling with amusement. “If she will bring us, then yes.” Charlene managed a tight grin and nodded. I finally forced myself to leave for rehearsal, wishing the weekend could start tomorrow.

The heightened sense of reality I’d experienced during the week—as though textures, colors, and sounds held a profound meaning—was amplified Friday night. Fascinated, I spent every possible moment with Theresa, and she encouraged my attention. I was disappointed that she was gone after we’d finished for the night, but she’d assured me she would be back tomorrow night.

When Theresa returned the next night, an animal heat drew me to her at every opportunity. She responded in subtle touches and glances. Charlene, shut out by our focused attention to each other, sulked in private.

Late in the night, when I couldn’t find Theresa on the lanai or at the bus stop, I wasn’t sure where to look. I wondered if she’d left, until . . . I caught her inviting gesture through the gap between the coconut palms and low palm grass separating Kalakaua and the beach. Smiling, she watched me cross the street before slipping out of sight behind the sheltering vegetation. I followed her into a secluded spot away from the lights. Here, behind the foliage, the metronomic slap of water rippling in stereo along the shoreline, muted the chaotic club and traffic noise.

Moonlight, flickering over Theresa's shadowed figure, heightened my awareness of her kneeling on the sand. A nervous smile of anticipation played across her face as she swept a beach towel across the sand several times before laying it out. "So we can be sure there are no flying cockroaches," she said with the hint of a smile, her expressive hands inviting me to join her.

"Oh, right," For a moment I was unsure what she meant, and then I smiled remembering Charlene's warning the night we met. As I moved down beside her, she leaned back on an elbow, wide eyes on me. Sand beneath the towel retained enough heat from the day's sun to warm us. The full moon silvered Theresa's features, the fallen palm fronds, and deserted beach; a fresh, coastal breeze rode over us from the murmuring and cresting surf a few yards away. Just days earlier, I'd learned to fear those waves, but here, they were caged, and I let myself be whisked into exotic fantasy.

I leaned to kiss her as she lifted her face to mine. The richness of her cushioned lips, open and welcoming, surprised and overwhelmed me. In an instant, our tongues touched, and it was as though we'd shared them with each other for all our lives.

Her breath caught for a moment as I dared to caress her untethered breasts, abundant and firm beneath her light dress. She leaned into me as sensitive nipples peaked through the thin fabric beneath my palms and fingers. As our kiss extended, my palm swept unimpeded across her taut stomach, under her gathered dress, to lightly grasp her waist. Searching, testing fingertips, left unsupervised by either of us, brushed under the thin cotton to span her flaring hip, and moved lower to cup her bottom.

Senses overwhelmed by shapes and textures, my hand continued its measured slide across the skin-carpeted curve of her taut cheek to where it joined the long muscle of her thigh; in sudden reflex, I pulled her into an embrace so passionate my breath caught until I wasn't sure if I would breathe again. Coconut, mingled with fresh flowers and a hint of spicy perspiration, scented her skin as we worked her panties over her ankles with them somehow ending up in my inside jacket pocket. She helped shuck me from my suit pants and briefs, allowing mischievous caresses from an intrusive breeze to cool my heated exposure.

Her thighs separated, inviting, as she lay back against the toweled sand. I moved over her, hard and heavy with painful throbs that matched my heartbeat. Her knees lifted, opening. Her eyes locked on mine, but her stare was inward as if observing her own physical reactions. I willed myself to enter her gently, but her body was ready. Her mouth widened into an O as I slid into complete, snug perfection. We froze, anchored in a moment outside of time, willing ourselves to capture sensations too intense for containment in mere memory.

In that moment, Theresa's eyes changed, reaching deep into mine as her face relaxed into an expression of tenderness, hope, and optimism I can hardly describe and will never forget—an emotion so pure, tears started at the corners of my eyes. In some mysterious way, I felt I'd entered the whole island through this lovely girl—as if I were interacting with everything around me: the beach, the whispering vegetation, the zephyring breeze, even the protective moon cloaking us in our private world.

Our bodies' natural rhythms took over, and her hands guided me, holding me to her in the supernatural naturalness of the Hawaiian night. Never had anything felt so right, as though an omniscient creator gazed down fondly on us, two of his human creatures consumed in the most ancient and powerful of rituals. With lips pressed together, breathing as one, we clung to each other, pressing as much skin against each other as possible. Our kiss broke as her eyes flew wide, searching mine for something. I don't know what expression she read on my face; I concentrated solely on drinking her in through every pore. Her smile grew. Had we been transported to Times Square in that instant, nothing could've stopped the primal motion driving me into Theresa's center.

In this elevated state, I felt as though I'd ascended toward the heavens; my whole existence in this world tilted on its axis. Whatever had happened in my life before, whatever it had taken for me to be in this moment, in this unbelievable place, with this extraordinary girl, it was a bedrock instant in my timeline, as vital as birth or death, a moment I had always been meant to reach, and in it—my soul was quieted.

I could hear her breathing in my ear, the catch as each new sensation lifted and shook her. As she peaked, her hands and arms locked to my hips; she threw her shoulders back, tilting her hips to pull us deeper into consummate harmony. I

existed entirely in this moment, my perception of past and future reduced to insignificance.

If I'd died then, which didn't seem impossible in the torrent of completion, my life would have been fulfilled and perfect. As we slid to our sides, still entwined, I savored the ecstasy of being alive. The thought of my life almost ending in the waves a few days earlier flickered through my awareness, and I had a moment of heartbreak for any other selves in parallel universes who might have drowned in their ocean's violent chaos and missed this night. If death meant to come for me here and now, I was ready, this experience marked and impressed in my memory with every ounce of effort I had to give.

Live music from across the street returned us to reality. The band had started without me. We parted gently, and I stood to help Theresa to her feet. Smiling, examining each other in a new light, she straightened her dress while I slipped into my suit pants. Theresa left me with a tender kiss before gliding across Kalakaua Avenue, beach towel and my room key in hand so she could shower and wait for me. Alone, the leaves in the palms above clicked and hissed like snakes in the stiffening breeze. The sensation of experiencing a momentous, once-in-a-lifetime event shivered through me and left me not entirely unaware of a fading, unspoken, commitment wrung from me by this island.

Pulling on my suit coat, I scurried through the riotous atmosphere in the club where I tried to sneak onstage to rejoin the band for the final songs of the night.

"Hey, I recognize that look," Mac said with a ridiculous grin as I slipped past him. "Bro has just been laid." I blushed neon. Les, strapped into his guitar, wanting to frown because I'd missed part of the set, but he couldn't hide a smirk.

"Yep, it's obvious." Dave shook his head in mock dismay. "We could turn off the lights; let you light the place up, man."

I opened my mouth to say something, but Leonard's sticks clicked out a tempo. I set the B3's drawbars for super funky with my left hand while my right slammed chord rhythms behind Mac dancing across the stage singing, Sam and Dave's *I Thank You. You guys are right on the money tonight*, I thought with a secret smile.

I cruised through our songs on automatic, attempting to connect the transcendent event I'd experienced to the reality surrounding me. We ended the

night with Vanilla Fudge's hard rock remake of *Keep Me Hanging On*. I usually loved playing this song with the B3 cranked to the max, but I couldn't help wondering if my erotic fantasy had been no more than an illusion. The powerful ending of the staccato drum, bass, and guitar hits that overrode the eerie drama of the melody from the keyboard through the changing speeds of the organ's revolving Leslie speakers couldn't come soon enough. As the last note died, I flipped the organ's power switch off, slammed down the keyboard cover and dashed out of the back door, across the alley, and into the hotel.

Theresa's presence, fresh from the shower, damp hair glistening, her fawn-colored skin glowing, had transformed my over-bright, dingy little room into a romantic hideaway. We knew we would make love again. My craving for her had only intensified. We didn't speak of our encounter on the beach. I thought about saying something but didn't; words were flimsy messengers for what our bodies had already told each other.

Not surprisingly, since Theresa wore only a towel, our naked selves were unveiled within moments. Lying across my simple bed, shy but provocative, she invited my inspection. I looked down on her, drinking in her physical beauty. Her mixed European and Hawaiian ancestors had bequeathed her flawless skin— island-bronzed, except where a skimpy bikini had hidden beige strips and tiny patches from the sun. With her clothes on she was stunning; unclothed, she was fantasy made flesh. Her lean, youthful body was richly succulent—naturally rouged tips centered on proud breasts, waist tapering to hips wider than apparent in the loose sundresses I'd seen her in.

Her huge, dark eyes slid to the part of me that had invaded her. She glanced up to assure I was okay with her attention and then, with curiosity, reached out a tentative hand to weigh and stroke. I shivered, and moved a hand along her inner thigh, through the sumptuous thatch of silky black hair, still shiny and moist from the shower. I gasped at the silken richness hidden within. I tried to pull away long enough to run through the shower, but she raised her leg to replace my hand with the part of me she held.

We never considered turning off the harsh overhead light in the room. Instead, we studied each other in its illumination like scientists researching sensuality, reading expressions and slight eye movements to combine with our own powerful

responses of where and how to please and be pleased. I didn't have skin or extremities enough to experience simultaneously all that I hungered for of her. Though our joining wasn't as mystical, hidden here away from the moon, our physicality reached greater heights as our bodies explored and dared to learn and demand more from one another.

I slid alongside her, spent for the moment but far from sated. Our hands drifted along each other's skin, comforting and soothing—touch-remembering—as perspiration dissipated.

"We've hardly said two words," I whispered to her. I caught a glimpse of her smile in profile, but she said nothing, and we lay quiescent.

"I have to go," she sighed at last. "Charlene will be waiting for me, not so patiently, I am sure."

I gently placed my hand on the side of her face. "Theresa, I want to see you again. Soon."

Her kiss on my palm was gentle yet full of promise. "I know. I want to be with you, too. Soon." She slipped out of bed and into the bathroom before returning to shrug into her dress and sandals, combing fingers through her hair.

"I've lost my underwear," she said with a little frown as her eyes searched my tiny room, "unless you've seen them."

"Oh." I'd been watching, mesmerized, as she dressed. "Oh, wait. I have them." I emptied out my coat pocket. Within moments, she'd gone, leaving me with ephemeral memories of the dream girl and a dream night just passed.

6 RUMORS OF WAR

Monsters don't sleep under your bed; they sleep inside your head.

—Theonette van Niekerk

April 17, 1968

Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii

I SHOULDN'T BE HERE," the young sergeant whispered. "Shouldn't be here man. Got to get back." He gulped at a beer staring at nothing. It was a weeknight, which meant Theresa wasn't here, thank God, though I missed the physical way we were learning more about each other. The Lemon Tree was encouraging servicemen to participate as judges in a wet Tee shirt contest. Not the kind of demeaning event I'd generally want the band to be part of, but we relaxed our standards when it came to these guys. Mac, our charismatic R&B lead singer, was most involved, escorting soldiers to the stage to interact with a collection of young (and some not so young) female volunteers recruited from the audience by the club's master of ceremonies. The competition's rules, to the degree they existed, were ambiguous.

The girls competed in a thin Lemon Tree Tee shirt with nothing on underneath. A soldier splashed a gallon of cold water over each girl's chest, making sure to drench her thoroughly. From there, it seemed to be a popularity contest. Regulations allowed contestants to stretch the now translucent shirt to reveal nipple details and emphasize the erotic contours of the heft of their breasts through the thin cotton. Most simply flipped the Tee shirt up to compete *au natural*. The emcee made a half-hearted attempt to convince the girls to pull their shirts down,

copping feels in the process, which went over huge with the well-oiled soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen.

When an Army sergeant nominated by the crowd had been reluctant to take part in the mock contest, Mac went to encourage him. When he realized the soldier was agitated, and in some sort of distress, he brought him to the table I shared with Dave and Mickey in the quieter edge of the room where we were trying to stay out of the way. Anxiety rippled off him like heat from an open fire. The sergeant's unfocused eyes glittered as he continued to mumble, "Shouldn't be here, shouldn't be here, man."

Mac motioned to Donna, the nearest cocktail waitress, and asked her to bring him a rocks glass half full of Jack Daniels straight up, with water on the side.

"Put it on my tab, wilya sweetheart?" He flashed her a brief smile. The young soldier was shorter than me and in dress cammies. Though I was sure he was in his mid-twenties, his face held the etched lines of an older man. He was jumpy as an over-wound super ball, and Mac did his best to settle him but, every once in a while, a tight little shudder ran through the young man.

"Now look soldier, this here's medicine." Mac put the drink into his hand and helped him find his mouth. "Consider this hair off the dog that shoulda bit you." The young warrior shot back the whiskey, and his eyes bugged before he swallowed. He grabbed the water glass Mac handed him and gulped it down.

In a minute, his color improved, and he seemed aware of us for the first time. His wild eyes searched beyond us for someone or something. Mac signaled Donna for another of the same.

"What's up sergeant?" Mac leaned in to examine his eyes. "You better now?"

He glared at Mac for a second, panting. "I shouldn't be here, sir. Need to get back to Nam. Oliver needs me. Me and Oliver—only ones left."

"Wanna tell us what happened?"

The soldier buried his face in his hands. For a minute, I didn't think he was going to speak again. "We was in the bush, recon, got pretty far from the LZ. Surprise firefight, got all separated. I don't know, support snafu probably. Had those all the time, guys who were supposed to know where we were in the shit didn't have no idea in actual fact. We was cut off, in the wrong goddamn place. Whole motherfucking squad shot up right in front of me. Oh, Jesus." His eyes

squeezed out tears that ran back from his eyes as his head tilted, seeing something no one else could in the dim recesses of the Lemon Tree ceiling. I visualized automatic weapons' fire cutting his men to pieces in some remote jungle.

Donna returned, and Mac pressed another rocks glass into the young man's hand.

"Only Oliver and me. That's all. Chopper smoked us a new LZ to get us out. Just him and me alive in that field." He let out a sob and chugged the whiskey again. I could tell he wanted to feel it burn all the way down. "Oliver says, 'take Sergeant Sloan here, take him, he's the one needs to go to Hawaii. He's the one needs some R and R.'" He looked at us pleading. "I don't need no goddamn R and R. It's comin' on the wet season, mud up to your balls. I need to get back, take care of my guys—well, Oliver anyway. Can't help the others. Goddamnit, can't be stuck out here in the world leavin' Oliver to go into the shit without me. Can't have that. Wouldn't be right."

Behind us, the emcee caressed another breast and said something suggestive into the mic; the girl giggled and jiggled. Her backers in the audience went wild. All we knew to do for Mac's soldier, or any of the others, was listen to their stories and play our music for them.

Our personal manager, Jimmy O'Neill, had been a well-known deejay in LA before becoming the emcee of the popular, though short-lived, ABC Television show *Shindig!* He'd discovered us at a club in North Hollywood and worked out of Seymour Heller's office in West Hollywood. Seymour managed Liberace and a number of other celebrities. It was exciting having such famous representation, and another reason for optimism when it came to our career. Jimmy's part-time assistant and full-time girlfriend, Eve, tried to keep us stocked with publicity photos for us to give to the servicemen, but no matter how many we received, there were never enough. Mac spent a lot of his nights rushing around getting us to autograph them for different guys.

One night, he walked up to me with a guy in his greens. "This here is Jim McAfee with the 821st—umm, what's your unit again?"

Jim grinned. "Combat Security Police, we're Air Force special cops."

Mac, all business-like, handed me one of our publicity photos. “Sign the back, Larry. Got to get everyone’s John Henry on here ‘fore my main man, here, goes home.”

“John Hancock,” I said.

“Yeah, we’re gettin him, too. Come on Jim, let’s go.”

These young men captured a special place in Mac’s generous heart. He seemed to be tucking some soldier under his wing all the time. He hadn’t told us much, but I’d heard him mention he’d been in the 101st Airborne as a teenager before the conflict in Vietnam had begun sinking under its own weight.

As the nights went by, many of the boys and men wanted to talk to us, to say hi, tell us their names and hometowns. They often treated us like long-lost friends they needed to remind what they’d been doing the last time they’d heard a song we played. It seemed like every song we knew brought back an important moment to someone. Hard-boiled combatants burst into tears hearing *Brown Eyed Girl* or the Box Tops’ *The Letter*, or even some raucous Stones’ tune, as their comrades threw arms around them in commiseration. Popular rock music was the background score of their young lives and a few notes from the Four Seasons, Otis Redding, the Beach Boys, Sam and Dave, or the Beatles could reanimate intense memories for them. We didn’t talk among ourselves about the raw emotions our music exposed in these soldiers, but we showed and communicated it in the way we played and in the expressions on our faces. The response of these boys and young men validated the real reason why we lived the lives we did: the joy we received from affecting our audiences by singing and playing the music we loved for them. And our appreciation of the freedom they were protecting.

One guy, an information officer, told me the average age of the guys fighting this war on the ground was nineteen. Meaning most soldiers out in those jungles couldn’t vote and legally weren’t allowed to sit and drink in this nightclub. Most of them over there in the killing fields with their lives on the line were boys. And though they may have initially come as liberators, he said, some people back home are accusing them of being invaders. They didn’t seem to understand that these boys were being commanded to burn down forests, farms, and plantations, or kill every single moving thing where and when some general thought it needful.

As the weeks went by, I realized I recognized these guys, these marauders, these raiders. They were the fuckups from my Junior Prom who upchucked off the balcony of the Indiana Roof Ballroom in downtown Indianapolis. They'd showered with me in PE, played grabass, climbed ropes, shot baskets, and all the other stuff teenagers do. There were good ones, bad ones, and just plain goofy ones. Someone decided to turn them into an army, so here they were, scared stiff, fighting like demons to despoil and kill people they'd dehumanized as gooks or slants before they killed them, or got killed themselves. Their leaders told them they had to.

I thought a lot of people would feel differently about the war if they saw our nation's warriors for what they were—just a bunch of boys from their cities, towns, and villages trying to survive a nightmare. You could be pissed at our government for what they were being made to do, for putting them in harm's way, but you'd have to take your hat off to their bravery in doing the best they could.

I thought about this bubble we occupied on this island dreamland, like an airlock between the war in Vietnam and their homes on the mainland—not a part of the war, but so close that guys in our club any given night might be fresh from a rice paddy or jungle recon the day before. I couldn't imagine how disorienting fighting like this must be—coming in only hours from mortal danger in a primitive alien culture in a land as far as possible from where they'd grown up to the sudden nightlife of Waikiki in the middle of a sparkling-clean Pacific Ocean. I could see how it might feel like the afterlife to some of them. No wonder our songs affected our soldier boys so profoundly.

It had been less than a year ago I'd received my induction notice into the Army. We were playing at a club in Downey, California, weeks before our first record was released. It was never far from my mind how scared I'd been in the Long Beach induction center where buses waited to whisk me, and hundreds of others young men and boys, to Texas to turn us into cannon fodder. The band had already left for Las Vegas, my replacement contacted and waiting there, before I even entered the warehouse-sized building. No one but Marie had believed the Hollywood attorney, who my new friends at the Pink Carousel had found for me, could save me from conscription. If he hadn't, it could have easily been me in uniform here in this nightclub.

The relief from my dramatic escape from induction last summer came from knowing I wouldn't be forced out of my band, my family of brothers. The longer we stayed among these soldiers, the more I came to terms with the odd realization that if things had broken differently, some of them might have become my brothers, instead. Or worse, I could have been one of those brothers who came home in a sack.

Many young people skipped off to Canada or found other ways to avoid going to fight in Vietnam—an action in normal times, considered treasonous. Many Americans despised the Vietnam War so vigorously that they felt forced to stand against a government who demanded the nation's youth risk death or maiming in a tiny, primitive country's civil war on the opposite side of the world. Television, for the first time, was ripping away the heroic facade of war portrayed by John Wayne and Audie Murphy.

I numbered among those draft dodgers, I suppose, but not in political protest. I was far too immersed in my precious life to have opinions about the events roiling the nation. Too ignorant to even be afraid. If I'd been pressed to answer whether we should have been fighting in Vietnam back then, I probably would have answered yes. If our president, our government, said we needed to fight in some godforsaken part of the world, I would have trusted there was a good reason. That was before coming here, seeing for myself the unending river of wasted lives the decisions of our country's leaders were producing. Five hundred soldiers a week were dying in Vietnam while we were here, which didn't count how many had been wounded physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Around me here were young men, recently recovered from physical wounds, suffering from anguish, fatigue, and in many cases, conspicuous mental illness. It wasn't unusual to see a soldier sit alone, face full of tears, or talking to some invisible companion. Moral compasses swung wildly between the conflicting values they'd learned from parents, teachers, and religion and the practical demands of survival in a brutal environment. Many masked their terror behind arrogant bravery and binge drinking, and there were those whose humanity seemed entirely burned away.

I pitied them and tried hard to understand what they were going through. In all honesty, though, I was glad as hell I wasn't one of them. I felt a survivor's

remorse for my actions but would never regret them. If I'd known what the Army had in store for me when that induction notice arrived, I'd have been willing to do far more than I had to avoid the barbaric experiences these young men and boys were desperately trying to survive.

7 SMOKE DREAMS

Reality leaves a lot to the imagination.

—John Lennon

*April 19, 1968
Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii*

FROM THE MOMENT she'd shown interest in me I'd hoped Theresa would become my lover and companion while I was in Hawaii. Since the overwhelmingly romantic night on the beach with her, I'd had no room for thoughts of anyone else. Over the following weeks, she came to see me most weekend afternoons, staying until well after my nights onstage ended. She was animated and playful now; it was hard to believe she was the same girl who'd been so reserved when I first tried to catch her attention.

We hungered for each other's affection, urgently making love as soon as we could, and, as often as time permitted, in tender passion afterward. Though her uninhibited enthusiasm was unlimited, I got the impression what she experienced with me was new and fresh to her—an endearing quality. She was eager to learn what turned on either or both of us, which seemed to be almost everything. As we became more comfortable in sharing ourselves, her growing confidence and inventiveness consistently left me breathless, and her enjoyment in making my desires hers, captivating. When we weren't indulgently feasting on sex, we laughed and talked about everything under the sun, which meant she was an excellent listener. I hadn't learned much about her life when she wasn't with me. There was no reason to ask a lot of questions; she was my island fantasy girl. Our time together

was just an incredible interlude during an amazing few months far from home on the mainland.

After the last show Friday night, Theresa sat perched on the bed with a knowing grin. "I found a bag of grass in your nightstand." She'd come to the room early to get out of the smoky club and shower before I got back at the end of the night. Her little makeup purse lay open on the weathered dresser. Something was appealing about her looking around, making herself at home in my room. I smiled tentatively, unsure of her reaction.

"More than willing to share but I didn't know. . ."

"Didn't know if I knew about marijuana?" she interrupted. "Really? Growing up on an island where Maui Wowie grows wild everywhere?" She pulled open the drawer in the nightstand and tossed me the baggie with a mischievous grin. "Go ahead, roll one. I've smoked lots of this before."

"Maybe not like this. This weed is wicked; it's called ganje." I hefted the plastic bag. "A lot stronger than anything I've ever smoked before. Guy Mac got it from last Wednesday says it's being brought back from Vietnam in soldiers' backpacks. When Mac and Dave and I went out in the alley behind the club to try it out, this guy rolled the skinniest joint you could imagine. Including him, we each got two hits. Two hits off this toothpick of a joint, and I could barely remember my name." I shrugged off my shirt and kicked off my shoes. "Haven't gotten high since we left LA, don't think any of us have. Didn't dare bring any grass with us on the plane. Could be why we got so loaded from this stuff." By now I was down to my undershorts.

"When we started the set, I was so stoned I didn't recognize the keys on my B3's keyboard, and Mac and Dave couldn't remember the words to the first songs. Les was royally pissed off. Nobody's supposed to get high at the gig, but it hadn't happened on purpose. Mac just wanted a little taste of what the guy was selling before he bought some, Dave and I were tagging along.

"When Les realized we were stoned, he did his best to embarrass us on stage as punishment for breaking the rules. But it didn't work. We were too out of it to be shamed, and nobody in the place cared anyway as long as we played music. So instead, the whole thing got hilarious. When the set ended, and we could explain

what happened, Les thought about it for a minute and asked Mac to get him some, too.”

Unimpressed by my story, Theresa told me she would take her chances, so I rolled a slender joint for us to share. I was a little self-conscious of how my joint humped in the middle as if a tiny white snake had swallowed a small marble.

“Rollin’ it slim,” I said, lighting and handing the rough cylinder to her. “Cause you might want to go easy with this stuff.” She twisted it in her slim fingers, examining my skill.

“Not too good at this, are you?”

“So take off for style points. It smokes, you know. That’s what counts.” She took a big hit and gave me a tolerant smile as I pulled off my shorts and joined her on the bed.

“I found something else in there.” She held the smoke in, gesturing at the nightstand as she exhaled.

“Oh, what else?”

She opened the nightstand’s bottom drawer, smiling, and lifted out a decrepit and yellowing paperback book titled *Forbidden Love*. I took it from her.

“I’ve never opened that drawer before.” On the cover, an illustration displayed two bare-chested men embraced in a kiss. I flipped through the pages.

“Uh, pretty sure this is gay porn, must have been left behind by a previous resident.” There’d been indications of a thriving homosexual community living in the raggedy hotel before Stan and Shirley bought the place. Little by little, management had been encouraging them to leave. I quickly closed the tattered paperback before any of it triggered my yuk reaction.

“What’s the matter? I thought it might be funny to look at.” Theresa passed the smoldering joint back.

“You do know it’s about men having sex with each other, don’t you?”

“Guess that would bother you more than me, ah?” Grinning, she took the paperback from me and opened it to mid-book.

“Oh!” she said, after another hit on our shared smoke. “You’ve got to hear this.” She read out loud in a teasing voice as though she was reciting in class. I tried to close my ears, worried what she was reading might ruin the mood.

She stopped reading long enough to give me a long glance. She returned to the disintegrating paperback and spoke more carefully — the love scene she'd been reading described a man fellating another man. If you could get past the gender thing, it was intense and clinically graphic. Every so often she paused to look at me. She noticed I'd gone embarrassingly erect, which I'd been trying to hide.

She studied me for a moment. "Would you want me to do what I'm reading to you?"

"Ah, umm. Well yeah, sure. What man wouldn't?"

"All of it, even the end part?"

"Emphatically yes. I mean, only if you wanted to, though."

"It sounds interesting," she said, putting the book aside. "If I can do it right, it seems to me you will like it a lot." She playfully tapped my erection to watch it bob back, already shockingly comfortable in our intimacy. "Let's finish smoking, and I will surely try."

The love-making that followed ripened into another erotic fantasy, full of sensual impressions impossible to forget, details tender beyond remembering. A couple of times over the weekend I caught her re-reading sections of *Forbidden Love*, and soon, very soon, as the days and especially the nights went by, she'd perfected techniques I'd only heard about and surpassed anything similar I'd ever experienced.

Despite the lack of a lesbian sex manual, we both delighted in my explorations of her exquisite body. My eyes exulted her female curves, my running hands swept around and across her buoyant breasts, teasing nipples stiffened with fingertips and lips; I savored the dense and silky pelt furnishing the crease between her legs, redolent with a personal perfume that would've aroused me if I'd been a dead man. We lost ourselves in ecstasies of discovery and exploration.

One afternoon she asked me to hold up my palm so she could put her hand against mine, thumb to thumb, little finger to little finger.

"Do you think my hands are too big?" she asked.

"Too big? No, they're perfect." The tips of her long slender fingers matched mine, her middle finger, maybe a touch longer. I could easily visualize them caressing me. "Why?"

“Some people think Hawaiians have big hands and feet.” She popped up a naked foot and wriggled the toes. “I am only hapa-Hawaiian, so maybe mine aren’t so much. I wanted to know if you thought so.”

Often, in the late afternoon, we found time to slip out to the club’s lanai and look out to our beach and watch the shadows grow long as dusk descended over the island. These hours of quiet conversation, gentle laughter, and affectionate comfort-touching were coming to mean as much to me as our lovemaking. I was experiencing with Theresa a freestyle way of life in a Hawaii most visitors would never see. On the girlfriend front, things were working out better than I could have dreamed.

On sun-hazy weekend afternoons, we sometimes walked along Kalakaua toward Waikiki, checking out the sidewalk shops. One of Theresa’s favorite treats was “shave ice”—thin ice chips in a paper cone flavored with tropical flavors like pineapple, mango, guava, and passion fruit. I liked them too, but I didn’t care for every treat she did.

Several of us caught a ride to the Ala Moana Shopping Center to see the Saturday matinee showing of *2001*, a movie adapted from Arthur C. Clarke’s stories. Stoned to the gills, we nearly left our skulls during one of the character’s transformation through a monolith. I couldn’t stop talking about it. That hadn’t been some schlock horror crap up on the movie screen that some idiot called science fiction. It was the real deal, from Arthur C. Clarke, one of my favorite science fiction author’s books.

Afterward, Theresa wanted to visit the Crack Seed Store, where her favorite treats, salty dried plums called *li hing mui*, were sold. A small bag of these dried-up lumps would last her several days. She chewed them like a ballplayer chews tobacco, a lump in her cheek for an hour or more. I asked to try one, but she refused, assuring me I wouldn’t like them, and she didn’t want to waste any. I dogged her until she finally gave in. The hard, dried fruit required mastication and lots of saliva to release a sweet and sour, but mostly salty flavor so strong it brought me to tears. I was determined to like it even though I was forced to spit it out on my palm every couple of minutes. My valiant effort continued until I finally gave up and hawked the soggy mess into the gutter. I kept her in stitches laughing at the faces I made. Though I laughed along with her, I didn’t ask for another one.

Without question, Hawaii was a distraction to the band, and as the bandleader, I'd been woefully derelict in my duties. The desk clerk had to come to my room with two telegrams he'd waited days for me to pick up. In the first, dated several days earlier, Jimmy wrote that he'd gotten Mac instead of me when he called and asked him to have me phone the office in LA, collect. Uh oh, that was the day we discovered and smoked ganje, which explained why Mac forgot to tell me. The second, from two days earlier, read: "Rumor has it, Larry Dunlap alive and well in Honolulu. Please confirm immediately."

When I got Jimmy on the line, he told me he'd guaranteed us a spot on the *Steve Allen Show*, though no specific date had been set yet. Also, we'd be doing a TV special with the Grass Roots, and another was in the works with Billy Joe Royal. Last, he wanted me to consider accepting dates at the Factory and other influential Hollywood clubs after Hawaii to promote *Look Back In Love* rather than going to Indianapolis. Exciting stuff, but as far as rescheduling Indiana, no dice, it would be the first time in three years since some of us had seen our families and friends—too many people would be disappointed.

"And oh, before you hang up, Larry," Jimmy said, "you should know that Eddie growled at me. He wants to know when he's getting the finished arrangements for the new tunes you're supposed to record when you get back to LA." Hawaiian time held us in its grip; I promised him we'd get back to work on this enchanted island of Circe soon.

Theresa and I settled into a routine. I hungered for Friday and Saturday late afternoons and nights with Theresa, letting everything else take a backseat. We struggled as a band to maintain our professionalism in the midst of the giant beach party taking place at the Lemon Tree every night. We tried to stick with wearing matching outfits on weekends, but on weeknights we'd gone native, playing in aloha shirts and long shorts, and bathing suits or shorts and tank tops at Saturday afternoon jam sessions. Mac often kept an unlit Camel behind his ear unless it was working in an ashtray next to a drink on a table by the stage.

I grew elongated sideburns down to my jawbone in furry isosceles triangles; they came in bright red in weird contrast to my dirty-blond mop-top. I kept them anyway; I thought they looked kind of Beatle-y. Since the constant breezes blew

my hair every which way, I didn't bother with haircuts, rarely even a comb. Nobody seemed to mind.

Rehearsals went unscheduled as, beguiled by sun, sand, and sea, we snorkeled at Hanauma Bay and visited North Shore, the Hawaiian Cultural Center, and other island highlights. There was no demand from our mostly military audience to learn new songs; their musical preferences were time-warped by memories of home. Our club owners, Stan and Shirley always had some event on tap—informal luaus, lunches, or dinners—with standing invitations for us.

We visited the Nooney Rickett Five, friends of ours from Indianapolis when they performed in the International Marketplace. Our bands had hung out together in San Francisco during our year in North Beach. Most of us were having a fine old time, except for Mickey, who'd begun showing signs of distress at being stuck on a small island in the middle of a big ocean—a kind of geographic claustrophobia locals called rock fever. I thought it was probably caused by homesickness for his wife, Lora, and little boy, Mikey. But I wasn't homesick. I loved Hawaii.

8 BUNNY'S TALE

Be wary then; best safety lies in fear.

—Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

April 26, 1968

Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii

THE FOLLOWING FRIDAY, Theresa and I sat alone on the Lemon Tree lanai sipping fruit juices with our feet up. She'd twisted her lustrous hair back into a bun; a pale sundress covered her bikini. On her feet were braided leather sandals I'd found for her in a Waikiki shop. I wore an unbuttoned short-sleeved shirt over my canvas board shorts. Except for occasional pedestrian and light traffic on Kalakaua, we enjoyed the afternoon's solitude. Our chairs were pulled close so we could touch while we watched cloud shapes shed shadows across the rippling ocean in the approaching dusk. As usual, the warm breezes ruffled our hair, carrying indecipherable secrets from far away. I turned and smiled at Theresa, content to be by her side.

"Larry," she said, a tentative tone in her voice. "Would you mind if I stay with you tomorrow night? All night?"

"You mean you and me sleeping tucked tight together until morning?" We spent hours entwined together in my narrow bed, napping in the afternoons, but we'd never tried a sleepover.

"Yes." She grinned. "I like it when we fit together like two spoons. I get so comfortable, sometimes it's hard to make myself leave."

“That would be amazing. I would love snuggling with you all night, sweetheart.” Waking up in each other’s arms seemed a natural progression in our relationship. I liked the idea and hoped this would lead to her staying all night more often.

“Great,” she said. “That will help a lot.” She jumped up and pulled me to my feet. “Let’s go for something to eat at the noodle shop.” I loved the way she concentrated on every item on the menu before making a choice, how enthusiastically she enjoyed eating, slurping her noodles and voraciously spearing every morsel on her plate or in her bowl. She’d steal bits from me and offer me tastes of her choices. Every day was an adventure.

There was something odd about her response to my exuberant agreement to a sleepover that tickled my brain, but it didn’t percolate through until the next day. How would sleeping all night with me help her? I hadn’t decided whether I would mention it or not when she came to my room Saturday afternoon with her overnight case.

Ravenous for each other, the decision about whether to ask her about how I was helping her got postponed again until we lay nestled together.

“Theresa, is there some reason why you need to stay here all night? I mean, besides the obvious. You made sleeping here sound like I’d be doing you a favor.”

She sat up, slipped on her bikini bottoms and rustled into her sundress as she moved to sit at the little table. “You know I like being curled up with you. I’ve wanted to let myself go to sleep instead of leaving, even if I never said so.”

I swung my feet to the floor looking for my boxers. I was missing something. “I’m looking forward to tonight, but if there’s some other reason you need to be here, I’m okay with that, too.”

Theresa gazed at her fingers twining together on the table, reluctant to acknowledge I’d said anything.

“Look, I want you to be here. The way you asked seemed strange, that’s all. I can’t help being curious.”

Her face twisted away from me. “I don’t want to say, but I don’t want to lie to you either.” Her swollen eyes reproached me. “Someone is coming tomorrow to take me to the mainland. I have to go meet them.”

I held back shock and surprise, and yes, disappointment. Sleeping together in each other's arms, the new experience of waking together, wasn't the reason she was here.

This would also mean goodbye; our unbelievable fantasy would end. But aside from that—someone coming to take her away—it sounded all wrong. I wasn't good at probing questions, especially when I feared the answers, but I had to ask them. Though she was embarrassed to tell me, eventually it came out. Before we met, she'd been seeing a musician in a band who'd played at the Lemon Tree previously. Though our fragile relationship was evolving, I didn't know much about her life beyond the hours we were together. I had no right to be jealous, but these revelations produced bruises I felt on many levels.

"I'm going to have my own apartment on the mainland," she said, voice small with the sort of fragile hope you deceive yourself with when the rent's due, and you're praying your lottery ticket will hit. "In San Francisco. And I'll have a good job—as a model. I do model sometimes, you know, at Liberty House."

I sighed from somewhere around my heels. "Theresa . . . who, in what band, honey? Who promised you this?" I worried at this question the way a tongue harries a sore tooth.

"What difference would that make?"

I hadn't been able to keep myself from asking about this nameless musician. I wanted to ask how she felt about him, but she was right, what difference did it make? Except to make me feel crappy about being a musician.

Her eyes dulled, and she glanced away. "He said he would get me a good job on the mainland."

"What's supposed to happen? There's someone you're supposed to meet?"

"A woman will be here Sunday morning to take me and some other girls to California. He said he would try to come, too, if he could. If not, the woman would arrange a place for us to stay until he could come to help me pick out my apartment." She pulled at a strand of her hair as the fantasy she'd let herself believe unraveled with every word she spoke. "She would get us easy work in the beginning so we could get on our feet." She spoke in a plaintive tone, like a disappointed child.

My heart made my stomach ache through a difficult discussion for us both. She told me she'd only been with him the last couple of weeks he'd played here, but she was the one he loved, even though other girls were offered trips to the mainland, too. I'd heard enough. In rising panic, I realized the undeniable truth. Theresa was being recruited into the sex trade. How could such awful things be happening in this incredible place?

I'd learned about sex trafficking from Bunny, a girl Mac shared a faded mini-mansion with in Indianapolis in late 1964, three and a half years ago. After Dave and I saw Mac performing in a slick nightclub band from Cincinnati, we discovered he'd left his group and was living with two girls in a large house on North Meridian Street near downtown, not far from the Governor's Mansion. We needed a singer, so I decided there was nothing to lose in asking Mac if he'd like to sing in my vocal group, the Reflections. From the moment he'd introduced me to Bunny, who I'd assumed was his girlfriend, I'd been morbidly fascinated by her thinly veiled profession.

I'd never considered the existence of a dark underbelly to the Wonder-Bread town my friends and I often disparaged as "Indianoplace." Mac's comments more than hinted at Bunny's ambiguous celebrity in the shadowy under-city where she consorted with vice detectives, corrupt police, judges, and high officials in city and state government. She must have known countless sordid stories if she ever dared tell them. I hinted to Mac about my interest in more details, but he was reluctant to elaborate. One thing he did say: "Never ask a working girl why she does what she does—'bout the worst thing you can ask."

My wife, Pat, met Bunny in the normal course of events when Mac joined the group. I hadn't yet figured out what to tell my innocent, young wife about Bunny; I was still trying to wrap my mind around who she was myself. Pat naturally assumed as I had at first, that she was Mac's girlfriend, similar to the other girlfriends of the guys I'd sung with and known from school. Soon, she'd struck up a friendship I'd never seen coming. On a fateful fall night, Bunny invited Pat to join her in a secret field trip to Cincinnati to check out a suspected rival for Mac's affection. To say the outing ended badly is to suggest the Civil War was a minor scuffle.

Not long afterward, I dropped by the mansion to pick Mac up for rehearsal. Bunny and I sat together in the mansion's sitting room while I waited for him. I'd never had a real conversation with her before. She turned the topic to Pat.

"You know, Larry, I love your sweet wife. I never met anyone so smart and still so innocent," she told me. "We had such fun talks on the phone. I never had a girlfriend to say silly girl stuff to before. I suppose I knew she didn't understand what I do for a living." Bunny's sideways glance revealed her vulnerability. I couldn't help but sympathize with her wistful desire to connect with someone who lived a normal life, as she saw it.

"I guess we can't be friends anymore now that Pat knows what I am. I'll miss that very much."

"I can't say for sure how she feels, Bunny," I said, realizing what she was asking. "I think she's a little embarrassed about being in the middle of what happened, but she's not mad at anybody." Bunny's suspected rival had turned out to be Mac's wife, a personal detail he'd failed to mention to her, or us.

She nodded. "I sound like a stupid school girl, and God knows, I've never been one of those." She stared away from me, despondent. I understood Mac's convoluted relationship with Bunny much better now, of course, but in those early days, Bunny had displayed a proprietary affection for Mac I assumed he reciprocated. I'm sure what she discovered in Cincinnati, and the ferocious fights with Mac that followed, disheartened her more, but her regret for the loss of her short-lived friendship with Pat was touching.

"Do you know how someone becomes what I am?" she asked softly. The delicate lines etched beneath her eyes were beginning to concede her age and experience.

"No, Bunny, I don't." I itched with curiosity. I couldn't deny my lascivious desire to hear what choices had brought her to this life.

She nodded and paused before going on. "I was an orphan." She sighed with regret. "An orphan in Chicago. Found out my folks hailed from Tennessee originally, never figured out how I got to Chicago, though. As a kid, you don't have a way to measure how bad a place is." Her eyes drilled into me, but a glimmer of the little girl she might have been shined in them somewhere. "I never remember being happy as a child." She straightened the skirt of her long, flowing day dress

and reached for a cigarette. Bunny's hair was done up in tight blonde curls, but I'd seen her real hair—buzz-cut short for wigs she used to help create erotic illusions in her professional roles.

"I was such a pretty little thing, you see, so cute, and I craved the attention I got from that as a youngster. Until I turned thirteen and my ass was sold to the Chicago mob so they could turn me out." I bit back a shocked expression at the casual way she uttered that brutal statement.

"I can't say the mob picked me out of the child welfare system exactly, but the bosses musta paid off whoever the hell did. Of course, I didn't understand this then. They started me out right away, taught me everything about sucking and fucking every which way, men and women both, sometimes together." She spoke matter-of-factly, just reciting the truth of it. "The training was simple. They'd treat me nice if I did everything they told me to and starve and beat the shit out of me if I didn't. Only good thing about that, they didn't use drugs. I was prime beef; they wanted me to last a long time." She took a lengthy drag on her cigarette.

"My trainers passed me around for a while, banging various people in the organization. Not for too long, though, they wanted me young and relatively unspoiled. I was being tested for aptitude, and well. . . I took pride in doing what I'd been taught." She stopped speaking, and with exacting deliberation tapped ash into a thick glass ashtray. Her laugh came harsh and painful.

"What the hell did I know? I was just a goddamned kid. A girl like Pat, now, she was probably in junior high when she was that young." She sighed again. This disclosure was costing her; I reconsidered whether I should let her revisit all this for the sake of my curiosity.

"Being put out on the street was the next step in my professional career. Like some sorta graduation, I guess you could say. I didn't like that, but they didn't put me out on the stroll for public consumption to, say, turn a car trick for some weirdo in a pickup truck, oh no. I was far too valuable, though they did threaten me with it. Better things were planned for me, so some wise guy stayed with me to chase off any cars that tried to stop and proposition me. They dressed me in tight, white, up-my-ass shorts, a halter-top made of a shiny piece of string, and five-inch pumps. Everything I had was out there on display." She licked her lips and crossed her legs, collecting her thoughts.

“The street scene didn’t last long. I was nearly fifteen. At least I thought so. By then I realized nobody knew or cared about my exact age, they told me how old I was, and I believed ‘em. What the fuck difference did it make anyway? Not long after what I thought was my fifteenth birthday, I got a present. My handlers arranged for the Chicago cops to pick me up in a blue and white for solicitation and give me a vacation in juvie hall for a few days.” Her eyes, dim and cold, challenged me. I knew what she wanted me to ask, so I did.

“Why would they want you arrested? You said they had big plans for you.”

“Yeah, and those plans didn’t involve me ever getting away from them. That’s one of the ways they protected their investment in me. See, by getting me busted as a hooker, even as a minor, I had a record. I’d never be able to work at any other kind of job. They used the Chicago police department to designate me as ‘fuck-for-hire’ for the rest of my life. That was now my permanent résumé for any cop, in reality, almost anyone, to look up. Don’t seem to be no expiration date on taking money for sex. And after I was legal, they got me busted a few more times—just to be on the safe side.”

“How did you end up here? With all this? In this huge mansion and all?”

She shot to her feet, waving her arms wildly. “All this?” Her laugh was maniacal. “All fucking this? All goddamn-it-to-hell this? You think this is mine?”

Her face wobbled as she groaned, pulling her lips into a bitter grimace. “Larry, this place ain’t mine. I don’t own a goddamn thing. Chicago owns this place, Chicago owns me. My name isn’t even my own. Chicago gave me my name because one of my trainers thought I looked like a Playboy bunny. Nothing here belongs to me—least of all me—me doesn’t even belong to me.”

Bunny’s conversation came to me in a flash as I sat with Theresa. I’d grown more and more regretful of my meddling curiosity as my sympathy for Bunny grew, but I also understood she would despise me if I let any pity show. I was forced to sit with nothing to say as she fled from the room. I hoped what I was about to tell Theresa would count in Bunny’s favor whenever such things were toted up.

9 TURNED OUT

The person who ignores slavery [human trafficking] justifies it by quickly deducting the victim is a willing participant hampered by misfortune.

—D'Andred Lampkin

*April 27, 1968
Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii*

LISTEN, THERESA," I SAID, desperate for her to understand. "You're being turned out. You can't let this happen to you."

"What does that mean?"

"Turned out, is an ugly expression for luring or forcing girls into having sex for money. This guy you knew is trying to use your affection, and phony promises he'll never keep, to capture you. And I don't think he's working alone. I knew a girl who got caught up in this kind of evil, and she told me how it works. They'll make you have sex with people you would never want to have sex with, and in ways you would never want to do it. If they have the right connections, they'll arrange to get you arrested so you'll have a record as a prostitute and you'll never be able to do anything else. And they will hurt you without pity—maybe even use drugs—to make you do exactly what they want. Your life will be over if you do this."

She averted her eyes. "I wouldn't have to do anything I didn't want to. And I could get away if I had to. I know I could. All I want is to leave this island. On the mainland, I could get away."

I moved close to her and forced her to look into my eyes. “You won’t escape from them. They might let you think you can, but you won’t be able to. Theresa, going with these people won’t be the beginning for you. It will be the end of you. They want to turn you into a sex slave.” I pulled her close. She curled into me, sobbing.

“I don’t like scaring you this way but believe me, this is extremely dangerous,” I whispered in desperation. “Please, Theresa. You have to believe me.”

She lifted her eyes to mine, and I saw her misery and confusion. She glanced from one of my eyes to the other. Whatever she saw made her say, “I can’t stay here, Larry. There’s nothing for me here. I have to leave this place.”

I ached to tell her I didn’t want her to go anywhere away from me, that I’d be here for her always, but I choked on the thought. My emotions were running wild, I didn’t dare promise things I couldn’t deliver, so I only said, “But you do understand this isn’t the right way, don’t you? You’ll give up this crazy, dangerous plan, right? You won’t try to go with them tomorrow, okay?”

She wouldn’t agree right away, but her stubborn resolve was breaking down. When I detailed more of the depravity she was facing, she finally shook her head. “No. I won’t leave with them, but I want to go to the pickup place. Robert is supposed to be there with the woman. I made a promise, and so did he. I want to tell him in person. I want to slap his face for his lies.”

“You shouldn’t go tomorrow; you shouldn’t risk it. You don’t have any idea who or what will be waiting for you out there.” Even as I said this, I was ashamed to admit I didn’t want any part of such a confrontation myself.

“I don’t care. I must go see.” She was adamant. This wasn’t part of the simple and fun part of the plan. I was getting involved in something that happened before I’d come to Hawaii. After all, how much of this was any of my business anyway? But how could I live with myself if I let her face these deceivers alone?

“Okay,” I said, fears and reservations ringing in my head. “Guess we’ll have to go tell them you’re not going anywhere tomorrow morning.”

Sunday morning revealed a Honolulu cloaked and hidden from the usual sunshine by a thick fog obscuring every familiar sight. The moist air was still and unpleasantly cool, making me sneeze and cough; no trade winds blew for the first time I could remember since being here. I gave Theresa a questioning glance.

“Kona winds,” Theresa said. “They blow smoke from volcanoes on the big island over Oahu sometimes.”

“Well, if we needed it to be more creepy, it is.”

We walked hand-in-hand down Liliuokalani to the corner, everything across the street, including our beach, lost in the gloom of an alien city. We cautiously made our way along a strangely malignant Kalakaua as barely visible vehicles whooshed past us. At a corner, where I struggled to make out Lewers Street on the sign above us, we waited apprehensively. I peered at my watch. The fog had delayed us—it was five minutes past eight. Theresa leaned against me, shivering. I felt rather than saw movement in the cross street to my right.

“Theresa? Are you Theresa, is that you girl? Come over this way so I can see you.”

I stepped in front of Theresa as an obese woman’s form in a long robe or shapeless dress that must have been cut from a tablecloth materialized out of the mist.

“Who are you? What you here foah, mista?” She tried to peer around me. “Is Theresa there behind you? You come out now, Theresa.” She fumbled in a large handbag. “I have airplane ticket for you girl.” She waved a rectangular ticket envelope in front of her.

My revulsion brought on shudders. I worried someone might jump out of the fog at us. I’d figured I could deal with some musician and a woman in broad daylight on a major street in Waikiki. I hadn’t counted on this dark and gloomy morning. Major mistake on my part not to ask any of the guys to come with us. *Especially, Mickey*, I thought. *If the fighting pride of Prineville, Oregon, were here, nobody would dare threaten us. Where is this Robert asshole anyway?* I thought, my head on a swivel.

“Where is Robert?” Theresa called out.

“He cannot come. He is playing the music. He sent me, Roxanna, to get you, to bring you to him. Along with the other girls.” She gestured to either side, and three or four shapes appeared beside her, pallid forms, thin and solemn as if waiting for Charon’s ferry. “You see? We are all going to big happiness on the other side of the ocean. You want to come, no?”

Theresa yanked on my arm and whispered. “Larry, get me out of here. Please.”

“Get away from us, woman, before someone calls the police,” I screamed, though in the thick air it didn’t sound near as menacing as I’d intended. “Get out of here you hag, you vulture. You girls. You should get away from this evil woman.”

Roxanna took a step toward me screeching. “You come here to me Theresa; you come here now. You been bought and paid for girl.” She took another step, her tone wheedling. “You come, be safe with me. You will have happiest life ever.”

Loathing everything about this creature, I shouted, “I told you to get away, you ugly bitch. Theresa is not coming with you. Not now, not ever.”

The woman reached into her purse again. Only God knew if her hand would come out holding a weapon. “You must come, girl, otherwise other people will come for you. You agreed, so now you must come.”

I spoke from the side of my mouth without turning, counting on my voice not carrying beyond Theresa in this murk. “Quick, turn around and walk back the way we came, but don’t get out of my sight. Stay within a few feet of me; I’ll be right behind you.”

“Send anybody you want,” I yelled at the corpulent apparition, adrenaline wobbling my voice. I stepped backward, one foot at a time. “They’ll have to come through me.” We melted back into the fog. I grabbed Theresa’s wrist. Praying a car wasn’t coming, we sprinted across Kalakaua. I pulled her along behind me, and soon the shrill voice shrieking her name faded behind us. I didn’t feel secure until we were behind the dubious safety of my locked door where I held this precious girl in my arms as she sobbed on my shoulder.

As a result of our expedition, we’d crossed an unspoken threshold. Sunday night we slept wrapped around each other like puppies. Though close to my height, she snuggled into me, the crown of her head beneath my chin in a possessive way we never had before. When we woke, the experience we’d gone through squeezed my heart, and I could barely stand to let her out of my sight. Her eyes never seemed to leave me, and we needed to touch each other throughout the day.

We took lunch out to our beach where Theresa told me things I hadn’t known. She’d already told me she was only nineteen. When we met, I’d assumed she was at least twenty-one and hadn’t given much thought to the difference in our ages. I hadn’t realized the Lemon Tree was an eighteen and older club, not serving alcohol to anyone under twenty-one. I was twenty-six. Instead of Theresa being five or

fewer years younger than me, there were nearly seven years between us. It was a disparity I'd set aside, considering how well things were going between us. But now that our souls had crossed into new territory, I guess she wanted me to know more about her.

She lived with her family and three brothers, one older and two younger, in a little town above Pearl Harbor called Waipahu. She worked at her mother's restaurant on some afternoons, and occasionally as a clerk or model at a Hawaiian department store. Her folks hadn't known she'd been coming to the Lemon Tree with Charlene on weekends. She didn't like sneaking around behind their back, she said, but she didn't think she could tell them what she was doing with a musician in a nightclub in Waikiki, either.

"Theresa, did you consider what you would have put your parents through if you'd gone with that woman? It would've broken their hearts, wouldn't it?"

She looked troubled. "I would have written them when I got there. I would have let them know."

We sat in silence. "What will your mom and dad think about you not coming home for the last two nights?"

"They think I am with Charlene." Her eyes weighed me for a moment. "But now I think I'm going to tell them the truth, that I was here with you." I nodded uncertainly. I wasn't exactly sure what that meant for our future. My erotic fantasy adventure wasn't over as I'd feared, but it had become a lot less fantasy and a lot more real.

10 BLUE HAWAII

It's no use to go back to yesterday because I was a different person then.

—Lewis Carroll - Alice, *Alice in Wonderland*

*April 30, 1968
Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii*

A COUPLE OF the guys noticed my moodiness Tuesday night, but I didn't tell them why. The harrowing experience Theresa and I had gone through Sunday had changed things. The girl was burrowing a home in my heart; a part of me was panicked, another elated.

“Hey bruddah, whaddup?” Dewey waggled the Hawaiian Shaka sign at me, a fist with thumb and little finger extended. “What you wan drink, ah?”

Stan's Lemon Tree was a family affair. Dewey, with help from Stan, was the brother who held down the head bartender job. I sat at the bar—something I normally didn't do, but I wanted to be away from everyone while I tried to let my chaotic emotions sort themselves out.

“Come on, my bruddah, I'm buy. What you like?” Dewey leaned widespread arms on the bar as his face widened in an infectious grin.

What the hell, a drink might get me onto a different page. “What are those cool-looking blue drinks I see people order? They almost glow, I've never seen those anywhere else.”

“Ahhh. Blue Hawaii. Very special Hawaiian drink. Invented by famous bartender at Hawaii Hilton. We make 'em wit Blue Curacao liquor, three kinds

rum, all layered just so, and plenty fresh juice. You will like *nui loa*. You want one of dose, I make for you myself.”

While Dewey set off to build this amazing-looking drink, I considered the flaws in my dating plan.

It wasn't the perfect solution I'd hoped for. I hadn't counted on getting to know so much about my fantasy girlfriend. Conflicting emotions fogged the simple pleasures I'd been experiencing with her. I was already a little apprehensive about the bittersweet pain I knew parting with Theresa would cause, but something serious was happening now that I wasn't sure how to process.

I was still shuffling through my brown mood when Dewey interrupted to whip a napkin onto the bar and settle a huge, double-rocks glass on it with great care. Light reflected through deep, neon-blue liquid overtopping the glass to surface tension.

“No umbrella or limes on dis, leave mo room fo rum.” He smiled proudly as he gently slid the glowing, azure creation across the bar to me. “*E luana*, my *haole* friend.”

My first sip surprised me. This drink not only looked spectacular, it tasted good. I took another healthy swallow. No, it was fantastic. When I drank liquor, I drank for the effect of the booze, not because I expected my taste buds to enjoy the experience. The flavor of exotic fruit juices and a smoky-sweet tang that must have come from the different kinds of rum, plus a clove-like hint of spice, filled my mouth.

As Dewey drifted toward the other end of the bar, I hollered at him. “Hey man, insane drink. Had no idea. Thanks, my Kanaka friend.”

He laughed. “Okay bruddah, but I'm no Kanaka, me. I'm Samoan. When you finish dat one, though, you come back. I give you nudda one, goin break yo mouf.”

He spoke English every bit as well as I did, but he liked to switch back and forth between pidgin and what he called “proper English” when he was playing his role behind the bar.

I strolled back to the stage, feeling pretty groovy, and rested the remainder of my drink on the B3. I got way into the music this set, singing my ass off, too. I finished my Blue Hawaii between songs, sure that Leonard, Mickey, and I'd been attached through our musical souls. We'd cooked the rhythm section. The other

guys must have thought so too—they grinned like the baboons at the Honolulu Zoo.

The thick, blue, neon goodness was helping me turn a corner about my Hawaiian girlfriend. Some of my mood had come from knowing she'd been with another guy in another band, one that played here, in this club. But that wasn't what was most important. I shuddered, wondering how any human being could trick another into the depraved and evil thing he'd had in store for her. How could he live with himself? How much money does a monster get for destroying a girl's life, selling her into slavery? What was the going rate for that? And how, I thought with guilty outrage, how could Theresa have ever agreed to this? What made her so desperate to leave? I could barely think about her doing the things we did together with someone else, let alone this vicious animal and the horrors she could have faced in the future.

My slightly-alcohol-tinged new reasoning attempted to lecture me: *You're such a fucking idiot. Why are you reliving this? It's over. She's got a chance at a much happier life now, thanks to you. Whatever happened before you came here is in Theresa's past and has nothing to do with you. Why pick the whole thing to pieces? She's arguably one of the most gorgeous, sexy girls in Hawaii. She wants to be with you while you're here, and you certainly deserve to get the girl. Can't you stop trying to analyze everything for a change and just enjoy being with her? Doesn't everyone say, "If it feels good, do it"—and Theresa does feel undeniably, incredibly, good, doesn't she?*

There must be some Hawaiian word for the concept of living in the moment. It's such an island-ish concept. I wished Theresa was here to tell me the word. But since she wasn't, the next best thing would be to go see Dewey again before I went back to the stage for the . . . hmm, what set was this? Oh yeah, the third.

The second Blue Hawaii was better than the first. I smacked my lips at the sweet, smoky tang after the first swallow, but a racket from the other guys interrupted my appreciation. I remembered I played—and maybe even sang—on this number, so I decided I better get with it on the keyboards. I might be a few bars late, but right there was middle C. I spread my fingers into the right chords and dropped them onto the keys. *Nope, wrong chord, wrong sound too, need more stops out. Okay, got that, oh wait, goddamn chord changed, got to move my little*

finger out to a major seventh, like so. Check out those fingers of mine, popping up and down on the keys. Is that cool or what?

The drink, the set, and I finished at approximately the same time. Guess I'd been good again 'cause everybody laughed with me, 'cept Les. There was a gleam in his eye, but he wasn't smiling. I clapped him on the shoulder.

"Hey now, Bear," I said, using the nickname the girls who'd let us sleep on their floor had tagged him with when we first got to California. "Don' worry 'bout me gettin' it goin' now. Jes' had a tiny little setback there for a minute, I'll be bringing it next set."

I'd gotten a little paranoid. I was pretty sure the band thought I'd had enough to drink. In fact, someone might have even said, too much. How could anyone have enough of these astonishing drinks? They made everything so clear. People ought to be able to get a prescription for Blue Hawaii libations. Help anybody get a new perspective on life. I took my empty glass to a table in the far corner of the club where nobody from the band would notice and got Eileen's attention, a waitress Dave was dating, and I knew, to order a Blue Hawaii. She took my empty and returned before I expected, asking me for five dollars. Goddamn, first one I'd had to pay for, these fuckers didn't come cheap. I took another heavenly swallow.

I had to admit the keys were a little fuzzy, but I wasn't worried, my mind was clear as a bell. I'd taken the ingenious precaution of getting to the stage early so I could set the drawbars on my B3 for the first song ahead of time. Extra carefully, so as not to slosh a drop, I used both hands to gently set my fresh blue elixir on the organ. Crap, couldn't set 'em right if I didn't know what we were going to play first. I stumbled around the dark stage looking for the setlist Leonard kept on top of his bass drum. When I put it back, the damn thing slipped past the edge of the drum and down behind the drum pedal. *Crap! Well, Leonard will find it.* I scrambled back to the bench, but by then I'd forgotten the song. *Crap!*

I couldn't remember a lot of our final set. I figured I probably had some good moments, but I'd gotten confused a couple of times, too. I might have been supposed to go up to the front mic, but I forget on which song. Seemed to be a surprisingly short set. I wondered if someone had snuck sips out of my blue drink. The glass sat dead empty on my B3, and I didn't remember getting a swallow. Les

might have dumped it out when I wasn't looking. He didn't seem too happy with me.

I staggered off the stage, relieved the night was over so I could concentrate on blue drinks and not have to wonder which damn song was next. I didn't think I'd be able to play that well after another one anyway. Not a very positive attitude, I know, but still I didn't think so.

"Larry, in a few minutes we're going to the Outrigger to see Dick Jensen, you with us?" We'd first met Dick and the Imports at the Hullabaloo Afterhours in Hollywood last year. He was here playing at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel and their hours ran later than ours.

I nodded, not entirely positive who'd asked. "Sure am. Going with my brothers. I love you guys, and I go where you go. Everywhere we go, I go, too." But before we went, I had to get another drink, which I'd come to think of as medicine. I found another table and explained I wanted the blue drink with Hawaii in the name, which my new waitress found hilarious. She said she'd have to hurry to get my order in before last call, so I let her go while I congratulated myself on how funny I was. I was still laughing when the bright-blue glass arrived. I had to pee, but I took a generous swallow first. It was a considerable achievement to get the main vein drained—*damn I should be doing standup comedy*. Soon, I was back to savoring this rockin' drink. I probably wouldn't be able to get another one, I thought sadly. . . Say, I bet they have them wherever it is we're going.

"Come on Larry, we're going to walk. It's only a few blocks. . . Hey, you too fucked up to go?" I smiled and shook my head waving them on as I drained the glass. I stood, taking a moment to get my bearings. Everyone had disappeared out the front door, past the lanai, so I followed a bunch of people out onto Kalakaua into the soft Waikiki night air.

The scene around me was from a fantasy world. The aroma from the flowers and pretty things blooming everywhere floored me. What an achingly beautiful place I'm in. I sniffled at the thought of how many people I knew who might never get to see or experience these things. I had to try and remember times like these in case I died. What did Les always say? "These are the good times, and we're having 'em." I guess I'd gotten ahead of everyone or something because Dave and Mac came up on each side of me from behind.

“You okay, man?” Mac asked. “Come on Dave, think our fearless leader needs a little assistance.” They grabbed me under the shoulders and duck-walked me between them. Did seem as if I walked straighter. *I’m not heavy, they’re my brothers*, I giggled. I’m still funny. I wanted to thank them but decided to focus on moving my legs instead.

“Don’ think I wan’ go in,” I told them, shaking my head carefully because otherwise, I got dizzy. We were outside of someplace where an awful racket came from inside. I felt sensitive to sound; tires hissing behind me on the street made my skin crawl. Dave and Mac tried to encourage me to come in, but I held my palm up to them. “Think I better go home, though I’d ‘preciate you pointing me in the right direction.” I burped up a little Blue Hawaii, not tasting so good the second time around. “Not exactly sure where home is from here.”

My world had become a little shifty, revolving around me faster than I could keep up. Dave and Mac let go of me while they discussed something I couldn’t follow, so I threw my arms around the pole I was leaning on and examined a spot where a bit of yellow paint had worn off the metal. Focusing on the imperfection seemed to help me orient myself. But my legs gave way, and I slid down the pole to the sidewalk, forced to search for another smudge or splotch to stop everything from whirling.

Mac’s face loomed in front of me like a mustachioed balloon in the streetlight’s glare. “Listen man. We want to go inside, but like you said, you’re too messed up to go in with us. But we can’t take you back right now, so we’re leavin you here for jes a few quick minutes. We’ll be right back. You’ll be safe here.”

My brothers sat me straddling the pole on the sidewalk. They pulled my arms around each side, so my hands touched each other. “Put your fingers together like this. Now hold on to the pole and don’t let go until we come back, got it?”

I carefully laced my fingers together. The pole reassuringly cooled my warm cheek. I was aware of the rings on my fingers and thought about pulling my fingers apart long enough to put them in my pocket so they wouldn’t get stolen. But I couldn’t control them individually; they were good and stuck. Well, helpful to know they wouldn’t release themselves by accident anyway, so I didn’t have to worry about falling over. I glanced up to show my buddies I’d figured out how to lock my fingers together, but they were gone.

Some other people came by, and I tried to smile at them, but they seemed horrified to see me sitting on the pavement hugging a pole. I wondered why. I was still in my suit. My tie was in my pocket, but I couldn't have looked that terrible. I must have fallen asleep because when I woke up Dave was trying to get my fingers unhooked from each other— but then everything went black again.

I came back to the world holding on to something white and cold. A stomach full of seething acid insisted on exiting my body. I barely had time to lean forward before a stream of thick, steaming, brown liquid gushed out through my mouth, each nostril and maybe even my eyes and ears. Once wasn't enough; in a couple of seconds my stomach rose again, expelling more noxious and sticky, burning fluid, and I let out a pitiful moan. These parts of my body weren't made for stuff to come out of; it made them hurt. I grunted and hurled and slept, rinsed, repeated. Someone came in and flushed the white thing, and I realized I was nuzzling my hotel-room toilet. I didn't care. I was ready to die. Anything to stop the retching.

Eventually, when I'd vomited up everything including most of my internal organs, I curled up into a ball on the linoleum floor. Ten minutes, ten days, or it might've been ten years later, I crawled into the shower. Someone had gotten my clothes off me. Leaning on the walls, I managed to tug socks and underwear over my ankles. I drenched myself until the ends of my fingers wrinkled. Grabbing a towel, I pulled it after me, falling into bed wet, to sleep away most of the next day.

BEFORE YOU GO

Thanks for reading this excerpt of *Enchanted*, the concluding book of *Things We Lost in the Night*. If you haven't yet read *Night People*, the first book of the memoir, you can find it with a simple search by title or author on Amazon.com.

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With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Larry".