

I walk towards the beach, where I see a lone figure standing on the sand. Abe is looking at something out on the water. As I get closer, I can see he's looking at Aka and Nalu floating just outside the breakers, watching him. I clear my throat softly so I don't scare him. He turns around.

"Oh, hey Keala."

"Hey Abe, how's it going?"

"Ok, I guess. I talked to your mom about what they want you to do, with the orcas. I told her it should be me."

"You? Why would you tell her that? You can barely even swim."

"It doesn't matter. She said I'd never survive a day out there. But it's my parents that died, and what does it really take to sit on the back of an animal, right?"

"Forget about it Abe, it's not going to happen anyway. My dad is launching that canoe, and it will take more than Friese to stop him."

"You're right, I guess. I'll talk to Palani about getting on the voyaging canoe. They'll need me to make sure they find the right parts."

"You don't need to go Abe, I'm sure you can tell them what to look for."

"It's not only that Keala. I want to find the drone that fired the missile and smash it to pieces. It's stupid, I mean I know it's just software right? But I still want to do it."

"It's not stupid Abe, I feel the same way."

I look out at the orcas. Aka is holding a tow rope in her mouth, and Nalu squeaks noisily as if she notices my attention.

“What, you want to take me surfing? There’s no time for that now, not that you could understand.”

Nalu floats in on a wave and partially beaches herself, which I’ve never seen them do before. I wade into the water near her, but take care to give her space in case she starts wiggling her massive bulk.

Abe calls out from behind me.

“I think they want you to grab the rope. Should I go get Friese or somebody from the *Kilo*?”

“No! Do not get Friese. That’s the last person I want to see. Maybe they want to show me something. Don’t worry Abe, what’s the worst that could happen? They eat me? You can have my stuff.”

“As far as I’ve heard, they don’t eat people Keala.”

“I know that Abe, I’m joking. Maybe there’s a hole in the fish pens again. We can’t afford to lose any salmon. I’ll be back soon.”

“Don’t go Keala, it’s not safe.”

“It’s totally safe Abe, what’s going to mess with me when I’m with a killer whale?”

“It’s the whale I’m worried about.”

“Abe, if Nalu wanted to hurt me, she’s had a chance every time I go surfing.”

I wade out into the water, making sure to give Nalu plenty of space. A few strokes and I’m at Aka’s side, grabbing hold of the rope. She swings her body around and tows me out to deeper water, then dives under me and surfaces so I’m draped across her back behind her dorsal fin. Nalu shimmies backwards off the sand as Aka powers through the water. The rope isn’t

doing me any good, so I hold on to her sharp dorsal fin as best I can. We head towards the fish pens, then past them. A few people in canoes wave or point, but they're mostly busy gathering the salmon.

Aka accelerates and we're racing across the Bay, going faster than I've ever gone. I lose my grip a few times and tumble off into the water, but Aka circles back and lets me grab on again. It's exhilarating and a little scary to go so fast. Before I realize it we are passing Waikokos on the west edge of the Bay and heading out to the open sea. I'm getting a little battered and cold, so I tap Aka's back, but she doesn't respond.

"Hey, I want go back! Just stop! I'll swim back myself."

They ignore my shouts, and I notice that at some point Hoku joined us. I've had enough and jump off Aka's back and into the water. I'm pretty sure I can make it back to shore, so I start swimming. Hoku swings around to block my path and Aka dives under me again, surfacing with me on her back. This happens a couple times before I figure out they're not going to let me go. I hang on to Aka to keep my head out of the water, and as soon as she feels my grip she accelerates out further into open water.

I've been scared in the ocean before. You have to be stupid not to be afraid of something so powerful. I was never scared of the whales though. I always thought of the orcas as big friendly creatures, all rounded, smooth, and smiling. Now I understand that I am completely at their mercy, and they're not so cute. I don't know what they want and I can't make them understand me. Or even worse, they do understand but don't care.

The swells out here are big, and I can't see much when I'm between them. Without me noticing, all three whales are gone and I'm left floating on the surface. It's probably too far now

for me to make it back on my own. I never really thought about dying before. I mean about me dying. The worst thing is that I'm so alone out here. I'd give anything just to be able to hold someone's hand right now, even Lani's.

As quick as they disappeared, the orcas resurface; surrounding me and spy hopping. Aka dives on top of me, pushing me down into the water under the weight of her thousands of pounds. She could easily crush me, but somehow she doesn't. Still, there's a sharp pain in my side when she smashes into me. I fight back to the surface, but she does it again. The third time, I know what to expect and take a deep breath. Then Hoku swims over both of us so I can't get back to the surface.

Aka grabs my leg in her mouth and plunges straight down, dragging me with her. It feels like my leg is going to rip right off, but it doesn't and the pressure increases as we quickly go deeper. With one hand, I grab my nose and blow, releasing the squeezing pain building up in my head. I can feel my lungs being pressed tighter and tighter by the weight of the water. The ocean is getting dark around me, and I don't know if it's the depth or I'm blacking out. Hoku opens her jaws and I float free, but I keep drifting downwards. As everything fades to black, my last thought is that they won't even find my body.