

Edward Tablak

Do Generals Just Fade Away

Prologue

“Ouch, you’re hurting me.” The voice was but a squeak from Billy Bowman, the second grade bully at Franklin Grammar School.”

“Quit pretending, Billy, or I will hurt you like you hurt Timmy, the smallest kid in the first grade class. You don’t like being held down by a girl, but I will do this or worse if I see you hurting any small kids.”

“Awright. Just let me up. I promise.”

She heard the voice of the school principal. “Abigail Adams, please come here.”

Abby let up on the bully, stood and brushed off her skirt. With her head down, she slowly walked toward the voice.

She was the tallest child in the first grade at Franklin Grammar School, in fact taller than some second graders.

She was surprised when the voice of the principal was not harsh and scolding, which is what she was expecting.

“Abigail, I saw the entire incident. Billy deserved to be punished, but that is not the responsibility of a young lady like you. I am sure that Tim and other children appreciated what you did but that behavior is not ladylike and I want you to grow up to be a lady.”

“But, I.” She was interrupted by the principal.

“I know you want to protect the smaller children but here, that responsibility is mine along with the teachers.”

Abby heard and understood, but it would not be the last time that she faced down bullies. In fact, on several occasions, later, she earned the respect and friendship of a few bullies.

Little did she realize that caring for others and winning the respect of opponents was to become her hallmark?

Chapter 1.

The crowd on the beach was thinning. Families had packed up their gear, gathered the children and headed for the parking lot.

Abby was enjoying the last rays she had spent the afternoon alternating between dips in the ocean and letting the sun deepen her tan.

While the body was lazy, the mind was active. At the top of her mind was the subject with which she had been struggling for a few days.

“Forced into retirement at age forty five has created a problem for me. Jerry is busy with his maintenance projects on the rental properties while I am left to my reading and sun bathing. That is not my nature.”

I feel that I ‘m doing a good job as Jerry’s wife but that isn’t enough. God has given me this brilliant mind, the ability to speak a dozen languages and a fast healing body.

I can’t let that gift be wasted. I have to find a way to serve others. I wonder how Jerry would feel about adopting children or serving as foster parents. We live so far away from the grandchildren.”

“I guess I need to be patient. My past experience tells me that life has a way of challenging each of us.”

Farther up the beach, two young teenagers in their cut-off jeans were hanging around, waiting for their opportunity. Both were charged with bringing a stolen iPhone to the gang leader as initiation into the gang.

Frankie already had his, having picked up a phone from under a blanket of a woman who had gone for a dip and thought that a phone under the blanket was safe enough.

Not safe from Frankie. He had been watching her do the same thing on two previous occasions earlier in the afternoon.

Toady was getting nervous. He was due to bring the phone at seven this evening. “I just can’t fail. Not only will the gang not accept me but I will be tagged as a weak kid, a kid without guts. I won’t have anyone to hang out with.”

Suddenly he saw this good looking babe slowly rising from the sand. He had been unaware of her body lying there. “What a hot looking chick.”

She strapped on a fanny bag and picked up her towel. Without looking around, she began walking slowly toward the hotel.

Toady decided that this was his chance. He started running to get within walking distance and then sneak up on his prey.

Twenty yards behind her, he slowed to a walk, sure that she could not hear him in bare feet in the sand with the soft sound of the lapping waves muffling any sound of his approach.

He suddenly was having second thoughts. “This gal is tall and looks well built. She’s a lot taller than I am. Hell, if my first plan doesn’t work I can scare her with the knife.”

He pulled out his knife, reaching to grab and slash the strap of her fanny bag, seize the strap and dash for safety.

“This is my lucky day. Beside the iPhone, she probably has a wad of cash and some kind of jewelry.”

Toady worked out each step in his mind. He had the right grip on the knife and decided on a long leap that would land him just behind her left shoulder.

He took his leap. Just as he started to reach, the tall woman whipped around, gripped his arm that was sliding toward her and thrust him forward into the sand on his face and stomach. In a flash, she was on his back and his arm in a half nelson so tight that he was screaming. The kid never had a chance.

She looked round to see if he had a friend but saw no one near. Holding him with one hand, she opened her bag with the other and called 911.

Fifteen minutes later the beach patrol arrived and relieved her of the thief.

She called the police later and discovered that the youngster was challenged to steal her phone as a way prove himself worthy of being accepted into a gang

Neither was aware at this time that their paths would cross again.

Today’s hot, tall babe was General Abigail Adams Foxglove, retired, now the wife of retired General Jeremy Foxglove.

She was a tall striking woman, age 45, who looked thirty and was in great physical condition, although recently separated from the U.S. Army with a medical discharge.

She had served on General Foxglove’s staff for three years as his Intelligence Officer in Afghanistan. It was during the last few months of her service there, that she realized that she had fallen in love with her boss, fifteen years her senior.

Abigail respected the general for his strong leadership but also discovered a man who cared for every soldier who served under his command.

Of his staff, he expected careful planning of each expedition that would minimize injuries or deaths. Abby thought of Jerry as a man with a mind of steel and a sensitive heart, a rare combination in any warrior.

Jerry and his Quartermaster, Colonel Bud Tachow, were close friends. When the opportunity presented itself, the two of them would sit down for a drink in the evening, often inviting Abby, a fellow staff member, to join them.

One of the things that bound them together was the fact that all three had lost their spouses in recent years.

The camaraderie grew deeper over the many months. As close friends often do, they exposed their deeper feelings and thoughts with each other, allowing them to lean on each other for support in times of stress.

Abby thought of Bud as her godfather or even the father she had lost when yet a child. He found ways to help quiet her emotions when the stress of her work was taking its toll.

Jerry and Abby discovered traits of each other that moved them to a love relationship that remained bottled up and unspoken for months.

Abby found herself, lying in bed, feeling the spot where Jerry had placed his hand on her arm during the conversation.

Some nights were worse than others, especially as she remembered his pain when he had reports of injuries or death of men under his command.

An open relationship between a soldier and her superior was absolutely verboten, especially in a battle zone.

It was only when they returned to the States and was assigned to separate commands that they were able to express their feelings for each other.

Their assigned military personal quarters were adjacent to each other, a surprise that served them well, once they discovered their mutual attraction.

Theoretically they lived in separate units but they spent most nights together, mostly in Jerry's apartment but also in Abby's. Some of her books and crossword puzzles as well as bras and panties found their way to his night stand or bureau drawer.

They gave themselves time to be sure that this June-December love relationship should be merged into marriage.

The months slipped by as two mature adults enjoyed life as honeymooners do, but in this case it was prior to the wedding.

They decided on a private wedding in Reno Nevada, attended by Abby's mother and Jerry's daughter's family.

It was while they were having drinks at the Top of the Mark that Jerry surprised Abby when he asked Abby's mom, "Martha, why don't you rent out or sell the house in State College and move with us to the Big Island? I have three other condos besides ours and I believe we ought to be close to each other."

Tears seeped out of two sets of eyes. Abby stood, pulled Jerry to his feet and wrapped her arms around his neck while planting a long kiss on his lips.

A half hour later, after some discussion, Abby placed a call to Uncle Joe, Martha's brother, who was delighted and said, "I will get things started. Take Martha with you so that she can see her future home and good luck to you and Jerry."

After a few more days in San Francisco, the newlyweds moved into Jerry's condo on the Big Island in the Hawaiian Islands.

Martha fell in love with her future home, especially the ocean view from her screened-in lanai.

She was only two miles from Hawi, the largest town on the part of the Island and located on the north shore. The beach was a public beach, visited by families for the main part and a half mile from the hotel's beach, which was crowded and noisy.

She knew within a few hours that she would love her new home as well as being close to her loved ones. She couldn't wait to tell Uncle Joe and to invite his family to come for vacations. "I have plenty of room."

Abby's mom, Martha, decided to rent out her home in State College, Pennsylvania, and moved into the condo, three doors from the newlyweds but was invited three or four days a week to test the cooking skills of her two grown children who were competing in the kitchen.

Jerry tried to convince Martha to move in next door but she insisted that would intrude on their privacy.

Jerry finally yielded. "Just remember, Martha. Burglars and thieves like the residences of older folks, especially if there is some distance between houses. I hope you won't object if I set up an intercom system with our house."

Martha smiled. "That will work fine, Jerry, but you mustn't fuss too much. After all, I've been living alone for more than twenty years."

Abby and Jerry, who wore side arms for years, would not think of going unarmed in this crazy world of today. Both registered their guns, including new small but powerful hand guns that they carried either in their fanny packs on the beach or in carefully designed holsters.

Two professional soldiers, who never cooked a meal during their years of service, found that cooking a coordinated dinner was a challenging art form.

After overdoing a rib eye roast one evening and serving cold pancakes that were too thick the next morning, Abby and Jerry signed up to attend a cooking class. They laughed their way through failures and successes.

Both became excellent barbecue experts within a month and moderately good cooks by the end of the class.

Both were determined to stay in good physical condition. Jerry worked out on his Bow flex machine while Abby stayed in shape with Yoga and Tai Chi. Both jogged five days a week.

There was a lot to learn about being homeowners and land lords.

Jerry went to a class for handymen to learn the skills he would need to maintain the four condos he owned.

Abby set out to make their new house a home that was attractive but restful. She and Martha spent hours shopping in Hawaii and doing some painting in both homes.

Married life was taking shape for the newlyweds.

There were romantic evenings when the couple joined together to cook a candlelight and roses dinner, complete with the right wines and two desserts, each a surprise for the other.

Life was glorious for Abby, in particular, who had spent most of her life without intimate relationships and hardly got to know the first love, of her life, Tom, who had been killed at the Pentagon on Nine Eleven.

Jerry was a wonderful surprise in many little ways. She loved the way he silently moved to her back and wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed the nape of her neck.

She found little ways to retaliate that Jerry obviously loved.

She loved the teasing moments in the kitchen when they bumped hips or when they exchanged love pats on the fanny.

They began most mornings in the shower together, teasing, touching, washing each other and then toweling down each other and ending the ritual with a tender kiss that said, "I love you."

Most evenings, after doing the dishes, they worked on one of the New York Times weekend puzzles from the book with 200 puzzles.

They seldom watched TV, except for a few PBS news programs. Most of their news of the world came from the Washington Post, on line. Often, the late evening ended with Jerry tinkling on the spinet piano. Some evenings either by request or on Jerry's initiative, the melody would become "You'd be so nice to come home to", a love song that was decades old but stirred the passions of the two lovers.

It was in the intimacy of their bed where both, with sensitivity and tenderness expressed their deep love for each other.

They held hands as they walked to the bedroom. Jerry would turn on the dim nightlight.

Their ritual included undressing each other slowly, looking deep into the other's eyes that were expressing love for the other.

That love was also announced in the way each partner caressed the other, with the words they whispered and the way their bodies climaxed by melting into each other and clinging together, each wanting the moment to last forever.

Each such evening did not end until they lay facing each other and sharing some long forgotten secret from their pasts and a long loving kiss to say good night.

One evening at dinner, Abby said, "Honey, we need to make plans for entertaining our twin grandchildren during their three week visit early this summer."

"I agree. In fact, I've been considering a thought I had. How would you like to join me in a special building project?"

"I'd love to but I have no building skills."

"That's phooey. I've seen you fix every little gadget that goes bad in the house, including the vacuum sweeper and the blender."

"All right. You found me out. What are you considering?"

"A fifteen foot sail boat. We could teach the children to sail. I was a pretty good sailor during my teen years and even considered applying for admission to the Naval Academy.

We could sail to some coves with picnic lunches and do some exploring. The children might love to do a little fishing."

"What a great idea. You are wonderfully creative, grandpa. So that's why you've been reading all those sailing magazines.

Jerry laughed. I thought I had hidden those magazines."

"Honey, there is no way to keep secrets from eagle-eye Hawkshaw."

Two minutes later they were sprawled on their stomachs reading a catalogue of easy-to-build sail boat kits. It was late that evening before sleep beckoned.

Life was fun and exhilarating for Abby and Jerry. They had a future for which they were making plans.

Abby fell asleep thinking about how each new experience with Jerry seemed to deepen her love for him. She moved closer to Jerry just as she fell asleep.

Chapter 2.

They decided on a fourteen foot Moonfish as the sailboat that met their needs and their pocketbook. The beam was four feet. The sail was triangular with an area of 69 feet and a fixed rudder.

Jerry negotiated an arrangement with the proprietor of the shop to assemble the kit in his work room near the pier. The proprietor would supervise the assembly process

His comment was, “You really won’t need me but I’ll be with you all the way. The only tricky part will be the gluing procedure.”

“My assistant, Jake, will handle the addition of the small motor which you have chosen.”

“Be sure to read all the instructions about this craft and review your sailing manual.”

Abby, whose IQ was in the near genius category, had one look at the instructions and never looked again. She led the whole process without help until the first time they started the process called stitch-n-glue.

Jerry insisted she take the helm on the first trial sail. He wasn’t surprised that after reading the manual, she was a master sailor before she put her body into the cockpit of the Moonfish.

The next morning at 1030 hours, they set sail on an exploration and picnic expedition. Jerry was at the helm while Abby’s eyes searched the beaches and wooded areas on shore. She took dozens of snap shots of the areas, the trees and birds.

Abby started giggling and pointing to a tiny sunny beach where a couple of bare-assed youngsters were making love, totally unaware of peeping Toms, who were silently moving by on the water.

Twenty minutes later, Abby gave her nautical command, "Ninety degree starboard, sailor." They headed into a sunny beach, about thirty yards wide, that seemed to be cut out of a shaded wooded area on the shore.

Jerry raised the rudder while Abby jumped out and pulled the craft onto the sand. Jerry brought the cooler with food and drinks. Abby reached in for the blankets and towels.

She chose a particular spot for the blanket, spread the blanket and spread a couple of towels atop the blanket. She walked to the boat and swung the prow about seventy five degrees to port.

"What are you doing, honey"

"I am not interested in some other sailors watching us during the next stage of our expedition. Sailor, I would appreciate your assistance."

"You may remove my bra and these scanty briefs that you have been ogling since we set sail. I am about to have my fantasy fulfilled."

Much later, she lay with the sun continuing to deepen the tan of her naked body while Jerry prepared the picnic lunch.

When he was ready, he turned to tell her that the food was ready. She was sound asleep. He smiled, took a seat near her so that he could admire this woman who loved him and whose beauty at this moment might be called a study in tan.

By the time they finished their late lunch, the sun had moved a bit northwesterly so that their small beach was more shade than sun. They packed quickly and set sail, with Abby at the helm. They also searched for locations where they could bring the twins during their visit.

In the evening, Martha had them come to her place for drinks and dinner. She had made a hearty stew which she served with home baked bread and an Italian's Red wine that the owner of the wine and cheese shop had recommended.

Abby who had more sun than was wise and more wine than was wise, fell asleep on the sofa. Jerry slept in one of Martha's spare rooms.

It was Abby who called the other two to breakfast of juice, toast, ham and eggs and hot steaming coffee.

Afterwards, the three of them worked on making the house "children proof" for the arrival of the twins' stay

From the moment Susan's family was in the station wagon, Eleanor, the younger twin was snuggled in the rear set with Gramma Abby while Teddy was deep in conversation with Grandpa Jerry.

Susan and Foster spent the first three days with the family and then, as planned, began a fifteen day tour of the islands.

Ellie loved tennis so she and Abby spent an hour or two on the courts each day. Teddy wanted to learn to play golf so Grandpa took him for lessons several mornings.

The other mornings were spent in the sail boat learning to sail and fish. It so happened while Teddy, the older and obvious leader of the two, found himself trying to catch up with Ellie as a sailor and as a fisherman.

One could see that while Ellie loved her Grandpa, she was absolutely taken with her new Gramma, Abby. She rose early to help make breakfast. She accompanied Abby to do the grocery shopping where she was rewarded with a chocolate sundae at the Sweet Shoppe.

Ellie chose the seat next to Abby on the sailing expeditions for picnic lunches and watched closely how the adults handled the tiller in all kinds of wind conditions.

"Grandma, you are the greatest teacher I ever had, even better than Miss Jackson, my math tutor."

Their time together was coming to an end. The tears flowed freely in four sets of eyes when the children and their folks headed up the ramp towards airport security

Jerry and Abby were absolutely worn out from the constant stream of activity over the fifteen day stretch with the grandchildren.

Abby drove home from the airport while Jerry fell into nap mode.

After the long interruption in their routine, they slept late the next morning. They started the day with their shower, teasing and laughing. The routine took a right turn that surprised but pleased Abby when Jerry led her, not to the kitchen, but back to the bedroom.

Much later, they lay side by side, holding hands, and reminiscing about the wonderful visit with the children.

Abby's voice was husky as she said, "Thank you, honey for loving me and giving me the experience of grandchildren. When I was younger, I thought about having a child but it didn't seem like a priority. I had no idea the joy that children bring into one's life. Thank you, dear."

Jerry felt the tear drop as she leaned over to give him a kiss.

Jerry was pouring the last of the coffee. Abby said, "I think it would be a good idea to talk about some long range plans. We have so many years ahead of us, having been given early retirement."

"I agree and have been postponing the conversation until the children's visit was past. I chose a life of service, one form of which is now behind me. What brought the subject to mind just now?"

"It must be the great visit with the grandchildren. I didn't realize the joy that comes from being wanted and needed by young ones. One evening after we put the kids to bed, I fell into a reverie in which I saw myself with so much love to give but only you and Martha to be the subjects of that love."

"You are both so able to meet whatever challenges come your way while the world outside must offer thousands who can use one or all three of us."

Just as Jerry was about to agree with her statement, the doorbell rang. Jerry answered the ring and a moment later he called, "Special delivery for you, Abby."

She had no idea why anyone would send her a special delivery message. She signed the postman's list and immediately ripped open the envelope.

The brief letter was from General Brown, her former superior and now a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"Jerry, the letter is from Jim Brown. Let me read it to you."

"Dear Abigail

There is a serious matter developing in the Islands. The National Security Agency is coordinating an investigation with the FBI serving as the point guard.

We would be most pleased if you could make yourself available to assist with your language skills. The principal suspects appear to be from the Middle East.

A Mr. Davey Jones will call to invite you to lunch. Please discuss this with Jerry and let Mr. Jones know your response."

Warm regards,

Jim Brown

Abby looked to see what reaction she could read in Jerry's face. He seemed to be puzzled.

“I’m perplexed, Abby. It can’t be Army business. Jim is just asking for a favor on behalf of the NSA or, more likely, the FBI, The Davey Jones is obviously a cover that sounds like the FBI. What’s your reaction?”

Abby said, “If you think it is okay, I would like to explore the request with Mr. Jones but only with your approval.”

“Abby, you don’t need my approval, but if you choose, you will have my support.”

Jerry picked up the torn envelope “The postmark is local. It appears that Mr. Jones carried the letter and posted it in Hawi. That phone call will probably be made within the hour.”

Right at 1300 hour the phone rang. “This is Abigail Foxglove.”

“My name is Davey Jones. I believe you are expecting my phone call.”

“I am.”

“I would like to invite you to lunch, tomorrow if possible. The invitation is for you and the General, noon in my suite at the Four Seasons.”

Abby was surprised that Jerry was being invited.

“You may be surprised that I am inviting both of you even if the letter did not so indicate. I would be pleased if both of you said yes to my invitation.”

Abby held her hand over the mouthpiece and asked Jerry who nodded a yes.

“We would be delighted.”

“Please come separately, five minutes apart to room 714. Thank you.”

The phone clicked off.

Abby was chatting with Jones when Jerry knocked. The waiter, who was setting up the table, answered the door to admit Jerry.

The two men shook hands and with Abby they took seats at the far end of the living room portion of the suite Jones, and with their nod of approval, poured glasses of California Chardonnay.

Joes inquired about their health and specifically about Abby who responded, “Fit as a fiddle. It feels as though both bullets missed me rather than nipping my lungs.”

Jones said, “That’s great. I know about the injury but not the circumstances.”

Jerry interjected, “She stepped in front of her superior officer during an assassination attempt on his life.”

“Well, I’m glad you are doing so well.”

At that moment, a knock on the door announced the arrival of the food .Five minutes later they were seated at the table, ready for lunch and the real conversation.

“Of course, my name is not Jones, but, if agreeable, let’s keep it that way.

Abby and Jerry nodded their agreement.

As they picked up their forks, Jones started. “We have definite proof that two sons of bin Laden and two nephews of al-Zawahiri have entered the United States using false passports which belonged to recently deceased Saudis and two recently deceased Egyptians.

We have them under surveillance since their arrival in Los Angeles a few weeks ago. Three days ago I took the same plane to the local airport along with another agent, fearful that they might have something planned for the flight.

Yesterday, they met with a local resident of Pakistani heritage, but whose family has been here for years. This young man, Michael Hutto, however, keeps posting anti-western messages on the Internet, making us believe he may be a radical convert.”

Jones paused to have some of his salad while his guests waited patiently.

He continued. “While we have no direct evidence that any of the four have ever been involved in an attack we have been able to follow the money, that is their specific bin Laden money, to Radical Islamist and Jihadist organizations.”

“There is no reasonable explanation for four wealthy married men to be staying at a family vacation resort without their families.”

When Jones paused to have some food, Abby asked, “How are they registered?”

“They are in suites, theoretically expecting family members to arrive later.”

He continued. “We have managed to have a bug placed in each of the rooms of all the suites and on the home phone of our local resident.

We also discovered the local store where they bought burn phones which they are continuing to use. The result is we have been able to listen to all phone conversations.”

“Something is definitely brewing, but we have a serious problem. We have no one available who understands Arabic or Urdu. We were surprised to make the discovery. “

“Worst of all, it is unlikely we can have someone flown in for at least ten days.

With the increased number of immigrants arriving from the Middle East, our interpreters are in much greater demand

We believe that we do not have that much time and I had to find some alternative and my first alternative is you, Mrs. Foxglove. In fact, your history tells me you are not only my first but perhaps the finest.”

“Thank you. I guess it would be useless to ask how you knew I was so close at hand.

Jones smiled. “I prefer that you not ask. What I would like to have happen is for you to say that you will be willing to help us. ”

Abby hesitated and glanced at Jerry. She interpreted his smile as “It’s up to you.”

“Mr. Jones, give me some specifics.”

“I am authorized to have you as a contractor for the FBI as an interpreter. There are hours of taped conversations that have to be interpreted. I also have current tapes that need attention in case something in the conversation points to some immediate action.”

I do have someone who understands Urdu and some basis Arabic, who is willing to listen to conversations involving young Michel. I have someone arriving in a few days that can help with Egyptian Arabic, but it is a heavy load to catch up.”

Abby looked at Jerry. He said, “You’re looking at long hours and knowing you, many of them will be consecutive since you will not be willing to take time off. You know that about yourself. I will support you, if you choose to do this.”

It seemed to Jones like hours for Abby to decide but it was only two or three minutes. She ran over the list of things on their platter and the conversation with Jerry about her desire to serve. This was not what she had in mind.

“All right. May I suggest you find Anthony Silacci, a First Lieutenant, to see if he is available for a couple of weeks, ASAP, You need to make a request of the Army for temporary duty with the FBI? He is an expert in Arabic and Farsi and some Urdu.”

“I can do that and probably have him here within twenty four hours.”

“Lieutenant Silacci was strapped in a military craft waiting for the takeoff, sitting on the floor with his hastily packed suitcase beside him. *“What the hell is this? I can’t complain about temporary duty in Hawaii, but why? OH, hell. This is the army.”*

His twelve week assignment to Fort Huachuca near Tucson, Arizona was nearing the end. He estimated that the mystery would be solved in about eight hours or so.

Tony had no idea that he was about to join hands with the finest boss he ever had. Abby was the G2 while he served on the staff near Kuwait City after the first Gulf War.

He kept tabs on her meteoric rise in rank and responsibility during the months after she was suddenly relieved of command to take a change of duty with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

As Tony deplaned, he recognized the face of the highly decorated General Foxglove, now retired and the husband of Brigadier General Abigail Adams. *“What is this about?”*

The gentleman, who was standing next to the General, stepped forward. “Welcome to Hawaii, Lieutenant. I’m Davey Jones of the FBI, temporarily your new supervisor. Let’s head for baggage claim.”

“You’re here at my request because your former superior officer, Colonel Adams, at the time, has need of your services. She will explain. First, I want to introduce Retired General Foxglove, Abigail’s husband.”

The two men shook hands. “I am delighted to meet you, General. I have admired your wife ever since our brief time of service in Kuwait and have followed her career with admiration.”

“Thank you. She is something special, isn’t she?”

Tony nodded, his mind trying to fathom the meaning of all that was happening. *“It has to be something unique to my skills.”*

As they walked to the door of the office building, Tony was *thinking* “*Do I salute or shake hands?*”

He needn’t have worried. Abby met him at the door with a warm hug and a “Great to see you, Tony. Come in. the coffee is hot and I have plenty of cream, remembering that it was how you took your coffee.”

It was typical of Abby. She allotted ten minutes to a warm welcome to her friend and then said, “Here’s the picture, Tony. Davey has tons of recordings of conversations among five suspected terrorists. They speak only Arabic or Urdu. Today a sixth voice was recorded, speaking Farsi.”

The Company, lacking Middle East language specialists for the present and immediate future has asked me to interpret all the conversations for the last few days, as well as keeping tabs on all current calls. We should have six of us but, with you, we are three and maybe another who may arrive tomorrow.”

“Based on what I have gleaned from the early recordings, I support Jones’ idea that the five are planning some sort of terrorist event.

So far, I believe that the four have not met in person with Michael, the Pakistani local.

Tony, the four are two Saudis, related to bin Laden and two Egyptians, related to al-Zawahiri.”

Abby stopped suddenly. “Where are my manners? Tony, you must be as hungry as a bear. When did you eat?”

He grinned. “I think it was about ten hours ago. I love it, boss. Your drive hasn’t lost a step.”

After a group laugh, Davey sent out for some Hawaiian take out.

Tony said, “Boss.”

Abby interrupted. “Tony, it’s just plain Abby.”

“All right, Abby. Let’s continue until the food gets here.”

She picked up again. “The system I set up is as follows. When the subject seems to pertain to any planning, I mark the passage, electronically with a code for the speaker. At the end of an hour, I excerpt the marked passages out of the whole and put them into a unit and translate them with a voice recording for Davey to hear and interpret for himself the importance or lack thereof. It’s tedious but the best we can do for the time being.

While Davey is doing that, I do the same with any recordings that came in during the hour. It’s obvious that the current conversations hold the greatest danger if some plan has already been formulated.”

Tony said, “That makes sense and sounds like a good plan. Now that we are about to be four listeners, two of us can be alert for current phone calls and stop reviewing and listen directly for any calls that may signal an immediate threat.”

“Great thinking, Tony. I’ll make the arrangements. I hope our number four member arrives tonight. I’m getting nervous as I hear more of the conversations.”

Fred Miller, the new arrival said he had slept on the plane and was ready for his assignment. The fearsome foursome of Abby, Adid, Fred and Tony were a good working team

Adid had the most fun and told the others of some of young Michael’s conversations with his three steady girlfriends.

If Abby or Fred came upon a recording in Urdu, they switched the call to Adid’s station.

Early in the evening of the second day, Fred picked up a recording of a current call between the two bin Ladens. After he recorded the call, he asked Abby and Davey to come to his cubicle.

“Abdullah referred to last night’s late call and said he now had the electronic package and now only needed the back packs and the nuts and bolts. His brother said, “I can use the truck to get the heavy stuff and also the back packs.

Abdullah reminded him to buy the back packs from five different stores and the same with the hardware.”

Abby said, “Fred, will you start reviewing last evenings recording of calls from or to Abdullah so we can discover the importance of the conversations. Davey, what about your operatives? Do you have enough to cover the retailers and hardware stores?”

“I do. As you know, we have a good start because the purchases will be in cash and the buyers definitely will be Arabs. That will help us a lot. Besides, additional operatives, 4 women, just arrived and I intend to have them tail each of the four as soon as we definitely identify them. We already have someone on young Michael’s tail.”

A half hour later, Fred called Abby and Davey to his cubicle. I just picked up the recording of last night phone call. “

“Abdulla was telling his brother that he would buy the electronics today. He was concerned that Egyptians were casual about their roles and feared the group might not meet the deadline He said, “It must be done the first evening of the next moon rise.”

Dave flipped on his iPhone and said, “That’s eight days from now. We now know the approximate time, the number of locations but still do not know the specific locations.”

Abby interjected. “We do know that they plan to meet. Let’s reorganize. Fred, you have about six hours of past recordings to monitor. I think you should stay with that. Tony, you and I will be on twenty four, seven, listening to current calls to or from all five phones. The meeting has to be some time very soon. We must have the times and locations with plenty of time for planning and setting up listening posts.”

Davey said, “We definitely need the times. I have been assuming a coordinated attack but it might be done in series to draw most of the authorities to one location while the others have minimum police protection.”

Chapter 3.

Abby's husband, Jerry, showed up an hour later. He walked to Abby's desk where she was chatting with Tony.

After a very warm hug and kiss for his love, Jerry said. "It's been days since I've seen you and moreover, days since any of you have seen the sun or smelled the sea breeze."

I am here to take my wife to lunch. You need to double up while she is gone. I recommend that when we return, the next one of you should do the same as we are doing."

Abby knew that he was right and furthermore that he would not take no for an answer.

Ten minutes later, they were seated on the patio of a restaurant, watching a group of surfers trying to manage their boards riding the fair to middling sized waves.

Jerry talked Abby into ordering a filet mignon and a green salad to make up for all the fast food she had eaten for days.

"How's your back feel after catnapping on those firm bunk beds?"

"I'm doing fine honey. You shouldn't worry. As you know, we learned to sleep in short naps while in Afghanistan and certainly not in Beauty Rest beds. What I do miss is your warm body to which I love to snuggle but all this will be history in another week."

"Well, I can't help worrying and I do miss you. I have kept busy doing small repairs on the condos. Martha and I have been having dinner together at her house. I've been doing some painting and minor repairs for her."

"Thank you for that. She told me. We have a five minute chat each afternoon during a break period.

Davey has set up a good routine and takes care of us like a house mother at a fraternity house."

"He spends most of his time on the phone with his operatives while also working with us. With his leadership, I have no doubt we will prevent a major catastrophe. "

"I'm glad you have a positive outlook, but don't underrate the enemy. I am sure you are getting good info because they believe their cover is good. If they get the slightest idea that they may be identified, they could go deep and move the operation to a different location and take time delay. If that happens, you will lose them and eventually get a shocking surprise."

Abby said, "That could happen, but I believe that Dave, a veteran, will take that into consideration."

Jerry insisted on a slow stroll to the office.

Tony met them at the door. “Abby, we just picked up a call to Michael’s number by the sixth voice. The message, in Urdu, was terse. “The D is ready. I need to meet your boss.”

“Two minutes later, Michael called Abdullah, who said that he would call back within the hour.”

Meanwhile, Tony was translating into English for Davey, the condensed version of the past recordings which, when edited spelled out the plans for coordinated attacks at five different resorts within a five mile radius.

The locations and date were to be determined at a later date, but no longer than the end of the current month.

Later that afternoon, Davey joined the group in the monitoring area. “My operative, who is following the younger bin Laden, just reported that Anwar has just purchased the last of five backpacks. They are colored dark blue, adult size packs, big enough to hold three sticks of dynamite, with lots of room for miscellaneous items such as nuts and bolts, etc.”

A half hour later, Davey received two calls, one from Anwa’s tail and the other who was stationed at a hardware store on the edge of the city. The message from both was, “He just purchased a large bag of four inch bolts and nuts to match.”

At six thirty, Anwa’s tail called to say that Anwa had driven to the backyard of Michael’s home and unloaded the backpacks and five hardware store bags of nuts and bolts in a storage shed that then was double locked by Michael.

Tensions were running high for each of the FBI team. Everyone was aware of the amount of damage to persons within range of the flung bolts and nuts.

Tony hushed the group as he saw the signal of another incoming call to Michael’s phone. The message was terse.

“The D is accumulated. I need to meet with your boss.” The phone clicked off. He was a very careful man.

A few minutes later, the group was listening to a call from Michael to Abdullah whose response was “Tell him to ask for the private dining room at the Four Seasons, reserved by George Dullah. We plan to meet at one thirty, after the noon hour rush.”

Ten minutes later, Davey had the phone number of the sixth man, when Michael dialed his number.

Davey made a quick call and then told the group, "We'll know the identity very shortly."

A couple of hours later, Davey came in for another conference.

"I have tried to keep you clued in with information that helps you understand the whole picture. Our research tells us that the sixth man is Richard Mann, obviously an Anglo zed version of his Iranian name. He immigrated some twenty years ago and, apparently through hard work, owns a ranch twenty miles south of here.

Now that we have him under a microscope, we plan to take another look at the money. He has an extraordinary huge home and more than enough ranch hands than he needs.

He, of course, is providing the dynamite which is easy enough for ranchers to obtain without question. We now have two operatives covering his ranch, one of whom will be tailing his every movement."

Abby thanked Davey for sharing the information with her co-workers. Tell us about the meeting tomorrow.

"I will arrange with hotel management to bug the private dining area where the meeting is being held. I hope to have a monitoring area. That will be the booth, in which Tony will be with my communications specialist, listening and recording."

Abby, who was hoping to be part of the operation, felt let down. She was about to ask Davey but he continued his remarks.

"Two men and two women of my staff will be there as couples, having lunch at a table just outside the private dining room and two men, will be working as hotel staff outside the other door to the dining room."

Abby felt sure she was being protected and thus left out. She was holding her breath and hoping for some role.

"Abby, since we are close enough in age to be a couple, I would like you to be my temporary date and interpreter at a table out of sight and round the corner from that private room. I need you to do simultaneous translation of every comment made among those damned killers."

Abby let out her breath very slowly and said quietly, "You'll have it, Davey."

The two FBI couples staged their seating just outside the private room to coincide with the arrival of the five. The other team members had arrived a few minutes earlier but, of course were out of sight.

It was another ten minutes before the Iranian's arrival. The maître d' knocked gently and opened the door when he must have heard the word to enter.

Abby was not surprised that no introductions took place. The maître d' took their orders and departed before any other words were spoken.

Mr. Mann, the Iranian, opened with, "I am having only some soup and expect to be gone in five minutes after we are served. Let me begin. I have fifteen five-inch sticks of dynamite ready for pickup.

I would like your messenger to arrive for the material at six tomorrow morning. A gray metal box will be placed at the inside of my ranch gate behind a large bush. .

Here are the instructions for the route to my ranch. I expect you to be on time. I do not want the outside possibility that some stranger will drive by and notice the box. My servant will put the material in place at five fifty five and leave the area. He will return at six fifteen to see if the material is gone.

If your messenger is more than fifteen minutes late, the box will be removed. Understood?"

Abby presumed heads nodded since no words were spoken.

"Do you have the ten thousand in used bills?"

Abdullah could be heard saying yes.

"Please." He was interrupted by a knock on the door. Abdullah said in perfect British English, "Enter and, waiter, please hold the next course for twenty minutes."

Minutes later, the waiter was gone.

Abdullah asked, "Shall we have our soup?"

The entire course was consumed in silence

Ten minutes later, Abdullah, probably have received a nod from Mann, who was counting money, first in hundreds, then in fifties.

Mann said, "Good day, gentlemen."

Anwa followed him to the door and looked around. The dining room was almost empty except for the foursome near their door.

Inside, he said, "The room is almost empty except for two couples not too far from our room, but they seem to be pretty drunk. The waiter is bringing another round of drinks."

Abdullah said, "That's fine. Besides, this room is fully sound proof. Let's finalize our plans."

Josef, one of the Egyptians, said. "Here is a tentative plan that we discussed. After we are in agreement, I will burn all the copies."

"I recommend that the first bomb be timed to go off at moon rise, four evenings from today. That will be Michael's at the Big Island Hotel bar, which is always full on Friday evenings at that time."

Abby was certain she sensed a note of glee in his voice.

"Two sticks of dynamite will be adequate."

No one questioned his recommendation.

"The next should be at the Four Seasons, which is seven miles to the east, thirty minutes later. Knowing the Americans, most of the police force will be focused on the carnage and bodies at the bombed site."

"The bar at the Four Seasons is twice as large and also will be crowded. I suggest we have three sticks in the bag. Abdullah, I think this is a good place for you"

For the Hilton, the Holiday Inn and the International hotel restaurants, I recommend that they be hit simultaneously. If we delay and the police get the idea of a series, they may evacuate and close down all bars and restaurants in this part of the island.

If that happens, we will be shamed in the eyes of Allah and disgraced in the eyes of our superiors."

Davey turned to Abby. "With that information, I need to make a few phone calls. Please stay until they are disbanded. One never knows what offhand comment can give us another lead."

Abby nodded as she listened to the chatter in the private room. She heard nothing more that might be of help.

She heard the door open and the voices begin to fade as the group departed.

She packed the items in her tote bag and waited another five minutes before venturing around the corner.

She saw the foursome joking and laughing and one of the women toasting the others. They were putting on a great show.

The thought crossed her mind that one or more of the five might still be nearby.

She turned her head to the right and was staring into the eyes of a handsome image of Osama bin Laden.

The man began to smile but quickly turned his head away from her glance.

She thought, "I recognize that face but, of course, I've seen Osama's face in the media so often. That must be one of the sons and, of course, would not want anyone to remember his face."

As she turned her head back, something nagged her. "*Perhaps I have seen that face somewhere. Maybe, I was in Afghanistan.*"

She began a slow walk to the lobby where she would meet Tony, but her mind was running screens of Afghans she had met during her last stay.

"I got it. He had a lot more facial hair but he was in one of the southern villages during a visit some months before I left Afghanistan. I remember those eyes. He must have recognized me. That is why he turned his head so quickly. He did not want to be recognized. I must tell Davey."

Abby went directly to the office and to Davey's cubicle.

He was hanging up the phone as she entered. "Davey, I don't what it means but I accidentally ran into one of the bin Ladens. I am sure he recognized me as then army officer when we saw each other in a village in southern Afghanistan. He quickly turned his face away after the briefest of glances. Do you think it may change the way this goes down?"

Davey gave that some thought before saying, "I doubt it. You're in civilian clothes. He may not like seeing you but I am sure he will come to the conclusion that you are either retired or on vacation. He has no reason to suspect anything."

"Never the less, it may be a good idea to avoid any public place where you might meet again, although, he is probably doing the same thing."

She said, "I agree. By the way, he had a good look at the two couples at the table near the room. They need to be careful."

"That's under control. By the way, I think this is a good time for your group to know where we stand. Let's get together in an hour. Order in some beer or wine as I finish planning with my boss."

Davey started the meeting. "I think you might appreciate knowing our tentative plan since you have made such a great contribution to the project."

"Now that we know the locations and times for the bombings, my team of twenty operatives, five teams of four, will be on the go. Two team members will follow each of five

bombers from Michael's storage area to the designated goal. Two will be at the intended bombing location, awaiting the arrival of the bomber.

Once the perpetrator arrives at the scene, our operatives with the attending member of the State Police, the Fie O, will place the man under arrest and remove the explosives.

We are taking no chances, which are why we start at the storage area and make the arrest at the intended bombing location.”

“It is our intention to do this without any member of the public aware of what is going down.”

Even though no one present other than Davey would be in the action, Abby sensed the tension in the room.

She asked, “Where exactly will the arrest take place? At the car? Inside the building? During the walk to the building?”

Davey answered with, “At the entrance to the building? We need to make sure that his intent is clear.”

Abby said, “I understand. What if he is crazy enough to blow up himself at that moment? With his thumb on the right button, even quick action might not be fast enough. That could involve some personal danger to your team and as well as property damage.”

I see your point, Abby, but nothing about these men indicates such radical intention to kill themselves, but you do have a point.

He laughed and said, “I'll bet you have a suggestion,”

She laughed. “I do. It may sound crazy but why can't you substitute fifteen blank sticks? You have an agent on the scene to perform a three minute job in between the placing and the pickup.”

“I'll be damned. Great idea. With that assurance, we could even make sure the bomber is inside the building before the police make the arrest. That will add strength to the charges. Thank you.”

He walked to her and shook hands. “Your history revealed that you were extremely brilliant and creative. I sure would like to have you on my regular team.”

“Thank you but you should remember that I am retired.”

Abby's friend, Tony, laughed aloud. “Anyone would hardly guess watching the energy you put into this project.”

After the laughter died down, Davey said, "I would like to have constant monitoring starting at seven the morning of the dynamite pickup.

Every one of the enemy will be hyper tense. My five team leaders will be here, hoping you might find some weakness that we can exploit. We're almost on the last leg before show time. Even I get goose bumps at this stage of the game."

Young Michael had a secret. Months ago, he had bought a stick of dynamite He was convinced that it was his duty to kill unbelievers even if it might mean losing his own life Allah demanded sacrifice of all real believers.

He was able to find online, several methods for creating bombs and setting a timer in order to create the explosion.

After everyone had taken their back packs, Michael decided to add his stick of dynamite into his back pack. "*An extra bit of explosive will do more damage to the place where they serve the forbidden drinks.*"

Michael was extremely tense as he began the trip to the hotel. He kept looking into the rear view mirror to see if he was being followed.

"That's ridiculous. No one knows, so how could I be followed?"

Michael must have been on high alert. His tail was definitely not in view, since a bug had been placed on his vehicle as it had on each of the others.

He dialed Abdullah. "I'm sure I am being tailed even though all the cars behind me are speeding up and passing me."

"That can't be. I am not being tailed. Neither is Anwa. No other has indicated anything. Have you talked with anyone about this?"

"No. Not anyone."

"All right. Stop for a bite to eat. Delay your bombing for a half hour while you relax. I will take the first time. Stop for a bite to eat. Now, relax."

Michael stopped at a Burger King and got out of the car, careful to lock up. He waited for a few minutes to see if another car pulled up. He waited for two whole minutes but no one entered the parking lot.

He walked in, placed his order and took a seat. Two minutes later a very good looking young Hawaiian woman walked in, placed her order and took a seat facing Michael.

He relaxed. She can't be any sort of threat. I guess I'm scared."

The young woman, Ana, was watching Michael carefully while appearing to ignore him. *“He has all the earmarks of a frightened kid. He keeps moving his right hand in and out of a pocket. That’s probably the phone to trigger a bomb. Something else is happening. He should not be running scared.”*

She looked at her watch. *“If he doesn’t*

start soon, he will be late for his appointment to set off a bomb.”

Ten minutes later, she walked to the far side of the room and called Davey. “Looks like a change of plans. My date is in no hurry to leave but he is as tight as a drum and very pale as though he is ill or frightened.”

Davey said, “I’ll call you in five.”

She walked back to her booth just as her food was served. She smiled at Michael and began to eat.

Out of the corner of her eyes she watched Michael put his hand into his jacket pocket and quickly remove it. It was as though he was touching something very hot and quickly jerking his hand to keep from being burned.”

He is certainly not a professional. He’s just a kid who got caught in the web of radical’s recruitment. That nervousness can lead to some unplanned act at the slightest provocation.

A few minutes later, she felt the vibration of the phone. “Hi, honey. What’s the word?”

She listened as Davey said, “He may be a wild card with a weapon in the car. It’s possible that he needs action instead of a dull bomb from a safe distance.”

If he heads elsewhere, let me know but he’s all yours. Good luck. Keep me informed.”

She saw Michael pulling out his cell phone. She rose and walked toward the counter as if to order more food. She dialed headquarters.

Abby answered and identifying Ana began a short version of what she was hearing between Michael and Abdullah.

“Junior wants to know how far away he should be with a bomb of three sticks.

” Hold it, Ana. His pack should only have two sticks.”

Abdullah just asked the question. “Do you have the wrong pack? You were to have only two sticks.”

“I know but I had another stick and put it in just for more power but I need to know what distance is safe.”

Ana heard Abby saying in a very calm voice, “You understand, Ana. That’s a game changer.”

“I know. We still need to nab him on the premises. Tell Davey that we go to plan B. We arrest him just as he steps through the main entry of the hotel. Davey needs to have any guests at least twenty-five feet from the entry.

Notify Big Mike, who is my partner at the hotel. He will know what to do when he sees me with or behind a young Arab.

Instead of ordering, she paid the cashier and left before Michael so as to put him off guard. She waited in her car, outside the Burger King parking lot. When his car moved toward the street, she led him toward the target. Watching in her rear view mirror, she saw that he was indeed headed for the original target.

About a mile from the hotel, Michel sped up and passed Ana. *“He must be running late.”*

Michael parked quite a distance from the entry. Ana decided to park closer in so that Michael could overtake her before they reached the front of the hotel.

Michael did come along side Ana. She surprised him with, “Why, hello, there. Fancy running into each other again. I saw you at the Burger King.”

A startled Michael gripped his bag tighter but suddenly remembered and he managed a tiny but grim smile. “I remember. You are so beautiful.”

“Thank you. Are you staying the night or just here for the fun at the bar?”

Michael stammered. The question surprised him as he tried to frame the correct response. As he tried to concentrate, he was unaware of Mike approaching then passing him.

Just as they stepped into the lobby, Mike wrapped his arms tight to his body, causing the bag to drop. Michael was frozen in place, unable to use his arms,

Ana slipped her hand into his jacket pocket, retrieving both cell phones, and then walked away from the entry.

She was quickly followed by two bomb experts who took the bag and cell phones and kept walking away.

She walked back to Big Mike, who had to bend low to receive his congratulator hug.

“Five O” has taken him away. The operation at the Four Seasons went smoothly. Davey is a happy camper. Come, I’ll buy you a scotch and dinner. You need to relax after that surprise.”

She tugged her arm into his and laughed. “Life is always unpredictable.”

At Davey’s office, he had just finished giving the final news to Abby and her team.

“My thanks for a job well done, giving the FBI and Five O the ability to avert a disaster and accomplished in a manner that kept the public from a feeling of imminent danger.”

“You’re invited to join my entire team at dinner in the large private dining room at the Big Island Hotel. I was so sure of our accomplishment that I made the reservation yesterday. How’s that for self-confidence?”

“Abby. Call the general, who was so generous in giving you to this cause.”

Chapter 4.

Abby’s feet were killing her by the end of the evening. If memory served her correctly, she had danced with eleven young men plus a couple with Jerry.

She fell on top of the bed, saying, “I’m too tired to move, Honey.”

Jerry laughed. “That’s because those young bucks forgot that you are a grandmother. Just lie there while I perform one of my favorite activities, that is undressing one of the world’s beautiful women.”

She giggled. “Are you planning on seducing me?”

“Not right now, but I want no impediments in the way when you attack me some hours hence.”

“Jerry Foxglove, I know now why you were a great general. You always prepared whither it be offense or defense. This time, I will slip by your defenses and make you cry “uncle.”

It was nine in the morning when both were gasping for air and both yelling “uncle.”

Jerry, a bit later, was preparing lightly toasted sour dough, Denver omelets and steaming black coffee while Abby was drinking her orange juice and reading the morning newspaper.

During brunch, Abby slowly told the story of her work with the FBI, including the involvement of two locals.

“I understand the young man who got caught up in the movement but what goes through the mind of a man like the Iranian rancher who has benefitted through twenty years of life as an immigrant to his adopted country? I’m sure he is now on the Homeland Security watch list.”

She continued with the story of Ana, the young Hawaiian woman whose actions prevented a last minute debacle.

Jerry was listening intently and observing Abby’s body language as she told the story. When she finished, he reached across the table and took her hand in his.

“Abby, I can see that you thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Am I right?”

“Honey, I admit it. I loved every moment. I had no time to think of anything else but I sure missed your warm body and our intimate pillow talks.”

Jerry pondered the statement for a moment but then changed the subject. “How about a sail, a picnic and a lazy afternoon of sunbathing at our tiny bit of paradise?”

“Wonderful. I can wear those skimpy panties and bra that will have you all excited during the sail.”

They both laughed, stood for a long hug and each moved to prepare for the sail.

The trip was all that Abby promised as she handled the tiller and Jerry kept admiring her body.

They pulled the boat onto the beach and walked hand in hand to their special secluded area. Two lovers appreciatively admired each other as they slowly shed the briefs that revealed more than they hid.

No matter how much their bodies yearned for immediate satisfaction, they always began the mutual seduction with laughter or teasing or appreciation for their love.

“Honey you are a handsome brute for a grandpa. Would you like to make love with me?”

“I would but that young body might get me into trouble. Are you sure you’re old enough. I don’t want to be arrested for rape.”

Abby burst into laughter and then said, "I would show you my ID but I left it at home."

"I guess I'll have to take a chance."

Jerry never had a chance. Abby was slowly easing her body onto the blanket pulling Jerry atop her.

Much later, they had a brief swim to cool their heated bodies, toweled each other and helped each other into those sexy briefs

In a small shaded glen, Abby served up a lunch of chicken salad, potato salad, soft rolls and dill pickles, accompanied by a bottle of California Chardonnay.

"Abby, dear, thank you for this day. It has been glorious as well as all the days with you. I never dreamed that a second love could be this wonderful."

"Thank you, honey. That is a great compliment. I feel so loved by you. You are so caring, so gentle. Above all that, your loving traits is so evident when we make love. As you know, I never want to separate our bodies. Parting makes me feel as though a part of me is leaving"

"Me, too. As you are aware, throughout most days, I can hardly keep my hands off you. Like now. We have a wide beach and here we are hip to hip while we have lunch."

"I know and I love it, especially a pat on the fanny or the way you bury your face into my hair or a kiss on the neck while your fingers are seeking my boobs. Please don't ever stop."

"I promise but I need to change the subject. Ever since we were able to discuss our love for each other, I have been riding on cloud nine. The months since our wedding and our move to the islands have been like a dream for me and, I believe, for you.

Watching you, how ever, while I visited you at work with your team and talking with you each evening, I sensed the excitement and pleasure you felt while deeply involved. Was I right?"

Abby hesitated for a bit, trying to formulate a response.

Jerry said, "Don't equivocate, honey. We have always been straight with each other."

Abby sensed a bit of blood rushing to her cheeks. "I wanted to deny it. I have avoided dealing with the feeling bur I must be honest. I really enjoyed the challenge."

"Thanks, dear. I want you to know that your total happiness is the most important objective in my life."

He continued." I've done a lot of thinking about this since that visit to the office. I think you should consider using some of your vast array of talents. I know I find pleasure in the upkeep work I do on the condos and the shop.

I know you love to read and that you want me to be happy but you need something more than reading to challenge your days.”

Abby nodded. I agree with all you say. I do find myself thinking about the past and wondering what I could do today that would make a contribution to society or our nation.”

“All right. We need to do something about that.”

“Jerry, you are so insightful and so damned loving.” She rolled to her left, pinning Jerry to the blanket and showering him with kisses.

A few minutes later, they were packing up and shoving off for the sail home.

Jerry poured a couple of scotches before preparing the evening barbecue. He was seated in his favorite arm chair. He invited Abby to sit on his lap.

“Where do we start? What thoughts crossed your mind about the kind of thing you would like to try?”

“Not many. Anything military would require a move from this paradise which is out of the question. This is now home.”

“That may not be necessary. Would you like to teach? The Navy might want to use your language skills or even your analysis skills.”

“That’s possible but not very likely.”

“You never know, Abby. How about a consulting role with Homeland Security?”

“I could explore that but the Navy would be more interesting. That reminds me. Alani Kaiwai, deputy commander of Five O for this county, asked me if he could call me when he had a need.”

“That sounds like a place to start. They obviously have limited language skills in the police units here.”

“I’ll call him in the morning. Right now, let’s make out for a few minutes. I need the sweet taste of your lips on mine.

Minutes later, Jerry was saying, “You know, dear, you’re still a great kisser, but right now you should call your mom. I have plenty of chicken.”

Abby brought her mom up to date during the meal. Abby and Jerry walked her home before taking a stroll on the beach in the light of a full moon.

At nine in the morning, Abby was saying, “Al Kaiwai, please. Yes, this is Abigail Foxglove.”

A moment later, “Hi, Al. This is Abby. I’m coming into town later and wondered if you were free. Lunch would be fine. I can stop by your office. Oh. Sure, The Big Island hotel dining room at twelve thirty. I’ll be there.”

After greeting each other and ordering lunch, Al was saying, “Abby, I was delighted with your call. I was going to call you later in the morning.

After giving my verbal report to the Commander yesterday, he got a court order for a wiretap on Mr. Mann’s phone numbers.

It was my hope that we could contract you to interpret any of the calls if any of the calls were in a Middle Eastern language.”

“What do you have in mind? How might this work?”

“You wouldn’t have to come to us. We can provide a messenger service with the recordings and pick up your dictations of the previous day. If the situation became urgent, we would offer an alternate method.”

Abby said, “I’d be happy to help. I think we can work something out.”

“That’s good. I’ll let the Commander know. He will be pleased. By the way, he would also like to talk with you about another matter and asked if you would be willing to fly to Honolulu for a conference. He can send his private jet any afternoon during the next three days. Unfortunately, he can’t leave his office for some reason or he would fly to meet you at your home.”

“I don’t mind. I need to talk with my husband. Let me call you when I return home later today.”

They were surprised to hear a soft female voice say, “Hello, Al. Would you please stop by my table, when your lunch is over?”

Al jumped to his feet. “Jane Stewart. We are about finished. Meet Abigail Foxglove.””

The women shook hands. Abby said, “I was just leaving.” She reached for her purse but was interrupted with, “If you have a few minutes, please stay. I had planned on calling you.”

That perked Abby’s interest. Al was saying, “Please stay, Abby. Why not join us, Jane?”

Abby noticed the waiter bringing a sandwich from another table as they took their seats.

Al said, “Jane is the executive of our Boys’ and Girls’ Club and pastor of the small Community Church. She is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church.”

He started to tell Jane about Abby but was interrupted. "I've done my research, Al. I probably know more facts about the general than you do. I am delighted to meet you, General."

Abby laughed. "I only respond to Abby this day."

Jane smiled. "Please call me Jane." Some chord had been struck. They were ignoring Al, who, quietly, paid the tab and vanished.

It was an hour or longer before Jane said, "I have to run. The kids will be out of school and some will be waiting at the door of the club. Would you like to join us and see what goes on?"

Abby nodded, saying, "I must call Jerry to see if I am needed at home."

Two hours later, she was sharing the events of the day with Jerry. "Jane is fantastic. She is the first woman in my age range with whom I would enjoy spending time. We talked for ages and then I joined her at the club. . We each took four girls and formed two basket all teams to compete with each other. I spent an hour showing both boys and girls how to use foot work on the soccer field. I am so tired but joyful for the experience I had."

"I want to spend more time with Jane and those beautiful children."

She was absolutely aglow. "I need a shower and some gentle hands to wash my back."

At dinner, Abby told Jerry about the request from the Commander. He said, "You should go. In fact, why don't we both go? We could take a couple of days to do the tourist thing. Wouldn't you like to visit the Arizona Memorial?"

"Good idea."

"A friend of mine heads the Schofield Barracks in Oahu. I'd like to see him. We probably could get a tour of Pearl Harbor."

"I'm in. We can set up the meeting with the Commander and then take whatever time we want."

Abby called Al to inform him of their decision.

He responded with, "That's wonderful. I'll talk with Commander Hana. What afternoon will suit you?"

"His choice will be fine. My husband and I will be taking a few days for sightseeing after the meeting. By the way, Jane hooked me into working with the kids, so I need to be home on Saturdays."

"Fine. I'll get back to you."

The call came within an hour. “Commander Hana has set 1400 hours on Wednesday He has reserved a room at the Hyatt Regency, unless you have other plans.”

“That is fine with us.”

“A helicopter will be ready for you at eleven, take you to the airport where a Gulfstream will be ready to fly you to the five o air strip near our headquarters.”

“We’ll be ready, Al.”

The first item on the agenda was dealt with swiftly. Commander Hana said, “I hope you understand that I don’t have the budget that equals the FBI, but we could use your help with the Mann matter.”

Abby said, “I understand. I’ll go along but what about future situations that may occur?”

“That is the next item on the agenda. I have secured special funding for a special project. You may be my best bet for leading the project and I can offer better compensation because funding is not limited to my sparse budget.”

“Commander, let’s put aside the subject of compensation. Tell me about your project and your hopes for achievement.”

Abby knew she had hit his enthusiasm button.

His grin was a mile wide as he started.

“For a while, we were able to stay ahead of the curve by hiring personnel with family backgrounds in Japanese, Korean Chinese and a few other Eastern Asian languages.

Now, like many other states, we are faced with a variety of immigrants from the Middle East and Eastern Europe. We have been caught flatfooted.”

My dream and that of the project committee is that we will be able to convince you to head the project by serving as the master teacher and recruit the right teachers to train personnel in Five O and other police units across the Islands.”

As he spoke, Abby could see his eyes searching her face for a reaction. He saw enough to stimulate additional input.

“If you were to agree, we have agreed to invite you to start by joining us on the planning committee to firm up the project with specific objectives.

If you need, and I do believe you will, I can provide a tutor to expand your knowledge of police procedures, specifically those of our organization. That could be done concurrently with our planning phase.”

There was no way for Abby to hide her enthusiasm. She had a lot more questions but she knew those could come later. She knew that the Commander needed a response that informed him of her willingness to move forward.

With a warm smile, she said, “It sounds like a good project and a necessary one in light of what is happening in the world now and in the near future.”

“I have a lot of questions but those may take some time and I’m guessing we need more than this appointment provides.”

Commander Hana laughed. “I was told that you were brilliant and quick on the uptake but not that you were a mind reader. I can provide detailed minutes of our meetings to date and ask you to sit with the committee on Friday morning. There the group will answer your questions and tell you of the coming agenda. ”

We usually end the meeting at 1300 hours with a catered lunch and would love to have the General join us for the morning and lunch.

“By the way, my name is John Tobias but my friends and colleagues call me Toby.”

“That sounds like a plan. Please call me Abby. Jerry, my husband and I can do the tourist thing during the interim.”

Hana stood and Abby could see that he must be running late. She rose, shook his hand and said her good bye.”

At the hotel, she slipped into her bikini and headed for the striped umbrella, topped with the blue ribbon that she saw from the balcony.

Jerry, who was asleep, nearly jumped out of his skin when her lips met his with a gentle kiss. “Would you like to take a dip?”

“I’ve been waiting for you.”

He rose, took her hand in his and strolled toward the water.

Abby gave him a run down on the meeting. Before she was half way through, she saw the grin on Jerry’s face. “What’s so funny?”

“He has you hooked and my wife is going to work. Am I right?”

She laughed and punched him in the arm. “Damn you, Jeremy. You are too incisive. Jerry, you will love him. He is your kind of man and he has a great idea. I haven’t said yes.”

I am meeting with the planning committee on Friday morning, and, on his initiative, you are invited to observe and even kibitz.”

“That sounds interesting and I accept. Right now, I am ready for a long cool drink, cuddled with you on a chaise lounge on our balcony. I hear the Blue Angels will be performing for some Navy brass and we will have a front row seat.”

The smile and then the kiss hinted at a bonus to follow.

After an early breakfast, they began the drive to the north shore where the beaches displayed some of the largest and most dramatic waves in the world. Today was the first day of the three day professional surfers’ tournament

This would be a busy day which would include a visit to the Polynesian Cultural Center as well as an ocean side dinner on the way back.

The next day started with a docent led tour of Pearl Harbor and a quiet time of reflection at the Arizona Memorial.

They drove up to the Pali from which they had a great view of the city and one of the islands.

Chapter 5

The planning committee consisted of seven members including the Commander and a deputy commander, Patricia Kona.

The chairman of the committee was John Kawai, the Police Commissioner. After the introductions, he asked Patricia to outline the police organizational structure for Abby to understand.

“Five O, as it is called, is the State Police Department. The three large islands or counties, have sheriff departments complemented by a sheriff’s division within five o to cover local enforcement on the smaller islands.

There is only one city department and that is Honolulu. The communication among units is working well.”

Abby nodded her head in understanding.

The Commander said, “You can see from reading the minutes that we have a basic problem. Few of our staff would even recognize a foreign language other than the few eastern Asian. Even if we had good interpreters at the state level, the local staff would not know whom to call other than a general number”

“The chair said, “That is the subject of our first discussion this morning.”

Abby was about to ask a question but a member named Felix asked, “Commander, what is your guess as to the number of officers who recognize someone speaking Japanese or Korean?”

“That’s hard to say. Perhaps, twenty percent would recognize the language but only a small group would understand the words. As the population and tourists have become more cosmopolitan, the police have fallen behind.”

The room went silent. Abby asked, “May I assume you have experts available who speak and understand the eastern Asian languages?”

Heads nodded.

“I am sure that we could provide simple one hundred word dictionaries and classes that would improve significantly the skills of your officers to recognize those plus some Midwestern languages and possibly Russian as well.”

The atmosphere in the room suddenly brightened. Felix asked “How soon can we get started?”

The chairman laughed. “Slow down, Felix. Our guest must have a lot of questions. We haven’t even talked contract.”

The next hour was devoted to Abby’s questions. At the end, she said, “I am sure we can work out something satisfactory if you choose to offer me a contract. Under any circumstances, I would be happy to work with your people to work on the simple dictionary.”

The chairman said, “I suggest we adjourn so that Toby and Mrs. Foxglove can work on an agreement.

Toby's executive assistant waved to Toby as he exited the room. "Abby, I'll probably need fifteen or twenty minutes. Why don't you relax in the coffee room until someone comes to get you?"

They found a corner away from the few occupants. Abby asked, "Do you see any reason to decline an offer, honey?"

"Nope, I can see that you have some solid ideas."

"One thing you may not want is a daily early rising to catch an early flight. You need to work on that."

Abby said, "I have an idea but it means some nights apart for us."

"I figured that might be the case. How about working four days a week in Honolulu and Fridays from home?"

"But that means three nights a week away from you."

I know it lessens the wear and tear on my beautiful wife. If you work out a condo in trade for saving three round trip flights, they will get more work from my workaholic wife.

That gives us four nights together and, on occasion, I might be able to spend three nights with you in Honolulu."

She took his hands into hers. "I see why some of your friends called you Foxy."

It all worked out as they hoped. Next Monday was her first working day. Toby introduced her to two language specialists.

"Abby, meet Fritz and Anna. You can do the formal introductions later. I have to run."

Fritz had good skills in various dialects of Chinese and Vietnamese. Anna was exceptionally good at Japanese and fair with spoken Korean.

Abby could help Anna with the Koran, when needed.

They met for fifteen minutes while Abby explained her idea. She found them to be sharp and very quick learners.

They agreed to work on 100 basic words in Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Vietnamese while Abby would work on at least Urdu, Farsi and two Arabic dialects.

By the end of the week, the team was ready for a test run. Fritz thought half-dozen students would be a good start. The others agreed.

Anna, who had been with the Honolulu Police for eight years, said, "I think we ought to start with the three desk sergeants who man the front desk and the three women who handle the general incoming calls. Those six are on the front lines, so to speak."

Abby nodded agreement and was pleased to see her co-workers take such initiative.

The class met five times for three hour sessions, one for each language and a fifth led by Abby.

This meeting was actually two three hour sessions in one day. She explained and gave examples of the way syllables were accented and the lilt of spoken words.

The longer afternoon session was the lab session. Headphones were provided for each student to listen to Fritz, Anna and Abby speaking conversationally.

The students were to jot down words they understood and would read back to the instructors.

At the end of the lab session, the three evaluated each student, deciding which needed additional training. They were off to a good start.

Jerry decided to join Abby at the Club on Saturday morning. He was delighted to meet a retired electrician and a retired plumber who were teaching boys and girls the basics of their trades.

Henry, the electrician, opened a thermos of hot coffee and invited Ben and Jerry to join him. In the course of the conversation, both men encouraged Jerry to bring some carpentry tools and promised, "You'll have a handful of eager students within minutes."

Jerry was back in an hour and had some new young friends within minutes.

At closing, Jane called the adult leaders together for some comments. "Do you realize that we had thirty one more kids this afternoon than we had this morning? I guess having an All American goalie from West Point and a big time general on the staff does attract more kids. Great job everyone."

"Next week, due to some generous donors, we will have ten computers installed and three college age persons to start classes."

"The donors shall remain anonymous but you will get to know the electronic specialists."

At Five O headquarters, it took ten weeks before the working group reported to the committee and provided a demonstration that indicated they were ready to roll out the program with the Honolulu Police Department.

The committee was thrilled to see the abilities of the original six and the progress of the second six, each of whom had been tutored by members of the first group.

The chairman was profuse in his thanks and saw how the roll out would multiply rapidly.

He asked, "How long will it take to start on recognition of word with Middle East origins?"

Abby said, "Our team believes we can start with the first groups when we have covered the first two thirds of your staff in the city department.

By then, we should have some well- trained persons who can handle the training of personnel in the other countries."

Meanwhile, we need to recruit good trainers for the other languages. Fritz and Anna are willing to put in extra time when I begin basis classes for Five O deputies or civilians.

Toby spoke up, "We've uncovered some university students of the families that have emigrated from the Mideast during the last ten years."

Abby was enthusiastic in her response. "That could be a gold mine for us. If their English is good, they present good possibilities for our team. Some of them probably would like part time work. If we make it worth their while, we could speed up our current program and get a head start on faze two."

She turned to the Commander. "Toby, I understand that the FBI now has two Middle East specialists. I am sure you can sweet talk them into assisting us. After all, it could work to their benefit."

Ever one around the table burst into laughter. Each had been "sweet talked" by Toby into serving on this committee.

After the meeting, Abby approached Toby. "I need a long weekend to rest, Toby, and I thought Kauai might be a good place.

She sent an email to Jane regretting their absence for the Saturday session at the club.

Jerry has made reservations and will meet me at the airport. I thought that working with the Sheriff next Monday might be worthwhile. Would you pave the way?"

"Certainly. I have an idea. I need a brief visit with him. Why don't we fly over when you're ready? I'll ask him to meet us at the airport where you can meet and make plans."

"I need a few minutes to pack."

“I’ll pick you up in an hour.”

Sheriff Kekoa was chatting with Jerry as Toby and Abby walked toward baggage claim. After the warm welcoming hug, Jerry said, “May I present Sheriff Richard Kekoa, who served on my staff in Afghanistan before you arrived on the scene. “Richard, this is General Foxglove, retired, and his lovely wife.”

His smile was warm. “I’m looking forward to working with you next week. Here is my card with directions, just in case. Please excuse us. Toby is always a man in a hurry.”

There was nothing to pick up at baggage claim. Abby, laughingly, said, “This small tote bag has that little bikini I might wear if I can tear myself away from you. Do you realize that I haven’t been with you for eleven nights? I failed my promise to you that this would never happen again.”

They held hands as they strolled to the rental car office.

They skipped the planned evening luau but ordered some snacks about eleven o’clock. Eating was not a priority

Abby was surprised to find the entire staff of the department gathered and waiting for her arrival. That included six deputies besides Richard, telephone receptionists and computer operators

The coffee was steaming and sweet rolls heated. After everyone was introduced, they took seats in a circle, napkins on their laps and hands filled with coffee and rolls.

Abby could read the approval on tier faces as she explained the concept

“Your trainers will be two officers from Honolulu P.D. and two students from the university, each of whom are second generation Americans.”

A raised hand caught Abby’s attention. She nodded. A soft female voice said, “I’m Mary Richards. Perhaps I can help. My mother is Chinese. We speak Mandarin at home especially when my grandmother is present.”

“Thank you. We can meet later. It usually takes two Chinese unless one is trained in several dialects.”

Abby answered a series of questions before the gathering adjourned.

Ricardo said, “Jerry tells me you prefer to be addressed as Abby. Everyone calls me Sheriff. I hope you will, too.”

Abby grinned. "That's a deal. Now, what's on our agenda?"

"Toby asked me to expose you to all the kinds of operations and routines that fill our day. I usually am in the field rather than my office. Our radio network and cell phones make it possible for me to be in close touch with my entire crew, back in the office or with our men and women on patrol."

I often rush to a crime scene, be it a possible felony or a misdemeanor. I use each event as a training opportunity besides finding the solution to the crime."

"We are making an exception by having a civilian present at crime scenes but Toby says you can handle yourself in critical situations. Are you armed and carry a permit?"

"I am, with a piece of some power in a shoulder holster."

Good. I rarely have to use my piece but often have it at ready or in my hand at most crime scenes until I receive the all clear from the officer in charge."

Abby nodded her understanding.

The Sheriff said, "I need some time with the headquarters staff. Feel free to explore or chat with the communications persons. They may have more questions."

Abby met Mary during her tour. They conversed in Mandarin as Mary gave her a guided tour of the facility.

When Abby was buckled in for the ride, she asked, "Sheriff, what are you looking for as you patrol?"

Each patrol officer is on the lookout for evidence of a crime occurring, be it a bank robbery, store robbery or a street holdup?

"What might be a signal of a bank holdup?"

"Customers unable to gain entrance or running away. Not so evident might be a vehicle very close with a driver all alone."

"What else does a patrolling deputy look for?"

"We would check out any scuffling in a group or between two persons. We look very closely if we sense some tension between a man and a woman, particularly if there is an age difference. Recently, we've had an uptick in assaults, specifically rape of young women. We consider rape to be one of the heinous crimes and have a goal of zero tolerance."

What would you say is your number two priority?

“The word “gangs.”

“Teens or adult?”

“Both. The older guys are always recruiting, even youngsters as young as twelve.”

They were just at the end of the Lihue town limits when the Sheriff hit the brakes and spun the steering wheel left. The car did a sharp U-turn and moved about twenty five yards. He was out of the car in a flash and was chasing two of three young men. He had a choice of which one he could grab. He chose the sturdier one.

Abby was right behind him but stopped to be with the one left behind. One quick look told her that he was a very young teenager.

The sheriff was hauling his captive toward Abby, saying, “I told you, Malo, that this recruiting has to stop.”

His captive sneered. “I wasn’t doing no recruiting.”

“Tommy, what was Malo deducing with you?”

Tommy was obviously scared and said noting.

“Tommy, was he threatening you or your family?”

A frustrated sheriff said to Malo, “Tell the boss that we can identify every member of your gang. I am telling my men that if we see anyone of them talking with a minor, then he will be charged with molesting a minor. Now, get your ass out of here.”

He turned to Tommy. “Why aren’t you at the Police Athletic club?”

Malo approached me in the rest room and said that I was wanted at home. I knew it was a lie but he had a tight grip. I guess none of the adults saw us leave.”

“What about the older guy?”

He joined us about five minutes before you arrived. He started right in with the usual talk that I heard before. He hadn’t started any rough talk before you got there.”

“I understand, Tommy. Where may I drop you?”

“I want to go back to the club. My mom will want to know why I am home early.”

“Okay. Hop in. I want to talk with the director and arrange for more help to watch for those big guys who have done this before.”

When they were back on patrol, Abby asked, "How can you protect them after the club session or after school?"

"We worked out a plan. The kids must walk in groups of three. When that is not possible, either a parent comes for them or they call our office and we dispatch one of a group of senior men who form an auxiliary group of men, called POPS that see them home safely."

"That's great."

Richard smiled. "We can do that because we are small. The whole island is less than sixty five thousand. Even our two large towns have less than ten thousand inhabitants. People of all colors, all faiths are easily absorbed."

"I think of Kauai as a big village, the one it takes to raise a child and try to teach my staff to adopt my thinking."

Abby said, "I am impressed, Sheriff. If I were younger, I'd apply for job with your outfit."

That got a chuckle from Richard.

The radio was chattering. Domestic disturbance on 1330 Pacific in Kapaau."

"This is Seven. I'll take it."

Richard said, "Let's head that way. I was planning to meet Tim for lunch so that you could visit with one of my best."

Ten minutes later, they were waved down by a woman who seemed to be about sixty years old. She was sitting on the side of the road and her head was bleeding."

Abby got to her first. She was crying and trying to talk but all she could do was point. Richard was dashing for a spot where some bushes were torn. He had his cell phone in hand and was putting it to his mouth.

Abby dashed to the car for the blanket and first aid kit. She put the woman's head on her lap and covered the body with the blanket. She thought the woman was on the verge of going into shock.

She could see that the head wound was not serious although there was a possibility of something more serious.

She used water from a small bottle to wash out the wound and applied a clean pad with enough pressure to reduce the flow of blood.

She could not hear any noise from what must be a ravine on the other side of the bushes

It seemed longer but it was only ten minutes before she heard two sirens. One medic rushed to her side while the other rushed to the hole in the bushes.

The one medic took a quick look and took the vitals. He then probed and asked questions of the woman who responded very clearly in between deep breaths.

He spoke to Abby. "Thank you, officer. You did the right thing and probably kept her from going into shock. If you stay with her for a few minutes, I need to check with my partner"

Abby nodded. She soon had the woman telling of the events that brought about the accident.

"I think my husband had a heart attack. That ravine is not very deep. He was breathing but I couldn't do anything for him so I climbed to the road. You came within minutes. Thank you."

She began to weep. "Can you find out about Henry?"

"I was ordered to stay with you. We do not want you to go into shock."

Mrs. Wilson started to object but was interrupted by the sound of another siren. A minute later, another squad car arrived.

The officer rushed toward the ravine but must have been waved off. He came to Abby.

"General Foxglove. I didn't realize that you were with the sheriff. May I take your place?"

He said to the patient, "I did get a 'thumbs up' from the sheriff before he signaled me to stay with you."

Abby told him, "I'm fine and you are supposed to call me Abby. This general is now a civilian."

Mrs. Wilson gasped. Forgetting for a moment the situation, she said, "Wait until I tell Emma that I was helped by a woman general,"

The sheriff came through the bushes and told Mrs. Wilson that the signs were good but the medic would give her details in a few minutes.

He ordered the deputy to stay with Mrs. Wilson until the medic told him it was okay to leave. "Abby, we need to shove off."

Mrs. Wilson squeezed Abby's hand to tell her "thank you." "She was too choked up to say anything."

Deputy Ted Kahu was seated in the diner booth when the two arrived. He stood to welcome Abby and his boss.

Since he was the only deputy to Miss Abby's presentation, she gave him a run down while they waited for their food orders to arrive.

He, in turn, gave them a report on the family dispute. "The husband had given his wife a beating, but she would not press charges. That is the second time this week"

"I also picked up a couple of delinquents who stole some candy from a mom and pop store. I took them to their mother, who batted their ears and sent them to their bedroom. She wasn't interested in talking with me."

"It's been the usual quiet Monday morning."

Abby became aware that almost every arriving or departing patron greeted Ted by name.

She asked, "Since you cover most of the northern portion of the island, where do you spend most of your time?"

"As you know, my area north of here is sparsely populated. That means I have to focus near the resorts or camping areas. The tourist is more likely to require my attention than our residents, except for the teen gangs."

"In fact, although it is not a major problem, burglary and thievery by the kids gets the greater part of my attention."

Drunken tourists can be a more serious problem, especially if any of them have weapons. That weapons problem has been reducing with the restrictions on boarding commercial flights."

Any particular tourists give you the most trouble?"

"Oh, yes. Disturbances among tourists are mostly with folks from the states. Asians are mostly families who are quiet and respectful. Over stimulation by alcohol is seldom a factor."

Abby switched subjects. "Ted, I noticed that you are very popular with the crowd here."

He laughed. "It does make one feel good to be with friendly neighbors. I stop in most days, either for breakfast or lunch or some days just for a cup of coffee. There is another diner half way to Princeville where I stop in three or four times a week."

He looked at his watch. "Boss, I promised to look in on a family who were burglar victims last week."

"Be on your way. Make sure you get to the class. This project has a high priority."

"Will do. It was nice to meet you, Ma'am."

The sheriff said, "Let's drive to the Lithe Forest. I promised Ted I would cover for him since he has to go north"

The trip was routine until they were on the return leg. Abby spied three teenagers suddenly running toward a grouping of trees.

"Did you see those boys, Sheriff?"

"

What boys?" I was watching a flock of geese headed for the lake."

"There were three teenagers carrying two fairly large sacks that must have spied us and dashed for the trees."

Without asking for any more information, he put the crossover into four wheel mode and turned in the direction that Abby pointed.

When he pulled to a halt at the edge of the grove, he jumped out of the vehicle, saying, and "Stay."

Abby paid no attention. She pulled out her weapons, exited and put herself ten yards to Richard's right and a few yards behind.

Two minutes later, they heard the boys crashing through some brush. They changed directions, Richard indicating with hand signals that they approach from different angles.

A few minutes later, Abby came up quietly ten yards behind a boy holding a twenty two caliber pistol pointed at Richard.

Not wanting to shoot the young man but aware that Richard was at risk; she picked up a stick and tossed it to the boy's right. He jerked his head to the right and Abby, like a deer, was bounding to the boy's back. With a hard fist, she knocked the gun to the ground and then pinned the boy's arms to his body.

Meanwhile, Richard turned his gun toward the two who were holding sacks. They dropped the bundles and held up their hands.

He asked the two boys, who were about fourteen years old, "Handcuffs or your promise to do as I say?"

Both stammered a "promise."

Richard handcuffed the older boy who admitted to being eighteen.

No questions were asked at the scene, Richard took pictures, including the gun on the ground and told Abby that the interrogation would take place at headquarters.

“For the two younger ones, I will have their parents present and some witness from the juvenile program.”

When they arrived at headquarters, the sheriff had the boys put in the juvenile facility and the older one in jail.

Abby dashed for home to arrive at cocktail time, as she had promised Jerry. She barbecued some lamb chops while Jerry prepared the veggies.

As they were sitting down to the meal, Jerry said, “Abby, We should have your mom fly over to be with us during these few days. This is the most beautiful island in the world. It would be a shame for her to miss the opportunity to see this place.”

“Jerry, you are the sweetest.”

They dined on the patio and were having dessert and coffee, hip to hip on a double chaise lounge.

The almost full moon was beginning its rise from the ocean.

Jerry reached for Abby’s hand and gave it a light squeeze. “This is beautiful and more romantic than I imagined, especially on an evening during a working week.

This is a beautiful tableau of a lover’s moon, two people in love and a soft breeze in paradise.

Even a novelist, like Nora Roberts, could not portray a scene as romantic as this.”

Abby turned her body and was whispering, “You, my love, haven’t missed a beat since I first fell in love with you.”

Chapter 6.

Richard came by in the Crossover at eight thirty the next morning. “I thought we would head south and check in with two of our deputies.

We can travel along route 50 and visit with some of the elders of the tiny villages. If anything important or dangerous is in the wind, the elders will let me know.

My deputies don’t have much time for light chit chat because they have so much ground to cover. I try to do some village visiting about once a month.”

Richard turned right off Route 50, about forty minutes south of Lihue. Another twenty minutes later the dirt road led them to a huddle of about forty homes. A flurry of adults and children came running to encircle the vehicle.

The children were excited and yelling something that sounded like “shareef”.

Soon the group was making a path for an elderly man accompanied by two younger men.

“Good morning, honorable Kei”, said the sheriff.

“Good morning. Would you care to join me for some coffee?”

Two young women were setting five places around the rough wooden table in the center of the village.

Abby was introduced as a general, Richard wanting to impress the villagers with the visitors that he brought.’

Abby was impressed with the excellence of the elders’ English, although heavily accented.

The only real news was that two Japanese families had moved into the village since the last visit. The elder was happy that both were good carpenters, something his village needed.

Thirty minutes later, after exchanging bits of news, they were headed back to route 50.

The radio sounded “Boss, this is dispatch. Betty is on her way to the Hyatt at Poipu Point. Someone has been breaking into guest rooms.”

“We’re on our way.”

Betty Snow, this is Abby Foxglove, the consultant I spoke of. Where do things stand?”

“You won’t believe this. We have identified two young boys from a family who, recently, emigrated from Saudi Arabia.

The security officer front the hotel has a few helpers out scouting for the boys now. I’ve just finished interviewing the guests who were victimized by the boys.

No jewelry was taken. Four iPhones and an estimated four hundred dollars in cash were taken.”

Abby said, “That sounds like a couple of boys who wanted the phones, not organized by a professional.”

Betty said, “Interesting. I hadn’t thought about that. Well, I’m betting that my idea of their hangout will prove right.”

Twenty minutes later, Betty answered her phone. “We’ll be right over.”

The boys sat mum, either unable or unwilling to say a word in response to Betty’s questions. The boy, who appeared to be older, said, “They wouldn’t understand so keep quiet.”

Abby recognized the Said dialect but said nothing. Both boys gave Betty blank stares as she continued her probing.

The sheriff said, “Hold them in some isolated area until six o’clock. The father should be home by then, if he is working. The parents have to be told that we will have to take them to Lihue for detention at our juvenile facility.”

Abby saw the older boy scowl and say to the other, “We’re going to jail in some other place but it won’t be for long.

Hey, no crying. Nothing bad is going to happen to us. We’re too young. I heard some local kids talking about that. I’m worried what the boss will do about us blowing our first job, but even more what my father will do to me when this is over. Hey, quit crying.”

Abby suggested a break. She wanted her associates to know what she discovered.

Betty was astonished. “I’ve never had a hint of any gang activity. There hasn’t been a single report of a break in at the hotel, the spa or any of the local residences during the last five or six months.”

Abby asked, "Any chance the hotel is covering up the thefts by paying off the patrons to avoid the publicity?"

The sheriff cut in with, "I'll check it out, Betty. I don't want the security chief to be upset with you if he had to admit to Abby's guess."

Jeff, a blushing security chief, admitted to the payoff for reasons that the sheriff had guessed. He also admitted that no jewelry had been reported lost on any occasion.

Later at the boy's home, Betty and Abby discovered the parents spoke practically no English. The dad said to a little girl "Fetch Pauli Daher so we can understand.

Abby saw the older of the two boys shudder and the younger start to cry. They seemed to be afraid of Pauli.

Her guess was that he was the "boss.

Five minutes later she knew that her guess was right. Abby could read the anger in the parents' responses when Pauli gave them the story. He wanted to take them to the woodshed immediately but finally understood when Pauli said that the boys had to be put in detention.

Pauli said at the father, "Give me his authority on your behalf and I can handle everything for you."

It was agreed.

A half hour later, Pauli and the two boys were loaded in the backseat cage of the Crossover. The sheriff and Abby in the front seat could hear all the conversation in the rear.

Five minutes into the ride, Pauli was asking, "Are you sure neither understands Arabic"

"Absolutely."

"How did you get caught?"

"I never noticed that little brother had not put on his gloves. I'm guessing he left a print or two. You know all immigrants have their prints taken."

"Bad luck. Both of you need to pretend you do not know or understand English. The judge will give me a lecture to translate to you kids and put you on watch, something they call probation.

I have to take the words of another lecture to your parents. I will try to help but your father is determined to give you a whipping."

He must have tureen his head. "You, kiddo, better not make another mistake. You may be my cousin but the gang will insist on tossing you out after giving you a good beating.

We have to close down the hotel operation and focus on the beach dummies that leave cell phones and purses when they take a dip.

We need to raise twenty five thousand during the next six weeks and those women leave a lot of cash in their purses.”

Next week, you two will be taken to Waimee. We’ll get you some nice new beach clothes in order to masquerade your real purpose on the rich beach.”

That evening, the three of them worked hard after dinner, planning a way to get all the deputies on all the islands, the security chiefs and their staff members into the basic program that was working so well on Oahu.

Having seen the advantage that Abby had, Betty, now a convert, was gung ho to get her fellow deputies aboard.

She even talked the sheriff into taking paid time off to do a promotion trip to Maui and to Big Island.

During the next few days, Abby flew to Molokai to work with the senior deputy sheriff while Jerry and Martha, did some in depth study of this enchanted island

On the drive back from Princeville, she said, “Jerry, I can hardly wait to tell Abby about the feelings I had when seeing the scenes where the movie, South Pacific, was shot.”

As they boarded the flight home, Abby was grateful to Jerry for the idea of having her mom visit Kauai. The excitement in Martha’s recounting of her tours was music to Abby’s ears.

Late that evening, Abby and Jerry were relaxing on the patio, watching the moon rise.

Jerry asking, “Why don’t we spend the weekend at Hilo? We can drive down after the session at the club. It’s only sixty miles. We can see some sights and tour the greater area. I’m sure Martha will enjoy it. She’s a great tourist.”

“Don’t I know it? She was a great guide for dad and me when I was growing up. Good idea. I can be there to start the week with my eager beaver friend, Betty, for our three day stint with the local sheriff and her deputies. She vowed to know 100 words of Japanese and 100 words of Arabic before she arrives. I promised to test her at breakfast on Monday morning.”

The weekend was a smashing success as were the sessions with the sheriff and her deputies

Betty lived up to her promise and was a hit with the deputies. She received a commendation from Sheriff Palako that was forwarded to her personnel file.

As a result, the Five O commander had Betty reassigned to temporary duty, serving the committee to roll out the program on all the islands.

With everyone pushing, Phase one was rolling beautifully across all the islands. The committee members were pleased and urged the Commander and Abby to move ahead.

Abby was determined to complete the project. She decided to stay in Oahu five days a week for the next month so that she could concentrate on the recruitment and training of the language specialists to supplement the few currently on the Five O staff.

Five weeks later, she had completed her contract and was heading home on the Big Island.

Martha invited them to dinner, the evening of her arrival. She and Jerry had shared the evening meal during Abby's absence.

Martha was saying, "Jerry took me with him to the Boys and Girls Club earlier this week. I had a ball teaching four girls and boys to knit. They were excited and asked me to help them start a knitting project."

"I had an opportunity to get to know the director, Jane, who treated the two of us to pizza after we closed. She certainly cherishes her relationship with you, Abby."

Jerry chimed in. "We got her talking about the Commit Church. She asked if the three of us might consider attending worship this Sunday. I said that I would talk with you before I would respond."

Abby paused to reflect on the subject. "Mom and dad had me baptized in the Presbyterian Church and I made my statement of faith when I was fourteen and I did attend chapel at the Point on a regular basis but nothing much since then. For some unknown reason, Jerry, you and I have never discussed attending church."

Jerry said, "I didn't attend church much. My folks sent me to Sunday school but that turned boring as I got to be about twelve. I'd be open to do some exploring as long as Jane is not a stickler to literal interpretation of words written thousands of years ago."

Abby said, "I'd like that. I think it might add a new dimension to our lives, if that community is open to people with different biblical interpretations,"

Martha said, "Jane handed me a printout of a statement of faith that the congregation recites weekly at present. Their worship committee and Jane compose a contemporary statement every quarter which tells me that their theology is not stuck in some tradition of ages past."

Jerry said, "I'm willing."

The others nodded their agreement.

Abby drove into Hawi, the next afternoon. The kids were not yet out of school so she had time to do some shopping before the B&G program would begin.

Just as she approached Laune's Drapery Shop, two toughs emerged. They were laughing. One was stuffing a wad of cash into his pocket. Naturally, Abby's mind was translating. Two hoodlums walking out of a dry goods store with no package but a lot of cash meant "shakedown."

Abby entered the shop. No customers were visible but Mr. Laune was visibly shaken. His face was ashen and his hand trembling.

"Are you all right, Mr. Laune?"

"What? Oh, Mrs. Foxglove, it's nice to see you. Yes, I'm fine."

"I can see that you are not. Have a seat. I'll get some water."

Two minutes later, Abby was saying, "I think you just handed over money to those two who threatened you. Am I right?"

"I can't talk about it. They'll kill me. They said so."

"How long has this been going on?"

"Six months. Please don't ask me anymore. I beg you."

"All right, but you should report this."

"I can't and I am asking you to say nothing."

Abby nodded but said nothing. She was thinking that other merchants would probably be victims, as well. She decided to stop into Robert's Shoe Store, two doors farther down the street.

Robert's face was white as a sheet as he was handing over money to one of the young men while the other was brandishing a knife.

Abby bent over and pulled out her small revolver from her ankle holster. "Robert, call the police."

A minute later, she said, "Call the club. Tell Jane I will be late."

Frank, the chief, showed up within minutes. He was surprised to see Abby's gun in hand, covering the two young gangsters, but said nothing. Ten minutes later, after handcuffing the men, he said, "I presume this was a citizen's arrest. Please come to the station to complete the paper work."

"That I will. I presume you found a real stash of money from other shakedown's, especially from the dry goods store."

The chief nodded and left.

After Abby handed in the completed paper work, the chief said, “I hadn’t realized that you had a “right to carry perm.”

“Jerry and I both applied. I took a bullet during an assassination attempt, which, by the way, is the reason I am an early retiree.”

“I hadn’t heard but I’m glad you were there today. We wondered about that possibility but every merchant had been tight lipped, frightened for their lives, I am sure. Now that the lid is off, the sheriff and I can go to work, but you are now a marked woman.”

“Perhaps but if Mr. Laune and Robert keep a tight lip and my name doesn’t get in the local paper, my identity will not be revealed.”

“Don’t bet on it. The Hawi Billiards Club, as the gang is known, has long tentacles. Besides they will be aware of your attempt to thin down their future supply by weaning the kids away from the pool house hangout to join the B&G Club.”

“You’re right, Frank, especially since I want to increase the recruitment activity.”

“I have a question, Abby. There will be many times when you won’t be wearing trousers, as you did today. How do you conceal the weapon?”

Abby grinned. “I carry my fanny pack on my side, top open for a quick draw, like Matt Dillon.”

Frank burst into laughter. “Get out of here. You’ve missed some of the club activities already.”

The Community Church members gave each a warm welcome that next Sunday morning. The entire attendance was less than a hundred beside the choir of about twenty voices.

The scripture passage for the morning service was from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, and a parable of Jesus on the subject of last days.

³⁴ Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and

visit you?’⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, ‘I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of mine, you did it for me.’

But, as Jane pointed out in the sermon, the challenge was for the day, the current time in our lives.

“Every community has a part of itself that could be defined as the “least of these.”

She said “You can take the words literally and be of comfort to the needy in our community but if you broaden your definition of the words, you may find ways of even greater service.

One example might be taking the word hungry to also mean hungry for love, hungry for acknowledgment, hungry for approval or hungry for inclusion. The door is open to tremendous possibilities.”

“I would like us to discuss those possibilities at the discussion class after worship.”

As one would expect, comments during the discussion meeting were insightful and thoughtful. Abby was particularly impressed by the comments from Frank Akano, the town’s police chief.

“One of the most vulnerable groups in town is a group of young teenagers who hang out near the pool hall. They show no interest in attending the Club activities. This pool hall is the domain of the only gang we have in town and I’m sure that those kids are hoping for an invitation to prove their worthiness of being a member. They may not know it, but they are hungry and thirsty for the real stuff of life.”

It was obvious to Martha and Jerry that Abby was moved by the morning but, for some unknown reason, she was turned inward during lunch.

Monday morning, Abby placed a phone call to Sheriff Palako in Hilo. “Good morning, Don. Have you forgotten your promise to drop in for a visit? It’s been weeks.”

“Sorry, Abby. Some gang activity in the south has kept me busy. I haven’t been north since our visit.”

“Okay. I forgive you. Do you have anyone working undercover in this area, someone I can chat with about an idea?”

“I do. We have some intelligence about gang expansion. He’s only been there for a month or so I’ll have him get in touch. I have your number.”

“Thanks, Don, I owe you.”

She heard him chuckle before they were cut off.

A couple of hours later, she was talking with a young man on the phone. "This is Peter Kahu. The sheriff asked me to call."

"Yes. Thanks for calling. I am working with youth at the B&G club and would like to explore some thoughts about the youth in the community. If that is within the scope of your activity, I would like to have you join me for lunch at your convenience."

"It is within my range of activity and I would be delighted sometime this week. I've just started my planning."

"Great. Come today at one. We can have some barbecued hamburgers and fixings. Our patio is secluded and a good place to chat."

As Peter walked in, Abby asked, "Didn't I see you in Hilo?"

Peter grinned. Front row, center, next to Betty. She and I were buddies during our training days. She is a dynamo."

Abby laughed. "That is a major understatement. Welcome. Meet Jerry, my husband and chef for the day."

"I am pleased to meet you General. Two of my closest friends served under your command in Afghanistan and came home unharmed."

"I love to hear that kind of news."

Peter was stuffed after two of Jerry's burgers and home fries plus trimmings. Jerry poured coffee and vanished.

Abby started in. "I've been volunteering at the club for a while but something the preacher said at church last Sunday widened out my thinking about what I was doing."

Peter chortled. "Jane can do that to you. Yes. I sit in when I am in town on Sundays and I was there last Sunday."

Abby nodded. "I've been trying to get a particular group of very young teenagers away from that pool hall where the local gang headquarters. I have a fistful of ideas to keep them interested if we could get them to attend a few times."

Peter nodded his understanding. "You probably guessed that each of those kids is trying to be noticed and invited to gang membership?"

"I do. I also notice that they earn some money through petty theft at some stores and on the beach where they see unwary tourists."

The chief, his policemen and I are aware but we don't have the time to jail them for petty theft because other crimes keep this small staff extremely busy. The chief and I have spent a lot of time noodling about those kids."

Abby said, "I guessed that was the case that started me having a crazy idea. Jerry and I have great luck with parents offering to volunteer with us at the club. I wondered if we could get the chief to set up a volunteer auxiliary police unit, focused solely on kid's misdemeanors."

Peter burst into a wide smile. "Auxiliary police, who would take them into custody where the juvenile judge would put them on probation, providing they attended the Club and actively participated."

Abby laughed, "You're reading my mind, Peter."

He went on. "I can visualize a dozen activities that could possibly catch fire. Brilliant idea, Mrs. F"

"Please make it Abby, and thank you. Have you an idea for getting started?"

"Let me chat with the chief. He is a wise man and the chief for a very long time."

Judging by results, Peter was true to his word. Abby and Jerry were invited by Frank to lunch at the hotel dining room on the following Friday. She knew none of the guests besides the chief but she knew she was in the company of power. Each was introduced by first name only.

Richard chaired the gathering. He opened with "I suggest we get directly to the agenda so we can enjoy our lunch. You have the floor, Frank."

The chief stood. "The town council has approved the concept. Your subcommittee has formulated a plan for seven auxiliary police to concentrate on petty crimes committed by our youth. The juvenile judge has approved the plan for putting them on probation with strings attached, of course.

An anonymous donor has offered the use of the vacant lot next to the club for any activity or building that would serve the club."

"I have asked General Abigail Foxglove, retired, to outline her hopes for this program. Abby, it's your turn."

Abby distributed a small packet to the group and highlighted the key items.

"You're Boys and Girls Club is doing a great job. I hope to expand the number of youth attending and thus benefitting from the program. I believe that once exposed to a period of participation, up to three quarters of the youth will gain the benefits that the current crop enjoys.

“It seems a little harsh to use law enforcement to overcome the kid’s resistance but I am so certain that the benefits outweigh the harshness of the method.

We may take some flack, but it sure beats the surety of the outcome of the path those kids are traveling at this time. Not all but most kids respond to the challenge of competition, be it in basketball, soccer, and gymnastics.

If we have funds to build a competitive military track on the adjacent land, we will be inundated with requests by older boys and girls to use the facility, which may provide other opportunities for the club...”

The excitement among those committed fathers was palpable. The chairman looked around the table. “General, I believe you have made a sale. We’ll leave it to the chief and you to see to the details. Frank will see that you get the funds you need.”

The program was set to go six weeks later. Seven volunteers served as auxiliary police to enforce the laws regarding misdemeanors committed by juveniles. Five were armed with Tasers only while two former military men were fully armed.

One Monday afternoon, seven new youth showed up in the company of a probation officer. Each was on probation for minor infractions but had missed their last appointment with the PO as required by the juvenile judge.

He had picked them up at the school yard and drove them to the Club office where they met the Lady General. Within five minutes, they were in the hot sun learning how to march to a cadence set by Abby. Since none of them were in good physical condition, they were sweating and dragging their asses while “that damned general” never let up until someone’s knees buckled.

When they collapsed to the ground, she surprised them by offering cold Cokes to slake their thirst.

One of those in the first seven was a young kid, named Toady, who was the victim of Abby’s strength and agility the day he tried to steal her phone, at the beach. When that became known among the seven, Abby’s reputation for being tough was enhanced a thousand percent.

School counselors visited the homes of the kids to inform the parents about being picked up for not reporting to the Probation Office. The counselor explained the program in which they would participate for three months.

Most of the parents, but not all, appreciated knowing that their kids would have limited opportunity to hang out with “hoodlums”

By the end of the second week, eleven more youngsters enrolled in the program, thanks to the work of the auxiliary police.

The counselors briefed the staff about their findings during the home visitations, in the belief that knowing their family backgrounds might help the leaders understand some of the recalcitrant behavior.

Abby was delighted to hear that Toady's single mom was failing but still determined to keep Toady out of a gang. As a result, Toady, who had come to respect Abby found himself in a one to one counseling session with Abby.

She was asking, "Thomas, you seem to have adjusted to being in the program. Have the guts to level with me?"

"Maybe. Oh, I think so."

"Okay. Can you tell me why you want to be in a gang?"

Toady hesitated for long time trying to decide if his secret would be safe.

Abby guessed what he was thinking. "Nothing we discuss will go outside this room, Thomas. I'm here to help, not punish or hurt any of you. I hope you believe that."

It took some more cogitating but Toady finally said, "I really don't want to be a gang member. As far as I can see, except for the excitement of stealing or the gang threatening others, life as a gang member is boring. I certainly don't want to get caught doing something that will send me to jail. That will really be boring. The problem is that the gang threatens any kids that don't show up at the pool hall. I'm afraid to be a member and I'm afraid to refuse. I know my mother would be happy if I stayed away and spent more time studying."

Abby said, "I would like to understand. How about the majority of kids, those who are not part of your group?"

"I don't know about other kids, but every kid in my neighborhood is pressured into being part of that group. I would have no friends and probably find myself at risk from the gang if I were to refuse."

Abby said, "Thank you for talking Thomas. How do you like being in our program?"

"I don't like the marching, but I am now enjoying most of the time, but I wonder what will happen when my time is up."

"We're working on that. We need all the help we can get from the community and you kids. I hope some of you will be willing to help."

Chapter 7.

Meanwhile, the gang leaders realized that income from stolen goods had decreased significantly and the number of young “volunteers” was down sharply. When the financial hit was combined with the temporary loss of extortion money from the merchants, income loss was significant enough to call an executive meeting.

Although the executive meeting was hush, hush. Peter Kahu, the undercover deputy sheriff, who had agreed to work with Abby as much as he could, had an ear on the inside.

Several weeks ago, while working a drug raid, the taskforce arrested fifteen distributors who worked for the Island Organization, operating out of Honolulu but controlling about ninety percent of the drug distribution of five islands one of the distributors was Dick Kanuhana, known to be the Hava gang lieutenant.

Peter was assigned to interrogate Dick, who was as nervous as a cat on a hot tin roof. As Peter probed, Dick was trying to find a way to keep his name out of the papers

It took a while, but Peter finally discovered that the Hava gang was preparing to enter the rug business as a small independent operation. Dick would be facing dire circumstances if he was discovered working with the Organization.

Peter saw his opportunity. He made a deal with Dick. “Keep me informed about the gang plans and your name will never appear as part of this operation. However I use that information, it will never point to you as the source.

The bargain was made and all went smoothly. An hour after the special gang executive meeting, Peter knew two things.

Dick started his report to Peter with, “The Boss just discovered that it was the lady general who screwed up the extortion operation. He checked her out and found that she is the force behind the operation that is keeping the young kids at the Club. He is really pissed.”

“The gang is going to launch their drug operation as soon as they immobilize the lady general, who they see as a major pain in the ass as well as the pocketbook.”

Dick told Peter that no decision was made as to the nature of Abby’s immobilization, whether permanent or temporary.

Peter dropped by the Foxglove home after dark that evening to inform Abby and Jerry of the threat. “My guess is that they will plan some sort of injury that will be a warning and incapacitate you so that you will be prevented from showing up at the Club. I am sure they will go directly for the pain, without a verbal warning.”

“The “Boss” is mean and direct. I expect they will move within the next few days. My guess is that he will use Butch and Harry, his bruiser enforcers, who are experts at delivering pain to the level that the boss expects.”

Peter could see that both were visibly shaken. Jerry was the first to speak. “I will see to it that Abby is accompanied each moment she is away from home. Here we are well protected with excellent warning systems.”

Peter shook his head. “These men are giants with whom you are hardly a match. Unfortunately, we don’t have personnel to offer any help, although I am shifting my schedule. I want you to call me at any time that you are on the move.”

Abby said, “Thanks, Peter. We’ll take advantage of that but we need to plan for contingencies. Right now, we need more specific intelligence. Please call Jerry with any tidbits that you discover. I will try some other sources.”

That evening as they lay in each other’s arms, Abby said, “Jerry, I’m frightened. During all those months in Afghanistan, I never gave a second thought to personal harm but the idea of being manhandled by gorillas is damned scary.”

“I understand. Right now, it’s at the top of our minds. I am sure a tactical diversion would be in order.”

A moment later, she began to giggle as she sensed a spidery movement on her thigh that brought a shiver to her welcoming body.

Abby, observing closely the young men, the new recruits, estimated that more than half of them were happy to have an excuse to be in the program. She set up a series of five minute interviews to test her theory.

By the time she was half way through the conversations, her guess had proven correct.

She arranged for Toady to be the last interviewee. He had grown more enthusiastic since their last conversation. He was her best chance for loose talk in his neighborhood since several of the older boys and girls were members of the gang.

She had been right. He showed his enthusiasm when asked for an evaluation up to this date. Just as he stood to leave, he turned to Abby.

“Do you know that you are in danger, Miss Abby?”

She nodded. "I heard some loose talk. It's not the first time."

"You ought to be worried and watch yourself. I heard a couple of gang members who live in my neighborhood say that the boss has ordered Butch and Harry to take care of you."

"Any idea what that means?"

"From what I heard about them, it could be a terrible beating that includes broken bones. The last thing I heard about was two broken legs."

"Have they ever killed anyone, as far as you know?"

"The talk I hear is that the boss has a specialist for that. The enforcers only hurt people."

"Wow. Thanks for the heads up. I better ride home with my husband this evening. I sure wish I knew when this would happen so I could get the police chief to protect me."

Today, who was street wise, said, "The gang always has something going on that requires the police to be away when they want to be sure the police will not interfere. They're smart."

"How do you know all this, Thomas?"

He grinned. "I watch and I listen. I better run back to my group."

As she reflected on that conversation, she realized that there was depth in Thomas, something she had overlooked. "He had potential, something I have overlooked, probably, because of our first meeting."

Abby and Jerry were alert and tense on the ride home. They locked doors and set all the special alarms that Jerry had installed for advance warning of any arrival on their property.

Neither slept well that night despite their careful plan of counterattack to any initiative by Butch and Harry.

The next evening, two minutes after the children started leaving for home, Toady came dashing into the office.

"I just spied Butch and Harry hanging out at the drug store around the corner."

"Thanks, Thomas. Now run home. Don't be found nearby, just in case they try something."

The moment he was out the door, Abby called Peter.

"How long will it take you to get to the area? Good, we will plan to lock up in twenty minutes. Tell the chief to look for a diversion tactic but focus on us. I am sure this is it. The bruisers are in the drug store."

Just as she hung up, the Club director, Jane, walked in, grabbed a seat and looked like she wanted to chat. Abby and Jerry kept packing, signaling that they had to leave but Jane was not taking the hint.

Jane said, "I have a few things to discuss."

Abby asked, "Can it wait, and Jane, we're in a rush."

"This will only take about ten or fifteen minutes, Abby."

"Sorry. We have to dash. I can come in early tomorrow."

"Oh. All right. I'll walk out with you."

Jerry said, "We still have to do the security walk around. Why don't you go ahead, Jane? Abby I'll go right and you go left. I'll meet you at the gate."

Jane started to offer more help but finally said, "Fine. I'll see you at about two-thirty, Abby."

"Whew. That could have been messy. Let's go, Jerry."

Although both were expecting the appearance of Butch and Harry, Abby nearly jumped out of her skin as Butch came around the car. He was over six feet and weighed at least three hundred pounds. Harry was a carbon copy.

"Well, hello, pretty pain in the ass lady. It's my pleasure although it may not be yours."

"What does that mean? Who are you?"

"Let's just say that we're two messengers from the boss."

"What boss?"

"Are you stupid? There is only one boss in these parts."

"Hey. You're hurting my wrist. Let go,"

"Before I finish with you, that pain will seem like a little tickle. Today is a warning. Stay out of our business and release those kids from custody of the Club. They belong to us.

To insure that you understand clearly, Harry is going to break your husband's arm while I mess up your face and break your legs. That way, you won't want to have anyone look at you and you will not be able to March or hike with those darling teenagers."

Abby started to protest. "Don't hurt Jerry. What do you want?" I have money we can pay you and your boss."

"Ha. Money can't buy my loyalty to the boss. Go ahead, Harry."

At that moment, he was interrupted with the sound of a shrill whistle and the advance of the police chief, two deputies and two auxiliary police, guns drawn and handcuffs ready to lock on the wrists and ankles.

Both messengers panicked and began to pull their victims in front of their bodies. To their surprise, quick judo moves by Abby and Jerry had the men on their backs staring into gun barrels of the chief and a deputy.

Other police jumped on both men and soon had them hand cuffed.

Peter stayed out of sight

Abby asked the chief, "How long can you keep them in jail?"

"Both have at least one felony on record. The DA can ask for high bail which will stretch the current cash situation of this small gang. They could be out of circulation for quite a while, maybe until their trial date."

He continued. "The Boss will find someone else or some other way to whip you, Abby. He is determined to grow and to compete with the Organization."

"And I need to win the battle over young teenagers. Peter, we need help from the county or Five O to handle the "boss." I

"I can continue to work on the youth who will be a bit more amenable when the news of the enforcers being jailed hits the news."

The chief said, "That keeps you at risk of bodily harm."

"Since gang members do not know that Jerry and I are armed, we have the advantage. That could change, of course, if the Boss decides that they are better off if we are dead."

Peter chimed in. "That would be the last resort. I am sure the Boss will opt for anything except a capital charge. That could tie him up for ages and dry up the money sources for his expansion."

The group decided to meet a week hence, hoping for the presence of the county sheriff and Al Kaiwai, the local rep for Five O.

Abby was delighted but not surprised when four new teenagers walked into the club wanting to know how to join. Some of the shine on gang membership was beginning to dull.

The sheriff was present for the meeting as was a second member from Five O.

Peter introduced a bit of surprising news. “Three major players in the gang have moved to other parts of the island. All three have been distributing drugs for the Organization and the Boss discovered the information. All three left in a hurry”

Al chimed in. “There is a rumor that the Boss is trying to merge with the gang centered in Hilo. That gang is facing competition from the Organization which operates in most of the territory south and west of Hilo.”

Abby asked, “How does that work for the Boss?”

“The Boss has some new, but deep pocket, financial resources but lacked the manpower that Hilo and Honokaa can offer.”

Tia Meara, the special rep from Five O said. “I am authorized to speak for the Commander. He had been in touch with community leaders in Hilo and Honokaa. They want to help prevent any expansion of power by their gangs. Having been told about the success of our B&G Club activity, they are seeking help to initiate programs of their own.”

He turned toward Abby. “The Commander wondered if you might find a way to assist them.”

Abby looked for a signal from Jerry, who gave her a slight nod. She said, “My prime loyalty is to our club and Jane, the director. She would have to be comfortable that she had the personnel to replace my activity.

Secondly, since this means time away from home, I need to have my husband be my partner in this endeavor.”

Sheriff Palako interjected, “General Foxglove, if you decide to accept, I will release Peter to serve with you. I know enough about gang leaders that you are a major threat and will continue to be so. At some point one of the bosses will do more than disable you. I am offering Peter as your shield who, incidentally shares your love of young teens and their potential.”

Abby was nodding her acceptance of the offer. “Let me talk with Jane and Jerry. I can inform you tomorrow.”

Mr. Meara said, “If this is a go, then we will have a joint effort by local police, the sheriff’s department and Five O and, more importantly, the leadership of volunteers, a first in Hawaiian history, I’m sure.”

A month of meetings with community leaders and directors of the Boys and Girls Clubs, Hilo and Honokaa had Auxiliary Police picking up young teenagers for minor infractions and having them paroled to the Club.

Within ten days, the Boss was seeing red. He was quoted as saying, "That damned general must be involved. This cannot be a coincidence."

He needed a successful merger and an expanded program in both areas in order to prove his worthiness to his pending financial investors

Two days later, the two new Clubs were broken into, the offices were trashed, computers stolen and sports equipment stolen.

A roughly scrawled note was left. "**Next time will be worse.**"

Within a week, the Clubs were back in operation, all equipment replaced, sturdy gates and locks in place and a printed sign saying "**We're watching.**"

Meanwhile, the Boss has set up a surveillance team which reported, "She is always surrounded by one or more males. It should be noted that the husband might be an easier target."

Two days later, Jerry and Mr. Meara of Five O were returning from lunch at Big Island Hotel. "Jerry, I'll fetch the car. Rest here until I drive up."

Just as he approached the front of the dining room, he was shocked to see Jerry being held by two men, one clasping his hand over Jerry's mouth while the other was hustling them into a large, dark Lincoln Sedan.

Meara hit the speed dial number for Peter on his iPhone. Peter and the Hilo police chief were just rising from the table after a second cup of coffee.

"Hello, Tai?"

"Kidnap out front."

Tai whipped his car around the Lincoln and slued a hundred and eighty degrees so that he was nose to nose with the big sedan.

At first it appeared that the sedan driver was going to ram Tai's car. The driver changed his mind and decided to reverse.

Peter, viewing the scene from the front door, stepped forward and put two bullets into each of the rear tires. Tai was on the move, his weapon in hand and motioning for the driver to raise his hands.

Peter was dashing toward the sedan while he put two bullets into the engine, then quickly pointed his gun at the nearest of the two kidnappers.

The Hilo police chief was covering the other kidnapper, who was trying to shield himself behind Jerry, but to no avail.

Peter, who immediately moved to help Jerry, noticed the pallor of his face and the coldness of his hands. He dialed 911 and had an ambulance on its way.

It was clear to Peter that Jerry's breathing was getting shallower. He sat beside Jerry and began a gentle rhythm of pressure on and off the chest.

He knew Jerry's heart was beating but did it need any help?

He sighed with relief when he heard the ambulance approaching

The attendants went to work on Jerry, ignoring Peter. He could see one applying the oxygen mask while the other was checking Jerry's vitals.

A minute later, Peter was answering questions while riding alongside Jerry on the way to the hospital. He still had no definitive answer from the medics who kept monitoring Jerry's vitals.

Meanwhile, three squad cars arrived to haul the three gangsters to jail. The only kidnapper with I.D. was the driver. The identification of the others would be discovered only through fingerprints.

What no one realized was that one of the men was the Boss, Jeff Akahanaa. It took a good deal of time to find out that he was the Boss and that he decided that he alone could be trusted to assure success.

Once kidnapping charges were made, the three of them were denied bail and would remain incarcerated until trial dates.

Chapter 8.

Abby's teeth were clenched and her hands gripped the steering wheel with fists of steel. "Dear lord, please don't take Jerry from me. I'm not ready to be a widow again. Our tie has been too short. There are so many things we need to do and I don't think I can do them without Jerry to support me. Please Lord."

Abby was at the hospital emergency room entrance when the ambulance arrived. The attendants gave her ten seconds to hold his hand before they left her behind as they rushed the trolley inside ER.

She turned to Peter. "What did they say, Peter?"

"Not a damned word, Abby. I asked a lot of questions but received no answers to mine. I couldn't tell anything from body language, although they showed no signs of extra worry."

Abby said, "That doesn't mean anything. Professionals are taught to stay cool."

Abby could not sit down. She paced the waiting area, tried to see through the small window of the swinging doors, picked up a magazine, put it down, and then paced once more.

Forty minutes seemed like hours. She dashed to the door when a doctor in greens appeared but was disappointed when he waved to an elderly gentleman who had been silently crying and dabbing his cheeks long before Abby appeared.

She realized that she had no idea where the incident took place or who was with him at the time. She chastised herself. "Details make no difference. The important thing is that he becomes well."

A few minutes later, she heard her name. A young woman was saying, "I'm Dr. Anaaka. Your husband is doing well. Come with me, please."

The doctor kept their movement to a stroll as she explained. “In layman’s terms, your husband has an occluded lateral heart artery that caused him severe pain. We have relieved the pain. Our full examination shows that he also had a partially occluded main artery. Heart surgery is indicated and recommended.

Meanwhile, he is at rest but very weak and anxiously waiting to see you.

We need your authorization for the operation. The procedure is urgent but not so critical to prohibit a second opinion, if you so desire.”

Abby wanted to scream the question “Will he be strong enough to make it?” but took a deep breath, saying, “Thank you. If I may have a few minutes with Jerry, I will sign the forms. I need him to agree that you should proceed.”

His voice was little more than a whisper. “I can stand a hug and a long kiss. I need that more than an operation.”

Their shared tears dampened the light coverlet but no one noticed. A few minutes later, she stood, a lonesome figure, watching the gurney vanish in the distance.

Jane had joined Peter, and both were waiting for Abby as she returned. Jane rushed to take Abby into her arms that melted into tears and welcomed those loving arms and the touch of Peter’s hand on her shoulder.

After a long moment, Peter suggested, “Jane can drive you home and I will be happy to drive your car. Jane stopped for a bottle of your favorite scotch.

Your place is only a ten minute drives there is nothing to do but wait.

We thought that would be a better waiting room for the two or three hour operation and recovery. That should give you an opportunity to change your clothing and pack a few things for Jerry.”

“Peter, you are so thoughtful. Thank you both. Were you with Jerry when this happened?”

He nodded. “I’ll fill you in at the house.”

Abby said, “Jane, I want to stop by the chapel for a few minutes before we leave.”

Jane placed her hand on Abby’s arm during the prayer.

Abby concluded her prayer with “ I am not only grateful that we have an extended time together, but also the reminder that time is precious and each day is to be lived as your agents of the fulfillment of your love for humankind.”

Three days later, Martha had the condo sparkling for Jerry's arrival home. She refused any help from Abby, saying, "Go. Be with him every moment that is available to you. Time together is precious. Incidents like this are signals that we should heed.

The several weeks that elapsed were filled with little acts of love by the three and supplemented with daily visits by Jane and Peter.

Jerry and Abby insisted the two visitors stay for dinner. They agreed on the condition that on alternate evenings, they bring the meal or the makings which Peter would cook with help from Jane.

It was a rich experience for all five of the participants, a topping off to a day filled with warm exchanges by a loving couple.

When Jerry was fully mobile and confident, Abby took him sailing to their favorite places where they sat, held hands and watched the water lapping onto the shore or eating a picnic lunch.

It was Monday of the sixth week that Abby pushed the wheel chair through the gate of the Club. The first voice she heard was that of Toady, "Hey, guys, look whose here. Shouts of welcome and young bodies rushing to meet the arrivals followed. That was followed by some of the leaders coming to welcome them back while some new kids and new leaders hung back until Jane brought them forward for introductions.

Jerry insisted that Abby leave him in the wood shop to visit with the current volunteer and his six students. Abby was eager to watch the soccer practice where she could see if any of her protégés were making progress.

She was not surprised to see Thomas (Toady) playing goalie. He had grown a foot in the months since they met.

During the break, she called to him. "You're shaping up into a good goalie, Thomas. Are you planning on turning out for the high school varsity team next fall?"

"I'd like that but I have a lot to learn. I won't have time to practice this summer. I have to find a job and earn some money. Mom needs an operation and my older brother left us."

"What kind of work are you considering?"

"Maybe I can become a stock boy for some store or a bag boy at the supermarket. The problem is my age. I have been taking some wood working shop classes here but part of the time overlaps with soccer practice."

Abby was moved by Toady's situation. "I'll scout around for you, Thomas. Perhaps, I can find something that may help."

"Thanks, Ms. Abby. You're a real peach."

Abby poured two scotches and a glass of wine for Martha. She took her seat and raised her glass in a toast for a quick recovery for Jerry.

"Honey, what do you have in mind for taking care of the yards and any repairs while you're out of commission?"

"I began to scan the yellow pages last evening but I need to check out some of the contractors."

"How would you like to hire a young eager apprentice that you can teach and supervise while you recuperate?"

Jerry smiled, saying, "And you already have a candidate. I presume."

Abby giggled. "Of course, I do. You know Thomas or Toady as he is known at the Club. He needs work. His mom needs an operation, he has no dad and his older brother has left the family."

"Does he have any manual skills?"

"I don't know. He recently signed on for the wood working class at the Club. He is a kid with talent and determination. I recently checked his school record. Within the last year he has moved from failing to being the top student in his class."

Jerry said, "That speaks well for the boy but I'm guessing you have some deeper reason."

Abby did not respond immediately. When she spoke, there was a slight catch in her voice. "As you may remember, Toady was the kid who tried to steal my purse on the beach, so I wasn't surprised when he was arrested and showed up at the Club.

I had a sense that he was really not the kid I suspected at the beach incident. I singled him out for private conversations, one of which led me to understand the real threat of the Boss."

I began to watch him during those afternoon sessions and had a revelation. Martha, do you remember how intensely I felt about bullies on the school grounds when I was young?"

"Well, I saw myself in Thomas, who spent some part of each session protecting the smaller kids from the bullies."

I have been so proud of him and I seem to have an emotional attachment and virtually adopted him as the son I never had."

Her voice trailed off and Jerry reached for the hankie to dab at the tears on her cheeks.

When she regained her composure, she said, "I wonder what brought that on. I never gave much thought to the fact that I had no children. So, Jerry, what do you say about my idea?"

"Let's give it a whirl. We can start small. He can do the weeding, relieving Martha. I can show him how to prune and, I am sure that I can find a small carpentry job to test his skill."

"Thank you, dear. I'm certain this is a good decision."

Abby and Jerry limited their afternoon activity at the Club to two hours. She suggested to Toady that he approach Jerry for a part time job helping around the condos while her husband was recuperating.

She watched from a distance as the two huddled for about thirty minutes. She could tell from the grin on Toady's face that he would be coming to work."

Until school was out for the summer break, Toad would work Saturday afternoons and all day Sunday. That allowed him Saturday morning for soccer practice or scrimmages.

To Jerry's surprise, Toady showed up on Friday evening, asking Jerry to show him the weeds to be pulled and how they differed from the good plants.

Saturday, he arrived ten minutes before noon and was on his knees in the garden when Jerry spotted him from the kitchen window.

Jerry asked Abby to take a glass of milk and a sandwich to Toady, "just in case he hasn't eaten."

Toady weeded for the next two hours under the watchful eye of Jerry, who engaged him in conversation on a variety of subjects, including the state of Toady's mother's health and the location of his brother, still a mystery.

At 1400 hours, Abby appeared with two glasses of lemonade. Jerry asked, "Are you up to a jog on the beach, Toady? Part of your job, which I failed to explain, is to accompany Abby on her daily jog. With all the potential enemies we have, she and I agreed that she would not be solo when she's away from me. I hope that is okay with you. You're on the payroll."

"Wow. That sounds like getting paid while having fun."

Jerry laughed. "That may be true but you need to keep alert by keeping your eye open to any signal that could spell trouble."

A half hour later, a winded Toady was huffing and puffing while trying to down a couple of glasses of lemonade.

More weeding and then some trimming of shrubbery filled out the afternoon.

The last chore was the removal of four pilings from the patio fence at the console net door. Jerry asked, "Toady, do you think you can take one of these on your way home and ask Mike Fox at the lumber yard to make four new ones?"

"Sure. Will you call him to say I'm coming on your say so? He once caught me stealing and thinks of me that way."

"Sure. I'll do that. See you tomorrow."

They were interrupted by Martha who asked, "Thomas, do you think it would be okay if I took you home and dropped in to see your mother?"

He hesitated for a moment before saying, "I guess that would be okay, but I have to ask you to wait outside while I convince her that you are a friend."

Martha parked on the dirt road that fronted a rundown triplex in what must be the poorest neighborhood in town.

Toady dashed into the house but was running back to the car within a minute. "Mrs. Adams, please come quickly. Mom is hardly breathing and the neighbor woman doesn't know what to do. Neither does me."

Martha hurried into the house. She noted that the house was clean and the windows open for fresh air. An elderly woman sat by the bedside, praying.

Toady's mom was lying on the bed. She was breathing rapidly. Her breath was shallow. Martha took her hand and the moment she touched her wrist, she knew the pulse was racing.

Martha threw her iPhone to Toady. "Call 911. I'll talk with the operator."

Twelve minutes later, the attendants were pushing a gurney from the house toward the ambulance and a minute later the siren was sounding as it headed for the hospital.

Martha was embracing a very tearful Toady, who could not join his mom in the ambulance.

"I'll take you to the hospital, Thomas. Let me call Abby first."

Abby called Peter, who came to sit with Jerry. She joined Martha and Thomas in the waiting room a few minutes before a doctor came into view.

He looked at Toady with a question mark on his face. Abby realized his confusion. "Thomas is her only relative. We are his friends."

The doctor shook his head. He put his arms around the youngster.

“We did all we could but it was too late. Your mom died within two minutes of her arrival in the ER.”

Abby saw Thomas’s body shudder as he cried out and let the tears gush. With her tears rolling down her cheeks she reached out for Thomas and then felt Martha’s hand on her shoulder. He turned and wrapped his arms around Abby, burying his face in her bosom and sobbed.

Over his head, she said to Martha, “Mom, use my phone and call the police chief and ask him to come quickly.”

She just realized that the doctor would be required to call Children’s Services who would immediately try to find a licensed home to take care of Thomas.

The chief arrived within ten minutes. Abby explained that she was hoping to take Thomas with her but would need some intercession with the Services agent, who had to live by the rules.

Frank nodded his understanding and intercepted the woman from Children’s Services, leading her to a private room for discussion.

It seemed like ages as she fussed mentally with the slight chance that her request would be granted.

She worried for naught. The agent turned out to be a supervisor with real authority.

Frank smiled as the two of them came into the waiting room.

“Ms. Manakaa, meet Mrs. Foxglove and her mother, Martha Adams. Abby, Ms. Manakaa, after getting some information will issue you a temporary license as a foster home, since you are willing to apply for a permanent license”

Abby sighed with relief and gave a warm smile to Ms. Manakaa and accompanied her to the small room.

Toady was in a haze and did not understand what was taking place. His grief over losing his only family was overwhelming.

The chief made arrangements to have the body taken to the county morgue, pending Thomas’ decision.

The following morning, Abby said, “Thomas, did your mom have insurance or ever talk about her death?”

“We never talked about that. We can look for papers. What do I have to do about the stuff in the house? Except for clothing and a few personal things, the rest can be thrown away.””

“We can go when you’re ready and you decide about the things in the house.”

The only papers of importance were all the family birth certificates, his parents’ marriage certificate and his mother’s social security records.

Jottings in a note book were meaningless except for a hope that when she died, her body or ashes would be buried at sea.

“Miss Abby, I don’t have money to pay for a burial.”

“That’s all right Thomas. I think there is a payment from your mom’s social security account that will cover the cremation. We can sail out to sea where you can carry out your mother’s wishes.”

Toady broke into tears while trying to say thank you to Abby.

Four days later, Abby and Jerry took Toady, with the urn of ashes, for a sail a few miles out to sea, a trip made in total silence. There the young man said a silent good bye to his mother.

Toady performed his chores, helped Jerry with repairs but refused to go to the club or soccer practice.

The older folks said nothing to Toady about his behavior until the following week end. Starting on Saturday, the three of them discussed plans that would involve his participating in activities and making plans with the family. He began setting and clearing the table at mealtimes. They decided what movie to watch on the television

Surprisingly, Toady agreed to attend church with them on Sunday morning. Jerry had permission to give up the wheel chair which gave Toady the responsibility to use his arm as Jerry’s support between the car and the church pew.

Halfway down the center aisle Mary Manakaa, a very pretty teenager, saw them approaching and immediately signaled a welcome with a smile and by moving to make room. Jerry insisted that Thomas sit next to the girl, saying, “I like the aisle seat.”

The kids were acquainted as school mates and club mates. She said, “I haven’t seen you here before, Toady.”

He blushed, saying, “I’ve never been to church as long as I can remember.”

“Oh, I see. I’ll be happy to answer any questions or help in any way I can.” She noticed Abby arriving. “I see you came with the generals as we call them.”

“Yes. I’m staying with them since my mother died last week.”

“Oh, I’m sorry. We just got back from the mainland where we visited family.” She reached for his hand and moved just a tad closer as the bell in the organ prelude began.

After the service, Today introduced Mary to Abby and Jerry and she introduced them to her parents.

After the coffee hour on the patio, the six of them were headed for brunch at the café around the corner.

Abby noticed that Mary and Thomas were in a world by themselves.

Abby caught a few of their words such as “autobiography, English, math, geometry, happy to help, hold you to that.”

She saw Mary kiss him on the cheek and Toady’s face turn red.

“She thought, “That was sweet. I am sure he has never been kissed by a girl.”

She looked at the girl’s mother and saw a frown of disapproval.

“Oh, oh, there’s a mother who has forgotten what it was to be fourteen.”

She rose and walked over to the youngsters.

“Have you two known each other at school or the Club?”

Mary replied, “Only at a distance. Toady says he is living with you at those Condos near the beach.”

Toady cut in. “Mary and I were just comparing notes about our strengths and weaknesses at school. Since here is no summer school, we were talking about studying together. Would it be okay, if Mary came by once or twice a week?”

Abby gave them a warm smile. “I think that would be great. Is it okay with your mom?”

“She isn’t really my mom. I lost my mother a year ago. She and dad married recently. I’m sure dad will approve.”

“Will you need a ride?”

“I have a bicycle and it’s not that far.”

That afternoon, when Abby and Jerry were alone, she said, “Watching the two young ones getting acquainted took me back took me back to my teens.”

“I don’t believe I ever thought about being a mother. My focus was on being of service to others, such as protecting small kids from bullies or serving the nation.

Yet, here I am, in my late forties, in the role of a parent to Thomas, a teenager whose hormones are stirring and I’m not sure how to handle that.”

Jerry laughed. Why don’t you concentrate on all the other parental responsibilities and leave sexual behavior to me?”

“Whew. Thank you.”

She continued. “Have you finished thinking about my suggestion of the other evening?”

“Yes. I agree. I would be delighted to be an adoptive father to Thomas, but how do you think he will react?”

That evening, after dinner, Abby asked him. “Thomas, how would you feel if we asked you to be our adopted son instead of our foster son?”

Thomas looked shocked. He just stared for the longest time. Abby saw tears forming and trickling down his cheeks. She and Jerry waited for what seemed an eternity.

“I can’t believe that anyone would care enough for me to want to adopt me. I don’t have anything special to offer.”

Abby said, “But you do, Thomas. Just being who you are is more than enough. You show a lot of respect for us, you seem to like being with us. In addition, Jerry and I believe you have such potential with your keen mind and loving heart. We would be proud to be called your parents. I would love to have you call me “mom.”

The tears began to gush as he shook his head up and down. The two adults

Shed tears of their own as they enveloped Thomas in their arms.

The two of them were seated on the sofa.

“Jerry, I’ve decided to retire from my duties at the Club. In fact, I’m thinking of a major switch.

I will continue to consult with the two new programs in Honokaa and Hilo while I focus on being a full time mother and assume a role working with Jane at the church. What do you think?”

I like the idea, but with one addition. “Add a phrase after “full time mother” and “full time husband.”

She burst into laughter, pulled him to her body and planted a kiss on his lips that held until they came up for air

“How’s that?”

He whispered. “Not bad for a start. I think I would be more comfortable in a horizontal position.”

“I’d love it, but are you sure?”

“The Doc said my recovery is on schedule and it is time to resume.”

It was after Mary’s second visit that Thomas asked, “Jerry, do you think I should get a used bike? I hate to see Mary travelling alone. I would like to meet her when she starts for here and then see her home.”

I think that is a great idea. Will she be coming often?”

Thomas blushed and said, “We were thinking three times a week. We have a lot of catching up to do.”

He hurried on to explain. “My grammar needs a lot of work and I have no idea how to even start my summer assignment, which is to write my autobiography.”

“English and history are Mary’s favorite subjects but she has a hard time with science and math. I find those subjects easier. We agreed that we should both be ready for the fall term, so that is going to take a lot of time.”

I see. How does that set with her mom?”

“That’s her step mom who doesn’t give a hoot about Mary. Sometimes, Mary says, it feels like her stepmother wishes that Mary doesn’t exist. Mary says that most evenings, she fixes a platter for Mary but gets her husband to take her out to dinner.”

“How does Mary feel about that?”

“She’s mad about that. She is upset with her dad who seems to be blind to what is happening because he is smitten with that woman.”

Jerry said, “Mary must be very sad.”

“She is. Do you think mom would mind inviting Mary to supper at least one evening a week?”

“Why don’t you ask her?”

Within a couple of weeks, Mary was having dinner with the Foxglove family three times a week and lunch on Saturdays

Abby sat in with the kids on occasion when they were doing their studies and served as a special resource in math and twentieth century history.

Abby was a source of comfort for Mary during her very painful menstrual periods and often found herself as a counselor to both children.

It was obvious to the adults that the teenagers were falling in love.

Abby planned a 15th birthday anniversary party for both when it was discovered that their birthdays were a week apart.

Abby was thrilled to be playing such an important part in both their lives.

The foursome celebrated in Honolulu on the day that Thomas became officially Thomas Foxglove.

It was joy for Abby to be a tutor to two teenagers, counselor and friend to both but challenging to be serving as the mother to both.

One of the big challenges came the day that Mary asked, “Mrs. Foxglove, I need some advice.”

It was the tone of voice that alerted Abby.

“I can’t discuss this with dad or my stepmother but I need help making a decision. It must be obvious to both of you that Toady and I are in love.”

“I promised my real mother to talk when I felt ready to have sex and I need to talk. It’s so complicated because it involves your son.”

Abby knew that a day like this would come but was still unprepared.

She nodded. "It is complicated but let's try."

May I assume that the two of you have talked about it?"

"Yes, I more than Toady. He is reluctant for several reasons, one of which is my getting pregnant, which would complicate our lives. I assured him that I am on the pill, something my stepmother insisted I do"

"He understands but he also says that no matter how difficult it is for him to say no, he thinks we are too young while I think we are old enough."

"Mary, I have no experience that helps this situation. I was not in love at your age and didn't have sex until high school graduation night. That was a goodbye gift to my boyfriend who was moving away right after graduation. That was no big deal and meant little to me. On that basis, I can only say, that the occasion of your first experience should mean a great deal."

The world is a much different place than it was thirty years ago."

Mary did not seem disappointed although Abby thought nothing had been resolved. Weeks later, Mary said to her. "Thank you. We decided to wait."

Abby worried about the fact that Mary was more attached to her and Jerry than to her own dad. When she raised the question with Mary's dad at church on Sunday, he blew it off with, "She seems so happy and my wife is less tense when Mary is not around. If you don't

Mind her hanging around, I have no objection. Let me know if she becomes a problem."

Neither youngster presented serious problems, and mostly met their familial obligations on time.

Neither put up serious resistance to Abby's rules regarding study time, bed times, and curfews when they partied with friends.

Mary turned moody one Sunday evening and asked Abby if she could stay the night.

"What's wrong, Mary?"

"I got into a fight with my stepmother and my dad blamed me. He has never done that before. In fact, my dad spoiled me, as my mother used to say. He always took my side when mom and I had a disagreement."

"Please, may I stay the night?"

“Of course, you may, but you should not let this fester. You will have to face up to your dad.”

“I know that but not tonight.”

When Mary came by on Tuesday, she came directly to Abby.

“Thank you for the talk we had late Sunday evening. Dad picked me up at school on Monday and we took a long ride and talked.”

“He is arranging for a divorce. He didn’t give me any details but he apologized for his recent behavior.”

“He says he is happy that you are my good friend and hopes that will continue. He told me that I need a woman’s counsel.”

“I’ll be there when you need me, Mary.”

Abby and Jerry continued to sail around the tip of the island, looking for coves and places to picnic.

Many afternoons were spent discussing their good life together along with its challenges and benefits.

One such afternoon, Abby was saying, “Isn’t it wonderful the way life finds you and leads you, as long as you stay open to possibilities. Who would ever have thought that so many wonderful challenges would come our way in just these few years?”

“I recall one of the early days when I lay on the beach and thought what lay ahead for me. You had your maintenance work to keep you busy and all had been reading and sun bathing, except of course, our times of intimacy.”

“So called retirement has been good for us.”

One afternoon in the spring of their junior year, Thomas biked in from school with Mary and another beautiful girl. Abby, who was carrying a basket of flowers, stopped to greet them.

“Mom, this is Akela Butler, one of our classmates. She is going to help us with our chores. We’ve been invited to a party and hope you can drive us and pick us up at ten thirty.”

Abby did not hesitate to say yes. The surprise came when she was asked to pick up Nick, another boy, who upon entering the car, gave Mary a lingering kiss.

Abby could hardly wait for the evening to pass. Nick got out at Mary's house, since he lived only a few doors from her home.

Thomas walked Akela to the door where he received a warm hug and kiss.

Thomas said nothing by way of explanation. Abby said, "That's a surprise. Have you and Mary broken up?"

"Not really. A few months ago, we decided that we were very close friends but we should date with others. After all we will be going separate directions after graduation, Mary certainly too some women's college in the east."

"Wow. That is a very mature outlook."

"Mom, you shouldn't be surprised. You've been helping us grow up for all these months."

"Wow, again. At this rate, you two will be gone in a flash. What happened to those green kids who came into my life a few months ago?"

Their mutual support system for study served both kids well so that by graduation they were in the ninety nine percentile of the senior class and in line for good scholarships.

Abby helped them prepare for their college entrance exams and counseled Mary regarding the eastern universities she wanted to consider.

Early in his junior year, Thomas thought he would like to follow in his parents' footsteps and seek a commission via West Point.

He, as a top student in his class, and a list of school and community activities, was definitely qualified. As a son of two retired generals, he became a viable candidate.

In the spring of his senior year in high school, Thomas jumped with joy when he opened the letter.

"Mom, I'm too excited. Will you read the letter?"

"I can't. The tears of joy are blurring my vision. Daddy, it's up to you."

"To the Class of 2017: Congratulations on your appointment to the United States Military Academy. You are about to enter an institution steeped in tradition. West Point is a special place.

It is not the location or the buildings. It is our graduates, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight Eisenhower, Norman Schwarzkopf, and the many others who have developed into leaders of character.

You are about to take the first step in adding your name to “The Long Gray Line.” There are many steps before you, but everyone here at the military academy is committed to helping you on this journey.

We will challenge you, but always remember that we also want you to succeed.

Our academic, military, and physical programs are among the best in the world. They are integrated and immersed in a rich moral-ethical climate that is unsurpassed. All of these programs working together will prepare you for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the United States Army.

You will be the leaders of America’s finest Soldiers in war and peace. Good luck as you prepares to join us, and welcome to the Class of 2017.”

. “Mom, Dad. You are the greatest. Thank you all you did to help me qualify for the appointment.”

On the following Saturday evening, a party was underway on the beach, where a dozen couples were celebrating their joy of being received as freshman at their colleges of choice.

All were graduates of the Boys and Girls Club. Five of the boys had been part of the potential gang kids who had been paroled to the program that first year.

Half of the group would be staying in the islands but others would be scattered across the continent from California to New York.

For many, graduation night would portably be the last time they saw each other until some reunion.

Abby wondered about Akela and Tomas. She knew that those two were deeply in love. Separation would be difficult.

Thomas was late returning with the family car. Abby lay in bed awake, looking at the clock every fifteen minutes, waiting for the sound of his return. This was unusual. She never had the need to stay awake when Thomas was on a date

She heard the car pull in at two thirty and promptly fell asleep.

Thomas came into the kitchen later than usual but in enough time to go to the eleven o’clock worship service.

While helping Abby prepare lunch, he said, “Mom, there was a special reason I was so late last night. Akela and I made love for the first time although we had talked about it for several months.”

Abby took a small gulp and hesitated. “How do I respond?”

“Were you at Akela’s home?”

“Yes. She and her mom had a long talk over a period of months. Her mom said the decision was hers, especially since we love each other. That was something dad and I discussed once.”

“Her mom and dad were away for the night, by agreement with Akela, so that we could feel comfortable and take our time. Mom, it was incredible, so much more than we expected.”

Abby sighed. She thought, I’ve been blessed to have this son who trusts me so much that he was willing to share his experience and his feelings.”

They were in a tight embrace when Jerry walked in. “Hey. Who’s trying to steal my girl?”

He guessed what had just transpired when a red faced Thomas turned to hug him.

At lunch, Thomas said, “I just had a call from Akela. Her mom is inviting the three of us to dinner this evening, if you are available.”

The looked at each other and nodded.

“I don’t think that I told you that Akela has been accepted at Columbia. That makes it easier for us to see each other.”

The folks smiled. Abby said, “The opportunities for visiting are rare at the Point, Thomas.”

Jerry asked, “Did you have a chance to read some of the material I gave you, letters from recent grads about the first year.”

“Not really.”

“I’ll look forward to reading your first letters or listening to your phone calls.”

Dinner with the Butlers was a pleasure

While the young ones were walking on the beach during the cocktail period, Mrs. Butler was saying, "Thomas is such a great young man. He is so helpful and well-mannered and mature. "

I understand that he is your adopted son."

"Yes. He was left without a family at age fourteen. We knew him through the Boys and Girls Club where we were helping out."

The comment led to questions by the Butlers about the Club. Before the evening was over, the Club had two new volunteers.

Abby helped in the kitchen by tossing the salad. Akano said, "Watching my little girl grow into womanhood is difficult for all mothers, I'm sure. It is for me."

"I hope you had no ill feelings about our agreeing to have the house for their first experience."

Abby said, "Oh, no. I thought it was a great idea for two youngsters who were having their first experience."

"Thank you. Akela told me that they had a wonderful experience."

"That is how Thomas felt. I am happy for them.

The rest of the evening was spent exchanging information about their lives and plans for the future.

Akela spent two days each week working with Toady and Mary. The two young ones spent Sunday afternoons sailing and composing poetry.

The young couple spent the last forty eight hours of May together. Thomas slept with Akela at her home.

By had a lunch for the two families on the thirty-first. Two hours later, Mr. Butler and Akela drove them to the airport.

June 1st was arrival day at the point for the plebes. Jerry rested near the fountain while the other two carried in Thomas's possessions and arranged his half the room.

The roommate had not yet arrived when the folks left. Thomas walked them to the car. The last sound Abby heard was a gruff voice asking, "Are you blind, plebe?"

Abby laughed, "It's begun."

Chapter 10.

Martha was at the airport in Hilo to greet them upon their return three weeks later. The two of them had done the tourist thing in the Big Apple and in Washington.

Abby insisted they had to visit with Uncle Joe and her cousins.

They played tourist in San Francisco, with drinks at the Top of the Mark and a gorgeous room at the Fairmont.

Martha came to their Condo during the first few days, knowing that their home would seem empty now that Thomas was gone.

She enticed Abby into joining a quilting project at church while Jerry was scouting for help with maintenance work at the Condos.

After the second session at the quilting club, Abby said, "Jerry, quilting is not my thing. I'd rather sit alongside you pulling weeds."

I'm sure Martha will understand. I don't want you working too hard until you find someone to help. By the way, are you not finding anyone at the Club?

"No luck so far. I'll keep looking. Meanwhile, I'd love having you as my partner."

He gave her one of his special smiles."

She laughed. "I'll be sure to give you a full view just to whet your appetite."

Several afternoons later, the outdoor bell for the phone rang while they were side by side weeding. Abby scrambled for the outdoor extension in the tool shed.

"This is Abby."

“Mrs. Foxglove, this is Susan Manakaa of Children’s Services. I am five minutes away from your home and wondered if I might stop by. We have a special short term situation that could use your help.”

“One moment, Susan.”

Abby held the mouth piece to her breast as she asked Jerry and got an okay sign.

“That would be fine but you will find us grubby and dressed in shorts working in the garden.”

She heard Susan chuckle. “I may sit down with you. It would make a nice change.”

Minutes later, Abby was making lemonade and ready to serve some of Martha’s sugar cookies.

Susan was at home, having spent many visits during the years that Thomas had been a foster child and then just to visit when Thomas was adopted.

She was saying, “I should remember to be close by when I am due for an afternoon break I love these cookies.”

“We’d love the company. We’re just rattling around a big empty house since Thomas is gone.”

Susan laughed. “That brings me to the reason for my call. We have a short time but critical need and hoped you might feel free to take in two teen boys”

“One is seventeen and will be out of the system when he turns eighteen in a few months. The other is fifteen and a sophomore “

The dad was killed in an accident recently. The mother has been an asylum inmate. We are trying to find relatives. If we are not successful, Tim will be beyond our responsibility but Teddy will need a long term foster home.”

Our immediate need is a home for both boys for a maximum of six months.”

Jerry asked, “What can you tell us about the boys?”

“Tim is an extraordinarily bright and good student. He would like to go to college but doesn’t have the funds and hasn’t made any preparations for next year.

Teddy has been Peck’s bad boy. He hasn’t been into a gang relationship but he and two older friends have been into serious trouble for a long time. His two friends are still incorrigible but Teddy seems ready to change after his recent stay in Juvenile hall.”

You probably can imagine the treatment a younger boy gets in an overcrowded facility, populated by teen age hoodlums.”

“That may be hard to believe since the reason for his stay was a case of arson. The three were caught after setting fire to a fruit stand after they were caught them stealing and boxed their ears. ”

“As you have guessed, we have not been successful in placing the boys. We have takers for Tim but we do not want to split them up. Tim wants to take care of Teddy but, of course, can’t do that any time in the foreseeable future.”

Abby asked, “How bad is the situation for their mother?”

The report is that she may be ready to take care of Teddy in about a year.”

“Jerry asked, “Your request is for a year?”

Abby sensed a hint of pleading in Susan’s voice.

“No, just until school is out. I figure that with you two as foster parents, Teddy will be more acceptable by another family for whatever period will be needed for the mother to take over.”

Abby said, “Susan, we need twenty four hours to consider this.”

“Of course, and more time if the answer is a yes.”

They all laughed and Abby said, “You’re a good sales rep, Susan.”

Susan introduced the boys two days later, after school. Tim did remind Abby of their Thomas. He was upbeat, answered all their questions and helped Teddy respond with a bit of enthusiasm.

Abby guessed that Teddy had been hard to handle at home with no mother to help while dad had to earn a living.

They paused for dessert. The two boys took a brief stroll around the grounds before they gathered again.

Tim must have had a straight talk with Teddy, who was much more responsive during the last part of the meeting.

Abby felt sure that Tim would be a big help when Teddy turned recalcitrant.

Jerry said to the boys. "You should be reminded that General Foxglove and I are retired army generals, which makes us naturally orderly, on time and faithful to our agreements. We will work out some rules that we all agree with and then live up to those rules, whatever they may be."

Teddy sound enthusiastic when he asked. "Do you mean we get to help set the rules?"

"Yep."

Teddy broke into a wide grin.

It was a Saturday morning. The boys arrived on their bicycles. A case worker drove in behind them with suitcases of clothing and other personal possessions.

Abby arranged for them to help her to clear and dust the spare bedroom, which was larger than Thomas'.

When it was spotless, she helped them set up the room in the same manner as her dorm room at the academy. What didn't fit or was needed on a daily basis was stored in a special shed that Jerry and Thomas had built.

When the boys and she agreed that all was ready, Abby said, "Now, are we agreed that this room will be in this condition, each morning after you arise and are ready for the day?"

Teddy said nothing.

Abby asked, "Teddy?"

He mumbled something.

“Teddy, we made an agreement. You remember that Jerry was very clear about obedience to such contracts. You were part of the negotiation.”

His response sounded reluctant. “I guess so.”

“Convince me that you will perform. I do not want to start out having to put you on report, which was part of the contract.”

The word “report” must have hit the right note. “I promise.”

At the Parent-Teacher Conference during the second week after their arrival, Jerry met with Tim and his teachers and came home impressed.

Abby, who met with Teddy and his teachers, had mixed feelings. Each teacher had a similar message. “Theodore is a brilliant boy, underperforming and a nuisance in the classroom.”

His English teacher said, “Theodore takes constructive help as criticism and gets angry, crumpling his paper or thawing his pencil. He has never threatened me but his tone of voice sounds menacing.

I have ceased talking with him. I write notes in red on his essay submissions.”

At the family conference, he was drawn inward and refused to say anything about the comments.

During the weeks that followed, Abby and Jerry kept Teddy’s feet to the fire. They assigned extra hours of chores when he fell short of group expectations.

He stayed moody and uncommunicative. Tim’s counsel and encouragement fell on deaf ears. He did not complain when assigned more hours.

Even when he lived up to the rules, his performance was marginal.

A suggestion that he might find some satisfaction by attending the Club to learn new skills, met with silence.

Abby and Jerry refused to give up on Teddy.

As Jerry said, “Tim continues to encourage Teddy, even when rebuffed. One of us will break through with patient listening to discover the root of his anger.

One day when Teddy arrived home from school, Abby served Teddy freshly baked cookies and a Coke while she sipped some coffee.

Ever since she awoke this morning, she had been worrying about Teddy. He seemed to be withdrawing from the family, deeper into himself, more than usual.

“What am I missing? What are we doing that is missing the point? Something has to change. Jerry is as frustrated as I.”

Yesterday had been one of his darkest days again. He hardly spoke a word starting with the moment he arrived from school. He went at his chores with a vengeance at twice the speed of any normal afternoon.

He gulped dinner and, without excusing himself, shut himself in the bedroom.

Tim told Abby this morning that Teddy had not spoken a word last night, pretending to be asleep when Tim came to bed.

Abby decided on a soft approach today. “Teddy, Jerry says you are caught up with your chores. How would you like a sailing lesson?”

His eyes brightened for a moment, then dimmed. “I’ve never been in a boat. That little boar of yours looks scary.”

“Do you know how to swim?”

“Of course. Everybody does that.”

“Put on your shorts or swim trunks. I’ll show you how safe that little boat is.”

Teddy didn’t set any speed records changing into swim trunks but Abby was sure that underneath his show of casual behavior was a sense of excitement.

He came to life twenty minutes later. Abby explained the basics of the tiller, the sail and the ropes and the reaction of the sail to the wind regardless of direction.

“Now. Let’s switch seats. You handle the tiller but I’ll keep the lines that are the ropes, until you’re comfortable.”

She watched his face go from tight and grim and finally into a smile as the boat responded to each slight movement of the tiller.

“Now, follow my instruction and watch me as you move the tiller. Remember, that when I say port, I mean left and starboard means right.”

“Now, move the tiller about ten degrees starboard. Notice the sail stiffen and the increase in speed.”

She continued the lessons for a half hour. “You’re a quick study, Teddy. I’ll lend you some sailing books, if you want.”

“I’d like that, Mrs. F.”

“Okay. I have some snacks. Would you like to sail onto that sand beach? We can have a bite and, if you are willing, we can talk. I have to submit a report to your case worker and I want it to be a joint report. I want you to be sure I am reporting accurately.”

“You mean I get to challenge what we say about my behavior?”

Abby smiled. “That’s what I mean. Remember that you were able to help formulate rules of behavior. I am not capable of being the sole judge of what has happened since you joined our family. Now how would you rate your behavior?”

Teddy let out a nervous laugh. “I certainly did not earn an A. At best you might say a four on a scale of one to ten.”

“That poorly? How about the first half of the stay and second half?”

“I think I improved some recently, with the exception of certain days, like yesterday. I am sorry about that.”

“Do you feel like telling me why?”

Teddy went silent for a long two minutes. Abby waited; worried that she had pushed too fast.

When Teddy started, the words gushed out, as though he couldn’t spit it out fast enough.

At school, yesterday, Don Hona or varsity football, all-star full back, bullied me as he does every day. I don’t know why he picks on me but he says I’m going to be like my crazy mother. He has gotten worse since my dad died.

Yesterday, he said it was my father who drove her crazy. I tried to hit him but he is so big. He twisted my arm saying I had to say the words, “My father was crazy, too.

Some other football players made him stop. I never said those words.”

His tears were rolling over his cheeks. He began sobbing and fell into Abby’s arms.

Minutes later, he was wiping away the tears with the back of his hand “I’m sorry. You are the only person who heard this. I haven’t even told Tim what has been going on, although I should have.”

I tried to call the shrink but the girl at the desk will not put me through. It’s so unfair.”

The dumbest thing I did was get hooked up with two guys who befriended me but were into breaking into houses to steal jewelry and money.”

Abby looked at the sun which was low in the sky. “Let’s test your memory. You take charge and see that we get home in time for dinner.”

He did very well. On the way, Abby told Teddy. “One of the reasons that Jerry cares for you is that he has a grandson named Teddy and we see him only once a year.”

As they neared home, Abby said, “I’ll write up the report and submit it to you for correction.”

Teddy grinned. “You two guys are even better than the way our case worker described you.

At Abby’s suggestion, Teddy repeated his story at the dinner table. Dining was interrupted by compassionate tears and hugs from Jerry, Tim and Martha.

As promised, Abby handed her report to Teddy for review and correction.

When he finished reading, he laughed and said, “You have the kindest way with words I, certainly, have not been as nice and compliant as your words suggest.”

“Perhaps not, but Jerry helped to polish the report and added a few comments. He thought this would be a good way to bribe you to stay with us until you graduate.”

Teddy gulped and tried to stem more tears but all he could do was wrap his arms around the adults. Eventually he got out a few words.

“I was hoping that you liked me well enough to make the request. Do you think the agency will approve?”

Jerry said, “I’ll bet on that.”

Abby took Tim and Teddy to the airport to meet Thomas when he arrived for Christmas leave.

It turned out even better than she hoped. The two boys plied Thomas with all sorts of questions which he was pleased to answer. He listened to their stories of their new life with Abby and Jerry, particularly the new skills that Teddy had gained through his work with Jerry.

Thomas refused their offer to sleep in his old room. “That’s now your room. I am the happy interloper. I will sleep on the enclosed patio room but I reserved the right to make morning inspections, West Point style.”

The Christmas Eve worship and the Christmas Day celebration and gift giving topped off ten of the most wonderful days of Abby's life.

She and Jerry gloried in the fun and laughter produced by their "three sons".

Tim and Thomas double dated one evening. It was the first time that Tim even mentioned a girl in his life. Leila was a junior and her visiting cousin from Honolulu was a freshman at the University.

The following morning, Abby teased Tim. "Why have you been hiding that beautiful woman?"

Tim blushed. "I didn't know how you would feel about my bringing a girl to your house."

"That's ridiculous, Tim. This is your home. Feel free to invite her to dinner. She seems to be a lovely girl."

"She is. We just started to go steady."

Chapter 11.

Shortly after the first of the year, Jerry called Frank Akano, the police chief, to set a luncheon date.

It was Jerry's treat, "because I have a favor to ask."

"Okay. What's the favor?"

“You, of course, know everything, so I am sure you know we now have two foster sons.”

Frank nodded.

“Tim, who will be eighteen, is one of the top students in the senior class. He will be too old for the Children’s Service support when he turns eighteen in the late summer”

Frank nodded.

“He has a full scholarship to the University but he needs some extra dough. He hopes to go into law enforcement, maybe even the FBI”

“I am hoping you might find a part time job next semester in your department that will lead to a summer job. He is fiercely independent and wants to earn his own money. I’ve offered him a loan but he says that if he can find work, he will not need to borrow money.”

I think he will have some funds from the estate when probate is completed.

Frank said, “Your timing is perfect. Other department heads and I are in process of negotiating funds for our summer youth employment program.”

“Ask him to pick up our standard application form for our summer program. I’ll give it my personal attention and, yes, if he applied for part time work in my office, I am sure my office manager will be delighted to hire on an extra hand.”

“Now, I’ll have my steak rare.”

At dinner, on the first day of the semester, Teddy surprised the family with a request. “Would it be okay if I tried out for the Junior Varsity basketball team?”

Jerry looked at Abby who nodded. “That would be great, but I ‘m surprised. The season started last month.”

“Two of their best players are moving to Kauai. I like to shoot hoops at lunch time when not too many kids are around. I did some shooting on most of the Christmas vacation days. Two of the days, the JV coach happened to come by and we played some one on one. He suggested that I try out. As he said, “Nothing to lose but I might fill a need.”

Abby said, “I never thought about this before, but you have the build for it, as tall as Tim with broader shoulders. You’ve grown at least an inch since you came to us. We need to go shopping for slacks.”

Within a month, Tim was working part time and applying for a scholarship at The University. Teddy was playing first team on the JV team

At the Club, Jerry found two girls who needed and wanted work. Both were junior's ad part timers at the Club.

They jumped at the chance to work part time, especially since Jerry paid more than the going minimum wage and promised to add some skills for their futures.

Cissy had a natural bent for gardening and dreamed about becoming a landscape artist. Donna had a talent for electrical and mechanical work. Neither was enthusiastic about academics

Both adored him as the older man in their lives, something neither had ever known. Since both of their mothers worked evenings as waitresses, the girls were invited to evening meals.

Jerry felt that, because of his rapport with the girls, he might be able to convince them that a good basic academics education would be a real asset.

He had a chat with Tim, who initiated a group study in math and English composition. Abby and Jerry joined in as tutors.

Abby suggested to Tim that his girlfriend, Leila, might enjoy joining in. She did and soon became a regular.

Tim drove the girl's home to insure their safe arrival.

One evening as they lay in bed after a rousing evening, Jerry said, "Honey, you seem so happy and contented."

"I am. I was just thinking that I feel like a house mother at boarding school. It is evident that each and every one of the children enjoys being a part of our interim family."

Cissy and Donna are doing well in their studies as is Teddy. He told me tonight that the coach expects him to be on the starting team next season. Tim is so happy with his job at the police department."

When I had my weekly luncheon with Pastor Jane, she told me that her counseling sessions with Cissy and Donna were going well. I was sure they would benefit from time spent with Jane."

"I was thrilled with the letter from Thomas. I was tickled with his goal to become the varsity goalie on the soccer team next season.

"When I top that with your love, I am as happy as a clam."

"By the way, has the doctor Okayed your speeding up the pace of our beach walks?"

He has. We can do an eighteen minute mile. I figure we can do a half mile up and back and you can finish by jogging the other mile."

“That is great news.

Life seemed to get better as spring brought a renewed spirit into their lives.

Tim was making plans for his matriculating into the University, but she wondered what that meant for his relationship with Leila, who still had to finish her senior year.

Abby taught Cissy and Donna to sail that summer. Tim learned a great deal from the police chief and was treated to an occasional patrol ride with the chief.

Abby and Jerry were on the return leg of their morning walk on the beach. It was the day of their wedding anniversary. Jerry had just said, “I’m sure you will approve of my choice of the restaurant for our celebration.”

Abby laughed, saying, “As you outrank me, your wish is my command.”

Not hearing his usual chuckle of her stale joke, she turned to see why. Jerry was slumping to his knees and gripping his chest.

She began to ask but stopped. She realized Jerry was in the midst of a heart attack. She rolled him onto his back and began CPR.

She drew her phone and tossed it to a passerby. Call 911.”

She began CPR

Her tears were dampening Jerry’s breast. *“This is not happening. I must stay calm and help my love to stay with us.”*

Within seconds, she sensed another presence at her side. She heard the male voice saying, “Heart attack .On the beach, a hundred yards west of the Four Seasons.”

She assumed, properly, that the person was talking to 911.

“May I take over? I’m a physician.”

Abby yielded but felt sure it was too late. It would be another eight to ten minutes before the Emergency team arrived with oxygen and other life-saving equipment.

She was pulled out of her despair when the male voice said, “He’s breathing but faintly. Where are the damned medics?”

At that moment, they heard the distant whine of the siren.

Sitting on the warm sand, while the medic worked on Jerry, Abby was trembling. Her tears flowed unabated. She had no hankie to help stem the flow.

It was taking too long. *“Jerry is leaving me.”*

Suddenly she was being enveloped in the arms of a tall woman, one of the ETs. She sensed the touch of a towel on her cheek. She took hold and moved the towel to cover her eyes but she was unable to stop the sobs that were making her body tremble.

“Oh, Jerry, what will I do without you?”

She almost missed the words. “We have him stable enough to take him to ER.”

Abby’s knees buckled in relief but were held up by the ET.

Abby couldn’t get out the words to thank the ET who shook off the thanks.

“Sorry we don’t have room for you.”

The Good Samaritan doctor who saved Jerry said, “I’ll see that she gets there.”

The ET said, “It will be at least forty five minutes before you will be able to visit, maybe longer.”

The doctor handed over Abby’s cell phone. She tried to thank him but her voice failed her.

“Do you need to tell anyone else?”

“My mother.” She pointed toward the condos.

Ten minutes later, she and Martha were wrapped in each other’s arms, while Dr. James called his wife to bring the car so that they could take the women to the hospital.

Before word came that Abby could see Jerry, the whole gang was in the waiting room with Abby.

Martha had told the girls at the house before she left. Cissy called the police chief who informed Tim. Tim called Teddy and Leila.

After a twenty minute visit during which Abby’s tears dampened the covering bed sheet, everyone was allotted two minutes with Jerry, spaced over the hour period.

Abby accompanied the gurney as Jerry was wheeled to Intensive Care.

As was to be expected, Martha had the house sparkling for Jerry’s arrival from the hospital. She took charge of arranging for Jerry’s settling in.

Once that was accomplished, she took Abby to the kitchen for the light lunch that her helper had made.

Abby, meet Kata, Cissy's older sister. Jerry said that we needed more help with the cleaning of the rentals. I knew I needed help since I'm not getting younger. Kata is doing a great job."

Kata decided she had some work to do next door and left the two to have lunch and chat in private.

"Martha, tell me about Kata and Cissy."

"The short story is that I mentioned to Cissy and Donna that I was searching for a cleaning service. Cissy said that her older sister was trying to start up a cleaning service for households."

I interviewed Kata and discovered a young woman with a baby, born out of wedlock and the father who left when he discovered she was pregnant"

I hired her for a day and discovered a strong worker, doing more than required. Over coffee, she told me about her mistake and her plan to make a life for her little girl."

"I may be a sucker for a sob story, but I would like to take a chance and help her make her dream come true."

By this time, Abby was hooked. "How can I help?"

"I hired her for three days. That should give us time to watch, chat and work alongside her and thus evaluate her. Would you be willing to do that?"

"Oh, mother, I'll be delighted but I'm guessing your instincts are right on."

She was right. With help from Martha, Abby who spoke with friends at church, Kat was off to a good start. Her clients' referrals soon had Kata looking for a helper.

Jerry's spirits were great but he was very weak upon his arrival The doctor suggested a change to twin beds side by side in lieu of the king size. He wanted Jerry to be able to raise or lower his head during different periods of the day.

"Look into the room often during the day for the next few days. His recovery will be slow. You might want to consider having a nurse on hand for a couple of weeks."

After consulting with Martha, the two of them felt they would monitor Jerry's progress and do so effectively while administering his medications.

Abby decided that activity away from Jerry was now a part of her history. She would continue to employ Cissy and Donna until they were ready for Community College, but she notified the case worker that she wanted their names to be taken off the list of eligible foster homes.”

She and Jerry were inundated with cards, flowers and phone calls during his convalescence.

Somehow the word reached Washington which resulted in cards from a myriad of locations around the world.

Jane and Peter were frequent visitors. The police chief and Jerry had a semi-weekly game of chess.

It was a month to the day since Jerry’s episode. Abby answered the phone. “Well, hello, Commandeer. Great to hear from you. Jerry is doing well.”

Jerry could see her head nodding as she listened. Then he heard her say, “I find it hard to turn you down or put limits on my help but if the situation is critical and if it is work I can do from home, I will give it a try.

After listening for a bit, Abby said, “I just can’t take time away from Jerry. My time with him is so precious. I want to make the most of it.”

“I want to be with him as we greet the sun each morning, cook his meals, and declare my love in little ways during odd moments of the day.”

“A big priority for us is holding hands each evening, watch the sun dip into the ocean and softly fading into dark.”

Jerry smiled as he heard her closing words.

“It’s time to heed the words of General MacArthur who said, “Old soldiers just fade away.”

The end.

