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# Under Maui Skies

AND OTHER STORIES

*I Lalo o Nā Lani o Maui  
a me Nā Mo'olelo ē a'ē*

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WAYNE MONIZ

*koa books*



KIHEI, MAUI

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## CONTENTS

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Mahalo

~ xi ~

Preface

~ xiii ~

*Seven Stories, Seven Genres,  
Seven Time Periods, Seven Maui Locations*

### *Under Maui Skies*

*I Lalo o Nā Lani o Maui*

WESTERN • KULA AND KAMA'OLE • 1908

*A deputized cowboy trails suspected opium smuggler Albert Devil.*

Dedicated to *nā kupuna* David Ventura Sr. and Henry Silva

~ 3 ~

### *The Cave of Whispering Spirits*

*Ke Ana o Nā 'Uhane Hāwanawana*

ADVENTURE STORY • HONUA'ULA • 1690

*A devotee's arrogance arouses Pele's wrath,  
causing the last eruption of Haleakalā.*

Dedicated to *nā kupuna* Keli'i Tau'a and Ki'ope Raymond

~ 15 ~

### *The Cruel Sun*

*Ka Lā Hainā*

LOVE STORY • LAHAINA • 1880s

*A couple faces their demons—alcoholism  
and missionaries—in old Hawai'i.*

Dedicated to *nā kupuna* Hōkūlani Holt Padilla, Alexa Vaught, and Nona Beamer

~ 31 ~

## Aloha, Sweetheart

*Aloha 'oe, e Ku'u Ipo*

DETECTIVE STORY • WAILUKU • 1939

*The kona winds are blowing and a private eye is framed for a murder.  
Whodunit?*

Dedicated to *nā kupuna* Nina and Charles Maxwell

~ 43 ~

## Auntz Becky's Tavern

*Ka Hale Inu Lama o 'Anakē Becky*

WAR STORY • PĀ'IA AND KIHEI • 1941-1942

*A soldier foresees the horrors of his service at Guadalcanal.*

Dedicated to *nā kupuna* Butch and Margaret Moniz

~ 59 ~

## An Island Beyond Hōkūle'a

*He Moku i 'ō nei o Hōkūle'a*

SCIENCE FICTION • HALEAKALĀ CRATER/KE'ANAE • 1955

*A diaspora from beyond leads to a search  
for someone to bring aloha to a new planet.*

Dedicated to *nā kupuna* Harry Mitchell and Les Kuloloia

~ 71 ~

## Luahinepi'i: The Climbing Woman

*Luahinepi'i: Ka Wahine Pi'ina*

GHOST STORY • 'ĪAO VALLEY AND PAKUKALO • 1963 AND PRE-CONTACT

*The story behind the White Lady of 'Īao Valley.*

Dedicated to *nā kupuna* Manuel and Margaret Duarte and Charles Duarte

~ 87 ~

Notes on the Stories

~ 99 ~

*Kaona and Other Mele*

*The Roselani*

*Ka Roselani*

Dedicated to Margaret Texeira Moniz

~ 109 ~

*The Night-Blooming Cereus*

*Ka Pānini o Ka Puna Hou*

Dedicated to Mary Texeira Torres

~ 110 ~

*The White Ginger of California*

*Ka 'Awapuhi Ke'oke'ō o Kaleponi*

Dedicated to Lucille Moniz Coelho

~ 111 ~

*The Mango*

*Ka Manakō*

Dedicated to Rusty Monix Biddix

~ 112 ~

*The Bougainvillea*

*Ka Pukanawila*

Dedicated to Marie Moniz Steeley

~ 113 ~

*The Cherry Blossom*

*Ka Pua Keli*

Dedicated to Pat Yanagi Moniz

~ 114 ~

## *The Ten-Cent Flower*

*Ka Puakenikeni Nui*

Dedicated to Alexa Santos Kahui

~ 115 ~

## *The Shooting Star*

*Ka Hōkū Welowelo*

Dedicated to Kamuela Kahui

~ 116 ~

## *A Pink Spiral Cloud*

*Ke Ao 'Ākala Mo'oni*

Dedicated to Marley Smith

~ 117 ~

## *A Child Lei*

*He Lei Kamali'i*

Dedicated to Kassie Smith

~ 118 ~

## *The Lehua of Hawai'i Island*

*Ka Lehua o Ka Moku Nui*

Dedicated to Nona Beamer

~ 119 ~

## *The Sands of Our Beautiful Hill Home*

*Ke One o Ka Pu'u Hale Nani*

Dedicated to St. Anthony School

~ 120 ~

*Rose Moon*

*Ka Mahina Loke*

Dedicated to Anna Aspell

~ 121 ~

*Wailuku, 1957*

Dedicated to the National Writers Association, Honolulu Chapter

~ 122 ~

Glossary

~ 125 ~

By the Same Author

~ 131 ~

About the Artist

~ 135 ~

About Koa Books

~ 136 ~



# MAHALO

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## PRONOUNCING HAWAIIAN WORDS

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The Hawaiian alphabet consists of twelve letters—five vowels and seven consonants. The vowels are pronounced similarly to Latin, Spanish, Italian, and Japanese, except the letter “e,” which is pronounced like the e in get. Hawaiian consonants are similar to those in English, but have less aspiration. Under certain circumstances (after i and e, and optionally after a or as the initial letter), the letter w is pronounced as a soft v.

Generally, the accent of words is on the second-to-last syllable. The *‘okina*, or glottal stop—it looks like a “left apostrophe” between certain vowels—is a quick stopping of the flow of air, causing each of the vowels to be enunciated separately. The *kahakō*, or macron—a line placed over a vowel—indicates that that syllable should be held for approximately two beats, rather than one. When pronouncing certain diphthongs (ei, eu, oi, ou, ai, ae, ao, au), emphasize the first vowel, then roll into the second.

## PREFACE

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The Hawaiian archipelago, in the middle of the North Pacific Ocean equidistant between California and Tahiti, is one of the most beloved landmasses on the planet. Its mountains and valleys, the shades of blue found in the sky and uninterrupted ocean, the touch of wind meandering from the northeast all play their hand in shaping these magnificent, remote islands. The islands were formed by an erupting geological hot spot starting about 5,000,000 years ago. Plant and animal life found their way here by air and sea over the course of millennia, evolving into species of flightless birds and post-volcanic foliage found nowhere else on earth.

Gods and men are said to have arrived in ancient times, including Pele, creator of land and fire. One of their offspring, the demigod Māui, was the trickster who lifted the sky and roped the sun to allow days long enough for his mother to dry her *kapa*, and he caused so much trouble that he was banished. Nearly 2,000 years ago, settlers arrived by canoe from the Marquesas and Easter Island, and a second wave of settlers arrived from Tahiti, “The Land Beyond the Clouds,” almost 1,000 years ago.

Each island has its own legends, history, and dialect. Maui, toward the southern tip of the island chain, ruled itself with extraordinary dignity until conquered by King Kamehameha the Great of Hawai‘i Island early in the nineteenth century. That was just a few decades after Captain James Cook and his crew of English seamen, the first non-Polynesians to touch shore, brought with them weapons, disease, and a very different worldview.

The two centuries since “contact” have been a time of profound transition. Hawai‘i became an independent, modern nation, recognized by Europe and Asia’s great powers. Literacy per capita in

this formerly oral culture rose to be highest in the world. The newly written language had been crafted and taught by missionaries, who also brought churches, Western education, and Calvinist mores, and bore offspring who eventually overthrew the Hawaiian nation and established an oligarchy, then a U.S. territory, and, half a century ago, a U.S. state.

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I grew up in the 1940s and '50s on a very different Maui from today. Sugar was king, along with pineapples, pidgin, and local pride. Ancestors of both European settlers and plantation workers dominated the local politics. Workers from Japan, China, Portugal, the Philippines, and many other places shaped local culture. My ear heard the rhythmic cadence of Hawaiian pidgin, now recognized by linguists as a unique language.

I was raised in Wailuku, the county seat and part of the verdant valley floor between 5,000-foot Mauna Kahalewai (West Maui Mountains) and 10,000-foot Haleakalā (House of the Sun), the strip of land that gives the “Valley Isle” its nickname. When plantation life came to a halt in the 1960s and '70s, community leaders decided to pursue tourism and development to keep the cash economy alive, and today Maui, though still remarkably lush and sensual, has nearly reached the tipping-point in the direction of overdevelopment. Locations of great beauty of my boyhood have become timeshares and condos. Beach access and fishing rights, though still extensive, have become more limited. Magnificent streams have been diverted and are considerably less pristine.

I am a playwright. Most of my plays are set in Hawai'i. To write a local play requires exhaustive research as well as conversations with *kupuna*, the elders of our community. Two years ago, while recovering from an illness, I didn't have the mobility to research

a new play. At the same time, I began wondering if I had the skills to write the Great American Novel. This self-doubt led to a smaller step—short-story writing. Writing a short story would require less research, allow me to rely on my imagination, and, at the same time, test my ability to write a novel.

I envisioned a book of seven short stories—seven being a magical number—all set on Maui, each in a different genre. As I worked on the stories, I realized that each also represented a different time period and location on the Valley Isle. As I researched the background for the stories, I became excited, eventually loving all of them as my own children, each with its unique value.

As is true for my plays, most of the stories are based on true-life personalities and actual events on Maui. A fiction writer can then take liberties to bring characters of former times back to life. In all of my plays, stories, poems, and lyrics, I write to express my love for the land and people of Hawai‘i, to preserve the memory of a time that is slipping away, and to encourage action to protect Hawai‘i’s magnificent land and culture.

There’s no need to read all seven stories in one sitting. When you are in the mood for a love story, read “The Cruel Sun.” If you have a hankering for a murder mystery, read “Aloha, Sweetheart.”

I have dedicated each story to nā kupuna who have assisted and inspired my work.

Following the stories are thirteen *kaona* and one previously published poem. *Kaona* is a redirected metaphor that describes a particular person’s traits by means of, for example, a flower, a waterfall, a tree, a bay, or another natural phenomenon. Nothing human is mentioned. Traditionally, it would be recited directly in Hawaiian to the one to whom the *mele* was dedicated.

When I discovered *kaona* several years ago, I taught what I had garnered from the writings of Mary Kawena Pukui to my students, and a number of them went on to receive awards for their own *kaona* in state writing contests.

I dedicate *Under Maui Skies and Other Stories* to Virginia and David Sandell, who have always been supportive of my work. I also salute our Maui writers, and all Hawai'i authors.

Wayne Moniz  
Wailuku, Maui  
March 2009

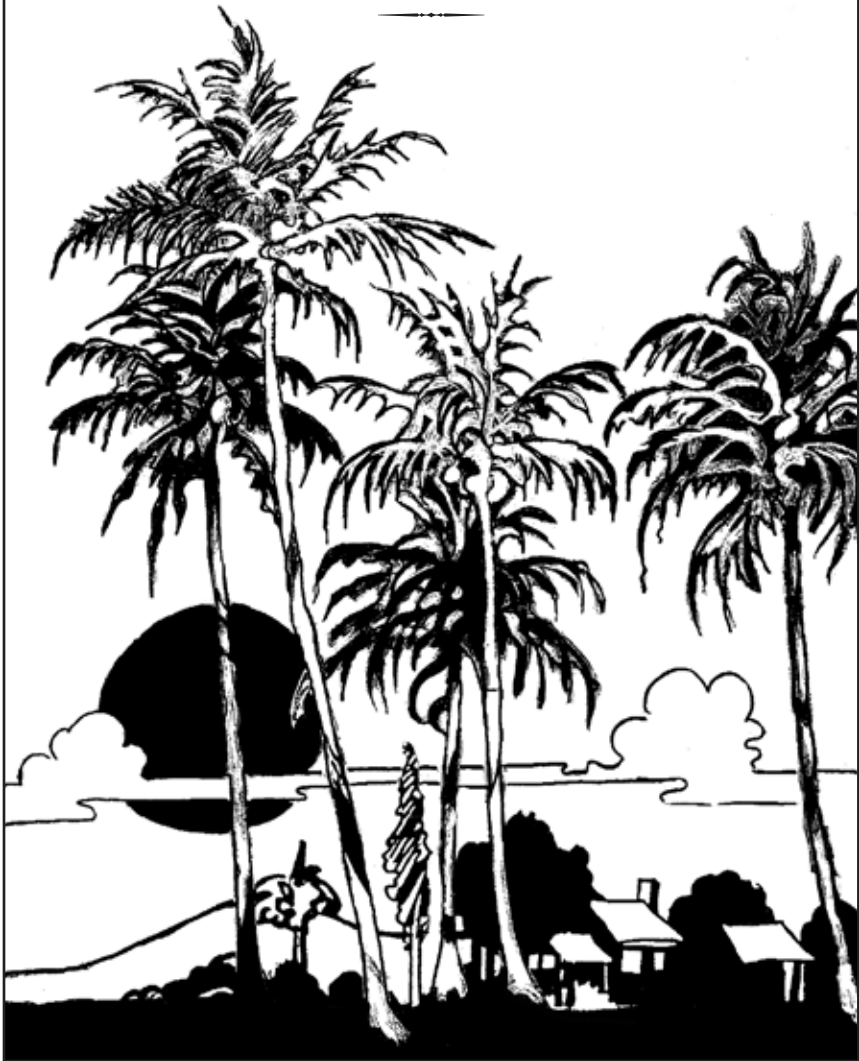
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# Under Maui Skies

## AND OTHER STORIES

*I Lalo o Nā Lani o Maui a me Nā Mo'olelo ʻē aʻe*

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# Under Maui Skies

I Lalo o Nā Lani o Maui

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A thousand stars glistened in the heavens, the moon so strong it seemed to penetrate Haleakalā's lei of clouds that teased distant Kaho'olawe. 'Ulupalakua Ranch's thousands of silent acres had lulled Ramón Acuna into a meditative state.

His contemplation of the summer skies was broken by snorting, scrunching sounds in the nearby shrubs. Normally, *pouwai'u* did not include staying overnight with the wild longhorns. But this beast—tied to the strongest *kiawe* around—hadn't exhausted his anger that morning and was still full of fire.

"*Calle la boca!*" Ramón shouted at the two orbs in the dark. The bull snorted back in defiance.

Ramón had decided to stay the night. The bulk of the herd was back at the ranch for branding. His wife was in Hilo with the relatives. So Ramon took the time to heal his gnarled hands. People thought he had arthritis, but his hands, like twisted *kiawe*, didn't hurt. They just looked distorted from pulling strands of rawhide to make the well-known *kaula 'ili* and bridles, an art he had learned from his father.

Ramón was a descendant of the *vaqueros* invited to this land by King Kamehameha III to train Hawaiians in the art of cattle ranching. The *vaqueros* were skilled cowboys, but they were *mestizos*, the lowest of classes in old Mexico. Moving to Hawai'i, they raised themselves to a respectable level, which is why Grandma Lum was able to marry Ramón's grandfather, Ventura Acuna. Once married, he did not have to return to the poverty and degradation of Monterey.

Like a true vaquero, Ramón pulled, from underneath his blanket, the black guitar he had dubbed *Makaleka*, after his mother. Too showy, some Mexicans would say, a caustic comment to remind him of the caste system his family came from. Tonight he'd sing of the surreal world of Maui: a land of daylight moons, purple Jacaranda muffling the Kula hillsides, and the fragrance of eucalyptus wafting through its groves.

As he was about to sing his song of solace, a thundering jolt shook the campsite. The belligerent longhorn snorted and stomped the ground, and the hollow lava tubes beneath his feet amplified the echoes. These tunnels were dangerous. Ramón recalled when Josie Manoa took a mean spill, horse and all, into one of their crevasses. Ramón knew the bull was clamoring for a different reason this time. Someone was coming. The third-generation vaquero heard jingling in the dark.

"Ramón!" a male voice called out.

He recognized the faceless voice. How did anyone know he was here? Only Chris at the ranch knew, and he'd gone home early, because Rosemary was sick.

"Ramón Acuna? It's me, Henry Saffrey!"

"Sheriff, what the hell you doing here?"

"I'm staying overnight at my brother's place in Makawao to see the parade for 'Ikuā Purdy. You heard, eh? The celebration's tomorrow."

"Ho, he must have done good in Cheyenne."

"Broke the world record. Ran that *pipi* down in fifty-six seconds. Get one big shindig for him in Makawao town tomorrow."

"*Auwē*. I don't think I can get back in time. I'll stop by the house when *pau hana* for congratulate him. So whatcha doing here, Sheriff?"

"Ramón, I need one favor."

"What is it?"

"You going to do your usual thing tomorrow?"

"Yeah."

“Go all the way down to Mākena for check the walls and fences, any strays?”

“Yeah. So?”

“So you can keep your eyes on Albert Devil when you down there?”

“Albert Devil? What, he spreading cheer again?”

“If you call illegal drugs, cheer.”

“Sorry, Sheriff, but as soon as I check out the pens, I gotta go Kahului for pick up Dolores. She’s over in Hilo. Plus I no like being *nīele* about good guys or rotten ones.”

“I’ll pick up Dolores for you, plus give you some *uku* for playing deputy.”

Ramón was curious about the money. He needed to cover Dolores’ \$5 roundtrip ticket on the S.S. *Haleakalā*. Henry uttered, “Twenty-five dollars,” and Ramón’s interest was stirred. That was a lot. His daily wage was 50¢.

“Before I say yes, tell me so more?”

“No need change your schedule. Do the same thing you normally do, but keep your *maka* wide open.”

“You beating around the bush, Henry.”

“Okay, hea’s the scoop. We spotted one Chinese vessel anchored off the other side of Kaho’olawe. Albert Devil hired a couple of local boys to take their canoes out, dive thirty feet down, and untie bags of opium hanging underwater from ropes top-side. The boys don’t know how much the bags worth. Then they sail the booty over to Albert at Keawakapu for *manini* wage. All you gotta do is follow Albert from one distance. He not going suspect your usual routine. We gotta send him back to San Quentin and put away the distributor, too.”

Ramón was hesitant. Albert Devil had a mean streak and wouldn’t be afraid to use his Winchester, even on his own mother. Ramón uttered a belabored, “Uh.”

“Promise, all *pau* when you get back home, Ramón.”

“Okay, okay, as long as you no make it a habit, Henry. After all, I only one cowboy.”

He raised his hand. “Let’s get it over with.”

“Do you promise to uphold the laws of the Territory of Hawai‘i?”

“I do.”

“By the authority of the Territory of Hawai‘i, I hereby deputize you.”

“Amen!”

“Well, Ramón, I better get outta here. I’ll see you tomorrow night when I bring Dolores home.”

Sheriff Henry Saffrey mounted his horse and galloped back up the trail, fading from the flickering fire. From the moonlit path, he shouted back, “*Mahalo*, Ramón. The people of Maui are grateful to you.”

Ramón belted back, “Tell me all about Purdy’s party later. No have too much fun.”

“*Aloha pō*, Ramón.”

The mountain crickets had no human interference and commenced their chattering on Haleakalā’s 10,000-foot face. Ramón grabbed the coffee pot from atop the coals, poured himself another cup, sipped, and plucked a lullaby from his guitar. He eventually succumbed to dreamland in a warm blanket as the orange embers alongside him slowly faded.

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A honeycreeper from the uplands roused Ramón from his heavenly sleep. The sun had broken free from Māui’s house. Ramón cupped his eyes to take in the panoramic view, one rarely seen anywhere else in the world. All the trappings of a cowboy surrounded him. It could have been Laramie or Tucson or San Antonio, but those cowboys never had a bird’s eye view of the furled bandana of golden beaches along the shore of South Maui.

With his spyglass he could see three-foot combers breaking at Keawakapu. He also spotted Albert Devil's campsite on the beach. The local boys would be back soon. They'd left for the anchored ship just before dawn.

Ramón suddenly felt a new silence. The longhorn had "kill fight" in him, and Ramón decided to let him be. He would deal with him later, on the way back. He gathered up his gear, grabbed one of Dolores' buttermilk muffins, slopped on her equally famous guava jelly, and washed it down with a couple of swigs of water from his canteen.

The air was crisp, but Ramón knew how hot it would get within the hour. He mounted Pāoa, remembering how, at its birth, Mother Acuna had said he looked like a chocolate-covered stick, like the famous, powerful stick named Pāoa that had led her Pele-clan ancestors to Hawai'i. Pāoa lived up to his name in the years to come. More than any other horse, working or rodeo, he always stood his ground.

The dry trail down Kama'ole yearned for November rains. A dusty cloud followed Ramón all the way to the lower corrals. Afraid of facing Albert Devil, he trudged on, cutting through a forest of *pānini*. The site reminded him of paintings he'd seen of eight-foot cacti in the Sonora Desert.

By the time he reached the Kama'ole pens, Ramón had broken a small sweat. Everything looked okay. From behind one of the high gates, he heard a muffled moo. Turning the corner, he spotted the stray.

"What's the matter, pipi? They leave you behind?" It was a calf that had probably wandered off in the shrub during roundup. The *keiki* echoed a doleful sound.

"*A'ole pilikia*," said Ramón, as he collared the calf. "You going home with me."

As he started to move the animal to the main trail, Ramón saw a black specter in the distance. The figure seemed to emerge out

of the wavering mirage formed by the suddenly searing sun. It was Albert Devil, dressed from head to toe in black, like the Grim Reaper warmed over—black hat, black Levis, black boots, black vest. Ramón had to chuckle at the villainous costume. Albert Devil always played it big—and black.

“Ramón Acuna?” Albert Devil yelled out.

“Who’s that?” Ramón pretended.

“Come on, Acuna!”

“Is that you, Albert D...?” Ramón cut himself off before uttering Albert’s satanic last name. “Long time no see. I thought you went Califrisco?”

“No play games with me, Acuna. I paid my dues at San Quentin. I went straight. I one legal businessman now.”

Ramón almost choked on Albert’s lie. He noticed two large flour sacks hanging from a Kihei Nightingale. The donkey was tethered to the back of Albert’s black horse, Maka’u.

“Flour for sell to the Kula folks?” he lied again.

“Yeah, the supply boat came in at Mākena Landing. Was a real bargain ... for a businessman.”

Albert Devil pulled out his Winchester. He cocked it. “Okay, Acuna, spill it. You spying on me?”

Ramón had anticipated the question. “Why you saying that?”

“Oh, only coincidental you stay hea’?”

“Come on, Albert. You oughta know by now. This is my job. Plus you think I want to be here when all Upcountry’s at Makawao celebrating Purdy’s win?”

“Maybe you spying for the sheriff?”

“About what?”

“Uh, maybe he believes that I still one crook.” He slid his rifle back into its holder. “I’ll see you back in Kula. Maybe I’ll buy you a drink.”

“Sorry, I gotta tow this little doggie and one longhorn pau pouwai’ū up to the Wahine Pilau area.”

Albert Devil kicked Maka'u. The donkey followed, burdened with the sacks of "flour." Ramón could still see Albert Devil, but he would drop back, little by little, to give Albert the impression he wasn't interested. His plan was to put the two animals in a higher pen. Fortunately for the new deputy, Albert's horse picked up a stone in his shoe by Maile Gulch, and it took him half an hour to get it out. This gave Ramón time to guide Pāoa up on the south trail to the ridge around Kula. He'd be there ahead of Albert Devil. The Norfolk Pine grove above town would be good cover for Ramón.

Kula Town was usually pretty deserted except for a couple of *makule* guys who sat, chairs back, whittling sandalwood scissors or whistles. But today, the hamlet seemed even more vacant. Ramón had forgotten momentarily that everyone was in Makawao. The only place open was Joe Santos' Lanai, anticipating some post-celebratory drinks after the boys got back from Purdy's party.

The silence was broken by the jingling cacophony of Albert Devil's spurs, keys, and chains. He scanned the area suspiciously. Then he looked directly into the grove Acuna was using for cover. Ramón did his best imitation of a pine. Albert Devil relaxed in his saddle. With the dealer's back to him, Ramón took out his spyglass and followed Mr. Devil to his rendezvous. Ramón suspected that the man in black might be headed for Ah Pak's place.

Ah Pak had not been on Maui long, maybe two years. He didn't come with the cane people. Shortly after he arrived, he "burned" a couple of folks in Wailuku, the county seat, and had to hightail it up to Kula to get away from irate clients. In Kula, Ah Pak bought and sold anything that could be bought and sold, to cowboys and farmers—including Albert's "flour."

Ramón couldn't hear the conversation but imagined what was happening in the parts of the playlet he did not see.

Ah Pak bubbled with enthusiasm at the sight of Albert Devil.

"Oh, so good to see you, Mr. Albert. I hope everything go well."

“What you so damn cheery about?” blurted Albert Devil.

“Well, so happy you have no problems.”

“I ran into Acuna on the trail, but, when I last saw him, he went stop for one water break with a longhorn and keiki in tow.”

“That’s his job. No problem.”

“Good. You get the \$5,000?”

“Yeah. Up in the ceiling. Safe. But we have time. Why rush? We go Santos’ bar to celebrate—as the *haole* man says—collaboration.”

Albert Devil growled back, “What collaboration? I no exist. You neva see me before. Got it?”

“Yes, boss,” Ah Pak trembled.

“And no call me boss!”

“Yes, boss ... I mean Mr. Devil. We go to bar now. Here. I put the bags up in the ceiling ... for safekeeping.”

Ah Pak dragged a stool over to the opening in the ceiling. He pulled down the money from its rice bag in the attic.

“See. No need count.”

He showed him a sample handful of twenties.

“You gyp me, *Pākē*, you die. I’m taking my *barato*.”

Albert Devil snatched the rice bag with the twenties from Ah Pak’s hand and stuffed the contents into another empty flour bag. He grabbed a coffee cup from the sink, scooped out two cupfuls of opium and put them into a second empty bag, plopped that atop the moneybag, and fastened it.

“Here. Put it up there. I’ll get it when we come back from Santos’ bar.”

Ramón watched the twosome walk down the street to Santos’ bar without the sacks. The vaquero could see Mrs. Ah Pak washing down the front porch. After the men left, her cleaning frenzy moved into—the kitchen!

“*Lōlō* husband, leave stool in the middle of ...”

She looked up at the trapdoor in the ceiling; it was ajar. Curious, she climbed up on the stool and groped about. She pulled down one of the bags of “flour,” stuck her finger in it, and took a taste.

“Yuck!” Flour gone bad! Stupid husband. Wrong place to store flour—too hot, too much humid.”

She pulled all the bags down. She thought of tossing them down the gulch, but her crafty thriftiness got the best of her. She’d walk down the road and sell them to Lizzie Gomes, known for her *pao duce* and *malasadas*. If Lizzie rejected the sour flour to make her sweet bread and sugar donuts, Mrs. Ah Pak was confident that she could at least wrangle \$5 for these slightly used flour sacks.

Ramón watched, confused, as Mrs. Ah Pak struggled with the flour bags down to Lizzie’s place. He could see them negotiating. Lizzie finally, reluctantly, pulled a \$5 bill from her bosom. Mrs. Ah Pak, bill in hand, raced home, beaming. Lizzie headed for the pigpens and emerged a short time later, locked the front door, jumped on the buckboard, and headed to Makawao to make it in time for the social and dance.

The sun was setting as Ramón watched Mr. Ah Pak and Albert Devil swagger out of the tavern. As they approached Ah Pak’s, Ramón could see Mrs. Ah Pak waving the \$5 bill from the porch. The troubled twosome looked at each other in horror and raced toward the house. Then all hell broke loose. Expletives were hurled along with dishes and furniture. Mr. Ah Pak and Albert Devil almost tore the front door off as they exploded out onto the lawn. Like maniacs, they raced toward the Gomes’ place. Mrs. Ah Pak trailed, begging, “No hit! No hurt! Aye eee!”

Ramón moved off the hill to the road below and followed the dealers. He positioned himself near the *mauka* pasture and shrouded himself in the guava thicket that ran along the barbed-wire fence. Albert was in a fury as he dashed toward the locked front door. He raced around the back of the house, where he spotted the bags draped over the pigpen fence. Then he went into shock. A trail of opium led away from the pens out to a grove of *ōhi’a* trees, a tranquil setting for—Lizzie’s outhouse! Albert Devil opened the door and shut it just as fast from the stench that singed his nostrils.

Mr. Ah Pak, frantically trying to separate the illegal powder from the barnyard dirt, looked up. Albert Devil had murder in his eyes. Ah Pak knew he had to run, and he did!

Ramón stepped out onto the road, turned in the opposite direction, and pretended that he'd just arrived. Pursuer and pursued whizzed past him, Albert's eyes so angry red and Ah Pak's eyes so scared white, they didn't even notice him.

With his work done and the money and drugs at the bottom of the Gomes' outhouse, Ramón galloped up the road. Dolores was home; the porch lantern lit to welcome him. Pāoa's snorting drew Dolores and Sheriff Saffrey out onto the porch.

"How was Hilo, honey?"

Ramón dismounted Pāoa, ran to the porch, and kissed his wife.

"Raining, as usual. The family says hello. The sheriff wants you to help him out. You guys talk and come inside when *pau*. My sister wen pack some *laulau* and *poi* for us eat tonight."

Sheriff Saffrey walked over to the railing, took out some tobacco and paper, and rolled a cigarette. A slight fog crept down the mountain.

"What you got for me, Ramón?"

"All I can say is everything's back to normal."

"Where's Albert Devil?"

"The last time I saw, he was chasing Ah Pak down the mountain."

"Let me guess. Ah Pak went stiff 'em?"

"His wife did."

"So where's the dope and the money?"

"At the bottom of Lizzie Gomes' outhouse."

"What? Ramón, your \$25 is down there too!"

"Well, as they say, Sheriff, easy come, easy go. Nobody want that *kālā* anyway, Henry. It's dirty money."

And so Ramón told the sheriff the whole story of Albert Devil as the moon peeked over Haleakalā, the same moon that shines down on the just and unjust who live and die under Maui skies.