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Windward Side

By Stephanie Ahlen

A Hawaii crime novel

Chapter 1

Wednesday, February 14

Honolulu, Hawaii

Dawn broke to reveal lines of long, gentle waves rolling toward the beach at Waikiki.

Imperceptibly the rising sun washed the darkness from the ocean, transforming the water into a sheet of glistening silver that sparkled invitingly. This is the magic hour, before the tourists swarm down to the beach from their hotels and vacation apartments, the time when Waikiki is a peaceful place where the bankers, waiters, students, and teachers paddle out to surf or kayak. The ocean is a great equalizer. In the ocean it doesn't matter whether you are rich or poor, whether you live in a six-room mansion in Kahala or a tiny one-room apartment in Kaimuki. The ocean has its own rules that all who enter must obey: don't take waves from others, don't paddle in front of someone who is already up and riding, and don't mess with the 'locals'.

On some mornings, when the waves are especially good, or there is a contest coming up, the surf breaks off Waikiki can be fiercely competitive. But this was a morning for catching a few waves with friends, communing with nature, and getting some exercise—a Hawaiian version of a morning yoga session.

Kalei Kahamoku, a Honolulu Police Department detective, sat on his surfboard and gazed out to sea. He knew there were hardly any waves worth riding but that didn't bother him. He just wanted to enjoy the stillness

of early morning, with only the sea and his board for company. He'd been up long before dawn in his small cottage in Manoa Valley shaking off the effects of a rather gory dream, in which his ex-girlfriend Malu played the leading role. He tried without success to remember the details, wondering why his subconscious portrayed Malu as an evil Medusa trying to kill him. Malu was an altogether a kind person, a nurse who worked at Queen's Medical Center in Honolulu. In fact, it was precisely her motherly concern for him that made it impossible for him to live with her. Too, her nurse's shift work meant that for days on end the two of them only ever saw each other in the bathroom or in the bedroom. But that was not the main reason that Malu had left Kalei three weeks ago.

Kalei told himself that Malu was frightened by his job with the Police Department's Criminal Investigation Division. The real reason, however, was his inability to take the next step and commit to marriage and children. For Malu and her brothers and sisters, the *ohana*, what Hawaiians call their extended family, was all-important. And while Malu's two older sisters had already married respectable men and brought children into the world, Malu had spent the past year waiting for a similar commitment from Kalei.

Their breakup was tearful but without recrimination. Why then did he dream that Malu wanted to harm him? He'd lain in bed until the unaccustomed solitude became unbearable, then jumped into his boardshorts, shoved his board into his pickup and drove through the still-quiet streets to Waikiki.

Fifteen minutes later he was at the surf spot, Walls, paddling out toward Diamond Head. Once again it occurred to him that there was no better place to enjoy a tropical sunrise than from the deck of a surfboard off Waikiki.

Now, although he'd been sitting out there for almost an hour, the stunning scenery hadn't improved his gloomy mood. He looked toward the horizon. If he just paddled due south the next stop was Tahiti, some 2,700 miles away. It was tempting to just keep paddling, away from the land and all its problems. Just behind him was the most famous beach in the world, behind which loomed a motley, and architecturally uninspiring, cluster of high-rise hotels and apartment buildings. He tried not to think about what Hawaii had become.

Finally a decent wave arrived. Kalei spun his board around and paddled hard. Just as he was about to leap to his feet, he was almost rammed by a 7-year-old who, already standing proudly on his board, zipped by him grinning mischievously. "I got it!" he yelled as he shot past the nose of Kalei's board—something Kalei would never have dared do to an older person when he was a child.

Realizing that there was neither solace nor peace to be found in the waves that day Kalei decided it was time to go to work. He looked around to make sure he wasn't in anyone's way then lay on his board and paddled slowly toward the beach. As he got closer, he noticed a police car with a blue light on its roof parked on Kalakaua Avenue. Sliding off his board into the shallow water he

saw his partner, Chris Logan, standing on the sand waving him over. Chris seemed agitated.

The night before the two of them had gone to club Kanpai for a beer. Chris then went home to his wife and three kids in Palolo Valley, and Kalei to his cottage in nearby Manoa. As usual they'd had more than one beer, and as usual, none of their fellow officers had pulled them over as they drove home.

Chris had his pants rolled up to his knees and as Kalei stepped out of the water he came over and held his board for him.

"Sorry brah," he said with a laugh as Kalei undid the leash from his ankle. "I wasn't planning on seeing you again so soon."

"I guess you're not here for a walk on the beach," said Kalei, looking at Chris's Dodge Charger. The car was both his personal car and a fully-equipped police cruiser. The police department paid him extra for using his own vehicle.

Kalei towed himself off, hoping that Chris had a cup of coffee for him. He felt like he may have had a beer too many the night before and he was suddenly very hungry.

"This morning a dead tourist was found at that fancy resort at Turtle Bay. European, and it doesn't look like he drowned himself. The guys from Wahiawa called us early this morning."

Kalei finished drying himself and waited for more information, but Chris was staring at two 20-something blondes strolling down the beach in their skimpy bikinis. Topless bathing is forbidden in Hawaii,

but the bikini designers are adept at leaving as little as possible to the imagination.

“A dead tourist?” said Kalei, hitting Chris on the arm to get his attention.

“Now I know why you like to come here in the morning,” he said reluctantly turning away from the blondes. One of the girls winked at him and the two put their heads together and laughed.

“The victim and his wife are from England. Looks like they’re wealthy. The guys in Wahiawa called HPD as soon as they learned about it. So now we’ve got to do the investigation and all the paperwork while those North Shore guys do the easy stuff like writing parking tickets and busting surfers for smoking pakalolo.”

“Not without breakfast we won’t!” said Kalei, walking off to the Starbucks across the street. Actually, he hated Starbucks but they had a monopoly on that section of Kalakaua Avenue.

From Waikiki the drive to Oahu’s North Shore takes always more than an hour. After stocking up on drinks and bagels it took them twenty minutes just to get out of town and onto the H1 freeway. Another reason it took so long was that Chris insisted that Kalei remove every grain of sand from his body before stepping into his precious Dodge Charger.

As usual at that time of the morning, the streets heading into downtown Honolulu through Waikiki were choked with traffic. The street they were on bordered the Ala Wai Canal, a large waterway that routed rainfall from the mountains to the ocean. But for whatever reason, half the street bordering the canal was

torn up for construction, making the traffic even worse than usual. A heavysset member of the traffic police standing in the street directed cars to a detour leading to the freeway.

Bicycles and scooters with special surfboard racks zoomed recklessly between the slow-moving cars, sometimes bouncing into them. Also plodding through the traffic were huge double-decker tour buses transporting tourists to Pearl Harbor, dive spots along the eastern shoreline or to skydiving at Dillingham Airfield on the North Shore.

Except for a short slowdown near the airport the traffic on the H1 freeway was still light and they made good time. From Pearl City the H1 freeway winds its way up the hills to Mililani, at the center of the island. This was one of the few stretches where Chris could blow the cobwebs out of the Charger's huge V8 engine.

Chris was a transplant from Southern California where he'd spent his youth racing cars. His exploits outrunning the cops in LA were the stuff of legend. His last chase was so 'exciting' that he left Cali for Hawaii to get away from the heat, never imagining that he would become a cop himself.

The big Dodge was the last remnant of what he jokingly called, his misspent youth. Local kids had learned the hard way not to try and outrun the haolé cop in the blue Charger. Like a true racer he drove smoothly and decisively, the big V8 growling happily in the dense morning air.

Before long they'd passed the pineapple fields of Dole Plantation and were coasting downhill toward the beach town of Haleiwa and, the Mecca of surfing, the North Shore.

Malu's older sisters lived in Haleiwa. On those rare occasions when Kalei and Malu both had the weekend off, they'd often enjoyed the barbeques held with her large family. Kalei wondered if they'd ever do so again.

The coast road begins just after Haleiwa. This, being February, the big-wave season was in full swing. The twisty, two-lane road was lined with surfers, spectators, and tourists, and the parking lots at Waimea Bay, Pipeline, and Shark's Cove were packed. The waiting period for the 'Eddie Big Wave Surf Contest' would remain open until March. And what everyone was waiting for were the giant waves that might only arrive once or at most twice in any given year. The 'Eddie', as the locals call it, draws thousands of people to witness the bravest big-wave surfers in the world battle for glory in the terrifying waves of Waimea Bay. At this time of year all the vacation homes along the North Shore, both legal and otherwise, are booked solid and contestants long for the giant waves generated by storms in the distant North Pacific.

The contest is named after legendary big-wave surfer and lifeguard Eddie Aikau. Eddie was a fearless waterman who went missing while paddling his surfboard for help to save his shipmates on their sinking sailing canoe.

“These crowds won’t make our investigation any easier,” grumbled Chris. “This place is like a god-damned zoo.”

“I hope the dead tourist doesn’t turn out to be a famous pro surfer,” said Kalei.

He was no doubt thinking about Andy Irons, the Hawaiian surf star who was found dead in a Texas hotel room in 2010 at an age of only thirty-two. At first, they thought it was the result of dengue fever. Only later was it revealed that he died of a heart attack brought on by heavy drug and alcohol abuse. The media had a field day and it wasn’t pretty.

Kalei and Chris drove past ‘The Bay’ in silence, neither of them even looking at the giant billboards promoting the event.

When they finally reached the Kaihalulu Hotel & Resort, they’d crossed almost the entire island from south to north. As expected, it had taken a full two hours. Chris had to stop twice at guard stations on their way to the main building and show his police identification. Only after a thorough check of their IDs did the gate rise to allow them entry into the resort. Chris parked directly in front of the hotel’s main entrance in the valet parking area. Upon showing the eager parking attendant his police badge he was directed to the nearby employee parking area, where a police car from Wahiawa was already waiting. Obviously, the hotel preferred that none of their guests learn what had happened.

Clambering out the car Chris reached up, leaned back, and stretched his back muscles, uttering a satisfying groan in the process. Although the muscular Dodge Charger was an ideal police car, it wasn’t the

most comfortable vehicle on the road. A uniformed police officer led them discreetly into the resort via a side entrance.

Chapter 2

Surrounded as it was by lush tropical vegetation, the Kaihalulu Beach Resort was isolated from the nearby settlements, a quality highly valued by the resort's wealthy clientele. Fronted by a spectacular coral-sand beach and the crystal-clear sea, it was the most exclusive resort on Oahu.

Most of the beaches in Hawaii are public, meaning that hotels and apartment complexes can't prohibit the public from using them. But at the Kaihalulu there were no other hotels or local residences nearby. So, unless outsiders specifically insisted on their right to use the beach, resort personnel would simply turn them away or prevent them from entering the premises, even though that was illegal.

The officer led them through a discreet employee passageway to an emergency exit which opened to the resort's lush garden. Here, luxurious private cottages were tastefully arranged on a manicured lawn adorned with orchids, plumeria, and bougainvillea. These were the resort's most expensive and most exclusive accommodations. The beauty of the setting stopped Kalei and Chris in their tracks, so far was it removed from the Hawaii they lived in. Walking along a carefully raked coral pathway that meandered through the

colorful foliage they arrived at a beach house almost at the water's edge.

The whole crew was already there: the forensics team, the crime investigation unit, the medical examiner, etc. Most of them had parked their vehicles away from the hotel and either walked or were brought by golf cart to the scene. Only the van from the forensics team was parked next to the house. Another officer who was standing by the entry handed them plastic shoe coverings. The other officers were also wearing single-use gloves. Chris and Kalei made their way into the house, past an officer inspecting the door lock.

Their gaze was immediately drawn to the open lanai. Almost the entire side of the house was open, affording an entrancing view of hibiscus bushes, coconut palms, and a stretch of brilliant-white beach, beyond which lay the azure waters of the Pacific.

Kalei stood silently at the doorway, taking in the other details of the scene. The living room was undisturbed and there was no dead body lying around. Nor were there any marks on the elegant, oak parquet flooring. No blood was spattered on the walls or nice furniture. Casual yet elegant, the room was decorated in a warm, Pacific Rim style accented with potted plants and a flower arrangement. "What a nice place," he thought—a nice place for a murder.

Susan Young, the medical examiner, entered the room from the veranda. Her husband was a U.S. Air Force pilot and they lived halfway to the North Shore, near Wheeler Army Airfield, so she'd arrived at the crime scene before the others. She was just about to

remove her gloves when she noticed Kalei and Chris, and waved them to her.

Before the two detectives reached the veranda a young female officer appeared next to them.

“Logan, what are you guys doing wandering around in here like that?” whispered Eli Kealoha disapprovingly, distracted from her evidence-gathering. Eli was wearing a protective white smock, shoe coverings, gloves, and eye protection. But her most remarkable feature was her outrageous hairstyle—the right half of her head was overgrown by a wild tangle of black hair, that Chris called a self-inflicted haircut; the left side of her head was shaved. A tribal tattoo stretched from her neck down the length of her left arm. Although Chris had worked with Eli many times, her appearance never failed to shock him. Only after he got to know her better did he understand that the hair and tattoo were her ways of rebelling against what Hawaii had become, and reasserting her native Hawaiian heritage.

Eli’s regular Lara-Croft style clothes were hidden under her white, crime scene smock. She was not normally a quiet person, so the fact that she was whispering suggested that a relative of the victim might be nearby.

Feigning irritation, Chris turned to her and smirked, silently showing her that he was wearing sterile gloves. Years ago, he’d forgotten his glass of water, in the kitchen at a crime scene, leaving it between body parts and items of evidence. Since then, it was a running joke between him and the crime scene investigators, each accusing the others of negligence.

Eli pushed him on the chest with her gloved hands and went onto the veranda. Chris glanced at his shirt to check for blood stains.

Mildly irritated, Susan Young watched the young lady depart and turned to Kalei, who hadn't taken part in the jesting.

"We have a male victim." She began, without a greeting. "White, mid-to-late thirties. His wife says she found him dead in the hot tub."

Susan turned toward the lanai that afforded a stunning view of sun-dappled tropical foliage against the turquoise sea. The hot tub was on the lanai. Its water circulator had been turned off. At the edge of the tub could be seen a wet head of hair. The medical examiner, Kalei, Chris, and Eli walked over to have a look.

A well-built young man was lying in the water. His body was almost completely submerged, with only an unruly mop of dark blond hair above the water.

"Why's the water green?" asked Chris after a few moments. Eli was about to give an answer but Susan silenced her with a glance. Susan had no tolerance for stupid utterances at crime scenes. Black humor and cynicism were part and parcel of crime scene investigators, as it helped them cope with the terrible realities of their work. But the medical examiner could never understand this method of overcoming stress. She was able to deal with these situations tactfully without sounding callous, a trait which served her well in her line of work.

"The color is from the bath salts the hotel supplies," she explained. In fact, Kalei and Chris could

now clearly smell the pleasant aroma rising from the water. Corpses in water usually didn't smell so pleasant.

"No blood, no knife wounds, no bullet holes. Couldn't he have just died of natural causes?"

Susan chuckled indulgently. The cause of death would of course, be determined by an autopsy, but she had a strong suspicion that this was a violent death and she was more than happy to share her suspicions.

"I suspect," she said, with a raised index finger, "that this young man was assaulted from behind. The culprit most likely had a wire noose wrapped with a towel or other soft fabric that the culprit threw around his neck and tightened." So saying, she balled her fists together and twisted them to demonstrate the murderous act.

"The man was young and strong. He must've fought back. There are scrapes and contusions on the back of his head especially, and also on his neck and arms. Faced with this resistance, the offender probably jumped on him and used their body weight to force him underwater until he drowned."

"So, a struggle," mused Kalei. He noticed that there were some scented candles and bottles of bath oils on the floor around the hot tub. There were small white drops of melted wax splattered around the bath. He wondered if their pattern resembled those made by splashed blood.

"Has the garrote been found?" Chris asked Eli. She shook her head, messing up her hair further.

"Not yet. But that supports Doctor Young's suspicion that the victim didn't commit suicide."

Susan knew the detectives would want to know the time of death, which could only be determined by an autopsy, so she pre-empted their question, saying "The death probably occurred between 10:00 p.m. and early morning."

"Ten in the evening?" said Chris, surprised at the precise time she'd given.

"At quarter to ten our victim called room service and ordered a bottle of Scotch Whisky. Shortly thereafter he personally accepted the bottle from the bellboy and signed for it," said Susan. "Then he got back into the hot tub."

"Who is victim?" asked Eli. "A tourist?"

The answer to this question came from detective Yuna Takahashi, a lieutenant and the detective in charge of the investigation. She'd entered the room from opposite the hot tub and was standing in the shadow of a giant hibiscus that partially overhung the terrace. The green shimmer from the water illuminated her petite figure from below.

"His name is Jamie Hayward. He and his wife, Julia, rented this villa the day before yesterday," she said, waving to Hayward's head.

"He's not just a tourist," she continued. "In fact, you could say he's one of us. He's a detective in England, from their economic crimes division."

Kalei heard the words detective and England and flushed red.

Lani worked with the police in London. She'd almost certainly hear about this case. She'd recall her time in Honolulu, and the time she'd spent with Kalei ...

Chapter 3

The same day, in London.

At that moment, on the opposite side of the earth, it was already late in the evening. In fact, Nathan, the bartender at the Bricklayers Arms pub, had just rung the bell over the bar. In British pubs, a bell is rung to signal the last chance to order a drink. Thirty minutes later it is rung again to signal closing time. Thereafter no more drinks may be served. Before the last ring died out many guests had hurried to the bar to order a final ale, apple cider, or lager.

Nathan worked the handpump for the ales while his new east-European employee, next to him, drew the lagers. He watched with satisfaction how carefully she filled the glasses to their rims with Stella Artois and deftly swept away the foamy heads with a spatula. He knew that European drinkers liked the foam and were always astounded that the Brits did not. But this was England, damn it, and here beer is without foam, and has for hundreds of years. Until about twenty years ago most pubs didn't serve foreign lager or beers. And if Nathan had his way they still wouldn't. Beer—a Real Ale shouldn't be chilled. This way it retained its delicate aroma. And who on earth would want carbon dioxide in their beer? It gives you gas.

As he handed out more ales Nathan glanced again at the blonde lady who'd been sitting at his end of the bar for the past two hours. In all that time she'd only had two small glasses of imported French beer. At first,

he'd tried to engage her in conversation about the weather but she responded with monosyllables. She was deep into a book and clearly didn't want to be bothered.

He decided to try again. "Last round luv. Would you like something?"

She glanced up from her book and for the first time looked him directly in the face. Her blue eyes burned with intensity and Nathan noticed the deep shadows under them. He assumed she was a nurse or doctor, someone who kept irregular hours and had to work nights. Early thirties he guessed.

She cast a glance at a table near the window at which a couple sat. They'd spent the whole evening drinking a cheap Australian cabernet. Their glasses were still three-quarters full, a sight that apparently made her decide to order another half-pint.

"One for the road," she said, pushing her empty glass toward Nathan.

He used this opportunity to move closer to his young employee operating the tap next to his. Feigning absentmindedness he let his hips touch hers, noticing happily that she didn't move away.

As the blonde accepted the glass she grinned mischievously. Leaning closer to Nathan she whispered: "If I were you, I wouldn't hit on her so hard. You're scaring the poor thing. It's obvious she'd rather you kept your distance. Another week of that and she'll be looking for a new place to work." So saying, she raised her glass to him and took a hearty swig.

Before Nathan could respond the blonde's iPhone noiselessly informed her of an incoming call. She

looked at the screen and grimaced but after a few moments decided to take the call.

Like all bartenders, Nathan was curious about his customers and would've liked to listen in, but the lady had already turned away from him and was walking to the door.

Stepping from the warm coziness of the pub into the bitter cold of rainy night was like slap in the face. Irritated, she pulled up her hoodie and took the call from her boss, Detective Chief Inspector George McAllister.

"Lauren, where are you?" McAllister bellowed from the phone.

"Hello Chief. Yeah, I'm fine, thanks. I'm bored, sitting in a pub."

"Not the Bricklayers Arms in Earl's Court, I hope?" McAllister asked suspiciously.

"Oh, Chief. Their shepherd's pie is fantastic. It's my favorite and ..."

"Didn't I specifically tell you to stop watching Sean Pennywater?" he barked. "He's not a suspect anymore. His alibi is airtight, and his lawyer will be on us if we keep after him. I've told you that at least a dozen times."

"Pennywater isn't even here, Chief," she protested lamely, glancing sidelong at Sean and his honey, still nursing their bottle of cheap wine. "My girlfriend lives just around the corner and she wanted to come here."

"Tell your girlfriend, she'll have to spend the rest

of the evening without you. I want you in my office in fifteen minutes."

"But sir," protested Lauren. "I can't leave her here all alone. She's totally drunk and some creep has been pawing at her all evening."

Lauren's boss simply said: "Be here in fifteen minutes, Lauren. It's important. Something's happened."

The tone of his voice told her to stop protesting and make her way to the subway in Earl's Court. She cast a final glance through the pub's window and thought: I'll get you Sean. You won't get away from me.

New Scotland Yard, Lauren's workplace, was located in Westminster, just around the corner from Westminster Abbey and the Palace of Westminster, where both houses of parliament meet.

Lauren took the District Line to St. James's Park. Ten minutes later she was climbing the station stairs leading to Broadway. Walking quickly across the street she reached the main entrance.

The watchman wasn't surprised to see her at such a late hour.

"Evening, Detective Inspector," he said politely. "Overtime again?"

"Unfortunately," she grumbled, stepping into the elevator.

George McAllister was in his mid-fifties, heavyset, and balding. He'd devoted his entire adult life to the police. Through hard work and long hours, that had cost him both his marriage and his health, he'd risen

to the post of Detective Chief Inspector of the Homicide and Major Crime Command. There he oversaw one of the twenty-four Murder Investigation Teams. His group consisted of seven civilians and thirty-three police officers. Detective Inspector Lauren Bradley was one of them.

Lauren, dripping wet, strode into his office and presented herself at his desk. She was furious that he'd called her in again at such a late hour. But what really irritated her was that he'd caught her observing Sean Pennywater. She decided that the best way to deal with it was to grab the bull by its horns and defend herself before the DCI let her have it.

"It's not right to stop watching Pennywater. We can prove that he beat his girlfriend badly enough to put her in hospital. I'll be able to prove he's responsible for her death before I ..." she paused, glancing at the wall calendar. "Before I go to Quantico next week for training."

McAllister raised his hand and she looked him in the face for the first time.

"Pennywater is a dead end." He sighed.

"If I just find one witness who ..."

But the chief just waved to silence her.

"You're not going to the FBI for training," he said firmly. "You have to postpone that."

"What?" she stammered. The detective course at the FBI was one of the most sought-after training courses. She'd been waiting two years for the chance to go. She was scheduled to fly to Washington in a few days. Lauren had worked her butt off for the opportunity and she wasn't about to let anyone, or anything, get in the

way.

“I can’t postpone the training, Chief. It’s already set. If I don’t go, I’ll lose my place. I have to go!”

“A British police officer from the Metropolitan Police was killed in the States today,” he said, interrupted her grimly. “A young fellow named Jamie Hayward. He was found a few hours ago in a luxury hotel on the North Shore of Oahu, in Hawaii ...”

“Hawaii? What’s that got to do with us? Can’t their police take care of it? They won’t let us investigate it anyway. And, I can’t go.”

McAllister could feel the headache he’d been nursing all day worsen. It felt as if his head were in a vise that had just tightened. He reached for the bottle of aspirin on his desk and didn’t have the patience to argue with one of his best officers. There was nothing to discuss anyway.

McAllister thought very highly of Lauren. He valued her enthusiasm, her acumen and her work ethic. She worked harder and put in longer hours than most. There was no question that she’d earned her training at the FBI. What he didn’t care for, however, was her lack of respect for authority and her seeming inability to simply follow orders without constantly questioning them. Just today he’d caught her ignoring his direct order to stop shadowing a man who was clearly innocent. He wasn’t about to tolerate any more of her disobedience.

“Damn it, Lauren,” he growled, jumping up from his chair. “This isn’t the House of Lords where everyone can do what they want. You’re not going to Washington!

You're going to Hawaii. Our colleagues there have invited us to send two officers from the Met to assist them. We've already sent in the required application. The American Embassy is working on it and we should have your travel documents first thing in the morning. Your name is on the team list. So, that's it. Randy Sheridan will accompany you."

Expecting an immediate retort from her, he added: "The protocol calls for a detective chief inspector to be sent, but you're the only one in the entire Met Police who has a U.S. passport and has worked with the Honolulu Police Department. You're the only one who knows the territory and can help them with their investigation. That's why the Detective Superintendent asked specifically for you, Lauren."

The Detective Superintendent was the leader of the Homicide and Major Crime Command and McAllister's superior.

Lauren was not at all convinced that the Detective Superintendent's decision was wise. Her time with the HPD had ended abruptly and without the customary procedures. She'd left them feeling angry and disappointed, and after leaving hadn't contacted any of them again.

Her boss certainly didn't know anything about that. She hadn't told any of her superiors about her time there or why she'd suddenly left. And she didn't want to tell McAllister anything about it now. However, she did decide that he should at least be informed about certain facts.

“I should mention that my departure from Honolulu was not entirely amicable.”

McAllister was preparing to continue but now looked up at her with raised eyebrows.

“Some trouble with your bosses there?”

That wouldn’t surprise me, he thought. Lauren’s problem was her lack of respect toward her superiors. Especially if she felt they didn’t deserve their position or weren’t capable of carrying out their duties. Young, single-minded and full of energy, she often butted heads with her older colleagues, many of whom were set in their ways and resentful of anyone—particularly an attractive young woman—infringing their territory.

There were many on the force who wanted to put her in her place, but the fact that she was so capable and had solved so many difficult cases protected her from the disciplinary actions that less-qualified officers might have suffered. McAllister knew she rubbed a lot of people the wrong way.

“I had a problem there with an officer who beat up a civilian,” she said. “I thought he went too far. But he just said the guy was asking for it when he punched a cop in the face. I was the only officer who thought the colleague should’ve been charged.”

Lauren paused for moment to gauge McAllister’s reaction, then continued. “Anyway, that pretty much put an end to my work with the HPD.”

McAllister gazed at her thoughtfully. He hadn’t heard of that episode, and it was hardly a good omen for Lauren’s further interactions with their police colleagues in Hawaii. His reservations regarding the Detective

Superintendent's plan were therefore not without grounds. In fact, he didn't think Lauren was the right person for the job. He'd suggested sending Detective Chief Inspector Prior and Detective Sergeant Raji instead. But they had just been put on another case. In any event, the sooner Lauren was away from Pennywater the better.

"Objection noted but dismissed," he said, continuing with the briefing. "Your task is to accompany the officers from Honolulu who are working the case. You won't be expected to do much, but I'm hoping your presence will light a fire under their butts."

Lauren didn't like her boss's attitude toward their Hawaiian colleagues. He no doubt thought that HPD was nothing more than a bunch of street cops whose main tasks were preventing drunk teenagers from peeing in the swimming pools and arresting purse snatchers at the shopping mall. In fact, the HPD was the twentieth largest police force in the U.S.A. She wondered McAllister had thought of her when she first arrived in London. She found the thought unpleasant.

"Your flight departs at 8:45 a.m. tomorrow. Roxanne made reservations for you and Detective Sergeant Sheridan and mailed you the info."

Roxanne was Chief McAllister's personal assistant. Apparently, he'd gotten her up in the middle of the night also.

"Anyone else would be thrilled to go to Hawaii," said McAllister, hoping to end the conversation on a positive note.

"Honolulu is just as corrupt as any big city," she countered. "But I don't suppose anyone there will

remember what happened.”

Lauren looked out the ceiling high window at the sheets of freezing rain blowing by in the gusts. Winter was like a bad memory, she thought. It lasts too long. Perhaps a few days of sunshine and warmth wouldn't be so bad after all. I doubt anyone there even remembers me anymore. She turned to leave.

“One more thing,” said McAllister, as she reached the door. “I should tell you that I didn't support the Super's decision to send you to Hawaii. And not because of your pending trip to Quantico.”

She turned and looked at him questioningly.

“I told him that you had an anti-authority attitude and it could be a problem when you were overseas with nobody looking over your shoulder.”

Lauren looked down.

“I hope you prove me wrong and show us all that the Met Police can depend on you.”

Lauren nodded, gave an abbreviated military salute and murmured “Yes sir.”