

HONOLULU

HONOLULU First 10 Pages

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TEASER

EXT. PACIFIC - SEALINER - NIGHT

A terrible STORM rages. A sealiner bobs against the crashing waves as the volcano KILAUEA churns red lava into the sea.

INT. SEALINER - GRAND HALL - SAME

JON GEIST (35) pulls his bowler hat hard over his ears. It's no use. The deafening CRIES and WHIMPERS of men, women, and children flood the sealiner's grand hall as tables, chairs, and people rock to-and-fro with the menacing waves outside. Standing above Jon, a facial-tattooed MAORI man in a TOP HAT looks out a porthole, watching the volcano blow.

TOP HAT

The Red Goddess is angry.

LIGHTNING flashes followed by deafening THUNDER. Jon grimaces. A young woman staggers toward him in the darkness. She is VICTORIA (19), Hawaiian, in servant attire.

VICTORIA

Doctor? Doctor!

Jon sits up. He has a Dutch accent.

JON

Yes, yes, damn you, what is it?

VICTORIA

Miss Ella is gone!

Jon sees a young BOY wretch onto the floor. The boy's MOTHER pats him on the back.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Did you hear what I said?

JON

Yes, and... Never mind her.

VICTORIA

But sir!

JON

We're on a ship in the middle of the ocean. Where can she go?

Victoria points out a porthole.

VICTORIA

There!

Jon's head spins around. Through the window and the rain, Jon sees a raggedy figure wearing a poncho rowing a lifeboat.

EXT. PACIFIC - LIFEBOAT - NIGHT

A determined young Hawaiian woman looks up from under a leather broad brimmed hat as she rows defiantly through the piercing rain and sloping waves. She is ELLA KALIOKALANI (18).

EXT. SEALINER - DECK - SAME

At the front of the ship, a SAILOR blows his whistle next to the FIRST MATE, standing by watching Ella through binoculars. Jon staggers to the railing from below deck with Victoria at his side.

FIRST MATE

What are you doing up here? Get back below!

JON

Who is that?

Jon points in the direction of Ella's dingy.

FIRST MATE

Some girl took a life boat. Now, clear the deck, I said!

Jon's eyes widen at the mention of a girl.

JON

You have to go after her!

FIRST MATE

I'm not risking the ship over some tart.

JON

You don't understand! She's the future Queen of Hawaii.

In the distance, the volcano rumbles and offers another explosion of lava.

EXT. PACIFIC - LIFEBOAT - NIGHT

Ella pushes down on her oars, the flowing lava behind her hissing and sputtering through the black of night.

ACT ONE

EXT. NUUANU STREAM - DAY

A RAINBOW arcs over a green mountain. The sky is a brilliant blue except for a few dark clouds still retreating beyond the horizon.

Below, palm trees shade the stream that serves as Honolulu's toilet, a putrid swamp where citizens empty their piss pots and refuse. The shores are lined with outhouses and balconies that allow locals to relieve themselves directly into the tepid water.

EXT. NUUANU STREAM - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

A stone bridge straddles the stream, its underside cased in green moss and black barnacles. A grey rope wrapped around a bridge's column ends in a noose hanging a naked plum-faced DEAD MAN, Japanese, (35), with his hands and legs bound behind him.

EXT. NUUANU STREAM - PIER - CONTINUOUS

On a short pier adjacent to the bridge stands MARSHAL HALBERT WILHELM (55), tall, born British, holding a kerchief over his mouth. His blue Honolulu Police uniform is stark and artificial next to the soiled landscape. His right ear and left thumb are missing from old Boer War wounds.

Halbert watches closely as two WORKING MEN in bandanas hoist the body onto the bridge. Appearing at Halbert's right is DEPUTY LARS TUTTLE, an oily lawman with interminable sweats. His shirt is wrinkled. He chews tobacco.

LARS

Morning, Marshal. Didn't know you'd be here.

Halbert offers an unenthusiastic greeting.

HALBERT

Good morning, Deputy.

Lars spits.

LARS
 Couldn't have picked a more public
 spot. Someone will have seen
 something.

Halbert is less optimistic but says:

HALBERT
 Indubitably.

LARS
 Should I fetch the Sheriff?

HALBERT
 And interrupt his hangover? I
 wouldn't dream of it.

Halbert walks up the shore toward the bridge. Lars follows
 closely behind.

EXT. NUUANU STREAM - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

The Working Men plop the dead man onto the stone bridge. Lars
 kneels to examine the body.

LARS
 Alright then, let's see what we
 got.

Halbert leans over Lars' shoulder as Lars pulls the noose off
 of the dead man. Lars spits, then places his hands on the
 man's neck.

LARS (CONT'D)
 His neck ain't broke.

HALBERT
 Poor bugger.

Rushing to Halbert's side is CONSTABLE WADE MAHUIKI (21),
 also dressed in a Royal Police uniform. Though Hawaiian,
 Wade has an American accent. He's shorter than Halbert but
 more fit; A young proud copper still unnerved by the sight of
 a dead body.

WADE
 Marshal, the King--

Halbert nods, then turns to Lars.

HALBERT
 Thank you, Deputy. You'll keep me
 informed.

LARS

Sure thing.

Halbert walks off with Wade toward a pair of horses leaving Lars alone with the dead body.

EXT. HONOLULU - MERCHANT DISTRICT - DAY

Marshal Halbert Wilhelm and Constable Wade Mahuiki ride alongside one another through the dirt streets of the port town's busiest enclave. Hundreds of Honolulu's CITIZENS make their way up and down the road. A handwritten sign hangs in a window of a general store declaring "NO-ORINTLS-BLKS-OR-IRISH-WELCOM."

As the lawmen pass, the citizens take notice-- A tattoo ARTIST wiping blood from the back of a grimacing CANVAS-- A local VENDOR selling samurai swords and shark tooth jewelry-- A crowd watching two GOLIATHS bare-knuckle box in a pit.

WADE

The merchant marines are on the look out, especially around the Big Island. But the storm means she could be anywhere.

HALBERT

I want the docks watched day and night. She won't be rowing to San Francisco.

They come in sight of IOLANI PALACE, towering over every other building in Honolulu. Its architecture is uniquely beautiful and imposing.

EXT. IOLANI PALACE - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Halbert dismounts his horse and hitches it to a post.

WADE

Will the "homecoming" festivities still...?

HALBERT

I've never known the Merry Monarch to cancel a luau.

WADE

Then I'll see you tonight, sir.

Wade tips his cap. Halbert salutes him back.

HALBERT

Constable.

Halbert turns and faces the palace.

INT. IOLANI PALACE - MAP ROOM - DAY

The PAINTED WATERS of the Pacific are crisscrossed with longitude and latitude, arrows for currents and trade winds, green specs of land. The whole Ocean is laid bare, covering an entire wall like a tapestry. Beholding the grand map is KING DAVID KALAKAUA, (50).

David is a bit chubby, but he wears his blue uniform with pride as though he designed it himself. So many medals hang over the King's heart that the fabric sags on the left. His voice is low. Though he is Hawaiian, his accent is thick and British. Like his muttonchops. Halbert enters. David turns.

DAVID

My niece?

HALBERT

Not yet, Your Majesty.

David makes his way to a drafting table.

DAVID

Have you seen this, Halbert?

David pulls open a rolled map. A dark blue border conspicuously surrounds several islands in the Pacific, Hawai'i, chief among them. In the corner are the words: "UNITED POLYNESIAN EMPIRE." The map is a piece of art. Halbert looks it over.

HALBERT

It's a beautiful map.

David pulls out a bottle of whiskey and two glasses.

DAVID

Well put. A map. A dream, like as not.

David pours the bottle and offers Halbert a glass. Halbert accepts. David forces a smile.

HALBERT

We'll find her, Your Majesty.

DAVID
If you don't soon, I'm liable to
kill her myself.

A KNOCK at the door. David is annoyed.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Enter!

A small STEWARD sticks his head inside.

STEWARD
Your Majesty, the emissary--

HALBERT
Tell him to wait.

David shakes his head.

DAVID
No, bring him in.

STEWARD
Yes, Your Majesty.

David swallows down the rest of his whiskey.

DAVID
No sense delaying the inevitable.

Halbert throws back the rest of his glass.

A short Japanese man enters wearing a tailored suit and smiling eyes. He is REN HAGA, Emissary of Japan to the Hawaiian Kingdom. Ren bows to David as low as he can muster.

REN
Your Majesty, I was most grieved to
hear of your niece's disappearance.
If there is anything my government
can do--

David cuts Ren off.

DAVID
Appreciated, but my niece has not
disappeared. She's only gone on a
cruise around the islands to better
tour her inheritance.

Ren breathes an overt sigh. Halbert watches him with suspicion.

REN
Such a relief. Then I should look forward to meeting her tonight-- at the banquet?

DAVID
Of course!

Ren smiles wide and gracious.

REN
In light of her arrival, then, may I propose we sign to the terms of the dowry? The Emperor has already given his seal.

Ren pulls papers from his bag. David's smile turns into a sneer as he takes the documents from Ren. After a cursory glance, he hands them to Halbert. David turns back to Ren.

DAVID
Do you take me for an idiot?

REN
Your Majesty?

David scowls.

DAVID
You're not getting the dowry without the girl.

Ren acts taken aback.

REN
I didn't mean to suggest--

DAVID
Of course you did. No girl, no dowry! For all I know it was you lot who had her kidnapped.

Ren feigns surprise.

REN
Then she is missing...

DAVID
Listen here, my Jap friend. The deal remains the same. You'll have no dowry until Ella's married to your Emperor's firstborn son. No marriage, no dowry!

(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)

I've waited ten years to join our families. There will be no deal without a marriage!

David tosses the documents into Ren's face. Ren does not collect the papers. He only bows and retreats toward the door.

REN

As you wish, Your Majesty. Then... tonight?

DAVID

What did I say?!

REN

Yes, Your Majesty.

Ren steps out of the room. Halbert waits for the door to close, then addresses the king.

HALBERT

We need an alliance with Japan to be as strong as possible if we're to maintain our independence from the West.

DAVID

If the Emperor was half as bold as his ambassador, he'd have conquered China by now. This is how it began with the Americans. You offer an olive branch and they beat you to death with it.

HALBERT

Even so...

DAVID

You said it yourself. We need as strong an alliance as possible. Ella is the other half of that equation.

HALBERT

And this dowry we're giving them--?

DAVID

--The other half.

David gazes upon his giant map of the Pacific.

DAVID (CONT'D)

But without Ella, we're lost.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN - DAY

A SPYGLASS follows Ella Kaliokalani and her lifeboat from a distance. She yells and waves her arms about emphatically.

EXT. CASSIOPEIA - SAME

Tracking her with their spyglasses are two men-- one, of Middle Eastern descent, the other Japanese.

The Middle Eastern man is ORION NASSIR (30), a smuggler. He wears loose-fitting clothes practical for sailing and an Australian fedora to keep the sun out of his dark eyes. He has a Lebanese-Australian accent.

ORION

What are you thinking?

Orion's shipmate, TOMI GENSAI (28), Japanese-American, is more of a dandy. His Panama hat is stylish, yet practical. He wears the sleeves of his dress shirt rolled to the elbows and his suit jacket slung over his shoulder. Tomi shrugs, puts away his spyglass and turns his attention to a bowl of rice and steamed fish. He's missing a pinky.

TOMI

There are stranger ways to meet women.

Tomi retrieves a slender jade cigarette holder and lights himself a smoke with a match. He pulls out a little notebook and writes in it.

ORION

What are you doing?

TOMI

Math-- how much cargo it'll take to pay our debt to the Kraken.

ORION

That's a lot of numbers.

TOMI

It's a lot of debt.

Orion puts away his spyglass but keeps his eyes on Ella's boat bobbing in the distance.

EXT. PACIFIC - CASSIOPEIA - DAY

Orion's boat, the *Cassiopeia*, is a medium-sized schooner, with wide sails and a clip pace. It comes about Ella's lifeboat with ease.

EXT. PACIFIC - LIFEBOAT AND CASSIOPEIA - DAY

Ella keeps her balance on the lifeboat as it bobs next to the much larger *Cassiopeia*. In spite of her disheveled appearance, Ella has a refined demeanor and a posh British accent. Orion gives her a glance as he tends to the sails. She's clearly been out in the sun too long without food or water.

EXT. CASSIOPEIA - DAY

Tomi offers his hand and helps Ella cross over to the *Cassiopeia*.

ELLA

I can't thank you enough, Mr--

TOMI

Gensai. Tomi Gensai. And my esteemed colleague manning the sails is Captain Orion Nassir.

ELLA

Does he speak English?

Tomi shrugs.

TOMI

Only when he feels like talking.

She takes off her hat and wipes the sweat from her brow.

ELLA

Mr. Gensai, I wonder if I could trouble you for some water?

Tomi snaps to.

TOMI

Oh, of course. You got it.

Orion already has a CANTEEN for her.

ELLA

Thank you, Mr. Nassir.

Ella drinks from the canteen greedily. Tomi gestures to the empty lifeboat.

TOMI

So you're all on your own, Miss--?

Ella chuckles as she comes up for air.

ELLA

Ella. Sorry. And yes, quite alone, unfortunately. I'm dreadfully embarrassed to be in this situation.

TOMI

So you weren't shipwrecked, I take it.

ELLA

Oh, no.

TOMI

On the run?

ELLA

In a manner of speaking. Am I right to assume the two of you are on your way to Honolulu?

TOMI

That's right.

Ella frowns.

ELLA

I was afraid of that.

She pulls a small DERRINGER pistol from her waistband and points it at Orion and Tomi.

ELLA (CONT'D)

You see, I'm headed in the opposite direction.

TOMI

I thought you and I might have had something.

ELLA

No. I'm stealing your ship.

Tomi turns to Orion.

TOMI

If we rush her at the same time,
you think she can shoot us both?

ELLA

By all means, lads. Let's find out.

Ella cocks the gun. Orion and Tomi raise their hands.