

# Sister Aphrodita

by [zinc\\_chameleon](#)

*The adventures of Marilyn Monroe in the Hawaiian afterlife.*

**DAY ONE**

Leilani needed a new house lamp for the guest the Blue Dolphin King had told her about, the troubled brilliant one recently dead. "There must always be a light in her darkness," he said. "This is your duty, Leilani." He slapped his tail in the water to make his point. Obedient to the god, Leilani went out immediately to the north beach where the glow-crabs lived and proceeded to trap one.

She walked lightly along the shore, her short toes dipping in the water just long enough for a glow-crab to catch a taste of her life-force. Soon enough, an aquamarine light emerged from its hiding place in the low tide, scuttling sideways to reach the flavor.

Leilani let her right big toe drag in the thin surf, so that the glow-crab would not have to leave the water to catch her. A tiny piercing pain stabbed through her as the glow-crab got its pincers dug in and began to feed.

She felt a sudden touch of tiredness as some of her life-force flowed out of her and into the glow-crab's little body. She lifted up her right foot and quickly putting her gourd in position, deposited the intoxicated creature.

The next part was always her favourite. She knelt down and putting the gourd next to her child's face, peeked through the pin-holes she had made. Sure enough, the glow-crab was already in the midst of its transformation. Uncertainly at first, then with more clarity, the glow-crab travelled up the path of huna faster than the laws of Kanehunamoku normally allowed, a gift given her by the Blue Dolphin King.

A tiny replica of Leilani's face now sat on the body of a butterfly, with transparent wings of sheerest blue. Large eyes--much larger by comparison to

Leilani's face than her own--looked back at the human girl, imploring answers.

*"What has happened? Where am I? What am I?"* it asked in pure thought.

*"Be at peace, Little Light. I am Leilani, your Mother/Creator."*, Leilani sent the creature images of her new home, the Great House of Souls where Leilani lived. *"You will be happy and free soon."*

*"Little Light loves Leilani,"* its simple mind responded. To show its love, it began to glow to its fullest, a legacy from its life as a glow-crab. Lances of radiance sprang out, illuminating the beach, still in early dawn.

Leilani felt a change in the wind from the sea. She looked up to the south-west where soft lights of pale green played over the tops of the mountains of Kanehunamoku. The shoreline around her began to change shape, becoming the north-west tip of Maui even while she watched.

There. Leilani could see it clearly. At the place where the rip-tide would bring in and wash up those souls newly departed from Earth, the very south end of the beach, a huddled form grew on the sand, becoming larger and more human as each wave lapped up against it.

Leilani ran to the place, holding her gourd high, the light of the tiny creature within it illuminating her footsteps in contrast to the sand. Upon reaching the person, Leilani saw a haoli, a white woman, of early middle age, naked and convulsing on the shore. Her hair was blonde with brown roots, her face pale and puffy, dark circles of blue blood under her eyes. She thrashed about, bringing the unwanted attention of several glow-crabs, who began to delicately sidle their way over to her prone form.

Leilani tried to carefully insinuate her thoughts into this woman's thoughts,

but the pull of her haoli mind was greater even than the rip tide. Leilani's stomach fought back against a feeling of vertigo. Then--as if a mighty hand reached out from the woman's abdomen--Leilani felt her life-force gripped and contained by the evil images of the haoli woman.

"Help me! I cannot hold her! she cried out to the Blue Dolphin King. "Her mind is slipping into the currents of the evil Mo'o! Soon her body will follow!"

At once the nightmare of finned automobiles, masks and machines, all in the dead of night, became a dream of snorkeling in the Reef with blue spinner dolphins. The woman heaved a sigh and was still.

"I'm disappointed, Leilani. The Blue Dolphin King said, his voice mixed with the surf. "Surely you have the wisdom and strength to resist these evil dreams."

"This haoli is stronger than all the other six wahini combined," Leilani answered.

"Yes. Many challenges and opportunities await you."

"Could this be the one to set me free?"

"She must be. I created the Training Place for Hawaiians, not haoli. If you fail, or she fails, I will unmake this place, and leave you both in the open water as food for the Mo'o."

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Marilyn awoke on the beach in early dawn, to the sound of a young girl singing softly in Hawaiian. Marilyn put her left elbow into the sand, and lifted her head just enough to make out a tall slender form wrapped in a sarong, walking towards her with floating grace, holding some sort of lantern ahead of her. When the throb of her morning headache began, Marilyn looked down to see she was

naked in a public place. "Oh god, I'll never mix Mandrax and lemon gin again," she moaned.

"I do not know this Mandrax person, but I have heard of lemon gin. Is Mandrax a god?" the girl said in lilting English, or at least Marilyn thought it was English. The fuzz and daze in her vision said the drugs hadn't entirely worn off, so maybe this conversation was just a dream.

"You might say that." Marilyn replied.

"I serve the Blue Dolphin King," the girl answered. "He is the god of this place."

Marilyn pushed the dirty bangs out of her eyes to get a better glimpse. Such a pretty child, no more than twelve, and already much taller than the aging actress. "And where is this place? I'm assuming we're on Zuma beach, because I can't see any houses. This can't be Malibu."

"I do not know this Zuma or Malibu," Leilani replied. "We are in the Training Place, which the Blue Dolphin King has created within Kanehunamoku for the lost ones to find themselves. I am to conduct you to the Great House of Souls."

Marilyn decided to play along with this fantasy. After all, it was her fantasy. "That's great," she replied. "But sweetie, I told my agent that I wasn't ever going to do any science-fiction. I mean I like George Pal—you know, the fellow who made 'War of the Worlds'---but that Walt Disney is just a dirty old man. And I'm never going to take second place to a special effect. I'm a star, you know."

The girl rubbed her forehead in response. "I do not know these haoli men you speak of," she said. She stood silent for a moment, with her right ear cocked to the boom of the surf. "The Blue Dolphin King says it is time to show you your

new home."

"Who in the world are you talking too?" Marilyn asked, slowly and unsteadily getting to her feet.

"I am speaking to the Blue Dolphin King. Can you not hear him?" Leilani replied.

"No. I can only hear the surf. Great. Either I'm hallucinating this, or I'm actually stark naked on the beach with a little girl who hears voices. What else could happen?" she rambled.

Marilyn lept up, back on her feet and angry. "Okay, so let's find out if this all just a dream," she said, shivering a little as the wind off the ocean picked up. "I need something to wear. Something nice."

The image in Marilyn's mind shone with clear light. This would be easy for Leilani. "You shall have exactly what you wish," she said quietly. Leilani twirled around and produced a three-quarter-length red silk kimono. She finished with a small curtsy. "For you to wear."

Marilyn gasped. Leilani was offering her not just any kimono, but the black-on-red silk reproduction of Hokusai's masterpiece "Dawn on Mount Fuji." She had seen it in a boutique on Rodeo Drive just this week, but was too coy to tell the salesgirl that she couldn't afford it right now, what with her production company just getting back on its feet and all. But here it was.

"Oh, it's so beautiful," Marilyn whispered in awe. She allowed Leilani to help her put it on, one arm at a time, the silk against her bare arms and back nearly erotic in its intensity. "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't catch your name," Marilyn said.

"I am called Leilani," the young girl replied as she tied a cream-white

embroidered sash around Marilyn's tiny waist.

"Pleased to meet you, Leilani," Marilyn said, twisting her torso and shaking her arms to see if the kimono fit. "I'm Marilyn Monroe. Perhaps you've heard of me?"

"I am sorry, but I do not know that name," Leilani answered shyly.

"I understand. You were born in what, 1950? 1951? And out here on Maui, you probably didn't get to many of my movies."

"It is not that, Marilyn. It is because I died in 1888. On Earth it is 1962."

"And I was just starting to like you," Marilyn pouted. "But since this is just a dream--this kimono proves that--I'm in the mood for a little silliness. So perhaps you'd like to expand on that last point?"

Leilani hesitated. Should she tell this haoli woman everything the Blue Dolphin King had told her? Wahini like herself were no problem; they knew of Kanehunamoku and were happy to be there. But this one resisted to the core of her life-force. Leilani, remembering the dire consequences of failure for both of them, decided to take the plunge.

"You died last night. Evil men conspired together, and took your life. You were made to appear as weak, and mad. A suicide."

"So that's it? I'm dead, and this is the afterlife?"

"Yes," Leilani said after some hesitation. "This is not a dream."

Just then a glow-crab decided to try its luck. It got a pincer hold on the soft skin of Marilyn's right instep, and dug in. She shrieked with pain and surprise.

"Something just bit me!" She lashed out with her foot, losing her balance and landing on her back as the glowcrab hit the sand further in from the shore. It lay

still.

"Is it dead?" Marilyn asked, lifting her head up to take a look.

"No," Leilani replied. "Nothing ever dies in Kanehunamoku. It merely changes shape."

"Hallucination or not, start making sense." Marilyn answered grouchily.

"Just watch," Leilani replied unperturbed.

Motionless at first, the glowcrab's form began to go in and out of focus, like the work of a slipshod cameraman. It made Marilyn nauseous just watching it. Then the strangest thing happened. Like an egg being broken for an omelette, the creature divided into three, and then each third divided into two, six tiny pieces of shimmering crimson in all. These lept into the air, heading straight for Marilyn, who threw her hands up to protect herself. She sat up, warding off tiny divebombing versions of herself, all asking what was going on.

"Put your hands down," Leilani said quietly. "You are upsetting them."

"I'm being attacked by the Tinkerbelle Chorus, and you're telling me not to defend myself. You really are crazy." Marilyn replied.

That was all the explanation the tiny creatures --each a perfect miniature of Marilyn, right down to the dirty blonde hair-- needed. They fluttered their red and black wings, excited to be free and so close to the life-force of their Mother/Creator. "Tinkerbelle! Tinkerbelle!" they chanted, each one in a different key, like wind chimes in a dust storm.

"I have never seen such a thing. Six from one bite," Leilani whispered to herself. "Your life-force is great," she said to Marilyn, bowing her head.

Marilyn looked at her, speechless. She took a step back, turned in the

direction of the forests and the mountains, opened her arms wide, and shouted. "Okay, Bobby. Okay, Jack. You can come out now. Your little joke's been great, but come on, I've got things to have ready for Monday morning." She looked back over her shoulder and said to Leilani forcefully. "Run along, little Leilani. Get your mother or your father down here, with a car, and take me home."

"Who is Bobby? Who is Jack?" Leilani asked.

Marilyn put her hands on her hips in anger, feet wide apart. "Bobby Kennedy. Jack Kennedy. That's the Secretary of State, and the President of the United States of America. They must have taught you that in school. I know what's happened. Bobby had his doctor shoot me up with drugs, and they put me on a plane to Maui. They left me here to clean up my act on my own, far away from them. It almost worked, but I'm on to all of you now."

"A doctor gave you drugs, yes, but they stopped your heart. You have died, and wandered into the streams that lead to Kanehunamoku," Leilani explained. "It is because you wished to see your new house."

"Oh really? I'm dead, is it?" Marilyn shot back. "Then why am I not at the Judgement Seat? Where's Saint Peter? And where's Jesus, for Christ's sake?"

Determined to hold her own against this wild haoli woman, Leilani laid it out. "You are not ready to meet the Ascended One. The Blue Dolphin King was asked to help, so he created this piece of Maui for you. But it is not forever; you must meet Three Challenges, and you only have seven days of experience to do it in.

"All right, now you're pissing me off, little girl. Get someone to drive me home, right now, before I lose my....aaaccchhhh." The last word never came out, because Marilyn began to vomit pills, fresh ones, half-digested ones, little bits of

gelatin capsules. The entire contents of many stomachs spewed forth from her, narrowly missing her new kimono. When the pills hit the sand, they turned into snakes of many varieties, some garters, some rattlers, some coral snakes. Fearlessly, Leilani crushed the heads of the more dangerous ones with her heel, but still more came forth from Marilyn's gorge, along with an evil rotting stench.

"You need my help," Leilani said. She got behind Marilyn, put her hands through the sash and pulled Marilyn tightly to her, showing far more physical strength than her apparent age would suggest.

She began to chant the huna song of healing, while Marilyn gagged and moaned. The sun--created by the Blue Dolphin King for Marilyn's training--climbed overhead before the cleansing finished. Leilani held Marilyn as they both knelt in the sand and watched the last of the snakes wither and die under the power of Kanehunamoku.

"It is enough for her first day," the Blue Dolphin King boomed from the surf.

## DAY TWO

Marilyn awoke to the sound of venetian blinds being gently strummed by a light breeze coming off the ocean. She knew by the smell that it was not a breeze of Maui, but of Los Angeles. She turned to the sunlight to see her veranda door opened onto a swimming pool. At once she recognized where she was, and drew up the sheets to her bosom to hide her nakedness from any unwelcome photographic hound who might be hiding out here, lounging around the pool or in the lobby of the HollywoodRoosevelt on the 7000 block of Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles.

She lay back to collect her thoughts. What a wild dream that was! Something about dying, going to some kind of Hawaiian heaven, all spliced in with a Disney cartoon about fairies. Well, it did make sense that Tinkerbell would live in a Hawaiian heaven; as much sense as anything else in the dream did.

Other than the now-fading memories of that colorful dream, her head was remarkably clear for the morning. She didn't remember taking any sleeping pills last night; those always made her groggy the next day. Better yet, her mouth didn't taste like a barroom, as it might have after a wild party with the Rat Pack.

She straightened up in bed, the sheets falling away. So what if some creepy little guy with a camera caught her at just that moment? All he'd get is a shot of a bleary middle-aged bleached blonde with sagging breasts.

"And big deal at that," Marilyn said aloud. With that she leaped out of bed, heading for the bathroom.

Right away she knew that something was wrong. Was she dizzy, or was the floor really that much further away? She opened her eyes wider, and then brushed

her hair aside to receive the second shock of the morning. In her left hand she held auburn waves that grew down to her waist. She put it to her nose to smell it, then gave it a hard yank, only to yowl in pain. It was her hair!

At that, she ran into the bathroom, to look in the mirror over the sink. Even with only the reflective light of the sun--she was terrified to turn on the bathroom light for a closer examination--what she saw was utterly impossible. For in the mirror she saw the reflection of a young goddess, more beautiful and fearsome than anything she had witnessed in her life.

For starters, she was a head taller than she had been. She was afraid to even think of how this could be, until she remembered what that weird Sammy Davis Junior had been talking about earlier this week. There was this new drug out from Harvard that could make you see visions, either of heaven or hell, and that it was odorless and tasteless. That was it, she thought to herself, smiling. The little guy had spiked her drink with this LSD stuff and dumped her off at the Hollywood Roosevelt. She felt oddly pleased by this revelation.

And so much for the sagging breasts, which now were not only larger, but appeared to jut out straight from her collarbone. Marilyn was absolutely sure no one had given her a boob job last night; this must be another part of the 'heaven' that LSD could bring. "Too bad they won't last," she sighed.

Further examination revealed the kind of musculature that she had always struggled for. Marilyn was no stranger to weight lifting--she had been a regular at Vince Gironda's gym in the 1950's--but the sculpted muscles that moved under her breasts were beyond anything she had been able to attain.

Just for the thrill--since this vision was lasting a long time--she did a double-

biceps pose, marveling at her washboard stomach and the tight zig-zag of her intercostal muscles.

"Steeve Reeves, eat your heart out," Marilyn laughed.

A knock on the door. Marilyn reached for a towel to wrap around her body, and attempted to control her new hair in some kind of twist, which of course was difficult since she needed one hand to keep the towel up. "Hello Marilyn, are you in there? Can I come in?" a muffled woman's voice asked.

Marilyn breathed out a little, relaxed. It would be Imelda, the Mexican maid who always took care of Marilyn's room, and had seen the actress intoxicated before. "Sure, Imelda, come in. I'm a little wonky this morning. I think someone slipped me something in a drink."

The door opened tentatively, then a young woman's head peeked past it. Marilyn grasped her hair with both hands in shock, the towel dropping to the floor. The young woman's face had changed from girl to teenager, but there could be no doubt as to who it was.

Leilani stared back concernedly at Marilyn. "So...it is true. You have been chosen to become a New Sister," Leilani said quietly.

Marilyn decided to ignore Leilani's mysterious comment. "Okay, so I'm back in the dream. I should have known."

Leilani came in, closed the door behind her, and stood feet shoulder width apart, hands clutched in fists at her side. "Marilyn, this is not..."

Marilyn cut her off. "Just get me my kimono, and let's go get some breakfast, okay?"

Leilani re-opened the door, and stuck her right arm out into the hall,

returning with Marilyn's red-and-black silk kimono in her grasp. She handed it silently to Marilyn, then stood stock still, eyes closed but moving to the right for a few moments. At last she opened her eyes.

"Your breakfast is waiting for you beside the pool," Leilani said.

Marilyn felt a bit agrieved. "Well, that's fine for you, young lady, you're wearing a muumuu. All I've got on is this kimono. What happens if I cross my legs the wrong way while I'm eating? There's bound to be one or two photographers waiting for just such a moment."

Leilani turned her head to one side, regarding the actress. Marilyn saw that the little girl she had met the day before was now long gone. Leilani appeared to be about fifteen in her physique, but her gaze was that of an adult. "Yes, let us eat breakfast. I will explain as much as I can and as much as I know to you, and you can decide if this is a dream or not."

"That's better," Marilyn said, crossing the room while simultaneously putting on the kimono. She stopped at the open sliding doors, and motioned for Leilani.

"After you," Marilyn said. Instead they walked out the door shoulder-to-shoulder.

Once out in the open, Marilyn was struck by the sheer silence. "I don't get it," she said over her shoulder to Leilani. "By the sun, it's got to be ten o'clock in the morning, yet there isn't anyone around, not even the pool boy." Marilyn stopped moving while at the same time rotating her neck from north to south. "And there's no sound of traffic. That's impossible."

"If you want people and traffic, you have only to imagine it," Leilani responded, smiling slyly.

"Really? Okay, I'll give it a try." Immediately the pool was ringed by sunbathers, divers, people having breakfast, people doing deals on telephones the waiters brought them. The lobby--which Marilyn could see by looking lengthwise along the pool--was full of people coming in with trunks, people walking around talking, even parents with children.

Then it hit her. Marilyn was reliving every time she had ever stayed at the Hollywood Roosevelt, all at once. Her mouth fell open in awe.

"I've never had a dream like this," she whispered to herself.

"Maybe you should sit down and eat something. The coffee is very good here, too." Leilani said. She gently led the stunned Marilyn to a nearby table, where a full breakfast service of croissants with Danish butter, raspberry jam, Kona gold coffee, and finally one of Marilyn's egg shakes was waiting.

"How could you know? Didn't you die in 1888?" Marilyn pondered.

"I know because you know," Leilani replied simply.

Marilyn picked up a croissant and sterling silver butter knife, and began to daintily slice off a large scoop of Danish butter, which she smeared across the pastry. She bit off a quarter of it, then chewed and swallowed. "Mmm...that is good. I'll have to go swimming to work off this butter, though," she said, smiling, doing her best to be pleasant with Leilani.

Leilani examined Marilyn's facial expressions, then said in a serious tone.

"Marilyn, have you ever been able to taste anything like that in a dream before?"

Marilyn looked at her steadily, and replied by lathering raspberry jam on the croissant, and stuffing the rest of the pastry into her mouth. After several moments of chewing and swallowing, followed by a glug of coffee, she replied.

"No, I haven't. That's why we are having this conversation at all, Leilani."

"Go on," Leilani answered, sounding disconcertingly like Marilyn's psychiatrist.

"I don't know whether I'm in some sort of Hawaiian heaven..."

"Hawaiian afterlife," Leilani corrected.

"...afterlife or maybe I've been abducted by little green men, and I'm laying on a metal slab in a spaceship like the one from 'The Day The Earth Stood Still' or maybe Captain Nemo has me on board his submarine in the year 1888 and I only think I'm a movie star from 1962, but the point is, whatever is happening is real enough to be important. But...no more talk about me being dead, okay? It only makes me angry."

"Agreed," Leilani replied shifting in her chair slightly.

"So, it seems like you know everything about me," Marilyn began.

"Only what the Blue Dolphin King has told me, and what you project," Leilani clarified.

Marilyn raised her right eyebrow at the last statement, and answered by refilling her coffee cup while staring silently at Leilani. "The point is, I don't know anything about you, and I think you're the reason that I'm here at all, wherever here really is."

Leilani gazed unnervingly into Marilyn's eyes. "The first thing you need to know about me is that I am Huna."

Marilyn tried to lighten the topic. "As in Big Kahuna?"

"No. To your haoli mind more like a cross between a priestess and a witch."

Marilyn for once did not know how to respond.

"The second thing you need to know is that I died at the age of thirty-three from infectious leprosy, and that I contracted this disease a few weeks before my sixteenth birthday."

"Okay, I've got those two, awful as they are," Marilyn replied. "But I've got one question to ask before you terrify me with something else. Why were you about twelve years old yesterday, and you are fifteen now?"

Leilani smiled out of the corners of her mouth. "You are bright. I can see why the Blue Dolphin King chose you. You've asked a very important question, and I will answer it in my own fashion. Now, do not interrupt me, as I tell you my story."

"I'm all ears."

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Leilani just knew that she had met the love of her life the first time Captain Thaddeus Steward moored his sailboat "The Atlantean" in the small bay beside her village on the northwest coast of Maui. He was tall--even taller than she!--blonde, muscular, tanned, with clear blue eyes, and an infectious smile. And polite above all, which was quite a relief after all those smelly, surly whalers had finally been asked or forced to leave, although the haoli still called her home 'Slaughterhouse Beach'.

He had come ashore to trade, not mere trinkets, but ancient artifacts of gold, which he claimed he discovered in a forgotten temple on an atoll near Curacao in the Southern Caribbean. After Thaddeus and Leilani's family had dined together, he had gifted her father and mother with gold-and-jade necklaces, as a

token of his good will.

Her family were shocked. How could they give anything in return for such valuables? It was at that moment that Thaddeus turned his attention to Leilani, and asked only for the pleasure of her company, in the presence of her mother, aunts, and sisters of course.

Only fifteen, but soon to be sixteen, Leilani was embarrassed, excited, and generally overawed by his attention. One of her sisters reasoned that since Leilani was the prettiest--and the baby of the family--of course she would be his choice. Another sister had cautioned Leilani to spurn Captain Thaddeus' attentions, as he would never understand the Huna power growing within Leilani's heart. Leilani found herself quite willing to toss her priestess training to the side, in order to be with this amazing young man. Romance had conquered mysticism.

As is the way of such things, Leilani's two aunties would spend a few hours after sundown with the group, then yawning, take her mother in hand, saying that they had too much work to do in the morning to stay up all night like young folks. The elders would then solemnly command her two older sisters to chaperone Leilani and Thaddeus, which they solemnly did until the elders were out of sight, then winked at each other, running off to be with their own young men.

Such evenings always ended with Leilani and Thaddeus resting with his back to a palm tree, her head on his chest. Not once did she fear that he would force his attentions on her; she knew in her heart that he had a deeper purpose. Finally one night about three weeks before her sixteenth birthday, after a long talk about the power of Christianity, he asked her to become his Christian wife. Leilani accepted, joy overflowing in her heart.

That same night, he told her he would be away for a few days on a trading venture, but when he returned, he would formally announce his intentions to her family. That announcement never happened.

What did happen, however, was that a few days later, the 'Atlantean' was again moored in their little bay, but there was no sign of its skipper. Leilani swam out to the boat, and boarded it, calling out Thaddeus' name. She went into his cabin, and began to snoop around, as an adventurous young wife-to-be might just do. Beside his desk under the stern window she found a trunk, which she opened with some misgivings, rationalizing that she could always apologize to Thaddeus later.

The latches opened easily, and there, nestled in cotton rags, was a garment like none Leilani had ever seen before. She took it out, wrinkling her nose at its ancient sour smell while at the same time gazing in astonishment at its craft and weight. It was a ceremonial gown for a priestess, made of gold thread and tiny jade beads, all woven through hemp fibers, worked until they were soft and pliable. Leilani tried it on, removing her wrap-around skirt in the process. So what if her prospective husband-to-be saw her intimate parts? Hawaiians did not share in the shame of nudity that haoli did, and after all this man would be hers and she his forever.

She waited for a moment in the cabin, then grew impatient as all young girls will, deciding instead to stand on the deck, on the lookout for Thaddeus. She couldn't wait to see his face when he saw her in this dress!

Leilani did not have to wait long. From this south, sliding over the surf, Thaddeus paddled a small skiff with all his might. She called out to him, and he

heard her.

"Leilani! Get off the ship! Now!" he shouted.

Immediately her feelings were hurt. Was the gown that valuable that he had to shout? She only put it on to amuse him, after all. Then she saw the real reason for his concern. The flagship 'Kilauea' of King Kamehameha the Fifth was bearing down on Thaddeus' craft. Riflemen were stationed in the Kilauea's rigging firing sporadically, herding rather than attempting to bring down the young blonde American sailor. Leilani made the intelligent choice to leap off the deck, dive into the bay, and swim to shore, but she forgot to calculate how heavy the gown would be. It pulled her under, entangling her arms and legs in the process. Had she been a weaker swimmer, she might have drowned. Instead she made it to the beach completely naked, the gown now being pulled away to sea by the dangerous undertow.

Leilani watched in horror as the sailors of the Kilauea apprehended Thaddeus, tying him to the mast of his own ship, and executing him with a volley of rifle fire. It was only later she learned that he had seduced six other young Hawaiian maidens with his charms, and in their intimate embraces all six had contracted syphilis. His talk of a pure Christian marriage had been just that, talk. Her parents interrogated her at length, and they came away convinced that Leilani and Thaddeus had never been intimate. The situation was tragic, and they thought at the time, curable. But it was not. Later, the King's authorities verified that there was no atoll near Curacao with a temple of hidden riches. Thaddeus had robbed a leper colony in north-east Brazil, a place where pirates and thieves stored their valuables. The gold-and-jade gown was that of a priestess, but it had

been worn many times by female lepers to entice their male counterparts to sex. The sour smell was that of infectious leprosy.

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"That's the saddest story I've ever heard," Marilyn said, her chin resting on the tablecloth between coffee urn and the croissant plate.

"I did ask you politely not to interrupt," Leilani stated primly.

"Sorry."

"Apology accepted. The truth is I would have gladly died on the deck of Thaddeus' ship that day, compared to what followed."

"Dying of leprosy would be worse than dying of bullets."

"Only I did not die of leprosy. Not yet, at any rate."

"What?" Marilyn raised her head in surprise. "I thought you told me you died in 1888."

"You've already forgotten the first, most important thing that I told you; I am Huna."

"This has got something to do with why you were twelve years old yesterday."

"Excellent. You see, as a Huna priestess, I could travel as easily between Maui and Kanehunamoku as you can between Maui and Los Angeles. That is one of the core Huna powers. My first trip to Kanehunamoku occurred when I was twelve."

"And you tried to use your Huna powers to cure your leprosy. Let me guess...that's against the rules somehow."

"Doubly excellent. As the disease progressed--as my body decayed--my

Huna powers continued to grow. Then I came upon a way to cure my leprosy temporarily."

"Temporarily? I thought leprosy was incurable."

"That was and is my great and terrible mistake. You see, when a person dies, their vital energy separates out from their dying body and from their immortal soul."

"The Egyptian 'ba'," Marilyn commented.

"You know something of this?"

"In Los Angeles, there's every kind of religion possible. I have some weird friends into that sort of thing."

"I need you to listen very carefully to what I will tell you next. Both of our lives depend on it."

"So I'm not dead, am I? I'm knocked out cold somewhere, and you're an angel from Heaven guiding me back to Earth."

"Believe whatever you wish about yourself," Leilani sighed. "What is important is the decision I made to cure my leprosy. This 'ba'--if you wish to call it that--is very powerful upon release, but dissipates quickly, unless trapped. I knew how to trap 'ba's that travelled between Maui and Kanehunamoku. I could take them into myself, and for a few weeks, perhaps a month, my leprosy would be cured. Then my flesh would begin to rot again."

"And then you had to feed again, like Dracula, only you fed on the dead."

"I do not know this Dracula. I would climb to the top of Cliff Rock on Maui, and throw myself into the ocean below, something that would have killed me, if I were not Huna. My leprous body would die, and I would feed from a single wahini

to live again in a healthy body. I then would emerge from the surf to Kanehunamoku. But sooner or later, I would be pulled out into the ocean, back to Earth, to face my leprosy all over again. My great error was that I did not understand the purpose of the link between the blue spinner dolphins and the wahini that I fed on. Without the 'flash' of the 'ba', the dolphins could not find the departed souls that they were meant to guide to Kanehunamoku. Instead those souls drifted into the dark currents of the evil Mo'o and were consumed by them. Not once, but over and over. And here is the most terrible part of the truth. Every time a soul is eaten by a Mo'o it loses a little of what made it good, what made it human. Eaten enough times it becomes a shell without purpose. And now you know what awaits us both."

Leilani stood up from the table, began to walk toward the pool, then stopped and turned back to face the bewildered Marilyn. "This will be last time we shall speak in a friendly way. After this point, my descent into madness begins. Should you attempt to stop my feeding, I will do everything in my power to destroy you."

"What? I thought I was here to help you, and now you're going to be my enemy? What can I possibly do about your situation? Why me?" Marilyn cried.

Leilani's face began to change again, her mouth and nose twisting, her cheeks covered with grey scales of decaying skin. "Nothing. And you were a mistake. The

Blue Dolphin King is wrong. I am beyond hope." With that she threw off the muumuu, and shouted at Marilyn's illusory guests. "I tire of this silly haoli dream!"

She then dove into the pool, but did not reappear.

## Day Three

The first thing Marilyn heard upon waking was someone sitting down beside her on the sand. Marilyn opened her eyes to see the ocean, and heard a voice to her left.

"Glad to see that you're up. Here's your egg shake. I mixed the raspberry jam in with it. Hope it's cold enough." A woman's hand proffered an open thermos. Marilyn took it and began to drink, feeling refreshed immediately.

Bleary-eyed as she was, Marilyn was startled to see not another version of Leilani, but a heroically-built young woman of Japanese extraction. To Marilyn's eyes she looked like a porcelain statue come alive with chiseled features and flawless complexion. She wore some sort of seamless poncho, shorts with large pockets, and hiking boots of reptilian leather that came up to her knees. Marilyn could not decide on the design of the poncho, for teal, indigo and white flowed in non-repeating patterns, nearly hypnotic in their serpentine complexity.

When Marilyn had finished gulping down her breakfast, the Japanese woman stood up, and offered Marilyn a hand. "We've got to get going. Surf's up. "

Marilyn stood up, still dressed in her red-and-black kimono. The shock of standing face-to-face with the Japanese woman hit her hard. Except for the asiatic bone structure, and the nearly-blue skin, they could have been identical twins from the neck down.

"You're like me! You're a New Sister!" Marilyn exclaimed.

"Sister Aesthetica," the Japanese woman said, bowing deeply. "And you're not quite a New Sister, not yet. Let's just say that you're a goddess in training."

"But..." Marilyn stammered. "You are here to help, aren't you?"

"Yes. You've dealt with enough crazy people and gods for a while, I'll bet."

Sister Aesthetica began walking east down the beach. "Come along, we've got to get our boards. We can talk along the way."

"Boards? As in surf boards?" Marilyn laughed nervously. "After the last two days, that's almost normal."

They began to walk in step, Sister Aesthetica closer to the ocean side. "Tell me everything Leilani said to you, and don't leave anything out. We've got a lot of figuring to do, you and I."

A feeling of relief washed over Marilyn. Whatever was happening-whatever had actually happened to her since August 4, 1962--she felt that it was surmountable. So Marilyn related her experiences of Kanehunamoku to Sister Aesthetica, surprised at how vivid and accurate her memories of the past two days were.

Sister Aesthetica grew very quiet before she cross-examined Marilyn's story. "Marilyn did you think Leilani was happy to discover that you were chosen to be a New Sister?"

"No, she looked shocked, maybe crestfallen," Marilyn replied. "Is this going to be like 'Perry Mason'? That's one of my favorite television shows."

"I'll let you decide that," Sister Aesthetica smiled. "What would you say I if I suggested to you that all of yesterday was a set-up, and that you shouldn't have been where you were at all? Do you remember that you were supposed to enter the Great House of Souls? That's definitely not the Hollywood Roosevelt."

Marilyn thought a moment before she answered. "Leilani said that she could read my mental projections. I really didn't understand what she meant at the

time. So, you're telling me that the Hollywood Roosevelt was something Leilani pulled out of my mind to hoodwink me?"

"Exactly. When she saw your transformation--which she and the Blue Dolphin King have absolutely no power over--she conned you into thinking that you were back in Hollywood. You kept seeing through it, and she kept egging you on. "

Marilyn perked up. "And then she demanded to tell me the most depressing, horrible story I'd ever heard."

"But you didn't give up. You kept showing compassion for her. So, she was reduced to bad-mouthing you, and tried to convince you that there was no hope."

"I don't remember what happened next."

"Because Leilani decided to break every rule she could, and threw you a whammy. I think that's the expression from your time?"

"That's really rotten of her, but mostly I feel sorry for her. She's completely trapped now, isn't she?" Marilyn asked. Sister Aesthetica nodded her head in agreement, her luminous black hair reflecting the rays of the Kanehunamoku sun.

"Yes. She usually loses it on day four. The Blue Dolphin King has her locked in a loop, but time is running out for that short-term solution. That's why someone has got to put a stop to all this. It's affecting everything, everywhere else, but I'd rather discuss that after you've met your first challenge."

Sister Aesthetica crossed her arms and put her head down in thought for a while. "The good news is that she gave away a very important piece of information when she was trying to scare you. She told you the nature and location of her talisman."

Marilyn thought for a moment. "That gold-and-jade robe thing. She's more afraid of it than anything on Earth."

"Not just Earth. She's Huna; she can move objects between Earth and Kanehunamoku. And I think I know where it is, though that information probably won't make you feel better."

"Uh-oh. Let me guess. It's somewhere on bottom of the ocean, where the sea monsters live."

"Yes. You are going to get up close and personal with the Mo'o, to use the language of my time."

"And just how are we going to do that? I suppose you've got a plan."

"Marilyn, I can advise but I can't interfere. That doesn't mean, however, that I can't provide you with backup. As a matter of fact you've got some already. Six of them, to be precise."

"You mean the Tinkerbelle Chorus? What possible help can flying crustaceans be?"

"The closer their proximity to you, the more powerful they become. For starters, you can see through their eyes, if you wish."

"Oh, wow," Marilyn gasped. "Let's walk for a while. I need time to digest this magic stuff."

"Let's walk overland. We need to get to the Great House of Souls--that's where the Tinkerbelles are--before we get to Mo'o beach." Sister Aesthetica pointed to the jungles growing along the mountain range in the center of Kanehunamoku. We need to cut across there," She pointed to a crevasse between two peaks.

"Can I just call you Aesthetica? I'm not comfortable with titles," Marilyn asked. "I don't want to complain, but all I'm wearing is a lounge robe. The terrain up there looks pretty rugged."

"You can call me Aesthetica," Sister Aesthetica smiled. "As for travel gear, this is all you'll need." She opened her leg pocket, pulling out a red-and-black two-piece swimsuit of the same material as her poncho, but with patterns of flowing lava.

Marilyn removed her kimono, trying on the swim-suit. "Wow, Aesthetica, it's a perfect fit. The tops are usually a problem."

"Smart fabric, invented about 2025, I believe," Sister Aesthetica replied. "And now, for matching shoes and gloves." She opened the opposite leg pocket and handed fingerless climbing gloves and slippers with ridged soles to Marilyn. "These are military grade," she said simply.

Marilyn stopped to put on her new accessories, while Sister Aesthetica scanned the terrain. Then she did a hard left, moving swiftly across the sand until she reached a series of steps made of polished koa wood. Marilyn followed, noticing as she did that the staircase led all the way through the terrain to the crevasse. She considered leaving the kimono at the beach, but felt oddly sentimental about it. Instead, she put it on over her new hiking outfit.

"Who built these steps?" Marilyn inquired, while at the same time noticing she was not the least bit winded keeping up with Sister Aesthetica.

"That's funny," Sister Aesthetica said, looking back over her shoulder. "You did."

After they had walked inland a quarter mile, and to an elevation of several

hundred feet, Sister Aesthetica stopped and pointed to the east. "Roses," she said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Look familiar?"

And familiar it was! It was the rose garden that Marilyn had sketched many times, preparing for the day when she could devote herself to gardening. But the scale, and the diversity! Acres and acres of roses, ranging in color from a nearly-black violet to an iridescent white.

"This is my garden," Marilyn said proudly.

The two women entered the crevasse at the height of its watershed. They were now in the center of Kanehunamoku, with the Great House of Souls to their immediate left, and the extensive rose garden--dotted with tennis courts and swimming pools--to their right. A clear stream running down to Mo'-o beach ended their koa-wood staircase, and a bridge of woven hemp lay before them, the staircase continuing on after it.

Curious to see what kind of structure the Great House of Souls was, Marilyn craned her neck to see above the groves of acacia trees that surrounded it. What she saw made her heart leap. There to her left, lay a greatly expanded version of the beach home that she had intended to design with none other than Frank Lloyd Wright. Cupolas peaked over koa-wood decks, in a repeating pattern that rose for several stories and extended away to the edge of her field of vision.

"I was supposed to meet with Frank Lloyd Wright on Maui on August 6, 1962," Marilyn said quietly, while Sister Aesthetica silently listened. "I never got there, did I?"

"Are you sure you want to talk about this now? It's pretty painful stuff,"

Sister Aesthetica said gently. "Maybe we should wait until after training, and your first challenge."

It was all Marilyn could do to keep from bursting into tears. Instead, she took a deep breath and squared her shoulders. "Yes, let's do that. Now is not the time."

They began the walk down, much steeper than the walk up. Marilyn found the sight of Mo'o beach to be breathtakingly dangerous. She could see how the reefs had formed whirlpools of dark blue gray water, as contrasted to the bright blue greens of the shallows.

"Okay, it's prep time," Sister Aesthetica announced. "Before we hit the beach, I need to know exactly what Leilani said to you when she challenged you. Threatened you, actually."

Marilyn paused, contemplating Leilani's shocking statement before she repeated it. "She said that if I interfered with her feeding, she would do everything in her power to destroy me."

"Marilyn, if the Blue Dolphin King is a god--and he is--and if Leilani was a pure but tormented soul, don't you think he could have found another way to save her, as opposed to letting her suicide, then feed off the 'bas' of those other innocent girls? Again and again?"

"What are you trying to tell me?"

"I'm trying to tell you where the Mo'o come from. They aren't native here, they are evil souls newly arrived from Earth. The truth is, some people like being monsters after they die."

"That's not what I learned in Sunday School."

"That's what I learned as a little Japanese girl in Buddhist school. And here, in Kanehunamoku, it's true."

"You're right. I'm going to need backup," Marilyn said, pushing out her right cheek with her tongue. "I think I need to call the Tinkerbelles now, except for the fact that I don't have a clue as to how to do that."

"Picture them in your mind, flying around your head. They'll come."

Marilyn scrunched up her eyebrows, thinking hard, hoping for the best, hoping now that the Tinkerbelles would come to her aid.

And come they did, all the way from the north-west corner of the Great House of Souls. Marilyn was surprised to see that they flew in formation, with the oldest--or perhaps it was the latest--version of Marilyn at the lead. This time she let them flutter around her head, as they each touched her, their hands as soft as thistledown. They didn't chatter this time; they cooed in unison if Marilyn tilted her head.

Marilyn and Sister Aesthetica continued walking down the foot of the staircase. As their feet touched the sand, Marilyn felt a vibration go through the ground, an angry rumbling. The Tinkerbelles flew in a circle close to Marilyn, their hands touching their cheeks in apprehension.

"The Mo'o know we're here, and they don't like it," Sister Aesthetica said.

"What business is it of theirs what happens on Kanehunamoku? Isn't this the island of the Blue Dolphin King?" Marilyn asked in irritation.

"I told you things were getting out of control," Sister Aesthetica agreed.

"Oh wait a minute, I get it," Marilyn said. "Why didn't I figure all this out on day one? He's completely obsessed with Leilani, isn't he? And there's only one

reason a guy gets like that. He's head-over-heels in love with her, and he's walking off his job because of it."

Sister Aesthetica nodded her head in agreement. "There's our boards. Let's go surfin'."

Marilyn looked out over the ocean; she saw only breakers a few feet high, not nearly big enough to surf on. "Do we need to walk north to the cliffs?" she asked Sister Aesthetica. "The waves are guaranteed to be bigger."

"No," Sister Aesthetica laughed. "Imagine your favorite set of waves. Think of it as ringing the doorbell on the Mo'o."

Marilyn envisioned the waves on a perfect day on Catalina Island. She didn't see anything at first, until Sister Aesthetica pointed far out to sea. Rather than answer Marilyn directly, she ran down to the waterline, where two boards were stuck in the sand: one teal, indigo and white; the other flowing red and black. Marilyn followed running. "Surf's up!" she cried joyously.

They paddled out easily to meet the incoming waves. "Kanehunamoku physics are real," Sister Aesthetica said. "But they're not the same as Earth's. Watch what I do, and copy it, but don't lose your focus. If you break a leg or your back out here, it will take a full day of experience to heal up, and your time is growing short."

"Got it," Marilyn said.

The wave began to lift both of them up. It was a 'comfort zone' wave about three times her height. She adjusted her weight, admiring the strong grip of the 'military grade' slippers that Sister Aesthetica had given her. No reason to show off, she thought, although with a wave this easy she could probably do it, even

out of practice as she was. Marilyn felt young again; a whole new world of possibilities awaited her.

Sister Aesthetica kept a little ahead of her, and instead of gently gliding the board to a stop at the waterline she did something incomprehensible to Marilyn. Sister Aesthetica twisted her board with her feet, flipping the board into the open air, and remained suspended ten feet over the sand. "Marilyn, you can do this, but don't break your concentration."

Marilyn failed on her first attempt, sliding into the seaweed and shells on the beach, both of them laughing. "Maybe I should start that way instead." Marilyn amused herself by imagining the board as a magic carpet, following her around, anxious to please. The board vibrated, rose up of its own accord, and hovered knee-height in front of Marilyn, looking for all intents like a dog ready for a walk. The Tinkerbelles were first alarmed, then enchanted by the floating board. They kept very close to Marilyn, however, not knowing what this new creature was. "It's okay girls, it's just a new pet," Marilyn said comfortingly.

She stepped onto the board, which adjusted itself--or rather she adjusted it--to her weight. The sense that the board was alive was uncanny. "Aesthetica, I'm not going to shilly-shally around. If I keep my focus, I can fly, can't I?"

"You sure can, but if you fall off, will it ever hurt! There won't be any whammy; you'll get to feel everything that breaks until it finishes healing."

"Thanks for the warning. Let's get out of the kiddie pool, and try something serious. I want to surf Cliff Rock."

"I've never tried anything like that myself," Sister Aesthetica admitted. "But, there's a first time for everything. Lead on."

"Tinkerbelles, follow me," Marilyn commanded.

Once she got into the air, a little voice in Marilyn's head asked her if she wasn't showing off just to impress her new best friend, but Marilyn assiduously ignored it. They headed to Cliff Rock--which Marilyn had never seen from this northern a perspective--only to meet a surprise. Cliff Rock's northern exposure was now a gigantic tower of carved serpentine rock that ended in a pavilion ringed with Corinthian columns, looking like some misplaced temple from Ancient Greece.

"What is this place?" Marilyn shouted over the strong wind that had just whipped up.

"Here is where Leilani's tragedy begins and ends, and then starts over."

"Then this is where we train, this is where we fight," Marilyn shouted.

"I knew you had it in you, Marilyn," Sister Aesthetica said smiling broadly.

Marilyn began to fly to the top, zig-zagging like a barn swallow. The tower must have been a thousand feet high, with hundreds of balconies open to the surf, all forlorn and empty. She made it to the top, Sister Aesthetica remaining fifty feet below her. Marilyn assumed that this was a safety measure to catch her if she fell. Well, she wasn't going to do any such thing. The thought suddenly struck her that she might be able to see all of Kanehunamoku from here, so she commanded the board to rise straight up, the wind getting colder and the Tinkerbelles complaining the higher she flew.

Finally, the Tinkerbelles would fly no higher. They faced her in a tight ring, all of them shivering. The 'Latest Marilyn'--the one who looked the most like a New Sister--pointed her right index finger at Marilyn and complained in a voice so

high pitched that Marilyn could only catch the occasional squeak.

"All right, all right, go back to the Great House of Souls. I've got the situation in hand," Marilyn answered. They left as a group following their leader. Marilyn kept rising until she was another thousand feet, rapt in the vision she saw, oblivious to the cold.

She twisted her board, rotating it slowly. There were the gardens, and the beaches, and the Great House of Souls. The Hollywood Roosevelt was nowhere to be seen, merely a trick played on the novice Marilyn. What she saw when she finished her turn nearly made her fall off the board. A mile out in the water was a bank of shoals, the water no more than two dozen feet deep. In the center of the shoals was a dark ring that Marilyn thought must be a different kind of rock. In the true center of this ring she recognized the unmistakable sparkle of gold and jade. She motioned to Sister Aesthetica to rise, so that she could speak to her. The New Sister did just that, her ebony hair flapping in the wind.

"I can see the priestess' dress," Marilyn shouted. "It's right over there, and not even hard to get to. Let's go get it!" With that Marilyn veered away from Cliff Rock heading down like a bullet to the shoal that held the solution to Leilani's problems. No matter what witchery Leilani might attempt Marilyn intuitively knew that the gold, jade, and rotting hemp would act as a mirror, sending whatever illusion or curse smashing back into Leilani. Marilyn almost felt a bit sorry for Leilani. With the talisman in Marilyn's grasp, Leilani would be subdued, the wahinis saved, and all would be well.

Marilyn could hear Sister Aesthetica shouting something, but the wind blew her words away. Marilyn wouldn't need her help to simply swoop down and pick

up the talisman. She came within ten feet of it, practicing her hover, preparing for her quick grab. She decided to lay on her stomach on her surf board, so that she could grab it. Marilyn commanded the board to an inch off the water's surface, then put her hand in the ocean, which was surprisingly warm, and also had a rotten fish smell that she couldn't understand. She decided to try commanding the talisman to rise--it was about six feet under--and after a few wobbles, it picked itself up (she picked it up? it was really hard to tell), and rose into her hand. Smiling she got up on her board on her shins, and pulled the dripping gold-and-jade creation to herself, pulling off the rotten hemp, which was where she was sure the smell was coming from. Only when the hemp hit the water did she notice a pair of gigantic reptilian eyes staring back at her, a dozen feet down.

The attack came at hurricane speeds. The Mo'o roared out of the water, its tail still coiled, its jaws snapping onto and gripping the edge of the talisman. Marilyn tipped off her board into the water, only inches from dark green scales. She held onto the board with her left arm, fighting to keep the gold-and-jade treasure. Amazed by the strength of her new body, Marilyn was surprised when she managed to haul herself back up on the board. The Mo'o had to be fifty feet long and five feet across, its nearly-human face only a few feet from Marilyn's own. Its breath blew her wet hair off her face, and she could see the intelligence in its eyes.

"Oh no, you're not," Marilyn shouted at the Mo'o. "Bad dog!"

Marilyn imagined slamming a car in reverse--the images coming fast and unbidden--and the surf board responded by rising quickly into the air. Marilyn could not tell if it was her New Sister's body or the strength of her will, but she

knew she was a match for this particular Mo'o. It rose into the air with her until its length was fully extended. She decided to rise all the way up, over Kanehunamoku.

"Last chance," Marilyn taunted the Mo'o. "I can do this all day, and I bet you can't."

The Mo'o had a surprise of its own. It curled its body backwards into a tight semicircle, pulling the talisman from Marilyn's grip, oblivious to its own doom, doing its best to swallow the talisman, which instead got stuck on its gigantic canine teeth, half-in and half-out.

Marilyn's anger became incendiary. She had been manipulated and mistreated one time too many and there had never been enough information--much less help--in all her three days in Kanehunamoku. Whatever this new reality was, she was going to solve this Mo'o-and-talisman problem herself. She began a descending spiral, ramming her surfboard into the creature again and again until she heard the sickening crunch of a cracked vertebrae just behind the massive skull. The Mo'o lost consciousness, its head lolling from side to side until the talisman finally came loose and fell free.

"Did that clear your throat?" Marilyn screamed at the top of her lungs. She stopped attacking the sea monster and flew straight toward the talisman, caught it again with her right hand and headed for the beach to the north of Cliff Rock.

Marilyn was new to the study of sea monsters, and did not realize that such a gigantic creature--a close relative of the most primitive dinosaurs--requires a second brain in its hindquarters to control tail and flippers. This second brain made its final motion, a whip-like curl that knocked Marilyn clear of her board,

heading for the sand from five hundred feet in the air.

Marilyn imagined that she would black out from the shock and pain when she hit the ground. Instead, she got another lesson in the differences between Kanehunamoku and Earth. She experienced the pain of broken bones and punctured organs as a symphonic whole, sensations piled on sensations until she thought she might go permanently insane. At last she skidded to a stop on the waterline, the talisman still tightly gripped. Marilyn wanted to keep her eyes closed for as long as possible. Unfortunately, she opened them to see who was walking up to her.

"Interesting approach," Sister Aesthetica said matter-of-factly. "I'd like to say good job, but now we've got more problems, not less."

"Either help me up, or keep your mouth shut," Marilyn said through gritted teeth. "I'm not in the mood for word games right now."

Sister Aesthetica did not react to Marilyn's anger. Instead she knelt down beside her, and put her hands faith-healer style over Marilyn's torso. "Don't move, this takes real concentration." She began to hum a tune Marilyn had heard two days ago: the Kanehunamoku healing song. When it was finished, Sister Aesthetica gave her diagnosis. "You've snapped your left clavicle, shattered your left scapula, cracked two ribs on your left side and those punctured your left lung. If you had done this on Earth, you would look like a pizza that someone left on the street, and cars ran over. Even here on Kanehunamoku--even with your New Sister body--it's going to take a full day of experience to heal up. So...day four is basically a wipe out."

"And that's a problem because?" Marilyn queried.

"Because day four is Leilani's first feeding day, and she'll feed just over there, about one hundred feet out, below the tower. We needed the element of surprise, but that's gone now. All the Mo'o saw what you can do--and this one you supposedly killed is just a baby--and Leilani is going to meet you head on day five, fully charged. This is her turf and she fights just as well as you do or better."

Marilyn did not know whether to laugh or cry. "So what do we do now?"

Sister Aesthetica looked out to sea, deep in thought. "I can't interfere, but I can call in a favor. There's someone who very much wants to help you and he owes me."

"Now I know this can't be Heaven," Marilyn pouted. "I feel like I'm back in Burbank, arguing with studio lawyers."

Sister Aesthetica changed the subject. "Let's get you back to the Great House of Souls. You call your surfboard, and I'll levitate you. Ready?"

From her peripheral vision Marilyn saw the flaming-red and coal-black colors of her surfboard edging near here. She felt her body lift up a few inches and her board slide gently under. "Wait a minute. Isn't this interfering?"

"Yes, depending on who is keeping score. I'll probably get a penalty when I least expect it; that's why you need another person's help."

The two New Sisters, one walking and one prone, began their trek back to the Great House of Souls. They had not gone more than a few feet when Sister Aesthetica exclaimed.

"And here's our next contestant!"

The defeated Mo'o washed up on shore, carried by the last of Marilyn's Catalina surf. As soon as it touch the sand, its form began to change, looking for

all the world like melting ice cream, but smelling like rotten fish. The Mo'o body finished shrinking, assuming a human form. A pale, beaten man of Italian extraction lay on the beach. He had just enough time to look into Marilyn's eyes with rage before the tide pulled him back out to sea. "She's ours!" he growled.

"Nothing ever dies in Kanehunamoku," Sister Aesthetic intoned.

"It merely changes shape," Marilyn chimed in. The shock of recognition hit Marilyn. "Aesthetica, I know that guy. He's one of the goons who kept me away from Sam Ghiankana when I shot my mouth off in Tahoe at the CalNev." Then the awful truth of it all assembled itself in Marilyn's mind. "Oh my God," she gasped.

Sister Aesthetica turned to face Marilyn, her arms crossed, her gaze focused. "Now you understand why you are here, why you were chosen. You're not here to save Leilani from being eaten by the Mo'o. You're here to save Leilani from becoming one of the Mo'o."

## Day Four

Marilyn did not sleep at all on the evening of day three, nor did she black out, nor was she 'whammied'. She spent that third evening watching the sun go down over Kanehunamoku, looking out to Mo'o Beach, quietly meditating on her situation.

She found herself surprised at what finally convinced her that Kanehunamoku was real, even if reality meant she had been taken by fairies--the Tinkerbellies were still a little miffed at her--or abducted by aliens, or even if she was actually dead (which she thought was highly unlikely). No, all those possibilities didn't do it for her. Not even the fact that her left side hurt worse than anything she had ever experienced, and there was nothing to alleviate the pain.

No. It was the fact that after three days, and one very long evening, she still didn't need to use the bathroom. If this was Earth, she would have died of a burst bladder.

Marilyn spent a long and painful fourth day in her rose garden. Sister Aesthetica helped her learn how to levitate herself off her bed, and onto a sleek chrome-plated wheel chair. Marilyn didn't quite get the first attempt, and Sister Aesthetica had to catch her fall, which hurt less than Marilyn expected, a sign that she was healing. What amazed Marilyn was how her New Sister's body took over from her mind, calming her heart rate and breathing on its own.

During the recuperation--which seemed like an eternity to Marilyn--Sister Aesthetica told her the story of how she became a New Sister.

"My life was interesting, but not nearly as interesting as yours, Marilyn," she said as she wheeled Marilyn around. "I grew up in a nice section of Tokyo, with

nice parents, went to a nice school, and everything was pretty boring until I was selected as a swimsuit model when I was fifteen. Then things got interesting, as well as creepy. Anyway, my parents weren't rich enough to send me to Tokyo University, and the sales of my picture books and videos and sponsorships were. I was the cover girl for Ramen Noodles until I was an old hag at eighteen. After that I went to the University, majoring in Business. I met a nice man three years ahead of me who did well in banking, and we married. I had two kids who turned out great, and then my husband died of a heart attack from eating something weird in a sushi bar. After that I became a Buddhist nun, until I died at age eighty from a stroke. Just fell over dead coming out of Temple after prayers. Exciting, what do you think?"

"That is better than a glass of warm milk for putting me to sleep, no offense." Marilyn replied

"None taken," Sister Aesthetica said smiling. "So I thought after I died that I would wake up beside a pond in a Buddhist paradise, like the paper doilies you get under a meal at a Szechuan restaurant. No such luck there. Instead I was in some kind of airport, waiting in line."

"Like Judgment Day?"

"No, more like winning the lottery. I looked around and noticed that everyone in the room was female, which was a disappointment. I was hoping for a little action in the afterlife, if you get what I mean."

"I've had too much action in the afterlife, if that is what this is," Marilyn groaned, trying to get comfortable.

Sister Aesthetica delicately placed her strong left hand on Marilyn's right

shoulder. "Don't worry, kid. It gets better."

Sister Aesthetica continued. "So there's this raised podium in the front of the lines, and this goddess steps up and starts speaking to us. She's built like nothing I've ever seen before, and she's wearing this short Grecian dress that doesn't hide a thing, and I mean anything. I'm thinking to myself, I'm hearing her in Japanese, but all these other women can't possibly speak Japanese. They look like they came from every race and era of the world, and then I got my first big shock. Some of them weren't human--humanoid--but not human. However, everyone looked graceful or athletic, in a word nice."

"There's that word again," Marilyn commented.

"Yeah, it keeps coming up. She tells us that we have been selected to become New Sisters, and we're going to be in charge of the Milky Way galaxy, because the previous set of gods and goddesses needed to move on, and all their religions with them."

"Hold it right there," Marilyn interjected. "I thought we were in some kind of heaven, or at least the place you go after you die. You're telling me that we--I mean I--am going to take charge of the entire Milky Way?"

"Yes," Sister Aesthetica winked. "Next time you cross your heart, you'll know what it really means. As above, so below."

Lunch was simple: sangria (with a light tokay) and sliced mangoes, courtesy of Sister Aesthetica. Marilyn had to chew carefully, as the left side of her jaw ached terribly. At the end of quiet chewing, Marilyn made a decision. "Help me get out of this wheelchair. I'm ready to get up and hobble around."

They walked slowly around the patio that faced out to sea, Marilyn being

very careful to place almost all her weight on her right foot. A burning question drove Marilyn to ask: "What happens if I fail?"

Sister Aesthetica took a deep breath and then sighed. "Well, let's look at the positive side. You've met your first challenge, which was to retrieve Leilani's talisman. You defeated a Mo'o--a small one, but still a Mo'o--singlehandedly. Or thereabouts."

"You're dodging the question. What happens if I fail the next two challenges? Are they separate? Is one connected to the other?"

"Okay, okay, slow down a little," Sister Aesthetica responded, for the first time sounding irritated. "First, if you fail, you don't qualify to be a New Sister. And I mean you don't qualify for a long time."

"How long is long?"

"Twenty-six thousand years, give or take a day."

"Oh. So...what is second?"

"You have to return to Earth immediately, and trust me, you don't want to do that."

"You mean reincarnate as a baby?"

"Yes, and conditions on Earth are rough, to say the least. Things were much better in your time than the one that will be chosen for you."

"That's not all, is it? There's something else you don't want to tell me. If we are going to be friends, I'm going to insist that you tell me now."

Marilyn saw real anguish on Sister Aesthetica's face. "Marilyn, I'm not just your friend; I'm your biggest fan. I'm the one who campaigned to have you considered as a New Sister. When the Sister's Council learned the truth about

your death from Joe, they finally broke down and agreed. Even then it was touch-and-go. If this doesn't work, you won't remember any detail of what has happened on Kanehunamoku. Instead you will be haunted by emotions that you can't explain."

A fire alarm went off in Marilyn's head, and she ignored the last of Sister Aesthetica's statements. "Joe? You mean Joe DiMaggio? Here? Now?"

"Yes. That's the favor I called in," Sister Aesthetica said, her tone indicating that she wanted to change the subject. "He's here, up at the Great House of Souls, waiting for you."

"What are we waiting for? Let's go!"

Knowing that Joe DiMaggio would be at the top of the stairs made each footstep hurt less. Joe wore his full New York Yankees uniform, complete with cap and cleats. Marilyn found herself worrying that his baseball shoes would leave scratches in the koa-wood deck, but she noticed that the finish was unmarred. She chided herself for being such a fastidious housekeeper, as she hadn't even visited her own home yet.

Joe stood on the veranda to one of the main dining areas on the first floor of the Great House of Souls. From what Marilyn could see, the massive architecture was composed of seven such floors, all radiating outward from seven centers that rotated clockwise. The seventh and highest floor had a bridge that led to the open area at the top of Cliff Rock.

When she got the top of the stairs, and put her first footstep onto the veranda of her new home, Marilyn could hold back the tears no longer. She began to weep like a baby, and slowly limped over to her former-and-future husband. Joe

DiMaggio, one of the greatest baseball players in the history of the game, held out his arms to his one true love. He appeared as an athlete in peak condition, a very muscular (for the 1950's) and fit twenty-five year-old. They embraced. Sister Aesthetica did her best to tip-toe around and past them, heading for the adjacent kitchen.

"I'm glad to see you too," Joe DiMaggio said. He looked down at her feet.

"Did you hurt yourself?"

That question only made Marilyn hold him closer and cry harder. "I'm sorry if I'm ruining your nice clean shirt," Marilyn said.

"That's okay, sweetie," Joe replied. "I really like your new look. It's like every version of you, all at once."

"Does it bother you that I'm taller than you now?"

Joe gave Marilyn a playful squeeze around the waist. It didn't hurt at all.

"Does it bother you that I'm wider than you now?" he asked.

"No!" Marilyn giggled like a schoolgirl in reply.

Sister Aesthetica returned, with a bottle of wine in one hand, and three long-stem glasses in the other. "How about a toast to Marilyn's first success as a New Sister?" She poured Joe the first drink, careful to keep the wine bottle's label turned away from Marilyn. Marilyn noticed immediately.

"Is there something special about this vintage?" she asked.

Joe smiled slyly in response. "Show her, Sister." he said.

Sister Aesthetica turned the bottle around and Marilyn was faced with the picture of herself from 1956's hit "The Seven Year Itch", Marilyn with her skirt blowing up as the subway train passed under the grate. Sister Aesthetica finished

by pouring herself a drink, and knocking it back in one gulp. "The stuff's called 'Marilyn Merlot' for some strange reason." she said.

"I've whopped a sea monster, and tomorrow I'm going to give a witch the what-for, but I don't think I'll ever live down that picture shoot, not for all eternity," Marilyn laughed.

"Why don't you introduce Joe to the Tinkerbelles?" asked Sister Aesthetica, pouring herself another glass of the merlot.

"The Tinkerbelles? Like the Disney fairy?" Joe replied.

"I'll call them," Marilyn answered. "I hope they're not still mad at me." She scrunched her brows in concentration, then looked up as a whistling wind swept by the three of them. "And here they are!"

Instead of hovering around Marilyn, the Tinkerbelles made a beeline for Joe, examining his cap--the 'Latest Marilyn' even trying to lift the brim of it--before they settled on his shoulders like sparrows on a clothesline. They clearly approved of Joe, as Marilyn could see the smiles on their faces.

"What are their names?" Joe asked.

"Well, I call the one with long hair 'Latest Marilyn', because she looks the most like I do now," Marilyn replied. 'Latest Marilyn' shook her head vehemently in response, and then fanned out her hair in an effusive gesture.

"This is probably a good time to give them names, since they're your children," Sister Aesthetica remarked, before she took another sip from her wine glass.

"She's trying to tell you something in pantomime," Joe observed. "Maybe it's the glow of her hair color." 'Latest Marilyn' nodded her head up and down

excitedly, as did the other five Tinkerbelles. After a moment, Marilyn remembered dyeing her hair that color. "Apricot, your name is Apricot." she said the Tinkerbelle formerly known as 'Latest Marilyn'. Apricot nodded her head up and down, and swayed from side-to-side on Joe's shoulder. The other Tinkerbelles began to chatter amongst themselves in voices too high-pitched for human ears. Marilyn began to name them from left to right on Joe's shoulders.

The next two Tinkerbelles had taken on the personae of timid middle-school girls, and were happy to be named 'Vanilla Malt' and 'Cream Soda', two of Marilyn's favorite blonde dyes from the 1950's. The fourth and fifth to be named were more problematic. They were definitely snooty high-school seniors, and Marilyn had to go through nearly a dozen half-forgotten hair colors until they were at last satisfied with 'Honey Butter' and 'Chardonnay'. Luckily, the last Tinkerbelle to be named was happy with 'Baby', as she was immediately recognizable because of her white-blonde pigtails.

"I've got an idea," Joe said. "How about we make a nice traditional Italian summer meal? I'm thinking the Tinkerbelles might like to learn how to make fresh pasta."

"Good thinking, Joe," Sister Aesthetica added. "The more they interact with you too, the more human they'll become."

"So, the way we start is to build a volcano out of flour and eggs."

Joe reached under the table and produced a two-pound bag of flour, opened it in a heap, and then proceeded to dig out a caldera with his fingers. When he was done, he reached under the table again, two large hen's eggs magically in each hand. Cracking the eggs, he poured their contents into the incipient

volcano. All of the Tinkerbelles took flight, going round and round above his hands, amazingly without bumping into each other. Marilyn found herself experiencing a mild vertigo watching them. Soon a great mound of bright yellow pasta dough had formed where the caldera had been.

"Time for you and Sister to get to work," Joe said.

"Well, aren't you pushy!" Marilyn retorted.

"I'm just making sure everyone gets an equal share of the load," Joe replied.

"The Tinkerbelles are too small for rolling pins, and you're just right." He spread his hands wide. "We're going to make a sheet of dough half the size of this table." Joe then pulled two large rolling pins out of a drawer underneath the pasta table.

"What, no magic?" Marilyn chortled.

"Only the magic of watching you hard at work in the kitchen." Joe replied.

"There's some kind of kitchen--cooking history--between you two, isn't there?" Sister Aesthetica remarked.

"It's one of our most famous stories. Sunday night football, complete with flying spaghetti." Marilyn said. "I was studying for an exam in Japanese art, and Joe thought that I should stop and make the boys' supper. I told them to make their own, and they didn't like that very much. So I emphasized my point."

"I've learned my lesson, Sister." Joe smiled broadly. "That's why I'm doing most of the work tonight."

After the dough was rolled, Joe took out a large butcher knife and quickly cut the squares needed for the first items, butterflies. Seemingly out of thin air, he handed the two women tiny silver ice cream scoops along with a large stainless steel mixing bowl filled with prosciutto and ricotta cheese, smoothly

mixed. Marilyn and Sister Aesthetica deposited a tiny lump of prosciutto-and-ricotta cheese filling into the squares of dough, each using an ornate silver spoon that Marilyn thought more appropriate for ice cream sundaes. Joe then showed Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda how to use their tiny hands to squeeze the ends of the pasta dough into the shape of butterfly wings. Because of their size, it took two of them to create one piece, but they worked at Tinkerbelle speeds.

Marilyn couldn't take the mystery any longer. "Did any pig have to die to create this prosciutto?"

Sister Aesthetica responded first. "No. You only have to remember a particular instance of the meat, turn your head, and it will be there when you turns your head back."

"I thought it would be something like waving a magic wand, and saying 'Abracadabra'," Marilyn said.

"This approach is a tad more practical; its only limit is that you can't create something out of thin air you've never experienced first-hand." Sister Aesthetica replied.

"And some things just come by themselves, because they are a part of you. I didn't have to think about my Yankee uniform," Joe added. "Anyway, I'm sure pigs have their own heaven, but I'm not keen to visit it any time soon." He smiled.

"Okay, Honey Butter and Chardonnay, I'm going to show you how to create 'caramels'," Joe continued, all of the Tinkerbellees at rapt attention, hanging off his every word. The two 'high schoolers' tilted up their noses even higher than before. "Marilyn and Sister Aesthetica will scoop out the spinach and prosciutto-- Joe pointed to a second stainless bowl that had materialized--and you two can

wrap it like a Christmas present."

Honey Butter and Chardonnay both folded their arms across their chests, and shook their heads in a dance-like "I don't care" motion. After a moment of incomprehension on the part of the humans, they motioned with their combined gaze to the ice cream scoops, then pointed their index fingers at Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda, making folding motions with their hands.

"I wish I could hear what they are saying," Marilyn said.

"That's possible, but supper has to come first," Sister Aesthetica intoned mysteriously.

"Oh, all right, we'll do it your way," Joe conceded to Honey Butter and Chardonnay. "Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda, are you okay with this?" The two middle-schoolers nodded their heads excitedly, glad to be included with the older girls.

Everyone gathered around to watch this latest development. Marilyn was amazed at how quickly each Tinkerbelle was developing her own personality. Apricot and Baby hovered on each side of Marilyn's head watching with interest, mouthing words at each other that she couldn't quite follow. Marilyn did understand from Apricot's Tinkerbelle scowl that she did not approve of Honey Butter's and Chardonnay's domineering attitude.

For all their bravado, Honey Butter and Chardonnay had to lift the small ice cream scoop together, and even then it wobbled. They dug it into the bowl of spinach-and-prosciutto flying in a quick tight circle to create enough force to load the scoop. Just at their moment of triumph, they flew even faster, and lost control of the scoop. The tiny ball of spinach-and-prosciutto sailed out of the scoop

(which fell to the kitchen floor with a clatter) and smacked Baby in the head, also thoroughly splattering Marilyn.

Apricot flew toward the high-schoolers in a fury, on the way swooping down and picking up the ice-cream scoop by her own strength. Honey Butter and Chardonnay watched in frozen terror as Apricot scooped out a ball of spinach-and-prosciutto, firing it at them with the accuracy of a professional lacrosse player. The little green ball hit both of the high-schoolers at an angle, sending them tumbling, pixie head over pixie heels until they both came to a stop in mid-air, glaring back at Apricot, humiliated but undefeated.

"Time out!" Marilyn shouted. "All of you, to the centre of the table. Fly in a ring; I've got something to say to you all." The six Tinkerbelles slowly coalesced over the preparation table, Apricot having found a small piece of wet cloth, and wiping the spinach-and-prosciutto off Baby's cheeks.

"Honey Butter and Chardonnay. You're both out of line, but so was Apricot. However, you two need to apologize first. Get to it, girls, I'm tired of your attitude." Marilyn said.

Chardonnay was the first to approach Baby, followed by a clearly reluctant Honey Butter. They both lightly touched the tears on Baby's cheeks, their mouths forming cooing sounds.

"Now you, Apricot," Marilyn continued. "You're clearly the strongest, and it looks like you're the leader. I'll expect more from you than from the others."

Apricot simply stared at Marilyn, and continued to hover. The tension broke when Baby came up to Marilyn and kissed her on the cheek. Apricot finally lowered her head in submission, but stayed where she was. Just then it struck

Marilyn that Apricot's reaction to Honey Butter and Chardonnay was exactly what Leilani expected from Marilyn herself, to throw everything she had at the Huna priestess, rather than use discretion. A new strategy began slowly to form in Marilyn's mind.

Sister Aesthetica motioned to Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda as they had been entirely overlooked by Marilyn. "You'll have to learn to pay attention to all of them, Marilyn."

Tensions were released when they split the Tinkerbelles up on Joe's suggestion. Honey Butter and Chardonnay would learn how to make the gigantic-to-Tinkerbelle- perception tortoloni, while Sister Aesthetica, Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda would set the table. Marilyn, Apricot and Baby would go out to Marilyn's garden to pick fresh salad vegetables.

After the food fight, Apricot and Baby proved to be inseparable; Baby would stay as close to Apricot as she could without them bumping into each other's wings and Apricot would turn around every few moments to see if Baby was behind her.

"I have to hand it to you, Joe," Marilyn gasped in astonishment as she laid down her gigantic bowl of salad. "This is truly one grand spread. But why all the food, when there are only three of us?"

"Nine of us," Sister Aesthetica corrected drolly.

"If I tell you, it will spoil the surprise," Joe replied quietly.

"Spoil me. It's been a rough day."

"Let me explain," Sister Aesthetica chimed in. "The more the Tinkerbelles interact with you, the more human they become."

"I've figured out that part. I went from having no kids to six so far." Marilyn shot back.

"You haven't seen what happens when they eat your cooking."

"What does?"

"If she tells you, it will spoil the surprise," Joe countered. "Trust us just a little."

"Why do you two do everything behind my back?" Marilyn responded testily.

"Perhaps to ease you into your new life as much as possible?" Sister Aesthetica replied rhetorically .

"Time to say grace," Marilyn stated, changing the subject. "People and Tinkerbelles together, everyone hold hands." The last command proved to be a bit comical, as Marilyn, Joe and Sister Aesthetica had to strain forward on the dining room table, while the Tinkerbelles spread their arms and wings wide.

"In the name of the Ascended One, who gives orders to the Blue Dolphin King, who made this piece of Kanehunamoku for us, I want to say thanks for the chance to become the best creatures we can be, and to enjoy this amazing supper. Amen." Marilyn intoned. "Amen," all the others chimed in, with voices and lips.

The Tinkerbelles proved to be irrepressible, the fight quite forgotten as they began to dig in. They devoured the first plate of butterflies before the humans had finished their salads, clearly oblivious to polite manners. Marilyn noticed to her shock that the Tinkerbelles grew as they ate Joe's cooking. Up until now a Tinkerbelle could fit into the palm of Marilyn's hand; now they were the height of her forearm. The Tinkerbelles volunteered for clean-up duty, as their new size

made them more useful, and Marilyn could now hear their tiny piping voices. After the supper, the three adults held a war council. Sister Aesthetica politely asked Joe if he could make some coffee for them all, as she and Marilyn needed to speak privately for a minute. "It's important that you don't accidentally overhear us, either," she said. "When you come back with some quality coffee, I'll tell you why."

Sister Aesthetica pulled her chair closer to Marilyn's, away from the entrance to the kitchen.

"I'll bet you're annoyed that I have to speak in riddles. My primary concern is that tomorrow Leilani will forcefully pull thoughts from your not fully-trained mind, and relay them to the King of the Mo'o, the Ghiankana."

"The Ghiankana? You can't possibly mean Sam Ghiankana?" Marilyn asked incredulously.

"One and the same," Sister Aesthetica replied. "That's one of the big reasons you were chosen."

"He's the one who killed me, isn't he?" Marilyn asked innocently.

"One in the chain, but not the top one. Marilyn, you've just made a very important statement. Are you ready to fully accept your situation?" Sister Aesthetica asked gently.

"I...guess I am. It's being with Joe that's convinced me. He's definitely not a hallucination, and we've been together all evening, so I don't think this is a dream."

"Did someone order coffee? The only thing I could find is this cappucino machine," Joe said. He wheeled in a coffee-maker the size of a small steam

engine, all polished silver and brass. Without a word of command, he placed a silver serving tray in the crook of his left arm, poured three steaming cups of cappucino, placed three small jars of brown sugar, cinammon and powdered dark chocolate, and strolled over to the table, looking incongruous, a Yankee fielder doing butler duty.

"Oh thanks, honey," Marilyn said, reaching for the closest cup. "Joe makes great cappucino, Aesthetica."

"Once a San Francisco boy, always a San Francisco boy," Joe quipped. "So what's tomorrow's plan?"

"Let me start with what I know," Sister Aesthetica said between sips. "I've witnessed three of Leilaini's cycles, and they're all the same. One day five--when she's completely insane--she devours at least two wahini bas, leaving the other four for the Mo'o. The Ghiankana doesn't eat them, he lets the youngest, weakest Mo'o munch them down. Then the Blue Dolphin winds everything back to day one. So, there's never been a cycle when Leilani makes it through all seven days. If she did, this whole shebang would fold in on itself, and we would lose those six young Hawaiian girls forever. "

"So, we have to mess her up on day five, and she won't have a clue what to do on day six or seven, so we've got some breathing room," Marilyn noted.

"Not quite. Whatever you're going to do to save her, you're only going to get one shot at it. The Ghiankana's hanging back because he believes he's got all the breathing room he needs. We need to take him by surprise, too."

"And just how are we going to do that?" Marilyn asked, frustrated by all the mystery, all over again.

"Leave that to Joe and I. All I can tell you is that same way you can bend space, Joltin' Joe can bend time."

"Actually it wasn't all that hard to learn," Joe interjected. "Marilyn, it's what every pro athlete knows. The more you focus, the more time stands still."

Sister Aesthetica held up her hand, so that Joe would stop talking. "We can't tell you more than that, Marilyn, or Leilani will see our little surprise coming."

"And then it wouldn't be a surprise," Marilyn agreed.

After the coffee council, Sister Aesthetica went off with the still-growing TinkerBelles to explore the premises at Tinkerbelle speeds. "You two need some private time, and I need to keep my eye on the Tinkerbelles," she said.

"Joe, I've just go to ask. What was the favor that Aesthetica called in to get you here?" They were sitting on a couch out on the veranda, looking out to Mo'o beach.

Joe put his arm around Marilyn's shoulders. "That's a good question. You remember what a heavy smoker I was, right?"

"Yeah. I hated it."

"Well, in the big picture, a person doesn't just go from being an ordinary human to being a saint. Normally, they have to be cleansed of their bad habits. The old-fashioned Catholic purgatory."

"What! Coming here to help me is going to purgatory?"

"No. Sister Aesthetica cut a deal. If I came to help you in your emergency, I wouldn't have to be cleansed of my addiction to tobacco. The Sisters' Council did that for me, and then gave me this great new body on top as a bonus."

"So. This is all just a 'deal' so that you don't have to go back to being an

ordinary human and quit smoking all by yourself?"

"Not quite. I told Sister that you were quite a handful. Speaking of that, are those real?"

Marilyn squirmed in his arms. "Why, you want a look?"

A quiet knock on the lintels of the koa-wood doors that opened to the veranda. "Guys, I hate to break this up--I really do--but there is something you've both really got to see."

Marilyn leaped up from the couch. "A deal, eh?" she said, staring at Joe. "We'll discuss this later."

"Remember that bridge that connected the Great House of Souls to Leilani's Tower?" Sister Aesthetica queried.

"You mean the one that was there just before supper? Sure," Marilyn said. "It's been completely redesigned. There's a whole new temple there now. I'm sorry, but I have to insist that you and Joe see it."

"It's some sort of game-changer, isn't it?" Joe asked. "Marilyn, this is great. It's just like being back in the big leagues. Every inning can be a new game."

"Glad you think so, Joe. But I'm the one who has to knock it out of the park tomorrow," Marilyn said, continuing the baseball analogy.

All three of them practically ran to the new temple which glowed in shimmering aquamarine tones, a sure clue as to who created it. From the distance of one hundred yards, their sharp eyes made out six votive sculptures centered around a dais with a human-sized meditation mat on the floor in front of it.

"This is a gift from the Blue Dolphin King," Sister Aesthetica surmised.

"Dolphin's can't comprehend the human fascination with the indoors. For them the only indoors they know are underwater caves, and that's the most dangerous place in the world for a dolphin to get trapped. So, when they create something for both humans and dolphins, it's always this kind of open-air temple."

The three slowed down in their approach to the new temple, taking in all the details.

On the dais stood Little Light, her gourd now as transparent as glass. Little Light had now become a miniature version of Leilani in her late adolescence, pure and perfect. Sure in their physiques, and not having to recover from anything, Sister Aesthetica and Joe reached the temple first, but were gently pushed backed by a glowing-blue force field.

Marilyn walked up to it slowly, now noticing that the Tinkerbelles were emerging from the dark, each landing on a votive sculpture, which opened like a flower to receive them. When Marilyn reached the temple's edge, the blue glow enveloped her, and then opened to let her pass.

"My apologies to you, Blue Dolphin King," Marilyn said quietly. "I thought you were a dolt, beneath my dignity. Now I see you had a plan to save Leilani all along. Six wahini, six Tinkerbelles, one perfect version of Leilani, and me."

When they returned from Little Light's temple, Joe turned to Marilyn and said: "Man, am I bushed. If you don't mind, I'm going to turn in for the night. After all, just this morning I was an eighty-four-year-old man dying on a hospital bed in Hollywood Florida on Earth in 1999, and now here I am, a super-athlete in a Hawaiian heaven."

"Why can you sleep and dream, but I still can't?" Marilyn implored.

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone." Joe cradled her in his powerful arms, both of them looking out to Mo'o Beach. "Marilyn, what do you see in the sky?"

"Nothing but black fog. Truth is, I'm worried that there are no stars in the realm of Kanehunamoku."

Joe laughed quietly, put his hands over her eyes and said: "Get ready to see Kanehunamoku as I see it". Instantly the sky exploded with a Milky Way of every color imaginable, and some colors Marilyn was sure didn't exist on Earth. The whole of the Great House of Souls was lit with softly changing color.

"Night is never dark in Kanehunamoku," Joe whispered his loved one's ear.

After Joe left, Marilyn lay down on her favorite couch on the veranda, listening to the sound of surf. She slipped into a dream, but not a dream of her own. She was surrounded by loving relatives, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters, all quietly chanting songs of healing. She looked down at her body, and was shocked to see the grey leprous sores on her arms and legs, some of her fingers and toes already amputated. Then the truth struck her, and calmed her. This was not her dream, her life. Leilani, unfinished neophyte that she was, had formed an accidental link with Marilyn during her whammy. For the briefest moment before Marilyn fell asleep, she relived Leilani's life from Leilani's perspective, and in doing so, discovered the method by which she would both defeat and save this failed Huna priestess.



## DAY FIVE

Dawn on Mo'o Beach. Marilyn could sense the young Mo'o waiting for the exact moment when the sun would peak above the water, and they could begin to feed. She and Sister Aesthetica floated on their boards, the stars of the Milky leaving their last fading glints on the water.

Marilyn had the talisman secured to her back; the game plan was that she would fly in on her surfboard, ram into Leilani , and wrap the gold-and-jade robe around the Huna priestess. In theory--which Sister Aesthetica emphasized--this would remove her Huna powers. Then Marilyn would carry her on her surfboard back to the temple of Little Light, place Leilani on the meditation mat, and let the Blue Dolphin King make the final decision as to Leilani's fate. If the truth be told, Marilyn didn't think it was all that good a plan.

"So explain it to me again, I'm stubborn. If Leilani always does the same things, why can't we just sneak up on her? Why all this drama?" Marilyn asked.

"Because, Marilyn," Sister Aesthetica said between paddles. "She's Huna, and you're not. She can move between many multiple realities. You're still just getting used to Kanehunamoku. We have to catch her when she pops into our version of reality, and when she's completely focussed on something else entirely."

"Like a swan dive from five hundred feet up. Okay, I get it. I won't ask again."

"You won't need to, because she's walking up the ledge. Showtime!"

Marilyn rose from the water, the red-and-black patterns on her surfboard

and clothes coming alive the higher she flew, until new colors--incandescent yellows and oranges--began to swirl in and out. Leilani's arms started to close, perfecting her dive, a dive that would have killed her instantly on Earth.

Contact. Marilyn twisted her torso, slamming into Leilani's midriff, a perfect strike. Leilani's eyes opened wide with shock, and she tumbled head over heels toward the waiting ocean. Marilyn followed her down, the gold-and-jade robe held like a fisherman in her hands, but Leilani's wild flailing thwarted her attempts at a simple catch. Leilani slammed back-first into the water, and continued to sink like a stone. Marilyn decided to hover, knowing that Leilani would eventually surface.

Suddenly all the water around Marilyn--thirty feet across--began to bubble and boil. Leilani emerged, three times the size of Marilyn, all gray-green skin and leprous sores, well on her way to becoming a Mo'o. Marilyn shot up into the sky to elude her, but three monstrous columns of water rose faster, until one hundred feet in the air, they overtook her, serpentine flowing heads moving in whatever direction Marilyn tried to shift. Leilani arose leisurely until she looked down on Marilyn.

"Brute force, how predictable. And what a pathetic attempt at capture!" Leilani taunted.

"Leilani, you're not evil, not yet," Marilyn pleaded.

"Be careful not to look into the water serpents, especially the one on your left," Leiland sneered.

"Why? You know you can't kill me," Marilyn shot back in challenge, quickly looking to her left in defiance.

"I don't have to, because none of this is real anyway," Leilani smirked.

The leftmost spout of water crashed down on Marilyn.

"Marilyn, it's going to be okay. The doctor is here now, and he's just going to give you something to help you sleep, some new kind of vitamin," Marilyn's elderly housekeeper patted her on the hand.

"Where am I?" Marilyn asked groggily.

"You took too many sleeping pills by accident, and they had to pump your stomach. But you're home now, in Brentwood. It's a lovely Saturday night in August. 1962 is turning out to be a good year after all. Not even the awful Cuban missile crisis can beat California weather," her housekeeper rambled on, straightening out Marilyn's bedclothes.

Marilyn looked down at her body, soft and slow, and thoroughly middle-aged. What a headache she had! She found herself looking forward to seeing the doctor come through the door of her bedroom with his miracle cure. What an incredible dream she had just experienced! Flying and fighting all over some Hawaiian island she didn't recognize.

The door to her bedroom opened slightly, and her housekeeper was whispering to someone in the hall. Marilyn could only make out the phrase "Yes, I've made that phone call, it's all set," but the fog she was in from Mandrax wouldn't let her focus on the context. Then the door opened fully, and a heavy-set man of Italian extraction stepped through, his razor shadow blue against his oily skin. Even with her head swimming, Marilyn knew that this man was no doctor. He moved toward her, snakelike, a hypodermic in his hand.

"Wait a minute," Marilyn wheezed in terror. "I know that guy. I saw him on Mo'o beach."

Freeze frame. The entire scene stopped, the chloral hydrate needle only a fraction of an inch from Marilyn's inner thigh. A light--like the sun glinting off a necklace of pearls--began to permeate the room, coming in the the windows, the spaces between the floorboards, out of the closets. The human figures became two-dimensional, insubstantial. A quiet but insistent voice began its chant of power.

"I serve Marilyn. There must always be light in her darkness."

And back! Marilyn was again fully awake, floating one thousand feet above Cliff Rock, the monstrous diseased Leilani facing her, her rotted features twisted in hatred. Between them, at the level of their hearts, was the radiant form of Little Light, now freed from her crystal gourd.

"No!" Leilani cried.

"You only get to whammy me once, little girl," Marilyn said forcefully. "Now, it's time for me to whammy you. And all I have to do is tell the truth."

"Don't speak to me," Leilani pleaded, angry and helpless at the same time.

"Your family loved you with all their hearts, and they never ceased praying for you," Marilyn continued. "Do you think you've suffered more than anyone else? Try my life on for size." With that, Marilyn projected her life of neglect, abuse, betrayal and finally murder through Little Light, intensifying each experience to the breaking point of Leilani's ability to absorb it.

"No more!" Leilani screamed and begged.

"No. Hear it all, Leilani." Somehow, a greater force took over Marilyn's heart, and spoke through it. "You must understand that you tried to avoid and ignore the suffering all around you, using your magic to protect you, rather than

taking on the misery as a Huna priestess should."

Leilani's back arched in agony, bits of rotting flesh and stinking clothing falling away, the would-be monster defeated. The voice in Marilyn's heart spoke again.

"Now, Little Light," it commanded.

Little Light's chant changed. "Little Light serves Marilyn, but Little Light loves Leilani." Her voice became storm-loud, and then a thunderclap of sound and light consumed both Little Light and the monstrous Leilani. When the sound and flash cleared, Marilyn cradled in her arms. the perfection of Polynesian beauty that Leilani was meant to be. Marilyn floated the two of them gently down to the sand of Mo'o beach, depositing Leilani on the gold-and-jade of the priestess' gown.

"You needed my help," Marilyn whispered in Leilani's ear, as softly as a mother to her baby.

What to do next? Marilyn thought that returning to Little Light's temple was a good idea, taking the high ground always is. It bothered her that Sister Aesthetica was nowhere to be found, much less Joe. If their reasoning was correct, a very angry Ghiankana was due to show up momentarily, and Marilyn would have to carry an unconscious young woman while fending off a potential horde of Mo'o. Then to compound the problem, Marilyn sensed the presence of six wahini as wan greyish spheres of light, drifting helpless toward the shore of Mo'o beach. How was she to protect Leilani, and save them too? She stood up, still cradling Leilani, and prepared to spring into flight, only to discover that this power had abandoned her as well.

To add insult to injury, Marilyn's New Sister eyes caught sight of four young Mo-o--slightly larger than the one she had vanquished--several thousand yards out at sea, converging on her position. Four of the wahini were closer to them, two closer to her. She could hear the Mo-o hissing as they cut through the water. Marilyn attempted to will her surfboard into flight to use as a long-distance weapon, but instead it lay inert and lifeless on the sand.

Marilyn hung her head in disbelief and despair. "I did my best, I really did."

Four loud sharp whistles above her. Marilyn looked up to see four meteors--no--make those fastballs--streak out of an abandoned balcony of Cliff Rock, heading relentlessly for the young Mo'o. In the back of her mind, Marilyn realized that as she lost the power of flight, she was gaining the power of telescopic vision. She could even see the stitching on the hides of Joe's favorite brand of hardball.

Each ball found its mark, right between the eyes of the young Mo'o. Their heads exploded like balloons filled with blood, the momentum of the balls enough to send their broken bodies skipping like stones across the surface of the ocean. Marilyn allowed herself a small sigh of relief. Joe had learned to bend time, firing off four balls simultaneously to her perception of reality.

What happened next was truly hard for Marilyn to grasp. Instead of the Ghiankana riding in for vengeance, a one-hundred foot high tsunami approached the beach, only to funnel itself into a tentacle of water that rose and struck the very balcony where Joe and Sister Aesthetica had launched their meteoric attack. Marilyn saw Sister Aesthetica thrown out of Leilani's Tower, cartwheeling toward her and Leilani until she landed on her back not a dozen paces from the two other women. Her new, improved hearing allowed Marilyn to hear Sister Aesthetica's

spine break.

A voice deep as the sea and rough as coral growled from a thousand yards out in the water. "INTEFERENCE!" it boomed. Only then could Marilyn see the true form of the Ghiankana: five times the size of the young Mo'o, with a salamander's legs rising up and going back into the water, and the whiskers of a catfish waving madly.

Marilyn thought the approach of the Ghiankana was stately, even serene. What could possibly stop him now? She didn't have a clue as to how Sister Aesthetica had worked their time-bending magic, so she couldn't possibly repeat it. And anyway, where was Joe?

She watched in horror as the chief of the Mo'o slowed, and then hauled the front half of his body onto the directly in front of her, no more than twenty-five yards away. His gigantic eyes swiveled to focus on the huddled forms of Marilyn and Leilani.

"Well, well, if it isn't the uppity little actress!" the Ghiankana chuckled, his laugh sounding like grinding boulders. "And her self-righteous little Japanese friend."

"You can't kill us, Sam," Marilyn shot back. "We're New Sisters."

"Well, one of you is, and that one isn't you now, is it?" the Ghiankana taunted. "I'm not going to kill you. I'm just going to chew you up and spit you out until you don't remember who you are anymore."

"You're not going to doing anything of the sort, mobster". Joe Dimaggio in his new body raced down the beach, brandishing his baseball bat. Marilyn looked to Sister Aesthetica, hoping that she could work her magic again, but the

Japanese New Sister was thoroughly unconscious.

"No one harms Leilani. And get off my beach!" A new voice entered the fray. The Blue Dolphin King, in the form of a twenty-five foot spinner dolphin stormed in from the northwest, past Cliff Rock. Twisting at the very end of his spurt, he slammed into the side of the Ghiankana, knocking him off balance for a brief moment before turning to face this new opponent. The Ghiankana retaliated with a swipe of his might tail, and much smaller Blue Dolphin King was sent flying one hundred yards to land on his back. The Blue Dolphin King right himself, but the lay listless on the surface of the water.

The Ghiankana let out of roar of triumphant laughter. "Is that all you've got, you all? What are you going to do, Joe, kill me with your little bat? I'd like to see you try before I eat your girlfriend whole."

Joe Dimaggio stood his ground. "That's exactly what I'm going to do." He waved his bat over his head, as if getting ready for pitch. Suddenly six real meteorites, as bright as the sun, flew over Cliff Rock from the direction of Marilyn's house, sailing over the Ghiankana, each one landing beside a floating wahini.

"Fireworks? Now I'm scared," the Ghiankana retorted. He moved his great bulk closer until his mouth of gigantic curved teeth, and his smell of rotten fish enveloped Marilyn.

It would be over soon. Marilyn suddenly has the thought that perhaps this whole experience of Kanehunamoku is nothing more than the horrific final moments of a dying brain, trapped in a drug-addicted middle-aged fading actress in Brentwood on August 6, 1962. As nihilistic as that end was, it was more

appealing than spending a near-eternity in the belly of this sea monster.

Silence in this darkest of moment. Though she was without hope, Marilyn's New Sister ears heard six young women's voices singing a song of pure joy that encompassed every melody and every chord that she had ever heard. Her heart lept in her bosom. Where was this incredible choir coming from? Then she understood what the meteors really were.

The Tinkerbelles, now one with the wahini, rose from the ocean as Daughter Angels, each with the body of a New Sister, and the twenty-four-foot wingspan of a seabird. The Ghiankana looked up from his impending meal, turning his body in an arc to defend against this new threat.

The mightiest of the Daughter Angels were Apricot and Baby, more human and distinct in form than the other four, who appeared to still be in the process of solidifying their new shape.

"The Talisman will defeat you," Apricot and Baby proclaimed in unison to the Ghiankana. "There will be no escape for you, monster."

Marilyn gently placed Leilani on the sand, and picked up the gold-and-jade robe, unsure of what to do next. Then she heard Joe's voice.

"Go long, girls!" he shouted to the Daughter Angels. Joe then turned to Marilyn. "Mold it into a baseball, then pitch a fastball to me. I'm going to add my power to theirs; none of us is strong enough to defeat the Ghiankana alone."

"But Joe! I don't know how to pitch a fastball," Marilyn objected.

"Yes you do. If I know you know. Look into my eyes and trust me."

Marilyn looked into Joe's eyes. Suddenly she was both Marilyn the New Sister (in training) and simultaneously she was Bob Tulley, pitching an exhibition

game in 1954. Marilyn could feel the itch of his razor shadow. "The windup and the pitch!" the voice that came out of Marilyn's larynx was definitely that of a man's. She threw off her kimono, dug her right foot into the ground, lifted up her left leg, and fired the gold-and-jade garment, now molded by the combined power of Marilyn and Joe into a hardball.

As the fastball sped toward Joe, Marilyn could feel the waves of compression travelling with it. Joe hit it with all the power of his new body, splintering the bat, a sight that sent chills up Marilyn's back. What if Joe was wrong?

But he was not. The ball glowed like a comet until it reached the Daughter Angels, then slowed down as it unfolded itself into a round net big enough to catch the Ghiankana. To Marilyn's surprise, once the Daughter Angels (led by Apricot and Baby) grabbed the garment, they and it all sped up to comet speeds, aimed directly at the Ghiankana, who watched the whole operation with fixated awe. Instead of capturing the Mo'o, the Daughter Angels used the gold-and-jade to dice the Ghiankana, slicing him into thousands of strips from head to tail.

Gaseous pressures within the Ghiankana's body pushed the strips outward at explosive speeds, spreading across the ocean, and unfortunately also splattering Marilyn, Joe and Sister Aesthetica with rotting Mo'o carcass. Marilyn used her own body to protect Leilani. Sister Aesthetica finally woke up, and reduced to sitting up on her elbows, got a faceful of the demolished monster.

"Blecchh!" Sister Aesthetica complained, doing her best to wipe her face with one hand, while propped up on a single elbow. "That is some weird sushi!"

Marilyn surveyed the battlefield. The Ghiankana was now nothing more than shreds of fetid flesh, the young Mo'o destroyed. Although they could not be

ultimately killed in Kanehunamoku, the Mo'o would be a long time regrouping, and they would fear the power of the New Sisters.

"I think I passed my second challenge," Marilyn said proudly.

"Yes you did," both Sister Aesthetica agreed. "Marilyn, you're going to have to cart me around. I'm out for the day," Sister Aesthetica admitted.

"You can get off me now, Marilyn, I'm okay." Leilani added. Marilyn looked down to see a wide-awake Leilani, and a version of her she had never seen before. This Leilani was mature and clear-eyed, an equal.

"Wow!" Joe exclaimed. "That actually worked."

A moment of silence.

"What do you mean, that actually worked?" all three women asked simultaneously. All four then laughed uproariously, Marilyn hoping that Joe was joking. Marilyn backed away as Leilani got up and brushed herself off, sloughing away the last of the rotten hemp.

"Good to finally meet you, Sister Aesthetica," Leilani said. "It's time to celebrate Hawaiian-style. Could you make a lei of roses for me? " She then turned to Marilyn. "Okay, let's see if you can create a skirt for me."

"Sorry, Leilani, I think I'm all out of powers."

"Well, not entirely out," Sister Aesthetica commented. "You have one more large manifestation before your assignment here is finished. I'd suggest you not waste it."

"Not a problem," Leilani said smiling. She twirled, and a baby-blue wraparound skirt manifested itself, leaving the young Polynesian bare from the waist up. "I'm not quite as proportioned as you two, so I won't need a top. Wahini

only wear them when Christian men are around," she said smiling. "Oops! I forgot about you, Joe."

"I'll try to retain custody of my eyes," Joe said politely. "I think I know what your outfit needs. He put both his hands behind his back, and then produced a very large iridescent white rose, carefully placing it behind her right ear. "Good thing it doesn't have thorns."

"Now, Sister Aesthetica, if I have been eavesdropping properly, there's someone you are to introduce me to," Leilani said, winking.

"That's right. I nearly forgot." Sister Aesthetica waved to someone further north along the beach, just around the bend from Cliff Rock. A very handsome, tall, muscular young man--Marilyn's thought was of the 'perfect surfer'--came bounding up the beach. He looked suspiciously like Leilani's false suitor Thaddeus, she thought. As he came closer, Marilyn could see a soft blue glow around his body, like the reflection of Christmas tree lights.

"Leilani, I would like to introduce you to Thaddeus Blue. He's a local boy, and he's just dying to make your acquaintance," Sister Aesthetica said.

Sister Aesthetica and Leilani hugged each other, both with a conspiratorial look in their eyes. Leilani put her arm through Thaddeus' and they began to head past Cliff Rock.

"Where are you going?" Marilyn asked.

"To the Christian paradise. It's just across the water. You'll come a little later, I'm thinking," Leilani said over her shoulder as they walked away.

Marilyn looked askance at Sister Aesthetica. "That's not really Thaddeus is it?"

"Of course not. Who do you think it is, Marilyn?"

"I think the Blue Dolphin King just got himself a new job description."

Sister Aesthetica recuperated faster than she thought she would, so she threw a bash for Joe and Marilyn, complete with sushi, saki, and a teriyaki grill. She wore a full French chef's outfit in white, smiling broadly as she moved among her kitchen utensils. The Daughter Angels decided not to attend, as Apricot explained that they were anxious to try out their new powers. Marilyn knew they were close by the whooshing sounds that came in through the open veranda doors. The dinner only required candle light, as the stars of Kanehunamoku filled all the interior rooms of the Great House of Souls with a delicate multi-colored luminescence.

After a few well-deserved toasts of warm Japanese rice wine, Marilyn ventured a few questions. "So, Aesthetica. Am I done? Was that all three challenges?"

Sister Aesthetica took her time answering. "No. You still have one to go."

"What!" Marilyn exclaimed, rising out of her chair. "Beating two sea monsters and a witch wasn't enough?" Joe looked from one woman to the other and back, his mouth in a small grimace. Sister Aesthetica held up her hand for silence. "The last challenge is not so dramatic. You have to confront your murderer alone. Neither myself nor Joe can be present."

"Okay, given that I accept that situation as fact, there's a few more things I need to know about," Marilyn said. "Why did I lose my powers when I did? Which ones will I have tomorrow? Which ones do I get to keep?"

"I'm going to answer your questions back-to-front. You get to keep the

powers you earn. The problem with the gods-and-goddesses approach in past was that they became identified with their powers, and did not grow all that much spiritually. Add to that millions of worshippers, and that basically left them in a state of divine arrested development. So now, it's New Sisters. We're given different powers for each assignment, and if they work out, we keep them. The ones that don't, get dropped."

Sister Aesthetica continued. "I'm only going to tell you one more thing about your powers tomorrow. There's a reason your colors are that of hot lava. If you need more of an explanation than that, then I've overestimated you."

"Finally you lost your powers much more slowly than you think, and for good reason. You were given awesome powers the instant you woke up on Kanehunamoku. Much to the surprise of Leilani, you used them well, and kept following my guidance as I showed you how to perfect them."

"The Tinkerbelles," Marilyn said in awe.

"Precisely. Your greatest gift was to give those tiny crustaceans a full human life, and then an angelic one. They are what they are because of the potential you have inside you, and you've only just begun to discover that. Now you know why I campaigned for you." Sister Aesthetica concluded by crossing her arms, which looked particularly effective as she had two serving forks in her hands.

"I figured out your powers," Joe said energetically. "You can move between realities the way Leilani can, and that's why you could track her."

"True. Actually, I'm a lot better at it than Leilani. She's a dropout, remember?" Sister Aesthetica looked around. "Okay, let's clean up. The

Tinkerbelles won't be back for a while, and now they're too big to help in the kitchen."

"I call them 'Daughter Angels' now," Marilyn said. "Gosh, they grow up so fast."

## DAY SIX

Marilyn saw Joe and Sister Aesthetica off on the morning of Day Six, after all had slept well, right into mid-morning. They all walked together on the white sand below Cliff Rock. Marilyn saw a schooner coming to greet them.

“Time for us to be off,” Sister Aesthetica said.

“Exactly where are you going?” Marilyn queried.

“Some place very special to Joe,” Sister Aesthetica replied. “There's an exhibition game on in Baseball Heaven. Ty and the Babe have requested Joe's presence.”

“You mean Ty Cobb? Babe Ruth?” Joe asked incredulously.

“In top form.”

“Marilyn, you know I'd really like to stay here longer with you,” Joe said, skipping around as nervously as a schoolboy. “But I've waited all my life to meet these guys.” He turned back to Sister Aesthetica. “Is baseball still played the same?”

“There's been a few changes. I'm the ball girl now,” Sister Aesthetica commented.

“A ball girl? Won't that be a distraction?” Joe asked.

“Distraction?” Sister Aesthetica threw her head back and laughed. “Joe, you haven't even seen my outfit yet!” She put her arm through Joe's and motioned toward the schooner.

“Take care of Joe, but not too good a care,” Marilyn said.

“Not to worry,” Sister Aesthetica smiled. “I've got my eye on the Babe. He

ain't fat no more.”

Sister Aesthetica stopped, released Joe's arm, and placed her two hands on Marilyn's shoulders. “There's just one last thing I need to tell you, and after that, Kanehunamoku is all yours, for as long as you want. I have to whisper your new name into your ears. It's a kind of blessing for New Sisters who have completed their training.”

Sister Aesthetica leaned over and whispered something into Marilyn's ear, which Joe couldn't hear. “I really like it,” Marilyn said. “It's very classy. When can I tell everyone?”

“You'll know the time. See you later, New Sister.” With that, Sister Aesthetica and Joe splashed into the surf and hauled themselves onto the schooner.

“Hold on a minute,” Marilyn called across the water. “I've got one last request. Something easy.”

“What is it?” Sister Aesthetica asked, adjusting her poncho.

“I'd really like to learn how to play the guitar seriously, you know, like Joan Baez.”

“I'll send you a teacher in this schooner tomorrow.”

Marilyn walked along Mo'o Beach, wonderfully cleansed of old monster entrails. Now that Leilani's Tower was available, she mentally rehearsed the designs she had for a resort / health spa for the new souls who would soon arrive. Sister Aesthetica didn't say it exactly, but it sounded like it would be a good idea to get things ready for Day Seven of her life on Kanehunamoku, or perhaps Day Eight.

"Busy in Paradise," she hummed to herself, very happy to be alive, to be a New Sister. "And don't forget, a new mother of sextuplets," she said aloud. Her Daughter Angels could be seen flying in pairs here and there, exploring, and already hinting that they wanted their own places, much as they liked the Great House of Souls. Only Apricot and Baby stayed within visual range, inspecting every rock and plant.

She took stock of her situation, and that of her new children. Sometime today her murderer would emerge from the waters lapping against Mo'o Beach, most likely a lost and bedraggled soul that needed her compassion, not more of her aggression. Her New Sister eyes were now at full power; she could see a mile out to sea in fine detail, even standing on the sand as she was.

So, what else had Sister Aesthetica said that she should take note of? Marilyn could no longer fly with her unaided body, nor command her surfboard to fly --though it would be perfectly serviceable if she wanted to surf the twenty-five-foot-tall waves that crashed against Cliff Rock-- and she found herself wistful about this topic. Only when the images and thoughts of the Daughter Angels began to intrude on her own did she remember another cryptic statement of her New Sister Mentor, that Marilyn would be able to see through their eyes.

After about an hour of practice (after which she went back up to the Great House of Souls to try out Joe's cappucino machine) she found she could sort out their various personalities and subordinate them to her own. Apricot was easily the most assertive and dominant; Honey Butter and Chardonnay the most self-obsessed; Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda the most passive, which surprisingly made them the clearest to see through; finally Baby was the most curious, looking

around every nook and cranny. Marilyn could now see why Apricot kept such a close eye on her platinum-pigtailed sister.

A new problem presented itself that Marilyn did not foresee. Her Daughter Angels when small had been proportioned like manikins; only their faces were feminine, like living china dolls. Now they were voluptuous young women, with all the fine features from head to toe that men desired. Marilyn decided that they were a little too alluring to greet souls newly arriving in Hawaiian heaven. So she had to make them some clothes.

Marilyn called them to her, simply by a single focussed thought, and they came, some quickly some reluctantly. When they were assembled above her, she laid the problem out. "You've all become beautiful young women, and not to put too fine a point on it, you're all stark naked. I don't think that kind of a look is going to work when we are guiding souls."

Honey Butter spoke first. "We tried to make clothes, but we can't just think things into existence the way you can," she complained.

"Could," Marilyn corrected.

"Maybe you still can," Vanilla Malt suggested helpfully.

"Okay, I'll give it a try," Marilyn agreed. "What kind of clothes do you want?" Marilyn expected a fashion fight to break out immediately. Instead, the Daughter Angels reached a quick consensus.

"We want a skirt like Leilani's," Chardonnay said.

"And a color scheme like Sister Aesthetica's," Cream Soda added.

"And hats!" both Apricot and Baby declared.

"No hats. I'm going to speak for myself, Chardonnay, Vanilla Malt and Cream

Soda," Honey Butter replied. "Hats will ruin our hairdos, and that's one magical power we do have, so we're holding on to it. Okay, Marilyn?" The other three Daughter Angels all nodded their heads in agreement.

"Oh, all right, no hats," Marilyn conceded. She looked up at the Apricot and Honey Butter. "What kind of hats do you want?"

"A baseball cap like Joe's," Apricot said.

"A bowler hat, like that carpenter on the set of "The Prince And The Showgirl"," Baby blurted.

The last statement hit Marilyn hard. The communication with her Daughter Angels was a two-way street, indeed. It appeared that every memory Marilyn had of Earth was accessible to them.

"Not a big bowler hat, silly," Honey Butter countered to Baby. "You want a little tiny one, like the thing Jane Russell wore in "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes".

"Okay!" Baby said, breaking into her widest smile. Suddenly she spoke in a Yorkshire accent. "Can you do this for us, mum?"

Marilyn closed her eyes and imagined the clothing and hats that her Daughter Angels had requested. She added a forgotten piece of clothing, and knew without even opening her eyes that her efforts had succeeded. She had earned the right to keep the power of creativity; she dimly began to understand that this was her greatest power, as contrasted to some sort of Superman-like invincibility.

Groans emerged from the mouths of all six. "Do we have to wear this?" Honey Butter whined. Everyone of them now had a bustier designed after the bathing-suit top worn by Marilyn, excepted that theirs were robin's-egg blue and

pearl white.

"Yes you do," Marilyn said forcefully. "We've got customers coming."

In order to quell the teen-age discontent that was welling up in some of the Daughter Angels, Marilyn decided to let Honey Butter, Chardonnay, Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda to scout out new locations for their domiciles, which Marilyn promised she would co-design with them. They appeared happy with this strategy and flew off in two directions: Honey Butter and Chardonnay south-west, Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda south-east. Marilyn caught quick glimpses of Kanehunamoku from them, then turned her attention to her third challenge.

"Apricot, Baby, why don't you go fly up and around Leilani's Tower and give me a count of how many rooms there are, and what kind of shape they're in? We're going to need them in a few days," Marilyn said.

"Sure thing," they said in unison, something they did a lot.

Marilyn scanned the ocean to the north-west. Lo and behold, a ship was taking shape. "Aesthetica sure doesn't know her boats," Marilyn said smiling. "That's a trimaran, not a schooner."

Not just any trimaran; it was Jack Kennedy's 'Valkyrie', with Jack Kennedy tilting the sails. Marilyn jumped up and down, waving her hands and shouting "Over here Jack! Over here!" Her New Sister eyes saw him clearly when he was a thousand yards out. Jack Kennedy looked disheveled and faded with a wan gaze in his eyes.

He began to respond as he drew nearer to shore. "Ahoy! Is that you, Marilyn? You look really different, but really good." Even at five hundred yards away, Marilyn caught that famous Kennedy smile, with its hint of a smirk, that

drove women wild. Marilyn decided at that moment that if Joe DiMaggio could run away to be with his boyhood heroes, then she could spend some quality time with her greatest hero, the President of the United States.

Jack Kennedy slowed his trimaran one hundred yards out and dropped anchor. "Marilyn the shoreline is really rocky, and it doesn't look all that stable. I'll have to swim in to meet you."

"No way!" Marilyn shouted across the water. "I'll swim out to meet you." Oblivious to whatever dangers--animal, vegetable, or mineral--that might lurk in the waters of Mo'o Beach, Marilyn dove into the water at a run, making sure to stay on the top of the water to avoid the undertow, her Australian crawl clean and efficient. Presently she made it to the 'Valkyrie' and prepared to board. Jack leaned over the starboard hull and proffered her a hand, which she grabbed with all her New Sister strength. Jack let out a small grunt with the effort of bringing her up to the deck.

"So, Jack, can we cut to the chase? You're dead, you know; that's the only way you could be here."

"Uh, Marilyn, I was assassinated in Dallas Texas on November 23, 1963. It's the kind of thing you notice."

"So, how come you're here, and not in some Cape Cod version of Heaven?" Marilyn asked with a wink.

"The 'Valkyrie' of course. After you, she's the love of my life."

"I'm grown up enough to know that I can never compete with a boat," Marilyn laughed. She put her arms around him and began kissing his neck up and down. "You need to come the Great House of Souls with me and get some quality

food and drink in you, mister. I'll get you all fixed up in no time."

Jack kissed her full on the lips, which brought a moan of delight out of Marilyn. "I'm sure we'll find lots of ways to catch up." All thoughts of Joe DiMaggio vanished from Marilyn's mind. Here was the man she was meant to be with.

Marilyn took a break from kissing to look down at Jack's feet for a brief moment. "Jack, there's some kind of old seaweed wrapped around your ankles," she said concernedly. "Here, let me pull it off." Marilyn bent down to remove the aged vegetation, when she noticed that the weeds were thick as tug hawser cables, and ran off the deck into the water. She just had time to utter "What the hell?" when the head of the Ghiankana emerged, not fifty feet from the boat. The seaweeds were no seaweeds at all; they were only a fraction of the Ghianakana's wriggling whiskers, which rose up like cobras preparing to strike at Marilyn. And strike they did. In an instant both of Marilyn's ankles were trapped in the whiskers, which burned on her skin like raw kerosene.

The Ghiankana's voice roared out in triumph. "He's here as bait, you uppity little New Sister, and no Japanese friend to protect you. Why, you don't even have your pixies with you," he chuckled.

"Marilyn, do what he says," Jack pleaded. "He only wants to own of piece of your island, that's all."

"And if I don't agree?" Marilyn snapped.

"He'll feed me to the sea monsters, again."

Marilyn felt a strong tug on the whisker shackles. "Look Jack, he's got no power here. He can only punish evil souls who fall into his area of the ocean. So, he can't do anything to you, not with me around."

This made the Ghiankana roar with laughter. "Tell her Jack. Tell her the real reason you're here."

"Marilyn," Jack began in a small tense voice. "There's something you need to know about your murder."

"I already know what happened. Sam Ghiankana sent a guy to kill me with chloral hydrate."

"INNOCENT!" The Ghiankana responded, clearly enjoying the discomfiture of Marilyn and Jack.

"Okay, well, it wouldn't have been Hoover, because he could have used me as blackmail."

"SHE'S SMARTER THAN SHE LOOKS," The Ghiankana interjected.

"No, Marilyn, I really need to tell you the truth. My eternal future depends on it," Jack remonstrated.

"I know," Marilyn said, feeling oddly calm, her New Sister's body assessing the situation. "It was the CIA. They knocked me off because I talked to Fidel Castro."

Jack Kennedy, the past President of the United States in its golden Camelot period, got down on his knees, wrapping his arms around Marilyn's hips. "No. Marilyn. I gave the call. Please forgive me."

The truth of his words hurt worse than falling from five hundred feet in the air to the beach. Before Marilyn could react, the Ghiankana did. He flung Jack Kennedy a thousand feet horizontally, and when Jack hit the water, a dozen fully grown Mo'o descended on him. His screams tore Marilyn's heart out.

"AND YER OUT!" The Ghiankana guffawed.

Marilyn's anger turned quickly to rage, and then the last piece of the puzzle that Sister Aesthetica had trained Marilyn for fell into place. Marilyn wore the colors of hot lava, because here, in Kanehunamoku, she was the incarnation of the goddess Pele, queen of volcanoes, and mother of all creativity. The Ghiankana gave her ankles a mighty tug with his whiskers, but Marilyn did not move. Instead she noticed that her feet were six inches off the deck, and rising. And rising, and rising. Marilyn had earned the power of flight.

Marilyn aimed her head skyward. In the next instant, both Marilyn and the Ghiankana rocketed off the surface of the ocean, to the height of a thousand feet. The Ghiankana whipped his hindquarters back and forth, but he could not let go, for Marilyn's anger was greater than his cruelty. Her clothes burned with incandescent light.

"Daughter Angels! To me!" she shouted at the top of her lungs. And came they did, a rush of wings like the coming of a summer storm. They quickly formed a circle around Marilyn and the writhing Ghiankana.

Marilyn looked down at the monster. "There's a new marshal in town, mobster, and that's me. And these are my deputies. A quick thought, and every Daughter Angel now wore a white Texas ten-gallon hat, and a silver Deputy's badge on the left hip of their skirts. Another flash of insight, and each Daughter Angel had a lariat on their right hips. "Tie him up good, girls. We're going to a barbeque." Flying in a tight circle, the Daughter Angels, led by Apricot, trussed the Ghiankana into motionlessness.

The ocean below them began to boil with Marilyn's wrath. Kanehunamoku rose, slowly, until it ruled the ocean from the height of five hundred feet of sheer

cliff. The beaches all around the island disappeared, as surf became tsunami. Marilyn's pain of betrayal destroyed her gardens, tennis courts, and swimming pools. In their place, a small sharp, and very active volcanic cone arose, until it was only a hundred feet below Marilyn and her Daughter Angels.

Marilyn slowly flew the Ghiankana over the island, until his trussed and writhing monster body was no more than a dozen feet above the spitting hot lava.

"Are you going to throw him in?" Honey Butter asked, a wicked gleam in her eyes.

"Yeah, set it for simmer," Chardonnay encouraged.

"You know, Sam, my girls have got a point there," Marilyn said in her best East Texas drawl. "But I've got another idea. If I cook you now, there'll just be another punk coming along sooner or later to make things difficult for me on Kanehunamoku. So, I'm thinking that I'll let you go with a warning if you agree to keep you and your boys a minimum of five miles off shore. I'm sure there'll be lots of sinners to munch on. Let go of my ankles if we've got a deal."

A deep growl and then the whiskers retracted. "See, that wasn't so hard now, was it, Sam?" She turned her attention to her deputies. "Okay girls, drop him off."

With a troubled heart, Marilyn flew back to the Great House of Souls, both elated and concerned. The Mo'o were thoroughly defeated, but they had their place in the scheme of things, too. Was Jack Kennedy forever beyond the reach of her help?

Apricot and Baby were to first to regroup with Marilyn. Marilyn did a double-take when she saw Baby leading Marilyn's surfboard along like a puppy. "It

followed me home," she said. The three of them looked over the new Kanehunamoku. While Marilyn was negotiating with the Ghiankana, shoals had formed, complete with white and black sand beaches, turning the island into an atoll. The three gazed upon their new home for a while in awed silence.

"Marilyn, I don't want criticize, but that was quite dramatic," Apricot observed.

"I guess Sister Aesthetica doesn't know everything, mum," Baby added.

"She does her best, girls." Marilyn replied.

"Look, over near Cliff Rock," Apricot pointed. "There's the schooner, come back."

"Let's all go down to meet it," Marilyn suggested. She called her surfboard over with a whistle, and it obediently slid under the soles of her feet. The three of them swooped down the deck of the schooner, which did not seem to require a crew. On the deck stood a tall man of mixed blood, most likely American Indian and Negro. He had two large guitar cases resting on the guardrails.

"Angels, real angels," he said. "And a movie star in the middle. Yeah, man, I'm in Heaven for sure."

Marilyn walked forward to greet him. "You must be my new guitar teacher."

"Shucks, ma'am, I'll do my best. But I'll probably learn as much as you will."

"What's your name, stranger? " Apricot said, picking up Marilyn's East Texas drawl, and then proffering her hand, Southern style.

"The names' Hendrix, Jimi Hendrix, little wing," he said, kissing Apricot's hand.

## DAY SEVEN

As she promised, Marilyn helped each Daughter Angel to design her own residence, which had the combined ambiance of a temple and a health spa. Honey Butter and Chardonnay each took a shoal on the south west; Vanilla Malt and Cream Soda ones on the south east shoals. Marilyn thought that they would each serenely grace each one, but instead they spent their time flitting in and out of each other's temples, decorating, comparing, and competing.

Marilyn preferred the North Shore of the former Mo'o Beach, her favorite lookout being the quasi-Greek temple vacated by Leilani. She was deep in her new guitar lesson, learning a song that Jimi had written, "Voodoo Chile, Slight Return". Although she was playing rhythm to Jimi's lead, Marilyn watched his right fingering hand like a hawk, as it flew across the fretboard of his acoustic twelve-string. Someday I'm going to do all that, she vowed to herself.

Looking out to sea, Marilyn caught sight of a drowning man about to be eaten (again) by the Mo'o. It almost made her stop playing, as this poor soul was only about two miles out, and that meant that some of the Mo'o hadn't got the message yet. They would, Marilyn swore to herself. She allowed the piece to finish its last strident chord, and then spoke to Jimi.

"Let's take a break, there's something I've got to attend to."

"Sure thing. Can we break into the cracked crab, baguettes and beer now?"

"Dig in, bro." A single clear thought was all that was required to bring Apricot and Baby swooping down onto the temple floor. "Girls, could you pull that man away from those Mo'o? I'll be right behind you if they give you any grief." The Daughter Angels nodded their heads and took off.

Marilyn and Jimi watched as the two Daughter Angels hovered over the man. At two miles out, even Marilyn couldn't make out the details. Then she could see the Ghiankana emerge from the deeps and send the delinquent Mo'o scurrying. The Ghiankana dove down himself, but his tail waved back and forth in the water, a sign that Marilyn could only read as "I've got this covered."

Apricot and Baby deposited a dripping wet, leather-clad, long-haired man at Marilyn's feet. The man looked around in astonishment at the company gathered before and above him.

"Jimi, does this man look familiar to you? He's not from my time," Marilyn queried.

"Familiar? Sure, I've played a couple of gigs with him. He's Jim Morrison, lead singer for the Doors," Jimi said cordially. "How you doin' man? Long time in eternity no see."

Jim Morrison, push the wet hair out of his eyes. "I'm sure glad those flying babes got me away from those sea monsters. I was starting to dig getting eaten." Marilyn and Jimi looked at each other askance for a brief moment.

"How do, Jimi. Who's your friend?" Jim Morrison began, rising to his feet, sea water squeaking out of his leather clothes. "Wait a minute, I know you. You're the most famous woman the world ever knew. But...if this is Heaven, then I can't call you your Hollywood name can I? So, what do I call you, Marilyn or Norma Jean?"

"Neither, I have a title now. Call me 'Sister Aphrodita'."

*Author's Note of Thanks and Dedication*

*Thanks for reading. The purpose of the work was to cross-examine fame and mortality.*

*I'm dedicating it to Wave Weir, the real Marilyn in my life.*

