**Keilani's Long Vacation**

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**"Keilani's Long Vacation" (Part 1)**

Hello?? If anyone sees this, please, I need your help!

I'm currently being held prisoner... Well, not exactly prisoner, but against my will. That is, they won't let me leave because they don't believe I'm... Um, let me start at the beginning. God I wish I'd kept my mouth shut back then.

My name is Keilani and I live in Hawaii. O'ahu to be exact. The big tourist island. Sounds like paradise, right? Yeah, unless your job is in the tourist industry, which is basically like a third of the population. Me, I work -- er, worked -- in one of those outdoor cafe/bar places you see all the time on TV, the phony luau places with so-called native dancing and other entertainment, catering to stupid tourists.

Well the other night I was serving tables and this one fat tourist had had a few too many and he started being obnoxious. You know, pretending he was trying to touch me, tugging on my grass skirt, calling me his little coconut. Okay, I admit, maybe I'd been something of a mean tease all night, running a hand across my smooth dark olive skin, giving him a good look at my slender legs, but he was still being a pain in the ass.

Now, I'm a tiny little thing, not quite 5 feet tall even, but we had a couple of bouncers and the policy was for the servers to tell one of them if someone was bothering us like this, and they'd take care of it. But for some reason I just felt like being a total bitch to this guy that night. So when he pretended to reach for me again I intentionally threw my drink on him. He got all pissed off and demanded another and a free dessert, and I told him his fat ass didn't need it. Then I just started calling him all sorts of vile names, just shouting at him for no real reason other than I felt like it.

Unfortunately the music and dance number on the stage finished and the audience applause died down right as I was doing it, and all of a sudden it got really quiet except for me belting out insults, so pretty much everybody heard it.

My boss called me into his office not long after that. "Keilani, we need to talk."

"About what?" Even though I knew perfectly well about what.

"About the scene you caused tonight."

"I couldn't help it, the guy was a fucking prick."

"And we have a policy to deal with that," he said. "You should have told one of the bouncers. This guy asked to speak to me personally, and he's an executive at one of the big cruise lines. This could be very bad publicity for my business, and you know how much the tourism industry is already hurting. I'm afraid I'm going to have to let you go for this."

"You mean... I'm fired?"

"That's another way of putting it."

At this point I totally lost it again. "Yeah, well fuck YOU, and fuck HIM! I don't need this shit-ass suck job! I'll go find another that pays better by tomorrow you cheap-shit fucknut bastard!"

Okay, so maybe I just like being a bitch sometimes. He got angry at this point, whereas before he was just disappointed in me. I realized I'd definitely gone too far. But shit, what could he do worse than fire me?

I soon found out. "Oh, by the way," he said as I turned to walk out of this crap job forever. "I'll need your work uniform before you leave tonight."

"Um, okay but... I didn't bring a change of clothes." I'd been running late so I just threw on my uniform and came like that. "Can I drop it off later?"

"No, the last two girls who quit never brought theirs back, and they're expensive."

I got a cold feeling in the pit of my stomach. "But... I don't have anything else to wear!"

"Well you should have thought of that before you got so mouthy to me."

I stalked off at that point, giving him the finger as I went, and sat in the changing room sulking and thinking about what I was going to do. I looked around but the other girls' lockers were, well, locked.

At this point I guess I should describe the uniform: It was a fake grass skirt deal, with a top and bottom piece that shows off a lot of midriff. The bottom part rides low on the hips but has a green elastic-waist garment sewn into it, like the hotpants of a cheerleader's uniform, so we're always adequately covered under there. But there was no way to separate it from the rest of the costume. I hadn't worn a bathing suit or any underwear under that!

So what else could I do? Fuming, I stripped off the stupid uniform and threw it to the floor. Then, wrapping one arm across my chest and flattening the other over my most private area, I made my way to the door. I figured I'd slip out the back, which was right by the changing room, and no one would see me. I had to uncover my chest to open the door and pull it closed on the other side. But when I was out, I gasped in surprise: The boss was right there as I came out! He must have been afraid I'd try to sneak out still wearing the uniform.

I glared at him, but he didn't say a word, didn't even look at me that much, just silently opened the door for me. I was too angry and embarrassed to say thanks, and just tried to keep my back side against the wall as best as possible so he wouldn't see my bare behind. I think it was worse than him leering, the silence deepened my sense of shame at being fired in this manner. The door clanked shut behind me, and I was outside without a stitch of clothing! The night air was warm on my skin but it still felt very uncomfortable to be naked.

I took a couple of deep breaths and tried to stop the quivery feeling in my stomach as I thought about what the hell I was going to do next. My parents had the car, I'd gotten to work on foot, now I had to walk back. I decided the beach would be the safest route. It curves around near the street I live on, so it's a bit longer than a straight path but it should be deserted that time of night, I figured.

The hardest part was taking that first step away from the building and being completely out in the open, with only two hands and three body regions to keep hidden. I took another deep breath and just ran for it, hands over my front, down the darkened street, then crashed through the brush and onto the sand. Not wanting to remain in the middle of a deserted beach, I crept into the water, knelt down so it was up to my neck, keeping the rest of me hidden, and crawled/swam along close to the shore.

I was probably only about 10 minutes from the spot where I'd leave the safety of the water... when the searchlight came on.

"HEY YOU!" an amplified female voice boomed out. "There's no swimming after dark!" Instinctively I dove under the water to avoid being seen, but you can only hold your breath for so long. When I came up again there was a police officer at the edge of the beach, scanning the shore. "Come out of there!" she ordered.

"Um... I can't!"

"Don't make me come out there and get you." She sounded stern. But I didn't move. She sighed. "Fine." And she waded into the shallow water, which only came up to her knees in the spot where I was. I tried to scramble away but she grabbed my arm and proceeded to haul me onto the shore.

"No! Stop! Don't!" I cried. "I'm naked!!"

At this she turned and shined her flashlight over my unclothed form, sopping wet and covering up. "Well, so you are!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing skinny-dipping this time of night?"

"It's a long story," I muttered miserably.

"What's your name?" she asked.

I sighed. "Keilani Akana."

"Where are your parents?"

"Parents?" I repeated, a bit surprised by the question. "Um, they're on vacation." Which is true, my parents had left a couple of nights ago on a month-long trip across the continental States. I'd given them so much crap about how they didn't need to have someone check on me and the house, I'd take care of things, I'd be responsible. And look at me now: Stark naked on a public beach and about to be arrested, I was sure.

But, it was even worse than that.

"And your parents just go off gallivanting around, and leave you alone to run around naked?" I still didn't see where she was going with this, but before I had a chance to answer, she asked, "How old are you, little girl?"

"Little girl?!" I asked in disbelief. "Officer, I just turned 21 a few months ago."

"Yeah, and I'm Queen Lili'uokalani," she shot back. "Come on, let's get you out of here." She took my arm again. "I have a blanket in my car you can use to dry off."

I started to protest, but it was useless. So I ended up in the back of a police car, sand sticking to my legs, driven to the station. When we got there she took me inside, still wrapped in the blanket. I got curious stares from a number of other officers on duty as she led me into an office, had me sit down, and lifted a phone receiver from the desk. The room was air-conditioned, and I shivered and pulled the blanket more tightly around me. The sand was everywhere.

"Yeah, hi Gail," she said into the phone. "Yeah, I'm sorry to drag you out here this late, but we have a little girl here whose parents went out of town and left her alone." I tried to cut in but she didn't pay any attention. "Yeah, she needs a set of clothes, too." Pause. "About 12, I think." Pause. She glanced over at me. "I dunno, four-nine, four-ten?" Pause. "Probably around a hundred." Pause. "Uh-huh." Pause. "Well, just bring what you have." Pause. "Great, thanks Gail, I owe you one."

When she hung up the phone she turned to me and said, "Okay, hon, just sit tight. Someone from Social Services will be here to pick you up shortly. She'll bring you something to wear."

"Whoa, wait, WHAT?! Social Services?!? Look, officer, I tried to tell you before. They made me turn in my--"

"Now, young lady," she interrupted. "Please, just sit quietly. Gail-- The social worker will take care of everything. It'll be okay, you'll see."

I sighed and crossed my arms, sulking. I figured I'd just let her talk until this social worker got here. Maybe I could talk some sense into them.

It was about 45 minutes, sitting there the whole time. When the social worker arrived, she and the officer talked in private outside the door. It made me feel like the child she clearly thought I was. I caught phrases like "pretending she's a grown-up" and "acting like a big girl" that left me fuming. Finally the social worker entered, a tall, matronly woman with glasses, a long skirt, and her hair up in a bun.

"Hello, Keilani dear," she introduced herself. "I'm Ms Whitmur, and I'm here to help."

"Listen," I began. "I--"

"Yes, Officer Janene already told me you've had quite a night. But we'll get you taken care of. So. First things first. Let's get you dressed."

I had to admit that sounded like a good start. She put a sack of clothes on the desk and proceeded to unwrap the blanket from around me. Naturally, I fought to keep covered. "Hey! Stop! I'm NOT a little girl, I'm 21!"

"Yes, Keilani dear. Officer Janene told me about your little story. I know you're trying to act big with your parents going off and leaving you, but it's okay." And she proceeded to kneel and brush the sand off my legs and feet.

I was stunned. This could NOT be happening! Christ, did this woman honestly believe I looked and sounded that much like a 12-year-old? Well, when she finally tugged the blanket off me and stood me up, I started to see why. Remember how short I said I was? Well, I'm also quite... underdeveloped. My behind is flat and my breasts are little more than nubs. And, son of a BITCH, I thought, I'd just shaved my pubic hair the previous night. (Most girls here do it, since it's bikini season year-round.) All together, this painted a pretty convincing picture of prepubescence.

"Now now, Keilani dear, don't be embarrassed," she said as I renewed my efforts to keep covered. "I've seen lots of little girls undressed before." She put the bag of clothes on the chair where I'd been sitting and instructed me to put them on. I dug into the bag... and was horrified by what I pulled out: She'd brought me a white blouse and pleated skirt with black saddle shoes, a schoolgirl's uniform! No bra, not even a training bra, just an undershirt! And the underwear! They were pink with lace trim and a floral print on them. Big flowers, in pastel colors, with smiley faces surrounded by petals! They were the stupidest, most embarrassing undies I had ever seen! I mean, I'm 21, I wear thongs! These were too childish even for a 12-year-old!

I groaned audibly, but what the hell choice did I have? It's not like there was anything else available to wear, and the skirt looked a bit short so I didn't want to go without panties. I turned away from Gail so I wouldn't have to look at her, and slipped everything on, hating every second of it and how uncomfortable the juvenile uniform felt on me. The skirt was definitely an inch too short, the panties were confining, and the saddle shoes pinched my toes.

But, all right, I told myself, at least I wasn't naked anymore. Next step, get this woman to realize she WAS in fact dealing with an adult.

"Um, Gail?" I began.

She clucked her tongue. "Please call me Ms Whitmur, Keilani dear."

I sighed. "Ms Whitmur, then. Can I at least try to call my parents? So you can talk to them? And then you'll realize you don't need to put me through all this?"

"Oh, you have a number for them? Very well, Keilani dear, but only because I want to have a word with them for being so irresponsible. I'm still taking you under my care until they get back."

Yeah, like fuck you are, I thought as I went over and dialed the phone. I figured as soon as they talked to her she'd find out I was actually telling the truth, and I'd be out of this humiliating predicament.

So first I tried their cell, but I got the standard "cellular customer is not responding" messaage. God, they probably had it turned off. Why the hell did they even bother taking it? Then I tried directory assistance for the hotel I knew they'd be staying at one night, but the desk guy told me they'd checked out the previous morning, and I had no idea where else they might be. All this time, Gail stood behind me, brushing the tangles out of my now-dry hair, humming annoyingly to herself as she did so. I was about to try calling work so at least my boss -- er, ex-boss -- could vouch for me, but Gail stopped playing with my hair and took the receiver away from me.

"Hey!" I said.

"Keilani dear, it's obvious you can't reach your parents. We'll try again tomorrow. It's late. Now, do you need to use the potty before we go?"

Use the--! God, it's like she was treating me like an even littler kid by the minute! But I held back a reply because, yeah, I did have to go. I let her lead me down the hall to a one-person bathroom. Inside, I took one look in the mirror and almost pissed myself right there: My long, perfectly straight back-length hair had been braided in... pigtails! I looked ridiculous, like I was even younger, like 10! I realized this was just going to keep getting worse and looked for a way out, but there were no windows in the bathroom. I could only hope Gail wouldn't be waiting outside for me and I could slip away.

Unfortunately, she was there, and took me out to her car, holding onto my hand so I couldn't run. Christ, she buckled the damn seatbelt for me!

I was getting desperate, and this was probably my last chance. As we pulled out of the lot, I asked her, "Can we stop by my house first?"

"No, Keilani dear, it's too late. Maybe tomorrow."

"Where are you taking me?"

"St Sebastian's Home," she answered. "It's a special place, with other children just like you, who've been--"

"All right, LOOK," I said, determined to put a stop to this NOW. "I know you don't believe me, but if we go to the house I can SHOW you I'm an adult. I can prove it. My driver's license, my student ID... Just PLEASE, this is all a huge mistake--"

"No, Keilani dear." She got very serious, all of a sudden. "YOU are the one who is making a mistake. I am very tired, and I don't want to hear any more of this foolishness."

I'd had it. When she pulled up to a stop sign I took the opportunity to unhook my seatbelt as inconspicuously as possible. When she tapped the accelerator again, I decided it was now or never, and I opened the door and dove out. I landed hard, on one of my knees, but I ignored the pain and got up and ran for it.

Or tried to. The way the damn saddle shoes were pinching my feet made it hard to run. Between that and my short legs, I got maybe a block and a half before Gail had stopped the car, gotten out and caught up to me. The kindly matron was gone, and she grasped both my arms tightly and ordered me to come back with her.

At that point, I hit my limit, HARD, and I totally lost it. I hollered and kicked and thrashed about, and even tried to bite her as she dragged me every step of the way back to the car. I screamed bloody murder. I shouted, "You BITCH! You STUPID, FUCKING BITCH!! Leave me the fuck ALONE! I am NOT A CHILD!! I AM TWENTY-ONE FUCKING YEARS OLD, GOD DAMMIT!!!"

Gail stopped, and, holding me firmly by both arms, calmly turned me around so I faced her, then knelt down to look directly into my eyes. With perfect calm, she stated, "No, Keilani dear, you are not. You are twelve years old, and you are acting like you are five. And that is going to stop, right now."

And with that she leaned my struggling form over the hood of the car, stomach down. One of my knees was scraped and bleeding from the rough landing when I'd jumped out. Gail held my hands firmly behind my back, pressing down on them to hold my body in place as well. With her other hand, she flipped the hem of my pleated skirt up and began to tug down those horrible childish underpants.

I gasped in horror, knowing my bottom was being exposed to any oncoming traffic, and my stomach tightened with fear of knowing what was to follow. Desperately I tried to reason with her: "No, stop, don't do this! I'm sorry! We can talk about this! Like adults! Please don't--"

But my pleading fell on deaf ears as a sharp SMACK sent pain flaring across my exposed bottom. "This, is, how, I, deal, with, BAD, little, girls, Keilani, dear!" she exclaimed, punctuating every word with a fleshy, open-palmed SMACK to my backside. "You, are, a, very, NAUGHTY, little, girl, with, a, very, FILTHY, MOUTH!"

The pain and degradation and hopelessness of the situation completely overwhelmed me, and I just started bawling uncontrollably, like an infant. Tears poured down my cheeks, beet red from the sheer humiliation of it all. I had never felt so desperately miserable in all my life. I howled and kicked and let my mind fill with images of all the horrible, vicious things I would do to this bitch. Not caring that I would probably never get the chance. Not caring how ridiculous I looked. Not caring that there were cars driving past, cars filled with people MY AGE laughing and pointing at the "bad little girl" having her butt paddled in public. I relinquished every shred of dignity I had left. At that moment, I WAS a "bad little girl", and I behaved exactly like one.

It couldn't have gone on for longer than a minute, but those agonizing 60 seconds felt like hours. I wailed nonstop for another five after she let up, and was finally reduced to pathetic sniffling, gasping for air in short, queasy breaths. This morning I'd had a job, freedom from my parents for a whole month. Now I had a little girl's underpants and a little girl's sore paddled bottom.

Gail let me drain the rest of the hate and fury out of my system, then pulled my panties back up and lowered my skirt once more. "Come on, Keilani dear," she said quietly. "Let's get back in the car." Completely broken, utterly submissive, I obeyed, sniffing, my red swollen eyes turned toward the ground, their lashes still brimming with tears.

It hurt to sit again but I did it without complaint, refusing to look at Gail or give her the satisfaction of knowing how much it stung. We rode silently through the rest of the trip to St Sebastian's Home for Orphans, Neglected Children, and Problem Girls.

So, that's my story. Or, as much of it as I can tell you right now. Sister Bernadette will be back soon and I can't let her find me using her computer.

Who's Sister Bernadette, you ask? I'll tell you another time. Just please, PLEASE, if you read this, help me get out of this nightmare life!

**"Keilani's Long Vacation" (Part 2)**

Aloha?

Is anybody there? It's me, Keilani Akana.

I'm typing this on Sister Bernadette's computer while everybody else is asleep. I'm not supposed to be in her office, and if I get caught I'm sure I'll be in for another round of punishment... especially after what's already happened.

But let me back up a bit first, so you'll understand. I've been trapped here at Saint Sebastian's, in Kailua, on O'ahu, for about a week now. Last time I told you how I ended up here: Got fired by my prick of a boss. Had to leave my uniform and walk home nude. Got picked up by a cop who thought I was twelve and I couldn't convince her otherwise. Got a spanking from the social worker when I tried to run away.

The rest of that night is something of a blur. I remember sitting in the passenger seat as we drove through the tall iron gates to Saint Sebastian's orphanage. You can call it any damn thing you want, but it's still an orphanage, plain and simple. Its official name is Saint Sebastian's Home for Orphans, Neglected Children, and Problem Girls. At any rate that's where I found myself the next morning. I was startled awake by the jarring clang of a metal bell waved by Sister Ulalia.

Over the days I learned that's the normal routine, they wake the girls up at seven every morning. The sleep had been rejuvenating, and it took me a minute to remember where I was and why. Then the painful, humiliating memories of the previous night's events came flooding back, and I realized it hadn't all been just a horrible dream. At that point I just wanted to crawl back under the covers and die, but Sister would have none of that.

"Ho`âla! Maka hiamoe!", she cried, hauling me to my feet. That's native Hawaiian for "Get up, sleepyhead."

"Girls, this is Keilani," she announced, presenting me to my new roommates. "She's going to be part of our `ohana for awhile."

Yeah, not if I have anything to say about it, I thought.

But then I realized I probably didn't. My parents, whom I live with, were away on a tour of the continental States and I hadn't been able to reach them. They were the ones who could convince these people that this was all a horrible mix-up, that I actually was 21 rather than 12. I suppose I could have tried one of my college friends, but at this point I really, really didn't want anyone else to see me in this mortifying predicament. It would be bad enough with Mom and Dad.

Sister Ulalia turned to me. She was a squat, round woman with a kind face centered about a slightly bulbous nose. "Get your bed made up, Keilani," she told me, "then we'll go take care of some things."

I desperately wanted to explain to her that I was fully grown, but was not about to cause a scene in front of everyone. There would be a chance later, I told myself.

As we tidied up, I took the opportunity to examine my new surroundings. The bedroom I'd slept in housed maybe a dozen other orphan girls-- A dozen orphan girls, PERIOD, God DAMMIT, I am NOT one of them! They all looked to be about twelve or thirteen, the same age Gail, the social worker, had clearly told the Sisters I was (believing it herself). I later found out there were several dormitories throughout the building, where the girls were assigned beds approximately by age.

I tried to act like I belonged there as I straightened my sheets and tucked them around the pillow, but I felt a lot of curious eyes on me the whole time. Everyone was wondering about me, how they'd gone to bed the night before and all of a sudden I was here this morning. I tried to think of what I'd say if anyone asked, but no one did. I guess I still had that awkward new-kid air about me, and none of them seemed sure how to approach me.

My bed in order, I turned and peered out the window onto the grounds below. We were on the second floor. The first thing I noticed were the wrought-iron designs that crisscrossed in front of the glass panes. You could disguise them any way you wanted, their intent was clear. Bars, to keep the girls from opening the windows and climbing out after dark. I felt a twinge of despair again. Beyond was a circular driveway before the main entrance, and past that, a short expanse of grass and trees up to the outer brick wall and metal gates.

As I stood gazing out, I gradually became aware of snickering sounds from behind, unmistakably directed at me. It was then I remembered I was still wearing Gail's too-short pleated skirt and those wretched smiley-faced flower underpants! I pulled the back of my skirt down to try and hide them, and turned, glaring at the tittering girls.

One of them broke the ice with, "Nice britches y'got there, Kay-lawny!" Her accent had a twangy drawl, and unlike most of the other girls, she was halakea, fair-skinned. A mainlander, not a native. Her name was Suzanne, I came to find out, and rumor had it that her family came over on a cruise and dumped her here after something she did. I don't know whether it was true or not. But don't go feeling sorry for her, she's a mean, manipulative, EVIL little bitch and I hate her!

After our beds had been made, Sister sent everyone else off to wash up and escorted me down to the ground floor. The halls were tiled and echoey, not the comforting wooden floors like my old childhood school.

"Um, Sister?" I asked politely. "I know this is gonna sound crazy, but I'm actually 21. I got brought here by mistake and--"

She gave a little laugh. "Oh yes, I've heard about your little tale. Ms Whitmur told all of us after she brought you in. You're the talk of the orphanarium."

"Great," I muttered. She didn't believe me either.

"But don't worry, we'll get you looked at, then we'll go see Sister Bernadette."

Well... that sounded faintly promising at least. But: "Wait, looked at? What do you--"

And before I could get the question out she had led me into a small room with a padded table and some medical equipment. A doctor was there, a male doctor, snapping on a pair of rubber gloves.

I groaned to myself. But out loud, so Sister heard it.

"Now, Keilani, we have to make sure all our girls are healthy. It won't take long, and I'll be back for you shortly."

With that, she was out, and I was alone with him. I've gotta tell you, I hate doctors! I've seen too many elderly relatives suffer and slowly die off around them, while being poked and prodded and crammed full of medication the whole time. Plus they all give off this cold, professional demeanor that they must think puts you at ease, but actually makes you feel worse, like you're some kind of lab experiment to them.

He turned around, chart in hand. "Good morning, Keilani, how are you?" Without waiting for an answer, "I'm Doctor Kanehailua. I just need to ask a few questions, then we'll take a look at you. Don't be scared."

There, that was the kind of behavior I was just talking about.

He clicked a pen, poised over the clipboard. "How old are you?"

Here we go, I thought. But maybe, just maybe... I mean, the guy was a doctor after all. So I tried. "Twenty-one."

Doctor Kanehailua raised his eyes from the chart and looked at me with a disapproving expression.

"I'm telling you the truth!" I insisted. "Everybody thinks I'm a little girl, but I'm not! God, you're a doctor, and you can't TELL?!" Then I remembered the name of this place, specifically the "Problem Girls" part, and I understood my reputation had preceeded me.

"Sister Bernadette warned me about you," he said. "No more games, Keilani. Now let's try again. Tell me how old you are."

I sighed in disgust. "All right, fine, I'm twelve. Happy?"

It was weird. Up until this point I'd screamed denial every time someone had misidentified my age. This was the first time I'd ever actually gone along with it. I felt a horrible sinking feeling, like I'd crossed some line, and there was no going back, ever again.

The exam marched on. "Are you hurt anyplace? Does your tummy feel okay?" Yes, he actually said that, like I was a baby. He checked my eyes, ears, peered at my throat, took my blood pressure.

Then he said, "Okay, let's weigh you." He indicated a scale in one corner, and I stepped onto it. Then: "No, without your clothes."

So I had to strip, once again ending up naked in front of a complete stranager. There was nothing to do but stand there, feeling a cold breeze from the air conditioning vent in the wall right above, every inch of my olive skin exposed.

You've got to understand, this guy seriously thought I was a child because I sort of looked like one. I'm very short, my body never really filled out much at all, and I shave my pubic hair regularly. I was wearing a schoolgirl uniform, my hair was still in childish pigtails from when Gail had fixed it up, and of course everybody else acted as though I were a juvenile. It's amazing, even frightening, how some people's treatment of you can influence everyone else's.

Doctor Kanehailua recorded my weight, and stood me back against a measuring strip on the wall to get my height. I gasped as he put a cold stethoscope against my chest to listen to my heart. I kept both hands folded over my front the whole time.

"All right, Keilani, let's take your temperature."

I opened my mouth, waiting for the thermometer.

"Oh, sorry," came more bad news. "It's the other kind."

"Oh gaawwwd..."

So I ended up on my knees, bent over on the exam table, as the doctor eased the glass bulb of a rectal thermometer inside my `ôkole. That's Hawaiian for... well, I'm sure you can guess.

"Take a deep breath, then let it out," he instructed.

I did so, moaning slightly at the discomfort. It was so thoroughly humiliating, being in that awkward position, intensified by the fact that this man genuinely believed I was a pediatric case! The indignity lasted almost a full two minutes. I felt the redness in my cheeks and tried to reassure myself it would all be over soon.

Kanehailua, marking his notes, concurred. "We're almost done," he told me. "Now sit down.... Lie back... Good, now spread your legs apart."

That was the end of my modesty, I couldn't keep myself covered any longer. The white paper under my bare body crinkled noisily as I complied.

I felt an odd shiver as his latex-gloved finger probed around the edges, then the sensitive area just inside me. My mind raced with thoughts, trying to cope, to take my mind off what was happening. What would he do if I just leapt off the table and ran for the door? Of course I was naked so even if I made it outside it'd be last night all over again. I should have done it when the exam first started, right after Sister had left. When I'd still been dressed. Shit.

"Have you had your first period yet?" he asked, snapping off the gloves.

Had my first--! "What!?" I blurted. Then I got an idea. It'd been a couple of days since I'd last shaved myself down there, and there was a tiny bit of stubble starting to show. I figured what the fuck, at this point he'd already seen everything anyway. (Well, except for the fact that I was NOT standing on the threshold of puberty!)

So, "Look!" and I showed him. "I have hair here, it's starting to grow back! See? This proves I'm--"

"Yes, that's called pubic hair," he explained, very patiently. "Your body is going through a lot of changes right now, and it's probably a little scary to you. It happens to everyone. But I promise you, you'll be just fine."

I sat up angrily. The thin paper underneath me had torn in some places, and was soaked with drops of my sweat in others. "NO, you fucking quack!" I shouted, outraged. "I'm trying to tell you, I've already been THROUGH--!"

The door burst open, and Sister Ulalia appeared. Obviously she'd been waiting outside for the doctor to finish with me. "What's going on in here?" she demanded.

"Hey!" I cried, covering myself. "Close the damn door!" She'd left it wide open behind her, and a group of my roommates were passing right by! I caught an unmistakable guffaw from Suzanne, mingled with the others' giggles.

"Keilani, are you misbehaving for the nice doctor?" Sister asked. "Ms Whitmur warned us about you."

I wanted to SCREAM in frustration, to throw myself on the floor and yell and kick and throw a tantrum, just like a real little girl would. But that would only make my case worse. Plus I was naked, so I'd look ridiculous. Instead I clenched my fists my fists, gritted my jaw, and muttered, "The nice doctor is a fucking moron."

"You'd better watch your mouth, young lady!" warned Sister Ulalia, raising a finger. "Are you finished, doctor?" she asked, and he nodded.

"My mouth!" I exclaimed, inspiration striking. "Check my mouth! I have all my adult teeth! No, WAIT!" I pulled and struggled against Sister's larger, stronger form as she hauled me out of the room.

Doctor Kanehailua was already packing up his bag to go, and he only smiled and shook his head.

Sister Ulalia kept a tight grip around my arm as she pulled me down the hall, and I seethed with fury. Jesus Christ, a fucking MEDICAL DOCTOR couldn't get my age right within 9 years! It felt like a terrible conspiracy against me, every single person here seemed absolutely convinced I was a child. I prayed I'd never start believing it too.

No, I reassured myself, that was pupule, insane! I knew who I was! I just had to make just one other person realize it.

Hopefully that person would be Sister Bernadette, since that's where we were headed next.

Her office was exactly what you'd expect: Functional, simply furnished. Crucifixes, framed prayers and pictures of Jesus everywhere. And, I noticed with some trepidation, a nasty-looking switch beside her desk, clearly intended to function as a deterrant, or if that failed, a punishment device.

"Good morning, Miss Akana, how are you feeling?"

"Well... to be honest," I answered, still breathing heavily from my struggles, "I've been a lot better."

"Yes," she said understandingly. "I know you've had a rough time and you're probably frightened of being in a new place, but I promise you we are here to help."

Sister Bernadette actually spoke to me as if we were on the same level, none of the "Keilani dear" bullshit Gail had used on me. I began to have hopes that maybe I could get through to her, convince her that I was a grown-up, stuck here by a comedy of errors in the system. (Well, it would be a comedy if it weren't so fucking degrading.)

"Then please, help me." I figured let's get right to the point. "I didn't get a chance to talk last night, but I really don't belong here."

"You want to try your parents again."

"YES!" I gushed, gratefully. Finally we were getting somewhere.

She lifted the phone receiver. "What's the number, dear?"

I'd really rather have dialled it myself, but Sister didn't offer me the option, and I didn't want to blow my chances by "acting up". I bit back the first words that came to mind and gave her my parents' cell number. I couldn't remember the hotel's, and the list they left was back home.

I was on pins and needles as it seemed to ring for ages.

Finally Sister Bernadette hung up. "I'm sorry, Keilani," she told me, "but there's no answer."

I sighed. "Okay, next question. Can we go to my house to get a few of my things?"

That was my Plan B. Get them to take me home, where I had my driver's license, family photos with me in more adult getup, my class schedule for the U of H fall sememster. Then they'd have proof I was an adult.

But... it wasn't going to happen right away.

"Yes, on Saturday," Sister Bernadette said. "We'll have to have someone drive you, and the Sisters all have classes during the week."

"Classes?" I asked.

"Saint Sebastian's is more than a boarding house for girls like you." (Nice euphemism, I thought to myself.) "It's also a school. All of our Sisters teach here."

"And you can't spare anyone before Saturday?" I asked in the nicest, most imploring tone I could muster.

"No, we have six grade levels to cover, as well as cooking and cleaning. It takes a lot of hard work to keep this place running."

I conceded. "Fine. Saturday, then. But in the meantime can you maybe get me some clothes that fit? This uniform's too small." I tugged down the back of my skirt for emphasis. And because it had crept up to let my undies peek out again.

"Oh, of course," she said, "Sister Ulalia, will you see to that?"

While she went to look, Sister Bernadette sat typing something on her computer, ignoring me. That's when I first got the idea to use her office as a conduit to the outside world. There was a phone line going from the back of the PC to a jack in the wall, so I figured she had Internet access. I just had to find a time when no one else would catch me there.

Sister Ulalia returned a few minutes later, carrying a small stack of clothes... but also looking crestfallen. "I'm sorry, Reverend Mother, but we don't have anything in her size. I did the best I could."

"I feared as much," said the head nun. "Charitable contributions are down and we haven't been able to order any more."

It looked like I was doomed to having those embarrassing underpants on display for my entire stay here. My heart sank, and I thought of the donations canister that always sat up by the cash register at the luau bar where I used to work. (God, was that just yesterday?) I even recalled, guiltily, raiding its contents for cash I felt I deserved when some cheapskate haole tourist didn't bother to leave me a tip. And how here I was on the other side, genuinely needing that money and not having it.

The "aloha spirit". Doing good improves the whole world, while doing wrong makes it worse. The Hawaiian equivalent of karma, biting me in the ass. God dammit.

"I'm sorry, Miss Akana," and Sister Bernadette looked like she sincerely meant that, "But you'll just have to make do until we can get over to your house, in a day or two."

I gave it one last try. "All right. Just please, LISTEN to me. I know what that social worker told you last night, but honestly, I am an adult woman! I have a job and everything!" (Okay, so technically I didn't anymore, but still.)

Sister Bernadette didn't say anything, but the look she gave Ulalia suggested they'd both heard this sort of thing before.

"I can prove it," I insisted. "Ask me something only an adult would know."

"Very well," Sister said, deciding to play along. "If you have a job... How much did you pay in taxes last year?"

"Oh, crap," I cursed under my breath. My parents have always taken care of that stuff for me. In fact they'd often chided me about not being more responsible for myself. And here was the proof, me in a schoolgirl's outfit in an orphanage three days after they'd left me alone. Congratulations, Mom and Dad. You were right.

"I don't..." I trailed off, lamely. Sister Bernadette folded her arms triumphantly, but without cracking a smile.

"All right, fine," I said, standing. "You want proof? Would a child know about SEX?"

She kept her eyes on me, unblinking.

"Not just regular sex, but..." And with that, I launched the heavy artillery. "When a girl swallows the guy's cock it's called a 'deep throat'. If she jerks it between her breasts they call it 'titty-fucking'. If she lets him cum all over her face..."

Sister Bernadette's eyes widened with shock and anger. Sister Ulalia looked like she was about to faint.

"Dear Lord..." The Reverend Mother made the sign of the cross over herself. "Gail was right, you ARE a foul-mouthed little girl, Keilani!"

"NO, dammit! I'm NOT a child, see, that's the proof! What child would know about that kind of stuff?!"

She shook her head. "Miss Akana, it's obvious you're a very bright but also very troubled young lady. I've seen cases like yours before, children whose parents fail to teach them proper respect for sexuality." Then something occurred to her. "Did Suzanne and Makala put you up to this? Those two...!"

And, just like that, I lost it, big-time.

"All right, enough is ENOUGH! Just because someone DRESSES me like a child and TREATS me like a child, that DOES NOT MAKE ME A CHILD! But you just BELIEVE IT, you aren't even LISTENING TO ME!!" I raised both arms and bellowed at the top of my lungs, "How can you be so GODDAMN STUPID?! JESUS FUCKING CHRIST!!"

Sister Bernadette's expression grew even more grave, and I knew I'd made a serious mistake.

"Miss Akana," she stated sternly. "There are three things I do not tolerate here at Saint Sebastian's." She ticked them off on her fingers. "The first is lying. The second is shouting. The third is blasphemy."

"I'm sorry, that just slipped out!" I pleaded.

That seemed to placate her a little. "Well. Seeing as you're new here and this is your first offense, I will let you off easily this time."

I relaxed a little. But then... Her hand reached for that switch.

"Whoa, wait!" I protested. "I thought this was just a warning!"

"I did not say that," replied Sister. "I said I would let you off easily. Believe me, Keilani, compared to the normal punishment for taking the Lord's name in vain, this will be a mercy." She patted a conspicuous open space on her desk. "Now bend over."

"Aiâ," I squeaked, cringing. Last night's memory flared up again, Gail's palm smacking my bare behind over and over, and me howling uncontrollably. Again I thought about turning and running, but I knew Sister Ulalia would grab me before I'd make it through the door. And it would probably be worse for me if I tried. So I moved to the side of the desk and leaned over it, stomach down.

Sister Bernadette stood, lifted the hem of my skirt and pulled my flower underwear down to just below the curve of my buttocks.

I swallowed hard, trying to brace myself.

Raising the switch, Sister B swung it in one swift CRACK across both cheeks, hard. It hurt like fuck-all, but the shame was worse. The knowledge that I was far too old to have this happening to me, but that I was powerless to do anything about it, hit harder and deeper than Sister Bernadette's switch ever could. I whimpered and bit my quivering lip, willing myself not to unleash the tears. My face was burning hot.

She allowed a moment for the punishment to sink in, then told me to stand up, which I did, pulling the infantile cotton panties back up over my tender rear. "That was your warning, Miss Akana." She held my chin, forcing me to look her in the eye. "There won't be another."

"Okay," I said contritely. I managed to get it out without bursting into sobs. Sister Ulalia handed me a tissue and I blew my nose, sniffling.

"Now go wash up and join the other girls for breakfast," the Reverend Mother instructed me. "And think about how our Lord suffered and died for your sins, only to have His name degraded by your vulgar little tongue."

My entire being burned with fury as I was taken back to the second floor to wash up for breakfast. She would NEVER have treated an adult like that! But because she thought I was so much younger, she could get away with it, even feel justified in doing so! I vowed that somehow, I would find a way to get through to Sister Bernadette, to prove that I was who I said I was. I would make them all SO SORRY for everything they'd done to me...!

Okay, I've got to stop there for now. There's so much more to tell from my first day alone, but I've got to get some sleep tonight. Writing all this is exhausting, and I hate having to relive the whole nightmare all over again.

PLEASE, if you get this, send help!

**"Keilani's Long Vacation" (Part 3)**

Aloha??

Are you still there? Has anybody been trying to help me get out of this godforsaken place?

Now where did I leave off last time...?

I'd just had my first meeting with Sister Bernadette, which didn't go nearly as well as I'd hoped, then Sister Ulalia walked me back to the dormitory they'd stuck me in.

"Go wash up, Keilani," she told me, "and I'll leave these on your bed." She'd brought along the armload of spare clothes, though I already knew they weren't going to be a perfect fit. Saint Sebastian's had to make do with what they had.

Like me. Only I didn't have much LEFT. I'd had damn near everything taken away from me in the last 12 hours: My job, my freedom, even my adulthood!

Sister handed me a towel, some soap, and a half-empty bottle of cheap shampoo, and sent me into a small tiled room with changing benches and, further in, a group shower area with faucets along both walls. It was empty, as the other girls had already washed up and gone down for breakfast.

Good, I thought. Something had to go right sooner or later.

"Mahalo," I said, thanking Sister, although I really didn't have much to be grateful for.

"And don't try sneaking away," she added, crushing my feeble hopes before I even had time to detail an escape plan. "I'll be right down the hall."

It wasn't an accusing tone. Of all the nuns I'd encountered here, Sister Ulalia seemed to be the nicest. But like all of them, she sincerely believed I was an abandoned 12-year-old who belonged at Saint Sebastian's Home for Orphans, Neglected Children, and Problem Girls. And she'd witnessed my previous behavior firsthand, in Sister Bernadette's office.

So I sat and undressed, pulling off the saddle shoes, blouse and pleated skirt that damn social worker Gail had dressed me in when she brought me here. There was still a bit of sand between my toes from the previous night on the beach. A shower would be refreshing.

I stared at the shampoo bottle a moment, debating whether to even use it. My hair felt really grungy, but I didn't want to make it dull with this cheap crap, and there wasn't any conditioner. Cursing my bad luck for the hundredth time, I decided I'd go ahead and use it. But my long, shiny hair was going to end up with split ends, I was sure.

I gasped as the first blast of spray hit me... The water was COLD! After the initial shock I realized the rest of the girls in my dormitory, and the others throughout the building, had probably already used up all the hot. Jesus, I was on a fucking tropical island, and this place didn't have enough warm water!

Under the icy shower I scrubbed myself morosely, reflecting on all the degradation I'd suffered. I'd been spanked two times in two days, for being "naughty". Which basically meant trying to tell everyone else I was actually an adult, then getting pissed off when they were too stupid to realize I was telling the truth. I felt like I was regressing, becoming MORE like a little girl by the minute, so I took the opportunity to undo the childish pigtails. They certainly weren't helping my battle.

My battle. Already I was accumulating scars. Carefully I washed my right knee, which was still sore from where I'd scraped it trying to escape Gail. Then I craned my neck around to inspect my backside. The sharp needles of spray stung where Sister Bernadette's switch had found its mark mere minutes ago. I thought I could see a red welt. Closing my eyes, I leaned my head back against the wall and sobbed in silence as the frigid water fell down on me.

Having a good cry made me feel better. I stayed in there for 20 minutes, until Sister Ulalia wandered back in. Her interruption startled me, and I threw my hands over myself indignantly.

"Oh! I'm sorry, Keilani," she said, averting her eyes politely, "but we really don't have much privacy around here."

Yeah, no shit, I thought. Awkwardly I nudged the faucet off with my elbow, trying to stay covered.

"I've laid out fresh clothes for you," she continued. "They're labelled with your name." (Christ, just like my parents did when I was in grade school!) Sister continued, "Put your dirty ones in the basket at the foot of your bed, and they'll get washed up."

With some trepidation, I dried off and went to inspect what I'd be wearing while I was here. It was actually marginally better than I'd dreaded. There was a nightgown, a couple of extra blouses, clean socks, a longer skirt, and -- thank AKUA! -- some plain cotton underpants. Still a far cry from the skimpy thongs I was used to, but at least I wouldn't have to wear those awful ones with the smiling flowers anymore!

The downside, as Sister had said before, was that the skirt wasn't a perfect fit. It was about a size and a half too loose around the waist, causing it to slip down my narrow hips and reveal my underwear from above, instead of below like the shorter skirt. I found if I tucked it into the elastic waistband of my panties it would stay up better. I had to remember to ask Sister for a safety pin.

There was a mirror in the bathroom, so I went and checked myself. I still looked like a juvenile in that schoolgirl outfit, but it was a slight improvement from before.

Ordinarily I don't even eat breakfast, but after everything I'd been through I was famished. Saint Sebastian's had a small cafeteria, and I got myself a tray with some fruit, milk, and a bowl of paluoa lûlû. That's a traditional Hawaiian breakfast paste made from flour and water, and a few other things. I'm not sure what, I never really learned how to cook. It tasted good, but its gooey texture only conjured up the popular image of orphanages and gruel. I sat at a table as far away from the rest of the girls as possible, not wanting any attention.

But wouldn't you know it, one of them decided she had to come over. I recognized her from my dorm. She was mâku`e, dark-skinned like me, about my height (God I hate being small), but her black hair was cut boyishly short, which looked strange. Most girls here grow it long, and quite a few of the guys do too.

"Aloha," she said quietly, sitting down across from me. I returned the greeting, but really wasn't in the mood to talk. "I'm Oliana," she said, after a moment of awkward silence.

"Keilani," I answered, without enthusiasm.

"It's not so bad here," she tried to reassure me. "You just have to--"

But we were interrupted by two other, taller girls, one native and one white. I recognized the latter, as she'd made a crack about those stupid panties I'd been wearing earlier. I had an unpleasant sensation, a gut instinct that this girl was just plain bad news.

"Mornin', O-lee-anna!" she drawled in a heavy Southern continental accent. Then she whacked her hard on the back in a pretend greeting, as Oliana lifted her juice cup to drink, causing her to spill it all over her front. "Aww, golly," she added in mock apology. "Guess Ah made a mess outta yer clothes, didn' Ah? 'Least now they match yer hair!" And she laughed. Her friend, the other Hawaiian, leaned over wordlessly and took the muffin off Oliana's tray, and started eating it.

Great, I thought, just great. This Oliana girl was clearly at the base of the social tiki at Saint Sebastian's. She was a total pushover, just sitting there taking it. And there I was right next to her, on my first day here.

And the white girl noticed.

"Well howdy, Kay-Lawny!" She extended a hand. "Ah'm Su-zanne, Su-zanne Calloway." And she really pronounced her name like that, you could hear the space between the fucking syllables.

I shook the hand limply, but didn't answer. She already knew who I was, from when Sister Ulalia had introduced me up in the dorm.

Suzanne pulled out a chair and sat in it backwards. "How old're ya, Kay-Lawny?" she asked.

I considered this. None of the adults here believed I was 21, so there was no reason to think the girls would either. And I'd probably make it harder on myself if I kept insisting I was. So...

"Twelve." Then, to make myself seem just a little bigger I added, "Almost thirteen." God it was unsettling, how my "new" age became easier to get out every time I said it. I prayed this wasn't a slippery slope, that this new identity wouldn't take over completely.

"Well, Ah AM thirteen," Suzanne boasted, "an' a half! An' that makes me the oldest in our room. So Ah reckon AH'M in charge of yew."

"Sister Bernadette would disagree," I muttered, stacking my now-empty dishes on my tray. I found myself intensely disliking this girl.

"Y'all bin ta SEE Sister Bernadette, have ya?" Suzanne asked as I stood up to leave. Her expression was mischievously gleeful as she added, "Didja git ya a li'l ol' whack on yer bee-hind?"

And with that she caught the hem of my skirt, reached under and playfully slapped my panty-clad ass.

"Auwî!" I yelled. It was still sore.

I glared furiously at Suzanne, who cackled with laughter. "She done DID, huh?" Then, leaning closer to whisper conspiratorially, "Letcha in on a li'l secret. Ever'body miss-bee-haves, so ever'body gits a whuppin' sooner 'r later. Differ'nce 'tween yew 'n' me, Kay-Lawny? Is Ah LAHK it!"

"Not the only difference, you hick."

She chose to ignore my name-calling, for the moment. "Oh, it hurts like a sum-bitch, but Ah think it's mighty excitin' too! An' what's even better? Is watchin' it happ'nin' ta somebody else!"

I'm not exaggerating. I swear to God that's really how this girl talks.

She went on: "Some-tahms? Ah lahk ta git mah-self inta trouble, jus' so's Ah git me a spankin' from Sister." She turned to the other Hawaiian girl next to her. "Ain't that right, Makala?"

This other girl nodded, expressionless. Almost as an afterthought, Suzanne gestured and added, "This here's Makala. She's thirteen too."

Makala hadn't spoken a word yet. "Can she talk?" I asked Suzanne. "Or is she the brains and you're just the waha nui?" In my language that means, roughly, "big mouth". Immediately I regretted the taunt, feeling even more like a child for using it.

Suzanne looked to her companion, not certain what I'd just called her. She saw Makala's eyebrows furrow in a small frown, and understood she'd been insulted, again. I realized I'd just made at least one enemy, possibly two.

"Yew'd best mind yer manners, new girl," she warned, glaring. "Cuz lahk it er not, yer stuck here with us." She let those words sink in a moment, then stood up again. "We'll be seein' yew 'round, Kay-Lawny." Makala followed her to another table.

Well, needless to say, that spoiled my breakfast. I dumped off my tray and stalked toward the exit. Oliana caught up with me in the hallway, and I tried to tell her that I didn't need her help, I could take care of myself.

"If that were true you wouldn't be here," she replied, not understanding my situation at all. "But don't worry, I'll show you around. Just behave in front of the Sisters. And watch yourself around those two. Believe me."

Great, I thought. Just what I needed. The loser girl being my friend.

Oliana showed me the way to class... Saint Sebastian's also doubles as a school, the Sisters teach the orphans and the girls who get sent here after being kicked out of the public educational system. There were quite a few empty seats among the rows of one-person desks, so I chose one away from the teacher's. I sat and looked all around at the room, and tried to forget the unpleasant experience in the cafeteria. But it wasn't long before Suzanne entered, Makala in tow, and spotted me in the back.

"Y'all're in mah seat," she said.

"I don't see your name on it," I answered.

"Let's us git one thing straight, Kay-Lawny," said Suzanne, leaning on my desk with both hands. "Ah'm older'n yew, an' Ah'm bigger'n yew."

That's two things you stupid bitch, I thought. And she was only half right. Admittedly the girl was tall for thirteen and a half, five-four at least. And even through her clothes I could tell the outline of her figure was already more developed than I'd ever gotten. But this spoiled little brat was NOT older than me, I reminded myself. She only thought she was.

Her mouth was still running: "Yer lahf at Saint Sebastian's kin be nice 'n' quiet, er we kin make it a fuckin' NAHT-MARE. If'n yew cross me? Ah'm gonna GIT yew. Mebbe while y'all're slumberin' at naht. Er mebbe on the play-ground, when the Sisters ain't lookin'."

Now I'm not a fighter, but Suzanne certainly looked like she could handle herself if it ever came to that, plus she had Makala as backup. Not wanting to cause a scene (and end up with yet another spanking), I wordlessly slid out of the desk and moved to the next one.

"That'n there's Makala's," Suzanne added.

So I moved again, to one in the corner. Suzanne looked triumphant, knowing she could push me around and get away with it. I cursed myself for not standing up to her, and hoped I'd get another chance to redeem myself. Onipa'a, as my people say. Be steadfast. Sort of like "sticks and stones", only a lot more mature. I needed more mature right now.

Class started, and we all sat and listened to one of the Sisters teach, and took notes. There was none of the freedom of the college classes I was used to. You had to raise your hand and wait to be called on before you could talk. If you had to go to the bathroom during class, you had to announce your intent in front of everyone, and get permission to get up from your desk. If you got called on, you had to go up to the board and answer a question, with the whole class staring at you. God, I'd just gotten out of this crap a few short years ago, and now I was neck-deep in it again.

Worse was the fact that I knew all the subject matter already, having been through it the first time. It was all review, easy review, and I found myself consistently bored. But you had to pay attention anyway because Sister had a ruler that she'd rap sharply on your desktop if she caught you dozing off. And she did it a couple of times, with girls in the front rows. For the most part the Sisters were nice, caring people. But the fact that they had the power to punish me, to instantly bring my new juvenile identity to the forefront, was intimidating and quite unsettling.

Still, the next few days passed without any major incidents, mainly because I kept my mouth shut and did what was expected of me. The thought of punishment held me back... God, was I caving in already? The plan was to just hold out, make it to the weekend, when Sister Bernadette had promised someone would take me to my house. That's when I'd finally be able to prove to them that I was actually a grown woman.

For the most part I gradually adjusted to the new routine, but I still missed my old life terribly. Surfing. Hanging out with my friends from college -- Akela, Naia... and Kahoku. Even my old job. I would've given anything to have that fatass in the luau bar tease me again. I'd take him over Suzanne's bullying any day.

God, Suzanne. Although she didn't really do anything those first few days, aside from throwing a few taunts and sneers, the smug smirk on her face always suggested she was thinking of ways to get under my skin. Makala, for her part, seemed content to play backup thug, never saying anything but going along with Suzanne's act. I kept telling myself that I was grown up, I was above such things. But it still deepened the sense that I was reliving junior high all over again, and I could never completely ignore that little inner voice pounding in my mind, screaming that I didn't belong here.

At last came Saturday morning, and Sister Ulalia's wake-up bell. This was the day Sister Bernadette had said someone would take me to my house. I'd dressed under my nightgown the night before, so I was at her office door at 7:05, rapping eagerly. She didn't answer right away, so I kept at it.

"It's me, Keilani Akana," I called out. "Can we PLEASE go to my house like you said?"

The door opened and a flustered Sister Bernadette appeared. "Hu`omanawanui!" she chided, "Patience, child!"

She invited me in to sit, and I did, positioning my rear as far away from her punishment switch as I could. I fidgeted, on pins and needles, as Sister busied herself with some paperwork for awhile before finally informing me that Sister Ulalia would be taking me. I was pleased to hear this, as I'd come to like her best out of all the nuns at Saint Sebastian's. If I could sway her onto my side, there was a chance she could help me convince the others.

"So... Sister?" I asked as we drove through quiet neighborhoods on the way to mine. "You must at least sort of believe me? About being a grown-up?"

Sister Ulalia dodged the subject by changing it. "You shouldn't bite your nails, Keilani."

I stopped mid-bite and thought, shit. I hadn't even realized I'd been doing that. It's a bad habit I never outgrew, brought on by stress, now further adding to the illusion of childhood.

As soon as Sister stopped the car I ran up the wooden steps to my front door. Thank AKUA the spare key was still hidden under the potted palm. I'd had days to plan out what I'd do once I got back here. First step, get proof that I was, in actuality, really, truly, an adult.

Driver's license.

"I'll be right back," I said as I headed up to my room. My chest was pounding, I was so anxious to get Sister out of here and pick up my normal life again.

License was in my purse, I knew. Purse was... where? Not on my bed... Not under my bed... Not hung over the doorknob... Closet? No.

"Fuck!" I swore under my breath. Where was it?!

I tried to retrace my steps from a week ago. Akela and I had gone out partying, I'd driven. We'd stayed out late, and I hadn't bothered to get gas before I came home. Mom and Dad were kinda pissed about that.

Shit. I must have left my purse in the car.

The car which my parents had left in. Which was now sitting at the airport. In Honolulu. Clear the fuck on the other side of the island.

Son of a bitch. Son of a goddamn, motherfucking BITCH!!

Everything connecting me to my true age was in that purse, everything! My license, my U of H class schedule for the fall semester... I knew I had to have a birth certificate, but I had no idea where it might be. At that moment I realized that all I had to prove who I was were my looks, which so far hadn't been very convincing, and a few government-issued documents. That is really, really scary.

It almost killed me to go back downstairs. I took each step at a honu's pace, trying to think of a way to explain that I couldn't find my ID. A way that wouldn't look like my childish bluff had just been called. This was not going at all like I'd envisioned it.

Sister Ulalia was busying herself looking at the family photos around the room. "You have a message, Keilani," she said, indicating a blinking light on the phone.

I literally DOVE for it. Had my parents tried to reach me while I'd been locked away at the orphanage?

There were two messages:

"Aloha, 'Lani, it's Akela!"

"And Naia!"

"And Naia. Where've you BEEN? Nobody's seen you anywhere! We went by the kalapu pô and some of the girls said you got fired!"

"Ask her about tomorrow!"

"We're going to the dragon boat races tomorrow, you wanna come?"

"Kahoku's gonna be there!!"

"Naia says Kahoku's gonna be there. You could finally ask him out! Okay, call one of us back, okay? Aloha, 'Lani!"

"Alohaaaaa!!"

I almost busted out bawling right there, I missed being with my friends so much. But the next message was even worse:

"Aloha, Keilani." (It was Mom.) "I guess everything's fine with you, since you haven't called us. But we've had a little change of vacation plans. There's just so much to see and do here, and it takes so much longer to drive between places. So we've decided to stay an extra month so we can see everything we want. Just wanted to let you know so you didn't worry. I know you won't mind, and I'm sure you can handle things, you're a big girl now. See you in August, Keilani. Aloha wau iâ `oe."

"Aiâ!" I moaned, burying my face in my hands and whining. "`A`ole-`a`ole-`a`oleeeeee!"

"Something wrong, dear?"

Sister Ulalia was standing right there, and she'd heard the entire message. God, why did Mom have to use that "big girl" line?!

"Don't you worry, sweetheart," she told me, looking exasperated. "As soon as your parents get back, Sister Bernadette will set them straight. I swear, they are the most negligent, irresponsible..."

"No!" I tried to explain, "That's not the problem! The problem is I really AM old enough to be here on my own, but no one at Saint Sebastian's believes--"

"Keilani, we've been through this before. You can't stay here alone." Sister thought for a minute. "What about your older sister? Could you stay with her?"

"Whoa, wait, WHAT?!" I protested. "I'm an only child!"

"Now don't lie, dear. I heard the message her friends left for her. Lani, they said her name was. And I saw her in some of your pictures out here. Is she away at college?"

Inside, I was SCREAMING in frustration. My friends affectionately shorten my name like that, but "Lani" by itself is a perfectly legitimate Hawaiian name. And the pictures she was talking about...

"No, that's ME! I mean, yeah, these were when I was little, but these other ones are me too! Look at the faces, they're freaking identical!"

"Well of course you look alike, dear, you're sisters!"

And just like that, I suddenly had an older sibling. I tried to think of some way to use that to my advantage, but couldn't. If I pretended to call my "big sis", then Sister Ulalia would just stay with me and wait for her, and end up catching me in yet another lie. Calling Akela or Naia and asking them to pretend would mean everybody I knew would soon learn about this degrading situation.

Then I spotted the list of numbers my parents had left, showing their itinerary, and I snatched it up. I tried the place they had marked with today's date, but with the changes to their travel plans they hadn't arrived there yet. So I left a message for when they did, asking the guy to tell them I was in trouble, and I needed Mom and Dad to come back home right away. I didn't hold out much hope that they'd get it, the way things were going. It seemed to please Sister Ulalia, though. I kept the list with me so I could keep trying numbers back in Sister Bernadette's office.

Because, God dammit, it looked like I was going back to Saint Seb's again. The only remaining task was to get me some clothes that were my size, as the orphanage didn't have any to spare. Back upstairs, I fumed silently as I pulled outfits out of my closet and dresser and stuffed them into a pair of Duffle bags. As I worked my mind started formulating a plan. I resolved that this nightmare was going end, right HERE, right NOW.

"Um, Sister? Can you get my toothbrush for me? It's the green one." I pointed down the hallway, to the bathroom.

"Of course, dear."

I stood and watched her go. When she reached the end of the hall, I closed and locked the bedroom door. I tore open my window and hauled myself down the wooden trellis outside, with one of the bags of clothes in tow. I dropped the last four feet to the ground and started running, trying to think where I could go. Then I spotted the wooden shed in our yard, raised up on concrete blocks to keep the bottom from rotting during the rainy season. It would be a tight fit, but I'm small so I knew I could do it. She'd never think to look for me under there.

Just to make sure, I opened the gate at the back of the fence, to make it look like I'd gone through. Then I got down on my hands and knees and pushed the bag of clothes into the narrow space between the shed and the ground before crawling under myself. My schoolgirl uniform was getting dirt on it, but I didn't care. I had good clothes now, my clothes. I figured while Sister went looking for me, I'd slip away and make for the beach, where I could hide in a changing stall until the coast was clear. Then I could stay with Akela or Naia until Mom and Dad got back home.

So I waited. My heart was a fucking jackhammer, and I tried not to breathe too loud.

I almost squeaked with terror when a pair of black shoes and stockings appeared outside the crawlspace, directly in front of me. Sister had found me almost immediately. I guess she'd seen where I'd gone from the bathroom window.

She knelt down and peered under the shed. "Come out from there, Keilani."

"No! You can't make me!"

You can't--! God, had I actually SAID that? How immature can you get?!

Sister sighed, stood, and went around to the back, where she reached under and caught me by the ankles. The crawlspace was tiny and incredibly cramped, so I couldn't shift around to get away from her. My hands scrabbled in the dirt but there was nothing to grab hold of to keep her from dragging me out. I tried to kick but there was no space to maneuver. As I slid out I felt my skirt being pulled up, then a sharp poke in my backside from a splinter of wood, which made me yelp in pain.

As Sister stood me up, the oversized skirt, already loose, slid down my legs and fell off, leaving only white cotton panties covering my rear. Sister knelt and picked it up with one hand while holding onto my struggling form with her other arm. She was stronger than she looked, and I found I couldn't break away as she hauled me across the yard with my underpants on full display.

"No! Let me GO! You don't understand!" I wanted to scream, and cause a huge ruckus, but I didn't want any of the neighbors to see me like this!

"Yes, I do understand, Keilani." I ceased my thrashing and she let go of me. "I understand how desperately you want to be 'all grown up' and 'out on your own'. But you should enjoy these youthful years. You'll never have them again."

God, the irony of those words was fucking PAINFUL.

"Where are we going?" I asked as she led me back into the house, and upstairs.

"Keilani, you're filthy," she said. "We need to get you cleaned up."

I looked down at myself and saw dirt and grass stains all over the front of my blouse, my white cotton panties, and my bare legs.

Sister steered me into the bathroom and turned on the shower. Then, right there in my own fucking HOUSE, she began pulling my soiled clothes off me, as though undressing a child who needed help!

"Hey, I can do it myself!" I snapped, exasperated. "I'm not a baby!"

"No, of course you're not. I'm sorry."

At least we agreed on one thing. She let me go, but made no move to leave the room.

"Um... little privacy here?"

Sister Ulalia shook her head, slightly but firmly. "Keilani, I'm no fool. The minute I leave you're just going to lock me out and go for the window again."

"No I won't, I swear!" And I meant it. (Though only because the only clothes I had in the room were the dirty blouse and panties, and I wasn't about to run off in those.)

But she didn't believe me. So what else could I do but undress and take a shower with her standing right there? Granted, Sister averted her eyes politely, but she remained blocking the doorway the whole time. The fact that the situation was awkward for both of us made it feel even worse. Still, it felt nice to get a hot shower after four days of ice-cold. I tried hard to ignore her silhouette on the other side of the plastic curtain.

When I got out and dried off, I began to feel an urge in my bladder.

"Um, Sister? I... have to pee. Do you mind?"

"Of course not, dear," and she turned her back to me, facing out into the hall.

"I meant, can you leave? The room?"

"I'm sorry, Keilani, but you can't be trusted."

"But this isn't a trick! I really do have to go! And as soon as I'm done I'll open it again, I swear to God!"

"Don't swear to God," Sister scolded. "It's disrespectful."

Jesus Motherfucking Christ, I thought. But when you've gotta go...

So I sat, naked, on the toilet, and tried to force out a piss with Sister Ulalia directly in front of me. It was SO humiliating I wanted to cry! Before my parents had left I'd assured them repeatedly that I could handle everything by myself. Now I couldn't even go to the fucking lua without someone right there beside me! I didn't even have privacy in my own home anymore!

It felt like ages, and I'm sure Sister suspected I was just stalling, but it finally trickled out. I closed my eyes and hung my head, my face burning.

After I'd flushed and washed my hands, she led me down the hall -- still nude -- to my bedroom where I'd left the second bag of clothes. The first was still under the shed, but I knew better than to try to talk Sister into going back out there again.

Sister Ulalia dug through what I'd packed. She let me keep a couple of the traditional floral dresses, but frowned disapprovingly at a number of the other outfits. Especially the underwear, black bras and matching thongs, a couple of pieces see-through.

"Oh, no Keilani, this won't do at all. Put your big sister's things away and let's get some of your own."

"I told you before! I don't have a sister! Look!" I said, holding a tube top up against my chest. "These fit!"

Sister wasn't buying it. "Just because you're the same size doesn't mean you're the same age."

I covered myself again, even though she'd seen me naked for like ten minutes already, as she led me back down the hall the other way. Sister Ulalia peeked first into my parents' bedroom, then the spare one we keep for guests.

"Is this your room, Keilani?" she asked.

I was about to restate that the other room really WAS mine, but saw it wouldn't get me anywhere. So I replied with a flat, "Yes."

"It looks so mature for your age, no toys or dolls. You must feel very strongly about being 'grown-up'."

Yeah, no fucking shit, I thought angrily.

"Well then," Sister continued, "let's see what we can find for you to wear."

My heart skipped a beat as she began her search in the closet, which was empty aside from an old cedar trunk. A trunk containing all the old clothes my packrat Mom had never gotten rid of. My childhood clothes! I groaned audibly as she pulled out one embarrassing outfit after another, stuff from when I was ten years younger! Panties, pink with a pattern of rainbows and little red hearts. A pair of overalls with a duck on the front. God, what the fucking hell had I been thinking back then?!

"There is no way in hell I'm wearing those! I'm way too old for them."

Sister stopped her rummaging and smiled patiently. "Yes, I see exactly what's happening here, Keilani. You're trying to fit into this adult role you've created for yourself, so you've 'put away childish things'. That's from the Bible. But so is, 'Honor thy parents'. And right now I am filling that role. Now get dressed, dear."

"No!" I said petulantly. I refused to go along with this shit any further. So I sat on the bed, crossed my arms, and pouted. Just like a five-year-old who wasn't getting her way.

"Then I'll just have to take you back to Saint Sebastian's like that." She pointed at my bare little body for emphasis.

And that got me into the kiddie clothes. Sister was able to use the threat of humiliating punishment to make me do exactly as she wanted. It was unbe-FUCKING-lieveable. I felt powerless, like I really was just a disobedient brat.

As we drove back to the orphanage, Sister Ulalia tried to console me. "I know how you feel, Keilani."

I sulked. How could she possibly know how I felt?

"Growing up was hard for me too," she said. "I was the youngest of five in my `ohana."

"I'm the youngest of ONE!" I yelled at her.

"Keilani... I know you're only acting out because you're under a lot of stress right now, with your parents gone. But please... I am trying to help you." Then, "Sister Bernadette didn't even want to let you come back here, did you know that? She said you would only put up another huge fuss about wanting to stay. But I know deep-down you're really a good girl. So I stood up for you. I told the Reverend Mother you'd behave yourself." We were at a stoplight, and she turned and looked directly at me. "Please don't make me a liar, Keilani."

Yeah, that's it, Sister. Lay the fucking guilt-trip on me.

"Everything will work out, Keilani, you'll see. Kâlele." Have faith. She gave me what she clearly thought was a comforting smile, but it wasn't.

I think I cried all the way back to Saint Sebastian's. I was utterly devastated. I had thoroughly convinced myself I'd be out of there and back to my normal life at the end of the day. It was all that had kept me going the last few days. Now all that had just been snatched away from me. I'd been hit upside the head with the harsh realization that I was going to spend a very long "vacation" at the orphanage. I wondered how I'd cope now, and how long I could hold out.

The one consolation was the phone list. Yeah, it was outdated, but I figured (hoped?) my parents would still be stopping at all those places eventually. Sooner or later they'd get my message, I just had to keep trying.

Sunday was when things really started to suck.

Up until then I'd been able to avoid taking a shower with the other girls by using that time to make the daily phone call Sister Bernadette allowed me. My excuse was that early morning Hawaii time would probably be the best chance to catch my parents while they were on the Pacific coast. Everyone else would always be out of the kililau by the time I got back to the dorm.

But on Sunday morning, when I knocked on her office door, Sister told me the phone call would have to wait because we all had to get ready for church. So I had no choice.

Still, I put it off as long as I could. While everyone else was in there, I went extra-slow making up my bed and straightening the contents of my drawer. Then I pretended to take a long time in the bathroom and just sat in the stall, my only true refuge of privacy left at Saint Sebastian's. Once I heard the girls coming back out, I took my towel and headed in.

"Better skedaddle, Kay-Lawny," Suzanne teased as I walked past, "or Sister'll haul ya inta church lahk THAT, naked as a jay-bird!"

This brought laughter from the other girls. I seriously doubted it was true, but I wasn't about to take the chance. In the shower area I stripped and soaped up quickly, hanging my towel under one of the unused faucets so no one could take it and leave me naked and dripping. I didn't trust that Suzanne one bit.

And with good reason, it turns out. After I'd dried off and was making my way back to my bed, she and Makala were standing there waiting for me.

"Howscome yew ain't bin washin' up with the rest of us, Kay-Lawny?" she asked, stepping uncomfortably close to me. "Yew think yer better'n ever'one else here?"

She looked down at me from a good six inches above, and I suddenly felt very small and insignificant, standing in front of her in just a towel. The truth is, I really wasn't all that much more developed than any of the girls in my dorm, but Suzanne in particular was starting to noticeably curve underneath her top. When she filled out completely she'd definitely be busty. Hell, I thought ruefully, compared to me she already WAS.

I chose not to answer her question, and tried to push past them to get to my clothes. I figured I'd take them back to the bathroom area and dress in there.

Suzanne had other ideas, though. As I moved between them she added, "Er maybe yer just embarrassed ta have ever'body see... THIS!"

And before I could react, the little bitch grabbed the towel I had wrapped around myself, gave a hard tug, and yanked it completely off my body! I squealed as I found myself naked in front of a room of preteen girls, all of whom burst into laughter at my sudden exposure.

None of them chortled louder than Suzanne Calloway herself. "Well GOL-LY, if that don't beat all!" she jeered, seeing my flat little ass, robin-egg breasts, and narrow hips. "No wonder y'all bin hidin' yerself from ever'body... Yer SCRAWNY, Kay-Lawny!"

Well since that rhymed, of course it caught on instantly with the rest of the girls, and "Scrawny Kay-Lawny" became my new nickname. They even pronounced it that way, using the same insufferable corn-pone accent as Suzanne. Everywhere I went, so long as none of the Sisters were in earshot, it was "Scrawny Kay-Lawny this" and "Scrawny Kay-Lawny that". Even the younger ones who hadn't started to develop yet and didn't understand the joke, even they joined in the ridicule.

I grabbed the pillow off my bed and held it over my front, even though it was too late, everyone had already seen me. Then with one hand I took my clothes, and, clutching everything tightly with both arms, I padded my way barefoot to the bathroom, keeping my exposed backside turned away from Suzanne and Makala. Suzanne howled with laughter as my face smoldered. From her bed, I saw Oliana watching, looking as if she felt really sorry for me, but also relieved it wasn't happening to her.

As I dressed in the stall, I wondered if I should tell one of the Sisters what Suzanne had done? NO, I decided adamantly. That's exactly how a child would act, and I was NOT a child, dammit! I was an adult, and I could endure this... no matter how mortifying it was.

There were giggles as I rejoined the rest of the group, my face still flushed from the embarrassment. The Sisters led us across the orphanage grounds to a church on the far end. I overheard whispered comments about the towel incident the entire way, and I SEETHED in silence. Ordinarily I'd be BABYSITTING these girls, and they'd be looking up to me as the cool adult with the trendy clothes and driver's license. Instead they were teasing and laughing at me! God, I'd thought I was past all this crap, but the insults are just as hurtful as when you're a kid. I've always been kind of sensitive about my body, and this experience had brought all those feelings to the forefront.

So, that's been my life for the past couple of weeks now. I keep assuring myself it won't last forever, but it's so hard when your every waking moment is consumed by this twisted alternate life. I can only pray my parents get my distress call soon. They're the only ones I can trust to get me out of here without ruining my real life in the process.

Well, and you, if there's anything you can do? Please??

Will write more when I get the chance.

**"Keilani's Long Vacation" (Part 4)**

When you think about it, Hawaii really is pretty cut off from the rest of the country. We're 2400 miles out, reachable only by plane or ship, and three hours ahead, set apart even by time. This, I think, is what makes my situation all the more hopeless. Hawaii is no longer the tropical paradise where I grew up. It's become my island prison.

Right now Sister Bernadette's computer, where I'm typing this, is my only link to the outside world. For weeks I've been trapped at Saint Sebastian's Home for Orphans, Neglected Children, and Problem Girls. I still have no idea who Saint Sebastian is, but I hate the son of a bitch for his namesake hellhole.

Thanks to a series of horrible coincidences, they all think I'm an abandoned child, and nothing I've done or said can convince them otherwise. Until last week I still entertained vague hopes my parents would get home and bail me out of this mess, but so far they haven't. Not that I haven't tried to reach them. For weeks now I've been calling, but either they're keeping the cell phone off or they didn't take it with them at all. I remember -- God, it seems like a past life now -- how I'd drilled into them about not needing anyone to check in on me, I'd be just fine on my own, so they must have figured it was beneath me to ever call them for help. Grown-up, independent Keilani Akana. Yeah, that was me.

Now my life was back to a juvenile routine I once thought was long past me. Get up, eat breakfast, go to class. Lunch, then recess, then more class. Dinner, homework, a little free time, shower, lights out at nine-thirty. Every day it got worse, slowly eroding my old identity away until I began to feel like I truly WAS a child, rather than a 21-year-old college student. I still knew, deep down, who I was. I felt displaced, like this was some kind of alternate universe, and I needed to get back to my own.

Not that I hadn't tried. I'd already gone over escape plan after escape plan in my head, figuring out exactly when and why each one would fail. The doors were kept locked at night, and the walls around the orphanage were too tall to climb. Sister Bernadette had her eyes on me, too. I'd lost my temper a few times, and inadvertently established myself as one of the "problem girls".

So I continued to make the daily calls, trying to reach them at one of the places they might be staying at while they toured the other 49 states. I still have a list they left, of places they'd booked reservations at, but now it looks as if they'd changed all their plans after realizing how big the continental U.S. was. Right now I had absolutely no clue what part of the country they might be in.

I even called their house-- MY house too, I am GOING to get back to it someday, dammit! --and left a lengthy phone message trying to explain this whole wretched situation. So they'd realize what happened when they finally got home, rather than just finding me gone without a trace.

All this was on my mind as I sat disconsolately on the orphanage's high-fenced playground, with Oliana.

Oliana. She's about twelve, the same age they think I am. Something of a loser, but she's also about the only hoa`aloha I have here. Her hair is laughably short compared to the other Hawaiian girls, myself included. She's really quiet, like this place has already beaten her into submission. And for some reason she hangs around me, I don't know why.

But so we were just sitting there, not even talking, when Sister Ulalia -- the short, squat one -- came up to me. I still liked her best out of all the nuns at Saint Sebastian's, even though she didn't believe my story either.

"You have a visitor, Keilani," Sister Ulalia told me.

I didn't say a WORD to Oliana, I just scrambled up and followed Sister eagerly back toward the building. Had my parents gotten back at last? Could this be the escape I'd longed for?? My heart just absolutely LEAPT as I was led inside and pointed down the hall to a small office. I think it was Sister Ulalia's. I was practically running, glancing back at Sister keeping her own leisurely pace, whereas I was ready to explode!

I almost burst into tears when I saw it wasn't Mom or Dad. It was Gail Whitmur, the social worker who'd first brought me here after the police picked me up naked on the beach. Long, humiliating story.

"Hello Keilani, dear," she said to me, seated prim and proper behind a desk. I felt a growing sense of dread. What the hell was she doing here?

"Aloha, Gail," a mumbled, without enthusiasm, taking a seat.

She clicked her tongue disapprovingly. "Please call me Ms. Whitmur, Keilani dear."

Yeah, that's right, I remembered. Only grown-ups were permitted to call her by her first name, something I currently wasn't. I didn't acknowledge the correction, just sat in chair with my eyes to the floor. This woman had spanked my bare ass during our previous encounter, and it's hard to look someone in the face after that.

I raised my eyes just enough to see her studying me through her matronly glasses. "So... How do you like it here?" she asked me.

I turned and looked at the door where I'd come in. Nobody was there. Sister had gone back to her playground duty.

"Don't be afraid, dear. This is strictly between us, and you can tell me anything."

Ah. Now I understood, apparently this was a follow-up check, since I'd been at Saint Seb's for awhile. Well of course the truthful answer to her question was that I fucking hated this place. But I also knew what happened to bad little girls who said "fucking".

So instead I went with, "Fine, I guess."

"Sister Bernadette tells me you've adjusted, and that your behavior is much better now."

Yeah, no fucking shit, I thought. Sister Bernadette had taken a whack at my ass too, and she kept a mean switch in her office. I'd learned quickly that misbehaving meant a bare-bottomed punishment, so I'd tried not to rock the boat.

Again I didn't answer Gail. This didn't seem to bother her though. To her I was just a shy little girl, trembling on the brink of puberty. I'd long since given up trying to explain my real age to everyone. When you're a kid (or they think you are) nobody listens to you anyway.

And that's how it went, she'd ask me something and I'd answer, the kid giving the adult as little information as possible. How are you? Fine. What do you want to do today? Whatever. One-word responses were the norm. But still the parade of questions came. Was I sleeping okay? Was I getting enough to eat? Did the Sisters take good care of me? Were the other kids nice?

"Well..." I admitted, "there's this one girl, Suzanne Calloway..."

Suzanne was from Texas or Alabama or some damn place like that. Her parents had dumped her off at Saint Sebastian's to keep her bad behavior from spoiling their nice expensive cruise. She seemed to take a perverse pleasure in being my personal tormentor, nicknaming me "Scrawny Kay-Lawny" (that's how she pronounced it) because I'm so small and underdeveloped. Like everyone else here, she thought I was twelve.

It was ironic, I'd come to realize. I used to make fun of a haole girl all the time, years ago when I was in grade school... the first time around. I can't even remember her name anymore. Back then I was actually fairly tall compared to my classmates, so I'd push her around and call her insulting names because, even though she was third-generation born here, she wasn't Hawaiian in the true sense of the word. But then I just never hit a growth spurt in my teens, and now here I was, a kid again, having Suzanne, a white girl, pick on me all the time. It was a vile brand of poetic justice.

The other day in the cafeteria she tripped me into a faceful of my own food, while the girls around us all laughed. A couple weeks ago she'd de-toweled me in the dorm, exposing all four feet, ten-and-a-half inches of me to about a dozen of our roommates. Suzanne knew her game well, and was smart enough to do things only when the Sisters weren't looking her way.

I didn't volunteer all this, of course. Gail kept asking her probing questions, making me relive every humiliating experience in excruciating detail. It was far worse the second time, dredging up memories of things I was already trying to suppress. If I didn't answer, she would lean forward and prod me with, "Keilani, dear?" I finally gave in and talked about Suzanne, realizing it was the only way I'd ever see an end to this shit.

And then there was Makala, the Hawaiian girl who followed Suzanne around like a trained dog. She looked strong and mean, and all the other girls were scared of her, especially Oliana. Even when I said aloha and Suzanne wasn't anywhere nearby, Makala would just glare menacingly at me, never saying a word. It was creepy.

Gail listened intently as I told her all this, making some notes on a case file she'd brought with her. I leaned forward and tried to look, but she tilted it up toward herself to hide what it said about me. When she finished, she announced, "Well, Keilani dear, you seem to be a well-adjusted, perfectly normal little girl."

I decided to risk a question. "Um, Gai-- Ms Whitmur? How long do I have to stay at this place? It feels like I'm suffocating in here."

"Until we can locate your parents, I'm afraid. But," she added, seeing me slump in my chair, "Sister Bernadette has already told me she's planning to take you all on a fun outing this weekend. It'll give you a little break from Saint Sebastian's. Okay?"

"Okay." Just hearing that made me feel a little better.

"And," Gail continued, "I'll ask her to have a word with those two girls."

Now I was horrified.

"No! Please don't!" I begged. How could she NOT know that was the worst thing she could possibly do? Hadn't Gail ever been a kid before?!

But she must have (once again) not listened to me, because later that day I saw the two of them emerging together from Sister Bernadette's office. Makala rubbed her bottom, her face red with an angry expression, but still fighting to keep her emotions bottled.

Suzanne, on the other hand, despite the tear streaks down her face, looked absolutely ecstatic. Spotting me, she came over.

"That was GREAT, Scrawny!" she gushed. "Ah ain't never bin paddled with a switch be-fore. Thanky kindly fer squealin' on us. Reckon Makala an' Ah owe yew one!"

That's right, Suzanne LIKED being disciplined that way. It was fun for her, probably triggering something in her dawning sexuality. No doubt that was a major factor in her parents' finally having to leave her here. They couldn't control her because she enjoyed her punishments too much.

"C'mon, Makala," she drawled, leading her friend away in the opposite direction. "We'll git 'er back real soon."

I got a small bit of satisfaction at seeing Makala's suffering, but knew the payback would be hell. It was hard to watch my back all the time, it wears you down. I could have tried to get them first, but now that I knew about the weekend field trip I had to be on my best behavior. I wasn't going to give Sister an excuse to not let me go. Or to give me another paddling. The only thing Suzanne liked better than being spanked herself was seeing it happen to other girls.

Her revenge finally came Saturday morning, just before Sister Ulalia came in to wake us. I stirred from sleep, not yet fully conscious but sensing that it was nearly kakahiaka. There was a vague urge in my bladder, and I knew I should get up to pee soon, but maybe I could enjoy the cozy blankets a few minutes longer.

A shadow passed near me, someone moving in front of the window. I cracked my eyes open to the blurred outline of a figure hovering over me. Suddenly my blanket was yanked off.

"Git 'er arms, Makala!" came an excited whisper.

Shit! I thought. What was happening?! I jolted awake to find Suzanne at the foot of my bed. Then I felt her weight pressing down on my legs, which made me instinctively fight to escape. I moved to sit up, but Makala grabbed my wrists and held them. I tried to kick my legs but couldn't even budge them. Suzanne weighed a good 20 or so pounds more than me, and was built larger, and I told her so:

"Get the fuck OFF me you fat palaoa!"

Makala climbed onto the bed and got behind my head, pinning my arms down with her knees. It hurt, and I was about to yell that, when she took a corner of bedsheet and jammed it into my mouth like a gag. I hollered at the top of my lungs but it came out as only a muffled moan.

I continued to struggle, but both of them were stronger than me. Turning my head to one side, I saw the other girls watching intently, eager to see what would happen. My friend Oliana looked truly sorry for me, but simultaneously relieved it wasn't her.

Suzanne slid her fingers under the hem of my pajama bottoms and underwear and pulled them both down to my knees, exposing my pubic hair. Normally I shave, but since I no longer had access to a razor, it had grown back even thicker than before. Those first few days, it had itched like Christ.

"Gaw-LEE yew got a hairy pussy, Kay-Lawny!" Suzanne laughed. "An' lookit that scrawny li'l body, them bones ain't got no meat on 'em!" And she poked my bare abdomen with her index finger.

Well, that did it. I am SO fucking ticklish, and her unexpected touch made my entire body jerk spasmodically. My friends Akela and Naia used to do this to tease me, but it was just for fun and they always knew when to stop. Here, not knowing how far Suzanne might go, it was absolute torture.

"Ahhh, so y'all're ticklish, are ya?" Suzanne asked, with her usual penchant for stating the head-poundingly obvious. Grinning evilly, she ran her wiggling fingers down my ribs, sending me thrashing as my skin exploded with awkward sensations.

"No! Stop! Uoki!" I cried, but with the bedsheet in my mouth all that came out was: "MMMPH! NNNNNG!" My body shuddered from my rapid, gasping breaths. Tears streamed down my face as I laughed uncontrollably, hating every agonizing moment of it but powerless to break out of their grip.

And then I felt it happening. The urge in my bladder was intensifying, and my control was slipping. I saw Makala's smirk upside-down above me, Suzanne's broad leering grimace, God she looked fucking demonic. "Please!" I begged her, "Please please stop I have to go to the bathroom I can't hold it PLEASE!" But my words were lost, buried under a torrent of unstoppable giggling and muffled by the makeshift gag.

Finally, I just couldn't hold it any longer. I felt the pressure in my bladder ease up. My face was redder than molten lava as the hot urine poured out of me, down my inner thighs, saturating the sheets beneath me. My uncontrollable laughter quickly turned to despair and heaving sobs.

"Ewww! She's pissin' 'er-self!" cried Suzanne, and immediately scrambled off me to get away from the mess. Makala let go of my arms, and they flopped to the bed as I just laid there, bawling from the unbearable humiliation of having everyone watch me peeing all over the place, God it was awful! Even now, it's horrible just typing about it!

A few girls were giggling, but most were making groans of disgust and revulsion, and I knew this is how all of them would think of me from now on. They'd be whispering and joking about it for weeks, and I was stuck here with it! I shuddered to think what new nicknames I could get from this. Whatever it was it would be a thousand times worse than being "Scrawny Kay-Lawny".

Suzanne, clearly very pleased with herself, leaned over and whispered down to me. "'Member when Ah said Ah could make yer lahf a fuckin' naht-mare?" Then, after a pause to let that sink in, "Don' yew EVER try'n cross me an' Makala agin!"

I couldn't say anything, I just pulled my pajamas back up to hide my shame, though it was already far too late. Then I turned onto my side, away from the other beds, and lay there sobbing in a puddle of my own piss.

At that moment the door opened, and I heard the sharp clang of a bell. It was Sister Ulalia.

"Ala, ho'ala, wiki--!" she began, but stopped mid-ring, surprised to find everybody already up and about.

Suzanne wasted no time. "Sister Oo-la-lee-ah!" she exclaimed, loud enough so everybody in our dorm and anyone outside in the hall could hear, "Kay-Lawny done wet 'er bed!"

Some of the other girls voiced their agreement. I knew no one else would breathe a word about Suzanne and Makala holding me down and tickling me. Everybody was too scared of having something similar happen to them.

I heard Sister's footsteps approach my bed, and I felt a hand on my shoulder. "Keilani?" she asked gently. "Did you have a little accident?"

My sobbing and the fresh yellow stain on my sheets were answer enough. She urged me to my feet and led me to the shower area to wash up.

"Gawd, it SMELLS!" blurted Suzanne, much louder than necessary.

"Hush, keiki!" Sister Ulalia scolded, but that did little to stop the giggles. "Don't cry, Keilani, it's okay," she tried to reassure me, but there was no way it would ever be okay.

I let Sister pull off my soaked pajamas and underwear, and stepped under the water when she turned it on for me. I wanted to thank her but couldn't, and I didn't want to look her in the eye. I just wanted to DIE, right there. I closed my eyes, leaned my head against the wall and bawled nonstop for almost 10 minutes, until my sides hurt. I HATED Suzanne Calloway and Makala for what they'd done. I hated Gail for turning them in, and I hated the other girls for laughing along with them. I hated Saint Sebastian and his stupid orphanage and everyone involved with it, even Sister Ulalia, but I felt horrible about that because she was being so sensitive and caring toward a disgusting, bed-wetting little girl like me.

I don't think I would have come out, except it was the day Sister Bernadette was taking us on our outing, and I decided I'd be damned to hell before I'd miss out on that. When Sister Ulalia finally did coax me out, the other girls were already lined up and heading downstairs. They were all in swimsuits and sandals, and carrying towels. Sister herself had on a flowered mu'u mu'u dress, and I almost didn't recognize her, except she still had the black and white nun's habit on her head. It looked fucking retarded, but I was too miserable to laugh.

"W-we're going to the beach?" I sniffled. God how I'd missed going to the beach.

"Yes, dear," said Sister Ulalia. "Now hurry up and get your suit on."

I ran naked to my bed -- noticing that the sodden sheets had already been stripped away -- and found a swimsuit waiting. Well, I guess you could call it that. It was an ugly green one-piece with white ruffles around the leg holes, clearly intended for a young child. There was a smiley yellow sun right on the ass part. Ugh. Once again I was going to be the victim of Saint Sebastian's charity bin.

Sister must have noticed my look of disgust. "I'm sorry, Keilani, but it's the only one in your size we have left." The other girls had already taken the better suits.

Well, it was either wear it or don't go, so I put the damn thing on. It was tight and uncomfortable, made for a child's figure, and it squeezed my abdominal area so it looked like I had a chubby little girl's belly sticking out in front.

"I can't go out in this!" I whined to Sister. "It looks hideous!"

"I'm sorry dear, but sometimes we have to make do with what we have."

"Can we stop by my house? I have a better suit there." I thought of my black thong bikini, damn I looked good in that.

"No, Keilani." Sister was firm. "Not after last time. Besides, it wouldn't be right in front of the other girls."

I stamped my foot petulantly. "But that's not FAIR!"

That's not--! God, there I went again, my own behavior making me look even more like a child.

"Are you coming?" Sister asked. "You don't have to if you don't want to." It definitely sounded like an ultimatum.

And so, just like a spoiled kid, I went along begrudgingly. Outside the front entrance was a small bus with the Saint Sebastian's logo on the side. I climbed in after Sister Ulalia. Suzanne and Makala were sitting together in the back, and they exchanged giggles when they saw me. Not wanting to deal with them again, I sat in the front. Oliana had saved me a spot.

"Don' let 'er pee on ya, Oh-lee-anna!" shouted Suzanne, and my face burned.

Sister hauled her short, squat body into the driver's seat. I sat and fumed and had hateful thoughts about horrible things happening to Suzanne and Makala the entire ride to the beach. Oliana tried to talk to me but I ignored her. I wasn't in the mood.

At Kailua Beach Park, Sister parked the bus. The other girls all scrambled off and ran, with lots of yelling and screaming excitement, down to the shore. I plodded along miserably through the sand behind them. Suzanne's cruel prank had already ruined my day.

The beach was crowded, mostly with tourists: Japanese, Americans, a few Samoans. The kama`aina -- the native Hawaiians -- preferred the quieter, secluded beaches around the rest of the island. This made me feel a little better, being lost in the crowd, plus it meant there was less chance of someone I knew seeing me dressed in that ridiculous swimsuit.

"Can I get a surfboard?" I tugged at Sister Ulalia's sleeve and pointed to a rental shack nearby. God I'd missed riding the waves.

Sister Ulalia looked to Sister Bernadette as the authority.

"No, Keilani, it's too dangerous."

"But I know how! I've been doing it since I was ten!" Which, I realized, was only a couple of years in their eyes.

"Yes, but a lot of the other girls haven't. If they see you doing it they'll want to try too, and it's just too dangerous. It wouldn't be fair to them."

I crossed my arms and pouted. "When is something going to be fair for ME?!"

"Keilani, you are acting like a spoiled brat," Sister Bernadette stated bluntly. "Now are you going to go play, or would you rather sit here with us all day?"

I stomped off, kicking at small mounds of sand, seething at the unfairness of it all. When I reached the surf I cooled down a little. The warm saltwater felt good, washing over my bare feet. I looked around and saw the other girls playing and splashing, or picking up seashells. Oliana was building a sand castle and invited me to join her, but it felt too childish. So I waded out until the water was up to my neck, and brooded in my dark thoughts, unable to fully enjoy myself.

After some time I picked up Suzanne's annoying Southern accent, carried on the ocean air. She and Makala were jumping in the waves, letting them lift and carry them toward the shore. At first I was afraid they might be planning something, but Makala glanced in my general direction once and I didn't think she was looking at me. Evil gears started turning in my head, and I decided I'd get Suzanne back for what she'd done to me earlier. I knew it was stooping to her level, and I knew subconsciously that it'd only antagonize her more, but I didn't care. She'd ruined my day, and now it was payback time!

Suzanne was wearing a string bikini, the perfect kind to snatch away and leave the victim naked in the ocean. Akela and Naia and I had done this to each other sometimes, just as a friendly prank. But I intended to thoroughly humiliate Suzanne. I'd grab her suit and rip it apart and everyone would see her naked. I'd show that little bitch how it felt.

When the next wave crested, I dove underwater and swam in their direction. Squinting in the sandy saltwater, I caught sight of her floating bikini strings and went for them with both hands, just as a huge wave crashed over us. I felt myself get slammed into Suzanne, and the next thing I knew I was on top of her in the shallows, and she was underwater, squirming and thrashing desperately.

Some of the other girls had noticed the commotion and were gathering on the shore, watching. One of them, I couldn't tell who, turned up the beach and called out, "Sister! Keilani's dunking Suzanne!"

Hastily I climbed off and let her up. Makala pushed me out of the way and lifted her friend out of the water, coughing and spluttering. Sister Bernadette was hastily waddling toward us. She looked furious.

"Keilani Akana!" she snapped. "What on earth do you think you're doing?!"

And what could I say? I hadn't been trying to hold her under, but if I said I was going to pull her suit off I'd just get in trouble for that! Why hadn't I bothered to think this childish retaliation through? I mean, I'm an adult, I should have known better than that!

So I tried to deflect everything with, "It was an accident!"

Sister looked at Makala, who shook her head firmly, no.

Suzanne continued to make a huge dramatic show of choking and gasping. "She's lyin'! Kay-Lawny tried ta drown me! Makala seen 'er! Tell 'em, Makala!"

Makala nodded, siding with Suzanne, and pointed accusingly at me. But it wasn't true! I hadn't intended for that to happen, you've got to believe me!

Sister Bernadette clearly didn't. She took me firmly by the arm and began hauling me up toward the towel she had spread out next to Sister Ulalia's. "You just lost your swimming privileges," she told me, waving a finger right in my face. "Instead you can sit there for the rest of the day and think about what you've done!"

I sat on the towel, wet hair clinging to my back, sand stuck to my calves and feet. Sister Bernadette went off again, to tend to Suzanne, but Sister Ulalia stayed behind to keep watch on me.

"Keilani, I'm surprised at you!" she said. "Suzanne doesn't know how to swim, did you know that? You could have killed her!"

Jesus. Living on an island all my life, it never occurred to me that someone could grow up without learning to swim. I felt horrible. Suzanne's prank may have been incredibly mean, but it hadn't put anyone in real danger.

But just as I thought that, down at the water's edge, I saw her turn and make a mocking face at me. She was fine. That evil little bitch had faked the whole drowning incident, just to get me in trouble!

I tried to tell Sister Ulalia, "But, look! She--"

"Keilani," Sister cut me off, "lawa kêlâ!" That's enough.

So now I was stuck in a "time out", being punished like a naughty child, not allowed to do anything fun, while Suzanne and Makala got off scot-free. It was so unfair! First they'd taken away my surfing, now they wouldn't even let me swim. My stupid suit covered so much of me I couldn't even get a decent tan. How could this day get ANY worse?

\*Sighhh\*... I shouldn't have asked.

"Excuse me..." came a voice in Sister Bernadette's direction. "Did you just say that girl's name was Keilani Akana?"

Then another: "That's our friend's name too!"

My stomach absolutely FROZE. Standing right there, talking to Sister Bernadette, were Akela and Naia. My two best hoa`aloha from college. Though their backs were turned to me, I knew without a doubt it was them. I recognized Naia's arms and legs, with the different shapes and symbols tanned into them, and the `ehu, the reddish tinge, in Akela's hair. They each wore a friendship lei, the flower necklaces we had made for each other last semester. Before this wretched summer began.

NO, I thought. Please, NO. No-no-no-no-NOOOOOOOOOO...! I hunched my shoulders and slowly turned away, squeezing my eyes shut and praying they wouldn't look at me. I couldn't bear the idea of them seeing me like this. Why oh why had they decided to come to this beach, on this particular day? It was like a curse.

"Âiwaiwa, Keilani?! Is that you??" It was unmistakably Akela's voice.

"It IS her!" Naia exclaimed, coming over to me. "E, howzit, 'Lani?"

Despite my current situation, I was so overcome with emotion that I stood up, ran over to my friends and put an arm around around their necks in a hug. I'd missed them so much I almost burst into tears right there. And with that, both of them started in with an onslaught of questions. Only this was even worse than Gail's, because I didn't want them to know all the mortifying details of the past month of my life.

"Where the hell have you BEEN, aikâne?"

"Why didn't you call us back?"

"Is it true you got fired from your job?"

"And what are you doing wearing lole`au`au like THAT?" asked Naia, indicating my childish swimwear.

All right. I steeled myself. It was going to be fucking humiliating, explaining all of this, but at least it meant I'd finally get out of this nightmare and back to my normal life.

Only...

"Keilani! You sit down on that towel and stay put!" It was Sister Bernadette, come to check on me. "I'm sorry girls," she told Akela and Naia, "but she's being punished." And she led me away, back to the towel, as my friends watched in utter disbelief. "Now you sit quietly, Keilani, and no more trouble, or you'll be sorry."

You'll be--! My friends were stunned. As soon as Sister's back was turned, they started with the questions again.

"Why is that nun talking to you like that?" Naia wanted to know.

"And why are you actually obeying her?" Akela asked.

"Âiwaiwa!" squeaked Naia, suddenly grabbing my shoulder and pointing. "Over there! It's Kahoku!" And then, Jesus Christ, she fucking called out to him! "Aloha Kahoku! Hey, get over here! It's Keilani, we found her!"

"Oh, GOD..." I moaned, and curled up with my chin between my knees, arms up over my face.

I haven't mentioned Kahoku yet? Auê, I've barely had a chance to think about him since I got stuck here. Kahoku is this really incredibly cute guy at U of H. We met at a beach party one time, and I think he liked me, but I was always too shy to say much to him. I tried to be a little tease, flirting wordlessly, at Akela's and Naia's urging. They were always pushing me to come on stronger, even though I said I wanted to take things at my own pace. Then I went and got myself fired and stuck at Saint Sebastian's.

And now here he was, coming up the beach right toward me. Kahoku, in a blue Speedo, with his long dark hair and his bronze eight-pack of ripped abs shining in the sun, God he looked SO good.

"Kahoku!" exclaimed Naia. "You'll never guess who this is, right here. Go on, guess!"

"Who? Her?" I heard him ask.

I risked a peek, hoping against hope that he wouldn't recognize me, and that my friends would keep quiet. But I already knew that was physically impossible for Naia.

And, oh my God, he looked right at me, with a puzzled expression. It didn't register. "What? Who's this? Are you two babysitting today?" Then he smiled at me, like someone would smile affectionately at a cute kid in public. I felt sick.

Yes! I tried desperately to convey it to my friends, without speaking. Please say yes, please say you're babysitting, so he'll leave! Pleeeeease!

Then he asked Akela, "You said Keilani's around? Where is she?"

Naia couldn't keep her waha nui shut: "This IS Keilani!" she squealed, and then both she and Akela burst into laughter.

Kahoku stared at them as if he thought it might be some bizarre joke, but looking closer it slowly it dawned on him that, despite the giggles, they were serious. The "little girl" in the smiley-ass green swimsuit was indeed me.

"Keilani...?" he asked, seeming uncertain about how to talk to me. "Why... are you dressed like that?"

And how the hell was I supposed to answer? I didn't even have time to think about it, because now my plight had caught the attention of someone else, too. Suzanne Calloway had recovered from her ordeal and was stepping her way through the sand, right toward us.

"Howdy, Kay-Lawny!" she greeted me, then looked at Kahoku. "Who's yer friend?"

I stood up, whispered to Akela and Naia, "C'mon, let's get out of here. Hurry."

Sister Bernadette's voice stopped me. "Keilani! Where are you trying to sneak off to?"

To one side, Suzanne was starting in, talking to Kahoku. I struggled to take in both conversations at once. "So y'all know Kay-Lawny? You her paw 'er somethin'?"

God the nightmare just kept getting worse! I turned and faced Sister. This was ending, NOW. "I'm leaving," I stated. "With my friends." I looked pleadingly at them. Gimme some backup, for Christsake.

"It's true," Akela said, somewhat lamely. "We... are her friends."

"Best friends," agreed Naia, but her playful tone made it sound like she was in on some private joke.

Sister Bernadette thought the same thing. "Keilani, did you put these nice people up to this?"

"NO!" I cried. "I mean, these really are my friends! I told you before, I'm 21, they'll all vouch for me!"

Sister Bernadette looked from Akela and Naia, tall and busty in their skimpy bikinis, to me, four-foot-ten and titless in a kid's suit. Then back to my friends with an expression that said, "Yeah, right."

"Ya know, yer mighty cute," I overheard Suzanne saying to Kahoku. She was just talking to him like it was the easiest thing in the world. "Yew gotta girl-friend?" Christ, she was closer to his height than I was, too!

It was all crumbling, the horror unfolding right in front of me, like a train wreck. I had to get out of here, I just had to!

Sister Bernadette's tone was stern. "Keilani, you stay right there, I mean it!"

I felt my self-control beginning to slip away again. I stamped my foot adamantly in the sand. "No! These are my friends and I'm going with them!"

"Don't be ridiculous, dear. How on earth could these people be your friends? Look at them, they're 10 years older than you!" Then, to the two of them: "You really mustn't encourage her. She's a handful to deal with as it is."

"Don't talk to me like I'm not even here!" I whined. I hate when people do that.

Then I saw Kahoku looking at me with disapproval. He'd just seen my little outburst. Rather than make an even bigger fool of myself, I plunked my ass back down on the towel and silently prayed it would all be over soon. That seemed to satisfy Sister Bernadette, at least.

Kahoku came up and knelt beside me. "Keilani... what the hell is going on here?"

"She's gittin' punished!" volunteered Suzanne.

Naia wasn't helping matters any. "Is this a game, Keilani?" she asked playfully. "Did you dress up this way to surprise Kahoku?"

Kahoku's expression looked as if he'd eaten some bad poi. "Why on earth would you think I'd want to see you looking like this?" he demanded.

"I didn't, I..." But it would take forever to explain, and I'd already fallen in his eyes.

Kahoku glared at me. "I don't know what you're pulling here, Keilani, but this isn't the least bit funny." He shook his head. "You need to grow up." Then he stood, and started to walk away. "I can't believe I was actually thinking of asking you out."

Yeah, he distinctly said "was". Past tense.

"Kay-Lawny?!" Suzanne asked in disbelief. "Whadya wanna date her for? Lookit 'er titties, she gots robin eggs!"

Auê, I wanted to punch her in the mouth so bad. \*Sigh\*... See, in the past I'd always worn padding in my bras around Kahoku. Before today, he thought my chest was a whole two cup-sizes bigger than it actually was! I know that's stupid, and I was going to tell him eventually, but I wanted to get him interested in me as a person first... Is that so wrong? But now this stupid swimsuit was showing him what my body really looked like, undeveloped and flat as the Hilana Pali plain. Plus, it made me look like I still had baby fat. And Suzanne had just drawn Kahoku's full attention to it! Instinctively I crossed my arms over my tiny breasts.

"Be-sides," Suzanne added, "Ain't she a li'l young fer yew?"

"Of course not. We go to U of H together."

Suzanne was speechless for a moment. "Oh mah GAWD... Scrawny Kay-Lawny's in CAWLIDGE?!?" She cracked a delighted grin at her new discovery. It was absolutely hideous to look at.

"Scrawny Keilani?" asked Kahoku, repeating Suzanne's demeaning nickname for me. Then he laughed, the guy of my dreams fucking LAUGHED at me! I couldn't stand it! I turned my face away and down toward the ground to hide my painful blush.

"Careful, 'er she maht piss all over ya!"

Kahoku looked from me to Suzanne, and back, confused. "What does she mean by that?"

"She wets th' bed, y'know."

At that moment, I prayed with all my strength for a sudden volcanic eruption to bury us all under a river of molten lava. Me first.

But of course that didn't happen. And so, unable to bear being in this awful situation another second, I ran. I bolted off Sister Bernadette's towel and was pounding full-speed across the hot sand. I heard her yell after me, "Keilani Akana! You get back here this INSTANT!" But I knew neither she nor Sister Ulalia would be able to catch up to me.

As I ran I found myself fighting to keep from breaking into sobs. My life was RUINED! Even if I did somehow escape the hell of Saint Sebastian's, my old life, the life I'd always thought of as a refuge, was now shot to shit. Akela and Naia would tease me about this forever, I'd NEVER live it down!

And Kahoku! God, the way he'd looked at me, the scorn and disgust in his face! I knew any chance I may have had with him was fucking GONE. Every time he saw me from this moment forward, he would see the immature, pot-bellied little 12-year-old who got punished and made to sit on the beach. This beautiful, gorgeous guy I adored would never again be able to take me seriously as a romantic interest! Right now Suzanne was probably telling him all kinds of shameful things about me at Saint Sebastian's, and there was nothing at all I could do about it!

I didn't look back. I just ran.

After the initial horror cleared a bit, I realized I was instinctively running in a certain direction, back to my house. The one little piece of normal life I still had left. I also realized that was the first place Sister Bernadette would come looking for me. I had to be fast.

The key was still under the potted palm. Inside, I flipped the light switch but they didn't come on. Who cares, no time. I made my way to the kitchen, looking for the blinking red light on the answering machine. My parents HAD to have called, maybe I could get back to them before Sister got here.

Except... The message light was dark.

I tried the kitchen lights but they didn't work either.

I lifted the phone. It was dead.

SHIT! I realized, fresh despair washing over me. The BILLS!

I had assured my parents, every time they'd asked, that I'd keep the bills paid up while they were away. In fact, on that first awful night when I got fired and picked up by the police, I'd intended to mail them the very next day! That was over a month ago, and the phone and electric companies had lost patience and cut off our service.

I collapsed onto the table, pounding my fists in frustration and crying, "SHIT, SHIT, SHIT!" How long had it been off? I had no way of knowing. Even if my parents HAD tried to call home and give me their new numbers, any message they may have left for me was now lost. And when they did finally get back, the message I recorded for them would be gone too! They would have no way of knowing where I was, so there was no hope of them ever getting me out of Saint Sebastian's!

Unless...! I lunged at the counter drawer and took out paper and a pen. I'd leave them a written message.

I heard tires grinding in the gravel driveway outside.

Fuck! The door! I hadn't locked it.

I dashed back through the living room and reached it... just as the two nuns appeared on the other side. I scrambled for the lock but Sister Bernadette already had it open. I made for the other room but she grabbed my wrist tightly, making me drop the pen and paper.

"Keilani, you stop this RIGHT NOW."

I recognized that tone. That was the "someone's going to get a spanking" tone. But I didn't care. I grunted and pulled and tried to break away from her grip. Sister Ulalia came to her aid and lifted me up by my legs. On the way out I grabbed the door frame with my remaining free hand and held on for dear life, forcing one of them, I don't remember which, to pry my fingers loose one by one.

"NOOOOO!" I yelled. "PUT ME DOWN YOU FAT FUCKING PENGUIN! I AM AN ADULT WOMAN! I AM NOT A LITTLE GIRL! I'M NOT, I'M NOT, I'M NOT, I'M NOT, I'M NOT!!!"

Yeah, I'm sure that sounded real fucking convincing. God damn it all.

Together the Sisters physically hauled me down the front steps, across the driveway and up into the bus, me kicking and thrashing the entire way. The other girls were standing on seats and leaning out open windows, craning for a glimpse of what was happening. Much to my chagrin, I noticed that Suzanne had taken a front-row seat to my humiliation.

As soon as they let me go I bolted for the emergency door at the back of the bus, but I couldn't get it open in time. Sister Bernadette caught me and pulled me away, dragging me all the way back down the aisle, past every one of my schoolmates. They watched every moment of it, ducking back slightly as I passed to avoid my flailing feet. All of them saw what a rotten, spoiled little brat I was. They were half my age, and they were behaving better than me!

I was through talking. I just wanted to cause as big a scene as possible, I didn't care how I looked. I pounded my feet on the floor and kicked the seats, and just squealed as loud as I could.

"Keilani, STOP IT!"

But I wouldn't stop it. Not ever. This was so unfair, and even though a tiny part of me knew I'd brought a lot of it on myself, the rest of my mind was screaming to me over and over, this was not fair, NOT FAIR, NOT FAIRRR! So I continued my tantrum, my face red and scrunched up in fury. I knew Sister Bernadette didn't like it one bit, and that's why I did it. It was the only means of resistance I had left.

Finally Sister got me to the front of the bus. I was exhausted from all the struggling and I didn't have the strength to fight anymore as she knelt me over the driver's seat, my green-suited ass sticking out into the aisle for everybody to see. I knew what was coming and I let out a long, sobbing whine as she held me there, her other hand producing the switch... Jesus, she fucking brought it with her!

The other girls let out a collective gasp. They knew what was coming too, some of them had even experienced it before. But I doubt any of them had ever seen Sister Bernadette quite this pissed off. I heard an eager snorting laugh and knew instantly who had made it.

Unlike last time, she didn't expose my bare bottom. Since I was wearing a one-piece suit I would have been totally naked. Not that that was any consolation, the shame of everyone at Saint Sebastian's witnessing my paddling was nearly unendurable. The last time this had been done to me, it was a straight punishment, in the privacy of her office. Sister had been calm and totally in control. This time she was angry, and AIÂ, did I feel the difference! The damp suit clung to my ass, providing no cushioning of any kind against Sister's sharp WHACK-WHACK-WHACK across the smiling yellow sun, Jesus FUCK did that hurt!

She did it about a dozen times, and I bellowed and screamed nonstop.

Sister didn't say a word when she finished. Instead she heaved a heavy, exhausted sigh and then let me up, gently nudging me toward a seat.

There weren't any in the front rows. All the girls had gathered in close to watch the spectacle. So I had to walk to the back section of the bus, past most of my classmates, my ass stinging. At least I couldn't see their faces through my tears. Sister Ulalia walked behind me, guiding me. My throat hurt from all the yelling, but not nearly as much as my rear.

We reached the second row from the back. Oliana was already sitting there, but Sister instructed her to move. Very carefully, I eased my tender, sore behind onto the seat. I had bright red marks on the sides of my cheeks where the suit didn't cover. Sister Ulalia sat beside me, and I wiped my eyes.

From across the row Oliana looked at me with the most sorrowful expression I've ever seen, almost like solidarity, as if she knew firsthand what I'd gone through. Maybe she did, I don't know, we never talked about it after, I didn't want to.

I happened to glance at Sister's watch. It was only a little after 11:00. My misbehaving had cut everyone else's day at the beach short.

Good, I thought bitterly. That'll teach them to laugh at me.

I leaned my head against the window, the tears blurring my vision again.

The girls were dead silent as Sister Bernadette started the bus and pulled away from my house. Sitting up, facing forward, hands in laps, best behavior. No one said a word.

Well, almost.

I heard movement in the seat behind me, then a whispered voice, low enough that Sister Ulalia wouldn't hear it over the roar of the engine.

"Gawd DAMN... That was great, Scrawny! Ah'm a-gonna be rubbin' mah-self allll th' way home!"

I didn't say anything, I just sat there, fighting to stem the flood of tears.

But still Suzanne would not shut up: "Ah'd heard 'bout them stories yew told th' Sisters? But Ah never, ever woulda believed yew really was twenny-one. 'Til yer friends told me!"

FUCK... I'd forgotten Akela and Naia. What had they said to Suzanne after I ran away?

"Ah don' think they seen us leave, they was still down on th' beach lookin' fer ya."

With despair I realized I hadn't done the one thing that could have saved me. I hadn't told my friends where I was being held! They'd seen all the indignities I'd been forced to endure, but they hadn't seen the orphanage's name on the side of the bus.

They weren't coming to my rescue.

Neither were my parents.

Nobody was.

"Don' worry, Kay-Lawny," drawled Suzanne, "Ah won' tell nobody yer see-krit. Wouldn' wan' 'em ta let ya go... Ah'm havin' sooo much fun with yew."

It was a fucking outrage. The Sisters didn't know (or believe) my true age, but now Suzanne Calloway did! And I was certain she'd use this knowledge at every opportunity to make my life even more unbearable. I wished with all my heart that I really WERE twelve. At least then my being here wouldn't be such a mockery of my normal existence.

As we rode back I put my thumb in my mouth and sucked on it, snivelling pitifully. I hadn't done that since I was three, but it was a comforting sensation. I didn't care what anybody thought. Not even Suzanne.

Christ, what an absolutely horrendous day! You'd think things couldn't possibly get any worse after THAT, wouldn't you? But one final indignity awaited me before I could escape, however temporarily, to sleep. When I came back from the showers, Suzanne was already at my bedside, laughing.

"What," I demanded. Though after today I wasn't sure I wanted to know what.

"Looks lahk some-one got a present fer th' li'l baby!" Suzanne exclaimed, pointing.

I approached my bed. Sitting right on top of the blanket was...

A diaper.

A fucking DIAPER.

I stormed out of the dorm and down the stairs, bursting into Sister Ulalia's office with the wretched thing in hand.

"Hey!" I demanded. "What the fuck is this shit?!"

"Keilani, you watch your language. Or do I need to wake up Sister Bernadette?"

"I am NOT a BABY!!" I yelled, hurling the diaper to the floor, breathing hard.

"No, of course you're not," Sister agreed. "This sort of thing happens to lots of girls. I know you're under a lot of stress, and it's nothing to be embarrassed about."

Like FUCK it wasn't! "And I'm NOT a bed-wetter! Suzanne Calloway and that Makala girl held me down and tickled me and wouldn't let me up! And she was faking drowning today too, just to get me in--!"

"Now, Keilani," Sister interrupted me, and she looked stern. "I know you and Suzanne don't get along, but I talked to some of the other girls in your dorm, and none of them mentioned any of that happening. Not even your friend Oliana. I understand it's hard for you being here, but you cannot ho'opunipuni all the time."

I knew what that word meant.

"I AM NOT A LIAR!!" I shrieked.

But then I realized I'd already established myself as one. All that initial hollering about not being 12 years old, when it was obvious (to them) that I was. And now, in their minds, I had a track record of telling fibs and making up stories. Especially when all the other girls agreed with Suzanne out of fear.

"It's just for when you go to bed," continued Sister, shifting the subject back to the diaper. "It's easier than changing the sheets every morning, and none of the other girls have to know."

"But Suzanne knows! You left the goddamn thing out on my bed where everyone could see it!"

"No, I didn't, Keilani. I put it under your pillow so you'd find it."

Now I felt kinda bad. I'd jumped to conclusions and believed what I wanted, just like everyone else had done with me. But still...!

"I wanna talk to Gail again!" I demanded. And OHHH did I have plenty to say to that bitch now, and I was mad enough I wouldn't hold any of it back. I would tell her how I was REALLY being treated here, and God dammit she would listen!

But...

"Gail isn't here anymore, dear. The next time she comes by I'll make sure you get to see her."

God, the irony of it all was absolutely sickening.

"And tomorrow I'll have a talk with Suzanne about staying out of other people's things."

"No, DON'T--!" But I gave up, slumping my shoulders. It was hopeless.

Sister leaned over and picked the diaper up off the floor. "Now come on, Keilani. Be a good girl for me."

And what the fuck choice did I have? It was either put it on myself or she'd do it for me, which would have been even more degrading. The thick, bulky thing made my ass look big under the nightgown. The saggy plastic was hot and sticky, and I felt my hips and thighs sweltering inside. God, no wonder babies scream all the time. I can't believe they make them wear these awful things, it's inhuman! If I ever have children-- Aww, who am I kidding, I'm never gonna have any children. What the hell guy would be interested in me after this?! Not Kahoku, that's for fucking sure.

The diaper crinkled noisily as I slunk back to my dorm, under Sister's escort. The lights were out, but I'm positive I heard snickers from the direction of Suzanne's bed as I crawled into mine. I must have sobbed myself to sleep.

All that was last week, and not much has changed since. Suzanne still makes fun of me every day, but hasn't done anything really mean again... yet. I still have to wear the damn diaper to bed every night, Sister Ulalia checks. Right now I'm just going one day at a time, but I don't know how much more of this shit I can take. It's even worse typing it, reliving it, knowing you all know about it, but at least you can tell someone my story and let them know where I am. Like Akela and Naia. Or my parents, if they ever get back. Please tell me you're trying. You're the only hope I have of ever getting out of h

SHIT SOMEONES COMING

**"Keilani's Long Vacation" (Part 5)**

Kapu.

That's another word in the Hawaiian language. Loosely translated, it means "forbidden", but like aloha there's a deeper meaning. When something is kapu, it's not that it's morally wrong, or unethical, or socially unacceptable. It's simply not done, ever. Because it's the sort of thing that brings karma down on your ass, HARD, often instantly.

It's kind of hard for non-natives to understand, so let me give you an example. Taking black sand or lava rocks off a Hawaiian island, that's kapu. It's not against the law, the bag checkers at the airport will let you by with them. But Pele, our resident volcano goddess, is notorious for punishing people who take away pieces her island. Every post office in Hawaii has a pile of native rocks outside that people have sent back, believing them to be the cause of all their problems.

Sure, it sounds like a quaint local legend to you at first, but then you get back on the mainland with your rocks, and things start to happen, slowly but surely. Your pets die off unexpectedly. You lose all your money and then your job. Your relationships fall apart. People you care about end up in accidents or with terminal diseases. And you start to wonder what on earth could have made your world so completely turn to shit.

That's what I'm wondering right now. If all this is my curse for doing something kapu.

I was sitting at Sister Bernadette's computer. Again. Telling all of you the latest horror story about being a 21-year-old college student trapped at Saint Sebastian's orphanage... when I heard the doorknob turn. SHIT, I thought. With a jolt of panic, I clicked send and dove under the desk as fast as I could.

Someone entered, I heard footsteps. It was totally dark except for the glow from the computer screen. Maybe they wouldn't know I was there.

I thought I'd been typing quietly, certainly not loud enough to hear through the closed door, and I'd kept the lights off. Could someone have noticed me?? Technically I knew I wasn't supposed to be doing this. I got phone priviliges during the day to try and get in touch with my parents, who were on vacation somewhere and didn't even know I'd gotten myself stuck here. But sneaking in and using Sister's computer at night, I knew she wouldn't approve if she caught me. It'd mean another swatting with that switch she kept beside her desk. I'd had a lot of those lately.

Who else could be wandering around this time of night, I wondered. The other girls were all sound asleep in bed. Sister Ulalia had her own office further down the hall, but it had been dark when I passed.

I heard the door close but didn't dare peek out. Wait a few minutes, Keilani, I told myself. I stayed hunched over, as motionless as I could, and tried not to even breathe.

And then I heard a voice, and instantly knew my already pathetic little life was about to start sucking a whole lot worse.

"What're y'all doin' down there, Kay-Lawny?"

They say Hawaiian is a culture of love, that hatred was imported from the rest of the world. For me it came courtesy of Suzanne Calloway, an annoying Southern girl whose parents dumped her off at the orphanage so they could enjoy their tropical vacation without her. I could understand why. Unlike the misguided Sisters, who honestly believed I was an abandoned 12-year-old and were trying their best to help me, Suzanne was just plain mean. She loved nothing more than to ridicule and debase me in front of the other girls, and she knew just how to get under my skin.

Even worse, she'd recently discovered I was actually 21! My friends Akela and Naia let it slip during that disastrous beach outing the Sisters took us all on. Of course Suzanne would never tell them the truth. If they knew they'd let me go, and keeping me here as a sort of pet she could torment was too much fun for her. Sometimes I think all the time I've spent here at the orphanage might have been at least halfway bearable, if it wasn't for Suzanne.

I didn't say anything to her, I just stayed crouched where I was.

"Hel-looo-ooo?" Suzanne cooed in a singsongy drawl, bending down to peer under Sister's desk. "Ah kin SEEEE yewwww!"

"Get OUT of here," I muttered, crawling out, feeling foolish.

"Ah ain't goin' no-where. Not 'til yew tell me whatcher doin'."

"Fine, then I am!" And I pushed past her and made for the door on the other side of Sister's desk.

"Yew walk outta here now, an' Ah'll tell Sister B." She crossed her arms and gave me a look that told me she meant it.

I spun around, furious. "You do, you little hayseed trailer-park BITCH," I hissed through clenched teeth, "and you'll get busted too! For being out of bed after lights-out!"

Suzanne put on her best fake innocent look and began acting out her anticipated conversation with the Mother Superior. "Honest, Sister Bernadette! Ah had ta go ta th' bath-rewm, an' all th' ones upstairs were occ-u-pado. So Ah came down here an' saw 'th laht on in yer office... An' ye'll never guess who was in there!" She came back to the present, smirking at me triumphantly. "An' then it'll be yer word agins' mahn, Kay-Lawny. An' un-lahk yew, Ah ain't no LIAR."

DAMN it! It killed me to admit it, but she had me there. My track record with the Sisters was abysmal. How many times had I shouted at the top of my lungs? "I'm NOT a little girl, I'm 21!!" All it had gotten me was a series of bare-bottomed spankings and a reputation as a troubled preteen who made up stories to get attention.

My mind raced, trying to come up with something, anything, that I could hold over her head. But Suzanne saw the look of fear in my eyes and knew she'd already won. Satisfied that I wouldn't run out on her, she turned her attention to why I was here in the first place. "Hmmm, mebbe we oughtta see what yew've bin up to on this here Inner-net."

Yes, she fucking said "Inner-net"!

And before I could stop her, she sat down at the computer and typed something into the open web browser. I watched in horror as pictures of very well-endowed naked men, some of them doing things to OTHER naked men, began popping up on the screen.

"Gaw-LEE you bin naughty!" Suzanne exclaimed. "Lookin' at nekkid pitchers when Sister ain't watchin'!"

"Keep your voice down!" I whispered urgently.

Suzanne spun around in the chair to face me. "If'n Ah'm gonna keep quiet," she said, "then yew OWE me, Kay-Lawny. Lahk a favor, an' Ah kin cawl it in any tahm ah want. If'n Ah say dew somethin'? Ah 'spect yew ta dew it, no ifs, ands, 'er buts."

Palakumele: blackmail. It was now perfectly clear that this was to be the latest stage in Suzanne's game of humiliating me.

I should have ended it right then and there. I should've yelled and woken Sister up and confessed to sneaking into her office at night to make calls and use the computer. I would have gotten in trouble for it, but at least I'd have spared myself the indignities that followed. Fucking 20/20 hindsight.

"All right, FINE," I hastily agreed, not having the faintest notion of what I was getting myself into. I still thought maybe if I could hold out just a few more days, my parents would get home and rescue me from this hell. Not that they'd even know where I was. I still hadn't been able to reach them.

"Aw-raht then," replied Suzanne, clearly pleased with the way this was going. "First order 'a biz-niss... Gitcher clothes off!"

"What?!" I demanded, wide-eyed, momentarily forgetting the need for silence.

"Yew done heard me."

Arguing with her was useless. And so, cringing, my face flaring hot in the near darkness, I began pulling the flowered muumuu I wore as a nightgown up over my head. Suzanne chortled when she saw what was underneath.

"HAW-HAW-HAW! Nice dahper, Kay-Lawny!"

She was referring to the big, bulky diaper I'd recently been forced into wearing at night, after a degrading bedwetting incident Suzanne and her friend Makala had staged at my expense. Now she was waiting for me to take that off too, so I tugged the crinkly plastic down my legs and stepped out of it. Underneath the hot saggy folds, my hips, thighs and ass were all covered with a sheen of sweat. It would have been a relief to get it off me, except for the fact that I was now completely naked in front of Suzanne Calloway.

Suzanne tilted the monitor so its light bathed my nude form a little better. "Gaw-LEE, yer a scrawny li'l thang!" she said, looking up and down my four-foot-ten body. "Lookit them robin eggs!" She reached out and tweaked one of my nipples, and I instinctively slapped her hand away.

"Don't touch me!" I snapped, moving my other arm to protect my tiny breasts. I wasn't wearing a bra, my chest was too flat.

"Still cain't believe yew really ARE twenny-one! Ah'm gonna have so much fun with this!"

"Why don't you just go back to Pigfuck, Arkansas?" I demanded bitterly. "Or wherever the shit you're from."

If this remark bothered Suzanne she did a great job of not showing it. Instead she gave me a sickeningly sweet smile and replied, "'Least Ah've got me a place ta go back to. Mah parents're comin' ta git me outta here, soon as their vay-kay-shun's over 'n' done. What've YEW got, Kay-Lawny?" Then, with an absolutely evil grin, "Heh. Mebbe Ah oughtta ask mah parents ta adopt yew, an' take yew home with us. Then yew an' Ah'd be together ALLLL th' tahm, an' we'd be fam'ly! Oh-haw-na, yer people cawl it, ain't that raht?"

Dear... sweet... GOD! The thought of being a hânai in Suzanne Calloway's family was too horrifying to comprehend.

"'s gittin' late," she decided. "We'd best be headin' back."

Akua praised, was I ever relieved to hear that. I reached for my clothes on the chair, but Suzanne gripped my wrist tightly.

"Ah didn' say git dressed."

And so I ended up walking back to the dorm without a stitch of clothing on. In the office doorway I hesitated, peering up and down the corridor, checking for any sign of movement. I was sure the thundering in my chest would wake someone. Then I felt a sudden, sharp SWAT on my ass, and I stifled a yelp.

"Giddyap!" ordered Suzanne.

I stepped out onto the cold hallway floor, my mind screaming. What the fuck was I doing?! What if one of the Sisters caught me here?!

Granted, I'd been in this kind of situation before. I'd been outside naked on the beach that night I got fired. I'd had my bare ass paddled in public. But even then I'd never felt so thoroughly exposed and vulnerable as I did now. The hall felt cavernous with no one else around. Panic throbbed in my stomach with every step I took, hands over my front, Suzanne following with my clothes. It was even worse than before, because back then my manager at the luau bar and that social worker Gail had forced me into those situations. This time I'd made the decision for myself. I'd actively chosen my current state of nudity over letting Suzanne blab to Sister Bernadette about my late-night phone calls.

Suzanne, God damn her, kept a good ten feet behind me on the opposite side of the hallway, leaving me with absolutely no cover. I tried not to look at her, but a couple of times she'd make some sort of noise, like striking the wall with her hand, just so I'd spin around in a fright. Christ she was enjoying herself. I knew beyond a doubt that she would milk this for every drop it was worth. It was her thing, she got turned on by seeing me paddled and humiliated. I also knew I had limits on how far Suzanne could push me before I snapped, and I hoped against hope that she wouldn't cross them.

Back in our room, I couldn't sleep. My imagination kept conjuring up increasingly degrading things Suzanne might make me do. I tossed and turned for hours. At some point I must have drifted off from pure exhaustion, I don't know.

Suzanne wasted absolutely no time. When Sister Ulalia's wake-up bell rang the next morning, I got up and headed into the bathroom like I always did, so I wouldn't have to shower with the other girls. When I opened the door to my favorite stall, I found Suzanne waiting there, along with her friend Makala. Makala was an islander like me, and about Suzanne's age, bigger than me and mean-looking, like a silent stone tiki. In all my weeks at Saint Sebastian's I'd never heard a word come out of her. I wasn't sure if she even could talk, or what her deal was, to be honest. And I was too intimidated to ask.

"Howdy, Kay-Lawny!" came Suzanne's cheerful greeting as I opened the stall. Immediately I turned to make a hasty exit but Makala grabbed me and pulled me inside. That's how it worked with those two. Suzanne was the brains, Makala was the muscle.

The stall was cramped with the three of us, small though I was. I saw Suzanne had a small pair of surgical scissors and became very frightened. What was she going to do to me??

"If'n we're gonna keep yew here as a twelve-year-old," Suzanne explained, "we gotta do somethin' 'bout that hair."

My hand went instinctively to my head, the long black locks that dropped like a sheer waterfall down the entire length of my back. My friend Oliana, another girl at the orphanage, has really short hair and everybody always makes fun of her about it. Surely Suzanne didn't mean for me to...!

"Not THAT hair!" Suzanne said impatiently, "THAT hair." And she pointed at my crotch. "Ah seen it last naht, yer gittin' awful bushy down there."

It was true. Normally I'd shave and wax, but of course the Sisters wouldn't let a little "child" like me near a razor. So the thick pubic curls had grown back full-force.

Before I could stop her, Makala had lifted my nightgown, grabbed the sides of my diaper, and pulled it down.

"Gawd yer puny!" exclaimed Suzanne. "Ain't she puny, Makala?" Makala nodded agreement, and Suzanne continued. "Cain't have th' Sisters seein' that hairy pussy an' figgerin' out yew really are a grown-up!"

She moved to one side, and Makala hauled me to the toilet and made me sit. Suzanne squeezed around her to block the stall door. There was no way I could get out.

She handed me the scissors.

So I had to trim my pubic hair with both of them watching every moment, God was it dehumanizing. I had to cut as close to skin as possible with those tiny scissors. It took forever, and I knew Suzanne was enjoying it immensely. I just kept my head down, hiding my glowing red face so I wouldn't have to see their exchanged smirks, and prayed for divine intervention.

It was answered, as I heard someone come waddling in, then Sister Ulalia's voice. "What's going on in here?" Then, "Keilani?... Suzanne?... Makala? Why aren't you girls getting cleaned up?"

Suzanne already had an answer prepared. "Sorry, Sister Ooh-la-lee-ah," she drawled. "But... Kay-Lawny here had 'erself another li'l accident las' naht!"

WHAT?? My mind screamed. That was an outright LIE, and Suzanne knew it!

She continued, "Me an' Makala was tryin' ta help her git cleaned up, so th' others wouldn' hafta know." That manipulative little bitch! She was using my previous bedwetting "accident", which she and Makala CAUSED, against me!

"Shut up!" I yelled, near tears from the unbearable humiliation. "It's NOT true!"

"Now Keilani, be nice," I heard Sister scold gently. "Suzanne is just trying to help. No one else will find out." Then, "Hurry up, you don't want to miss breakfast."

And I heard her waddle back out. Suzanne had scored a brownie point with Sister Ulalia, and I was left looking like an ungrateful little brat. A bedwetting ungrateful little brat! And I knew that, regardless of Sister Ulalia's useless reassurances, Suzanne would blab about this to everyone else the first chance she got.

At least I was done. My privates were left with a thin, soft patch of hair, perfect for a developing adolescent. I knew Suzanne had seen this too, so I stood and pulled my diaper up and my nightgown down with what tiny shred of dignity I could still muster.

Suzanne looked at me, her eyes suddenly icy. "That was too close, Kay-Lawny. Our deal was, yew go along with whatever Ah say. If'n Ah say yew pissed yerself, then YEW say yew pissed yerself. Unnerstand?"

"Fine," I muttered. Anything to get her to let me the hell out of here. I went to push past her, but Suzanne didn't move.

"Ah don' think yew dew. Ah think Ah need ta remahnd yew of the consequences fer not goin' along with what Ah say."

And she dug into her pocket and produced... my list.

My phone list. The numbers of places my parents might be. It was my only lifeline to the outside world, and now Suzanne Calloway had it! How had she...?

"Picked it up las' naht, when yew was busy bein' nekkid," she commented, answering my question. FUCK, I must have left it by the computer and she'd spotted it!

"Give that back!" I demanded, grabbing for it with both hands.

"'s mahn now," Suzanne crowed, "'til yew do ever'thang Ah want."

Suzanne popped the lock and exited the stall as Makala gripped my arms and pushed me backward, landing me with a splash in the toilet. Immediately my cotton nightgown began soaking up the ice-cold water in the bowl, leaving me with a huge wet spot on my ass. It was dripping water all over the floor, so I had to wring it out with my bare hands, God it was disgusting.

Suzanne and Makala left me to shower in peace. I had the whole changing room to myself since the other girls were done by this time. When I came out wrapped in my towel my two tormentors reappeared. Instinctively I clutched the tower tighter to myself, in case Suzanne was going to pull it off like she'd done once before. Not this time, though. She simply gestured back toward the dorm we all shared and informed me, "Gotcher clothes all laid out, Kay-Lawny."

As I approached my bed, my initial outrage at Suzanne going through my stuff quickly gave way to despair at what she'd chosen for me to wear that day. In addition to the normal white blouse, socks and saddle shoes that had become my uniform, she'd selected a black pleated skirt which I recognized as the one that was far too big around my miniscule waist, and...

THOSE.

Those godawful childish underpants with the big smiley-face flowers and matching pink elastic-lace trim. Gail, the prim and proper social worker, had brought them the night she'd picked me up, and I'd been stuck with them ever since. I hated them and felt so ridiculous wearing them, but Suzanne was calling the shots, so I pulled them on, along with the oversized skirt, then began searching around for the safety pin I always used to hold it up.

I couldn't find it anywhere. I was still looking when Suzanne came back to check on me.

"Whatcha lookin' fer, Kay-Lawny?" In a fake innocent tone that told me she knew damn well what I was "lookin' fer".

When I didn't give her the satisfaction of a response, she held up her hand and showed me the big curved pin, and said, "Wouldn' be this, now would it?"

I stood up and made a grab for it... and my skirt promptly dropped down to my ankles.

"Haw-haw-haw!" Suzanne chortled with laughter as I quickly pulled it back up, blushing furiously.

It was clear I wasn't going to get the pin back. This was part of Suzanne's plan, to make my skirt fall down all day, to let all the other girls see my embarrassing underwear. I thought of asking one of the Sisters for another, but quickly realized Suzanne would be with me all day and wouldn't let me have the chance. God, I felt so helpless in the face of inescapable embarrassment. If I were back at home all I'd have to do is walk into the bathroom and get a replacement pin from the drawer, but here I had to rely on the other adults for the tiniest little thing... Just like a child.

As I walked downstairs I tried to fix the skirt so it wouldn't fall, even tucking the top hem into the waistband of those horrible panties, but it was no use, it just wouldn't stay put. I was going to have to hold it up with one hand all day to keep it from slipping.

God DAMN you, Suzanne Calloway, I kept thinking.

Breakfast in the cafeteria was awful, I had to balance my tray with one hand while holding onto my skirt with the other, but I somehow managed to get to a table. I would have lost it again when I stood back up, except Suzanne's impish smirk tipped me off. I made it to my seat in the back row of our classroom and figured I was safe for at least awhile.

Until I remembered what today was.

Today was the end of our algebra section, and the day Sister Bernadette had told us that everyone would have to demonstrate how to solve an equation.

On the chalkboard. In front of the entire class.

Suzanne, that evil little bitch, had PLANNED it like this, I realized. She'd known about my sneaking around after hours, probably for weeks, and had chosen this particular day and these particular clothes to maximize my humiliation.

God, how was I going to get out of this?

Could I pretend to be sick? No, that wouldn't work, I knew immediately. I'm a horrible actress and an even worse liar. Christ, nobody believed me when I DID tell the truth, about my real age! And besides, if I dodged what Suzanne had planned for me, she could always decide to rat me out to Sister. So I stayed in my seat and steeled myself, vowing to avoid the embarrassment and thus ruin Suzanne's fun. It was all I had.

Sister Bernadette arrived and took her place, and class began. A few of the other girls went up and worked their math problems, and did fine. We were supposed to work on them at our desks too, but I sat in my seat and stewed, hunched over so maybe Sister wouldn't call on me.

At one point Makala got picked and silently did her problem for the class. Then a bit later Suzanne, and I got another evil smirk on her way back to her seat, knowing the remaining students were dwindling, that it was only a matter of time. Time, I thought, might be my savior. Maybe if this went on long enough, classtime would be over and I wouldn't--

I almost jumped out of my seat when Sister called out, "Keilani Akana." I sat bolt upright, guiltily. Next to me, Suzanne supressed a snicker.

Sister indicated the board. "Please do the next problem."

Oh God, here it comes, I thought, clutching my skirt tightly as I made my way to the front of the room, trying desperately to keep my wardrobe predicament inconspicuous. I got all the way to the blackboard before Sister asked me, "Keilani? Don't you think you might need your book for this?"

Scattered giggling followed but was swiftly silenced by Sister Bernadette's stern glare sweeping around the room. Except for Suzanne, she didn't care if she got in trouble. Hell, she liked getting punished.

So I had to walk all the way back to my desk, looking like a complete wa'awa'a. The desks were those flip-top kind you put your stuff inside, which meant using two hands, one to open it and one to take out the book. I was painfully aware of what would happen if I let go of my skirt, so I sat back down in my seat before opening it, well aware that everyone in the class was looking directly at me.

At least I remembered to hold on when I stood up again. And so, with one hand grasping my skirt and the other with my book, I made my way back to the front of the class, and realized...

"Um... which problem was it again?" I asked timidly.

Sister looked at me with disapproval, the naughty student who hadn't been paying attention. She didn't seem to notice my skirt problems as I looked down and shifted my hands, checking to make sure my panties weren't showing. Most likely she just assumed I was a nervous, fidgety little girl who couldn't keep still.

"Problem number seven, Keilani."

Seven. Fucking lucky number seven.

I had to lean forward against the chalk rail to hold my skirt in place as I flipped through the book trying to find what page we were on. Sister pushed me along with directions like "Chapter five... Page 47..." She was clearly growing impatient with me. I glanced up once or twice and caught Suzanne's growing amusement at my predicament. God this was awful! I thought I could put those bad memories of junior high behind me forever, yet here I was stuck going through it all over again!

I finally found the right problem, and turned my attention to how I was going to get it copied onto the board. Using the chalk would take one hand, and holding the book the other, which would leave my skirt vulnerable. I decided the best way would be to try to balance the book open on the chalk tray, that way I'd have a spare hand for the skirt. I stood with my front pressed up against the metal rail too, for extra insurance. I knew I looked ridiculous, but it was better than standing there with my skirt around my ankles.

Okay, I could get through this. I knew the material. Hell, I'd been through this crap ten years ago, and again in my first week of college review. I studied the simple equation I was supposed to solve, and...

My mind... fucking... went... blank!

It must have been the stress brought on by my current crisis, but at that moment I could not remember a damn thing about math. It was like it was in a fucking foreign language!

"Today please, Keilani," Sister chided.

Shit! Okay, I thought, start by copying the problem out of the book. I wrote it out slowly, trying to use the time to think. Two... X... plus... five... equals--

Suddenly the book slipped from its perch and threatened to topple onto the floor. Instinctively, before I could tell myself otherwise, I reached out to grab it with both hands...

...and my skirt slipped off my tiny hips and fell straight down, exposing my panty-clad ass to the entire classroom!

Laughter erupted all around me, the tittering of twenty or so girls half my age. One voice in particular rang out over the others.

"HAW-HAW-HAW! Didja see that, Makala! Kay-Lawny done lost 'er skirt! Lookit them perty li'l bloomers she's wearin'! HAW-HAW-HAW-HAW-HAW!!"

Sister Bernadette made her best effort at restoring order. She called out for silence, took out her ruler and rapped it loudly on the desk, but to no avail. Finally she threw up her hands in exasperation, seeing there was no way she was going to quiet the girls down. Instead she turned her attention to me, and simply shook her head with a mixture of sympathy, strained patience, and -- please let it have been my imagination -- thinly concealed amusement.

"Oh, Keilani..." Her voice had a definite tone of, "What on earth are we going to do with you?"

Sister dug around in the drawer of her desk and produced the safety pin I'd so desperately wanted. If only I could have asked her before, I could have saved myself from this indignity. Sister took hold of my skirt and fastened it in place for me. As if I were a little baby, incapable of doing such a thing myself.

By this time the din had more or less died down on its own, though Suzanne's loud obnoxious cackling lingered well after the other girls had ceased. After all that, I still had to finish the stupid math problem. My mind was still a blank, so Sister had to pretty much walk me through the whole thing. Everyone but me had been able to do it on their own. My face smoldered, tears threatening to spill from my lashes as I made my way back to my seat, between rows of amused eyes, knowing everyone in the class had seen and laughed at me in my stupid flower underwear.

Then I saw the gears turning in Suzanne's head and I realized the nightmare STILL wasn't over. As the lesson continued I noticed her chewing on something, but careful not to let Sister see. A few minutes later a whisper came my way.

"Psst! Kay-Lawny!" Her words were mashed by whatever was in her mouth.

I glared at her out of the corner of my eye, refusing to speak.

It didn't matter, Suzanne took the initiative, whispering, "Tell 'er it was yew."

"What was me?" I stupidly asked.

And with that, Suzanne spat the soggy gob of wet paper into her hand and whipped it toward the front of the classroom. It struck Sister Bernadette squarely in the back of the head with a wet smack. She whirled around, furiously. Everyone gasped.

"WHO THREW THAT?!" she demanded, her flaming gaze sweeping over every student in the class.

I sat perfectly still, trying not to make myself look guilty, but Suzanne kept glancing over at me with an expression that said, "Tell 'er." And Sister noticed. On Suzanne's other side, Makala silently pointed at me in agreement with Suzanne.

She approached my desk. "Keilani?" she asked, in a tone that told me she expected an answer immediately. "Do you know who threw it?"

I held off as long as possible. I'd been on the business end of Sister's paddling switch before, and wasn't at all eager to experience it again. Especially not now, with everyone in the class watching. ESPECIALLY not after what I'd already been put through today!

Finally, when I couldn't put it off any longer, I nodded my head, keeping my face turned down, struggling not to start crying in front of everybody.

Sister leaned towards me, and pressed harder. "Did YOU throw it, Keilani?"

Once again I had a chance to save myself, and once again I chose not to take it. Suzanne and Makala made it two against one, and I knew I'd get even worse if Sister thought I was lying to her. There was nothing else for me to do. So, biting my lip, I nodded, wordlessly.

Sister stood back upright, satisfied. "Please come up front, Keilani."

I obeyed, wringing my hands as I followed Sister back. God she's an indimidating woman. I knew what was going to happen to me, and I tried to mentally put myself somewhere else.

She bent me over her desk, my backside pointed at the other girls, then leaned close and whispered to me. "I know you had a bad time at the board, Keilani. But you can't take things like that out on other people. If you had studied like you were supposed to, you would know the material." Her words barely registered. My face was scrunched up, trying to block the tears that I knew were coming.

"Let this be a lesson to the rest of you," she told the class.

And then, right there with every pair of eyes on me, Sister Bernadette unhooked the safety pin and pulled down my skirt, followed by my flowery panties, exposing my bare rear end to everyone!

"Shouldn' she be wearin' a dahper?"

"SUZANNE CALLOWAY, YOU KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT!"

This time there was no laughter. Through tear-blurred vision, I saw Sister produce the switch from under her desk.

From the corner of my eye I saw her step behind me.

I heard a swish through the air as Sister raised her arm.

I heard the tense, collective gasp from the other girls.

I heard the WHACK as the switch found its mark across my little exposed bottom.

It took about a half-second after impact for the pain to fully register. When it did, it absolutely ERUPTED, a streak of searing fire burning across both cheeks, making me gasp sharply. I'd tried to brace myself but I was completely unprepared for the intensity of it. Sister was unrelenting, immediately lifting the switch for a second strike.

I lost it, I fucking lost it. I let go of any remaining inhibitions and just howled, squirming about as Sister rained thrash after thrash upon my poor little ass. Sobbing, I sucked in a shaky breath and let it out again in a loud bawl until I thought my lungs would rupture. Sister held me firmly in place as I wriggled and kicked, arms flailing, tears spilling onto her desk.

I'm sure I heard fucking Suzanne say something, but I couldn't make it out over my own screams and the blood pounding in my head.

It took awhile before I even realized Sister had stopped. She lifted my head so I was looking directly into her eyes. I could barely see her through the tears.

"Keilani." Very quietly, perfectly calm. "Don't ever disrupt my class like that again."

Sniffling, a stream of snot running down from my nose, I nodded my head and whimpered out a compliance.

Sister nodded too, satisfied. "Now go stand over there." She pointed to the corner, at the far end of the blackboard.

I bent over and reached for my clothes, not even caring how much I was showing anymore.

"Keilani."

I stopped, looked up to show I was listening, but not directly at her face.

"I didn't say pull your skirt up."

Silently I obeyed, shuffling into the corner with my skirt and panties still down around my ankles, my red-marked bare ass facing the entire class.

"All eyes on me!" ordered Sister Bernadette.

I had to stand there in silence for the rest of the lesson. My hands, my entire body was shaking. Every instinct I had was screaming at me to run from the room, but I knew I was in for another round if I did. I scrunched my face up and put every ounce of strength into suppressing my sobs. Time slowed as my sore little ass throbbed with pain. It had to have been close to the end of classtime, but it felt like I stood there for hours.

After class I waited for what I thought was a good five minutes before I even moved. Finally I forced myself to turn around, and found the room deserted. Breathing a final, deep breath of relief, which quickly dissolved into a long and pitiful wail, I bent over and pulled the bottom half of my outfit back on. Even the soft cotton fabric of my little-girl panties stung my ass. Eyes red and puffy, nose running, I made my way toward the door, wanting only to get away from any reminder of the horrible experience.

But it was no use. My tormentors had waited for me just outside the classroom. I caught the tail end of Suzanne's one-sided conversation with Makala.

"--was braht red, lahk one o' them zoo monkeys with the red bee-hinds!" Then she noticed Makala pointing and turned to me, beaming with pride.

"Gawd-DAMN, ya done yerself good, Kay-Lawny!" And she gave me a comradely slap on the ass, causing me to yelp in pain once more. "Ah'm a-gonna be fingerin' mah-self ever' naht fer a WEEK thinkin' 'bout that!"

There were a thousand hateful things I wanted to scream at Suzanne, but I didn't say anything lest the tears start spilling again. My ass was sore for two whole days after that. For the next week I was a fucking nervous wreck. My stomach was in constant knots. I could barely sleep, I couldn't eat. I think I even lost weight, making me even scrawnier and more pathetic than before. I kept waiting helplessly for the next round of humiliation from Suzanne -- that cruel, EVIL little bitch! -- but she seemed to be biding her time, content for the moment to watch me suffer. Suzanne was very careful about keeping my secret, and never told any of the other girls my real age, except maybe Makala, and she never talked. Occasionally I'd pass the two of them together in the hall, and upon seeing me they'd exchange devious smirks, as if they knew something was coming. I could only imagine what they'd been plotting all this time.

After lunch one day (which I didn't even touch), Sister Ulalia caught up with me in the hall and instructed me to come with her, but wouldn't say where we were going. I followed her to Sister Bernadette's office, where the Mother Superior was at her desk, finishing her own lunch. I tasted bile rising in my throat as I saw that Suzanne Calloway was there too.

"So, Keilani," Sister B said after swallowing a bite. "Suzanne says you have something you wanted to tell us."

Ohhhh GOD, she'd told! She'd tattled about me using Sister's office at night, and now Sister was waiting for me to confess to it, just like she'd done with the spitwad in class.

...Or was she? Could this all be a trick by Suzanne, to see if I'd turn myself in?

NO, kokami, I decided, Suzanne's manipulation was over! She couldn't make me admit to anything, she'd have to accuse me herself. So I played dumb, forcing her hand.

That was fine for Suzanne, she knew where she was going with this. Turning to the Sisters, she proudly stated, "Kay-Lawny an' Ah'd lahk ta announce that we're friends."

What the motherFUCK...? I wondered. What the hell was that little bitch up to now??

"Ah've noticed Kay-Lawny's havin' a tough tahm here, an' Ah'm gonna help 'er out. Mebbe we kin git through this together." She nudged me with her arm. "Ain't that raht, Kay-Lawny?"

All this time my jaw hung agape in disbelief. Suzanne was a problem girl herself, that's why her parents had left her here! She'd been causing trouble at Saint Sebastian's well before I ever arrived. She couldn't honestly expect the Sisters to swallow this load of kukae kohola?!

(That means "whale shit", by the way.)

Both Sisters were looking at me expectantly, waiting for me to confirm Suzanne's statement. I glanced over at Suzanne, saw that icy look in her eyes that told me I'd damn well better go along with her.

I couldn't bring myself to say it out loud, so I just nodded pathetically. I had no idea what sort of future repercussions this might have.

Sealing the deal, Suzanne put her arms around my tiny frame and gave me a big hug. God it was fucking revolting.

After the Sisters awarded Suzanne yet another suck-up point (even telling ME I could "learn a lot from her"), they shooed us out into the hall and I headed for the nearest bathroom. I didn't have to go, I just wanted some alone time to absorb this latest assault on my dignity. When I'd first gotten here, Suzanne was the troublemaker. How had things gotten so completely turned around?

But of course Suzanne followed, standing in the stall doorway, preventing me from closing it. "Well now," the little white trash drawled, "Bein' we're friends 'n' all, Ah reckon Ah don' need ta keep this no more."

She bent over and reached into her sock, producing a folded piece of paper. Unfolding it, she showed me my precious phone list. I reached out my hand, feeling a glimmer of hope. Was her cruel torture finally over? Had she had enough entertainment at my expense? Was she going to give it back to me now?

But instead Suzanne held it up in front of me, with both her hands at the top, and then slowly and deliberately pulled one hand down, ripping the page in half.

"NO!!" I burst out, pleading. "Stop! Don't! Give it back!!"

Holding the pages over hear head, out of my reach, Suzanne put the two pieces on top of each other and tore them in half again. And again. And once more. I jumped, trying desperately to grab them, while Suzanne calmly made her way to the nearest toilet and dropped the scraps into the bowl. I felt sick as she pushed the handle, flushing them away.

AIÂ! It was over. It was all over. I was NEVER getting out of Saint Sebastian's. My parents had no way to contact me, and now I had no way to contact THEM! I strained my mind to recall any of the numbers I'd dialed over and over so many times, even just one, but they were gone, completely fucking GONE.

It was hopeless. Suzanne had taken everything from me. There was nothing left to lose.

Which meant...!

"You fucking CUNT!" I felt my hand twisting into a fist, jaw clenching, as I took a deep breath...

Suzanne stopped me before I could do anything. "Whoa now, hold yer horses, Kay-Lawny! Y-Yew don't wanna git in trouble fer fahtin' now, do ya? Not after yew just said we's friends not two minutes ago...!" But she'd held up her hands defensively and I saw the fear in her eyes, she was afraid she'd gone too far. And Makala wasn't around to protect her.

I relaxed my fist. Suzanne was right, I wasn't going to do anything. Yeah, I know, I'm a fucking coward.

Defeated, I slumped back against the stall. "Mom... Dad..." I whined, to myself. God I missed them so much.

Reassured that I wasn't going to attack her, Suzanne fell back into her usual mode. "Oh, mah parents're gonna LOOOVE yew, Kay-Lawny." She paused a moment, pretending to think. "Y'know, Ah got their CELL PHONE NUMBER, mebbe Ah'll cawl 'em t'naht an' tell 'em allll about yew."

"Your mother and father," I muttered viciously. "Are they by any chance brother and sister too?"

For once Suzanne didn't have a snappy comeback. Instead she glowered at me. "It's high tahm you learnt some respect, Kay-Lawny. Don't yew be insultin' mah fam'ly! Don' fergit, Ah kin still tell Sister what yew bin doin' at naht."

Oh yeah. On top of everything there was still THAT. Jesus Fucking H. Christ on a motherfucking CRUTCH.

As if she heard me thinking that, Suzanne continued. "Yew best watch yer mouth, Kay-Lawny. Cuz from this day on... Ah OWN yew! An' if'n Ah got anythin' ta say 'bout it, yer gonna be here fer a lawng, LAWNG tahm!"

The only good thing that grew out of all this shit was that, once we were "friends", Suzanne more or less left me alone for awhile. Obviously she couldn't allow herself to get caught teasing me by the Sisters, who seemed to have bought into her born-again bullshit. Plus I think she realized she'd pushed me absolutely as far as she could before I pushed back, and that she'd better give me a break. Not that this opened any new doors for me. I was still stuck in this awful place. I couldn't even go back to using Sister's phone at night, not without my list. And I couldn't shake the feeling that she had something deeper, even more devious, planned.

I did have one confidant. Oliana, the short-haired outcast girl who hung around with me sometimes, and who was another frequent victim of Suzanne Calloway. She at least was nice to me, never laughed along with the other girls, and in fact always seemed to feel really sorry for me. She'd also noticed the change in me over the last few weeks, as a result of Suzanne's persecution.

I'd been thinking, God knows I'd had the time, and I finally came to the conclusion that I needed to be able to trust another human being in this place. So one day when the two of us were alone on one edge of the playground, I confided in Oliana, told her everything. About how Suzanne was blackmailing me. About how she made me do all those degrading things or she'd rat me out. The only thing I didn't tell her was that I was actually twenty-one. I couldn't prove it, and I didn't want her to think I was making up stories. I needed at least one person on my side.

Unfortunately, while Oliana sat and listened and seemed to understand, she wasn't in a position to do anything to actually help me. And the Sisters, I'd tried and failed with them more times than I could remember. I'd lost the ability to call my parents for help. Only Suzanne could have done something, and she was never going to let me go if she could help it.

And so finally, after weeks of pondering the futility of my situation, I became so desperate I did the one thing I originally swore I'd NEVER do.

I called Akela and Naia.

My two best friends from college shared a small flat in Kāne'ohe, and were spending the summer together. When they first moved in they'd asked me to join them and split the rent three ways, but back then I'd been too afraid of living away from home. God, that sounds so stupid now, after all I've been through.

I settled into Sister Bernadette's chair for what felt like the hundredth time, and probably was. Thank Akua I still remembered their number. The phone rang twice, and I got their answering machine:

"Aloha, it's Akela!"

"And Naia!!" Her bubbly voice, hollering in the background.

"And Naia," Akela reaffirmed. "We're not here right now, but..."

I was getting one last chance to back out before my penultimate humiliation. But I fucking didn't take it. I left them a message anyway.

"Akela... Naia... it's Keilani." I felt strangely uncomfortable talking to them after the beach incident. Like now that they'd seen my unwilling masquerade as a Saint Seb's orphan, I'd become somehow younger than them, in their eyes. I mean, Akela really was six months older than me and Naia was four, but... you know what I mean. "Keilani Akana," I added, in case they'd forgotten who I was. "Look, I--... I just can't take this shit anymore, I really need your h--"

"E, howzit, 'Lani?" Akela's voice, she'd picked up. "Hey Naia, it's 'Lani!"

"'LANI?!" came Naia's muffled, astonished voice.

"What's going on, where ARE you?!" Akela, sounding relieved to hear from me, but also a bit put out.

"What the hell HAPPENED to you, 'Lani?! We thought the tide washed you away!" Naia, clearer now, as if standing next to Akela.

And before I could get a word in, the stream of questions began:

"So okay, you owe us an explanation!"

"What was the DEAL with you on the beach that last time?"

"What have you been doing all summer?"

"With that stupid green suit?"

"We stopped by your house like fifty times but no one's ever there!"

"You still hot for Kahoku?"

"Are you ready for college? What classes you taking?"

That one hit me like a tsunami. Jesus, had that much time already passed? Had I really been here almost the entire summer?!

"I... I haven't signed up yet."

"You haven't??" Naia was shocked. "Well what you waiting for? Classes start next week, you better 'Āwīwī, aikâne!" Move, girl.

"Hold on, lemme get our schedules," said Akela, "maybe there's still openings..."

"We signed up for the same things, just like last year!" chirped Naia perkily.

My heart sank even deeper into despair. Every agonizing minute I was imprisoned here, I was missing the signup for the fall semester at U of H! If I didn't get out of this place soon, I wouldn't be going to college at all! My friends would all move on to more advanced classes and I'd be left behind. I'd miss out on all the parties... I wouldn't graduate! And what would Mom and Dad say about that? I couldn't take another lecture about how irresponsible I was, on top of everything else!

And, just like that, instantly, I became DESPERATE to get out of Saint Sebastian's NOW.

Akela and Naia were still talking over each other on the other end.

"Okay, shutup shutup SHUT UP!" I demanded, almost forgetting to hold down the volume myself, lest Sister hear. "Look, I'm at this place, it's..." I took a deep breath. Here it came. "It's an orphanage."

Immediately they started up again.

"An ORPHANAGE?"

"Are you volunteering there, or what?"

"'Lani, this a joke?"

"What orphanage, where?"

Finally I just stopped talking altogether. When Akela and Naia get like this, I know complete silence is the only thing that can get their attention back.

It worked. The other end got quiet, eager to hear what I had to say. FINALLY, someone was listening to me.

"I'm at this orphanage," I reiterated, "and I need you to come here -- WRITE THIS DOWN -- It's called Saint Sebastian's." I gave them the address. "I need you to come here and talk to Sister Bernadette, she's the Mother Superior here, she runs this place. Are you writing this down?"

"Yeah, yeah, we gotcha 'Lani," came Akela's voice. I thought I could hear the reassuring scratch of pen on pad.

I closed my eyes to think, to try and cover all the bases. I knew I'd only get one shot at this.

"Now look, Akela, Naia, this is VERY important. They... they think I'm a kid and they won't let me out. I've--"

"A KID?!" asked Naia in disbelief.

"How could they possibly think THAT?" Akela's voice immediately following. The same goddamn question I'd been asking the whole summer.

"Look," I pressed on, trying to keep control of the conversation. "The point is they won't believe you without proof. So. I need you to go get my driver's license, it's in my purse, in my parents' car at the airport. You know which car it is?"

Tripping over each others' words, they assured me they did.

"And bring some of my clothes too, go to my house. Anything, I don't care what. Key's under the potted palm, you know where?"

At that moment I noticed a movement out of the corner of my eye and, turning, saw a shadow through the glass pane in Sister's door. I had a "perty good reckonin'" of who it might be. I had no idea how long she'd been listening there, but decided I'd better wrap this up before she could interfere.

"Clothes, and my license. Bring them tomorrow. Talk to Sister Bernadette. Saint Sebastian's, are you SURE you've got all this?"

"Yeah, yeah 'Lani," Akela assured me. "But what have you been doing all--"

"Look, I SWEAR I will explain everything later and I will owe you SO MUCH and just PLEASE DO THIS FOR ME! Mahalo nui NUI loa!" I gushed, thanking them profusely.

I hung up without listening to their reply, praying they'd get everything right. Akela's a little spacey at times and Naia's a complete lōlō. Hell, I was the most mature of the three of us... emphasis on WAS.

Suzanne wasn't in the hall when I left Sister's office. She must have skipped out when I'd twigged on her eavesdropping. I wondered if she was still awake and watching me when I climbed into bed. I knew I'd have to be extremely careful tomorrow.

The waiting the next day was sheer agony. I woke up at five and laid awake in bed until Sister Ulalia's morning bell. I figured it would take Akela and Naia awhile to drive to Honolulu, find my parents' car and get back. Breakfast and my morning classes seemed to drag on eternally. The hardest part was constantly trying not to look over at Suzanne to see if she was doing the same to me. I absolutely did NOT want her fucking this up for me. That had to be her plan.

My stomach was so knotted I didn't feel like eating. I skipped lunch and went straight outside, and stared through the bars of the tall metal fence surrounding the playground. It wouldn't be long now and I could be OUT of here. My freedom was so achingly close.

"Psssst! 'Lani! Hey 'Lani, is that you?"

"Aiâ, it IS her!" squeaked Naia, as I spun around. My two friends were right there, peering through the fence at me, in my little schoolgirl outfit. Akela with the red streak in her hair, and Naia with all the different tan-lined symbols down her arms and legs. God it was good to see them again, but still...

"What are you DOING here?!" I hissed. "Go inside!" I pointed them towards the entrance, then looked nervously over my shoulder. Some of the other girls had finished lunch and were starting to come out for recess.

"We were. No one's at the front desk," explained Akela.

\*Sigh\*, of course not, I realized. Between the lunchroom and the playground, all the nuns were minding the girls. Why, oh WHY did they have to come right at this particular time?

Naia tried to hide a laugh but didn't succeed. "'Lani, why are you wearing THAT?"

"I TOLD you! They think I'm a little girl so they're dressing me like one." I felt like an idiot standing there in a long-sleeved blouse, pleated skirt and saddle shoes with knee socks, in front of my friends and their more risquè midriff tops and tight jeans. Instinctively I tugged my skirt down a bit in back so my childish panties wouldn't show. Today I was stuck with the old pair Sister Ulalia brought back from my house that time we went there, the pink ones with little hearts at the end of rainbows. They were my only clean pair.

"Heehee, she looks so cute!" giggled Naia.

"Just like my kaikaina," Akela agreed. Good God, she was comparing me to her kid sister, who was like eight!

As I turned my gaze downward in embarrassment, I couldn't help but notice both of my friends now had their belly-buttons pierced. That was something we'd all planned to go and get done together, but because I'd been stuck here the whole summer I'd missed out!

And then I happened to look past them, and my heart... fucking... STOPPED.

Waiting across the street, leaning against Akela's car, was Kahoku. The cute guy from college, who I had the hugest crush on! Standing right there in a sleeveless shirt and cutoff shorts that showed off his muscular arms and legs. Christ, what did they bring HIM along for?! He was staring at me with a mixture of amused disbelief and disgust. Like he was looking at a circus freak.

Akela noticed, and looked guilty. "Oh... We ran into him on the way. And Naia kinda... let it slip that we were going to see you. And he wanted to come."

"I think that means he still likes you, 'Lani!" giggled Naia, as if that was supposed to make me feel any less humiliated.

"Who still lahks Kay-Lawny?" came a sudden hateful voice from right behind me. Suzanne was there, along with Makala, and she looked absolutely delighted.

"Go AWAY!" I demanded. She was going to ruin everything!

"Yew cain't tell me what ta do." Then she saw Kahoku and waved, "Howdy, Kay-Lawny's boy-friend!"

"E, I remember you," Kahoku said, coming over to us. "The beach that time." God, he was talking to HER! But not to ME!

"'Ae, when Keilani was wearing that awful green baby lole`au`au," Akela added.

Shit, they'd all remembered every excruciating detail! I'd been trying so hard to forget!

"Hey what was that you called her..." said Naia, "Scrawny Keilani?"

Oh GOD, they remembered THAT too! I turned my head down to hide the rising blush in my face.

"HAW-HAW-HAW! Scrawny Kay-Lawny!" Suzanne chimed in. "That's her aw-raht!" The other girls, sensing something was about to happen, were starting to watch us from a distance. This was not going at all like I had planned.

"She does look pretty thin," agreed Akela. "Is she getting enough to eat?" She was talking about me like I wasn't even there! Like Suzanne was the older of us, and I was just a stupid baby!

"Come on," I told her, desperate to get this train wreck back on track, "go find Sister and talk to her."

Suzanne picked up on this immediately. Turning, in a loud voice, she proclaimed to the rest of the playground, "Hey! Sister! Kay-Lawny here's got somethin' ta say to ya!"

Oh HELL... If one of the Sisters came over here Suzanne would provoke me until I misbehaved again!

"Come ON!" I urged my friends. "Go back to the front office and wait!" Of course in my current outfit it was hard to take me seriously. I looked like an impatient little brat, demanding that the adults do what I said right now.

Naia stifled her giggles enough to ask Suzanne, "So are you staying here with Keilani?"

"Tha's raht," she announced proudly. "An' we're best friends, lahk two peas inna pod. Ain't that raht, Scrawny?"

Christ... I just wanted to curl up and fucking DIE...

Makala nudged Suzanne on the shoulder and pointed across the playground. Sister Ulalia had noticed the commotion and was waddling over to investigate.

Suzanne slapped her knee. "Aw-RAHT! This is gonna be fun!" She pulled me close, and whispered, "When she gits here? Yew tell 'er she's a fat, stupid toad-faced cunt."

"What?!" No way. No fucking way, this was NOT happening!

"Ah know yew got it in ya, yew done called me that th' other day."

She was right, I had. In the bathroom when she torn up my phone list, I'd lost my temper and called her a cunt. And now it was coming back to haunt me.

Sister Ulalia was approaching. Aiâ, how was I going to get out of this mess?

The answer, of course: I wasn't.

"Tell 'er," ordered Suzanne, "else Ah'm blabbin' yer see-krit!"

Naia's eyes lit up. "Oooh!" she squeaked. "What's Keilani's secret?"

Suzanne got the biggest grin. "Ohhhh, Kay-Lawny's bin a bad, BAD li'l girl! Sneakin' 'round at naht, breakin' inta Sister's office..."

"Is that true?" Naia asked me.

"No!" I answered defensively. "I mean, yes, but it was just to call my Mom and Dad! And you guys!"

Throughout all of this, Kahoku stood silently, glowering, debating whether I was still worth talking to after the last time. It didn't look like the deliberations were going in my favor.

Right about then, Sister Ulalia reached us. She noticed my college friends on the other side of the fence and, looking from one to the other, asked, "What's going on over here?"

Akela and Naia exchanged looks that said, "Well? What do we tell her?" They leaned in toward each other and whispered, trying to decide.

Anxiously, with pleading eyes, I mouthed the words, "Tell her I'm twenty-one!"

"Don'cha got anythin' yer s'pose ta say ta Sister?" Suzanne prodded me.

Sister looked to me for an explanation. "Keilani? Who are these girls?"

Both of them started talking at the same time.

"We're Keilani's friends from school."

"We all go to U of H together."

"Yeah, she's actually our age."

"But she's here by mistake."

"So could you please, you know, let her go with us?"

"Nuh-uh!" Suzanne joined in. "They're them cawlidge kids she was talkin' to on the beach that tahm. Tell 'er, Kay-Lawny!" She looked more insistant now.

"Auē! Here! Look! We brought her driver's license!" Akela took it out of her purse.

"Yew had 'em make ya a fake I.D.?!" Suzanne, in pretend shock.

"No, it's real!" I protested as Sister snatched the card from Akela's hand.

"Ah heard 'er talkin' 'bout it, Sister! She said they done made it for 'er, so she could git outta here!"

FUCK! Suzanne was going to sabotage my only means of escape if I didn't give in to her demands!

Sister Ulalia frowned at my license briefly... before tucking it away inside her habit. She'd apparently chosen to believe that stupid hick's version of events.

Seeing she was on a roll, Suzanne just kept going. "She cawled them two here, Sister," pointing at Akela and Naia. "Know how Ah know that?"

But Sister's attention was focused squarely on me. "Keilani, I think we need to have a little talk." That's right, a "little" talk for a "little girl".

I wasn't about to take this quietly. "A'ohe!" I hollered. "A'OHE!! Give it back! It's MMMMIIIINNNEEEE!!!!" I clawed at the folds of Sister's robes, trying to get the license back.

She grabbed my wrists and pushed me away, warning me, "Keilani... Uoki." Stop it.

Kahoku's voice. "Akela. You told me she would be different from last time." I couldn't bring myself to look at him. I realized how stupid my pureile behavior was making me look.

Akela and Naia decided to try and salvage this.

"Okay, okay, we're not really Keilani's friends!"

"It's true, Sister. We're, um, her sisters." Akela, looking to Naia for confirmation.

"Yyyeah... her sisters," Naia nodded stupidly, trying to do her part to solidify Akela's story.

It might have worked too, if only it hadn't been Sister Ulalia. She was the one who'd actually been inside my house before. She took me there the one time to let me get some of my stuff, and she'd seen the pictures of my family. So she was the ONE fucking person at Saint Seb's who knew for a fact these neither of these two girls was my sister. She fixed Akela and Naia with a highly dubious look.

"Nuh-uh!" Suzanne of course chose the most inopportune moment to pipe up. "Kay-Lawny's tryin' ta git these two ta help 'er git outta Saint Sebastian's. She said ta fib, an' per-tend ta be her relations, so she could git outta here! Ah heard 'er!"

"Keilani? Is this true?" Sister looked suspicious. After all, I was a troublemaker with a history of trying to get away from them. Oh, and as she asked that she kneeled down to my height, like she was addressing a child.

And what the hell could I do? Suzanne had completely wrecked my chances. I'd run out of plausible stories. There was nothing left to say.

"I think you girls had better leave," Sister Ulalia warned them, "before I call the police."

Their eyes widened, they looked intimidated by her threat. Glancing nervously at each other, they turned away toward the car. Oh GOD, I thought. This was my absolute, final, VERY LAST CHANCE, and it was slipping away!

"Hey Sister, y'know what else Kay-Lawny's bin up tew?"

"What's that?" Sister looked very interested to know.

"No," I begged Suzanne, "please don't...!"

"Yew done had yer chance. Now 's mah turn ta tell," she replied triumphantly. "Kay-Lawny's bin--"

I am so ashamed of what I did next. But you've got to understand, I was at the very end of my rope. I'd just lost Akela and Naia's help, and I'd probably lose my phone priviliges too, if Suzanne told Sister everything I'd been doing after dark. Which meant I'd never be able to call them again and maybe scrape a second chance. There was only one option left, and that was to do exactly what Suzanne Calloway wanted.

All of this shot through my mind in an instant, and before I could react differently, I turned to Sister Ulalia, and I shouted as loud as I could:

"LEAVE US ALONE YOU FAT, STUPID CUNT!!!"

And just like that, the entire playground went dead silent.

A split-second later I heard Suzanne whisper, "She fergot toad-faced, Makala."

Sister Ulalia stopped in her tracks and just stared at me. There was genuine hurt in her eyes and I felt absolutely terrible. I was furious with myself for being so mean, and with Suzanne for making me do it.

My friends heard it too, of course. It was amazing how fast the tide turned against me. Akela stared at me, bewildered. "Keilani... Why would you say such an awful thing?!" Naia looked equally shocked.

"Does she always act this way?" Kahoku, clearly growing weary of this. He said it to my friends, like I wasn't even there.

Sister managed to compose herself, and made the Sign of the Cross. "Well," she said quietly, shaking her head. "I have never in my life heard that kind of talk from the mouth of a twelve-year-old."

At those words, the last, final ounce of my self-control drained away.

"That's because I AM NOT TWELVE!! LIKE I'VE TOLD YOU A MILLION, BILLION TIMES!!" In my tantrum I jumped up and down, stomping hard with both feet as I screamed out each word, "I!! AM!!! AN!!! ADULT!!!!" I practically screeched that last one.

There was laughter behind me. Red-faced, panting heavily, I turned to see Akela... holding her camera phone at arm's length, pointed in my direction. She and Naia were snickering as they recorded my infantile outburst. Some friends they were turning out to be! God, I'd never be able to show my face at U of H again, not once those pictures started circulating! That's assuming I ever DID get out of here, which was looking more unlikely by the second.

The tears started welling up in my eyes as Sister said, "Keilani... come here."

I hung my head in shame as Sister took my wrist and pulled me over. And then she did what any adult would do with a child who had just spoken the way I had. As if genuflecting, she knelt down on one knee, and leaned me over her other one. I struggled but she held me there. Sister Ulalia's stronger than she looks.

This brought about a new round of laughter from my friends, and I heard Naia exclaim, "Auê noho`i ê! Look at her undies!"

"Cute rainbows, 'Lani!" Akela teased.

Then those went down, and my little olive-skinned ass was revealed in all its glory.

"A-ha-haaaa-naaaa!" my friends chanted, "'Lani's gonna get it!" Suzanne joined in, naturally.

After that came a SWAT. Followed by more. My mind struggled to take in this new affront to my dignity: My best friends AND my worst enemy had ringside seats as my naked, jiggling ass was spanked in front of an entire playground full of preteen girls!

This time I didn't scream out. I even stopped struggling. I just laid there across her knee with my naked ass sticking up in the air, and whined and cried bitterly, my face a scorching shade of red. The punishment itself wasn't painful... hell, she didn't even hit that hard. I think what made this time so awful is that Sister Ulalia had never spanked me before. She was the nice one, the one who'd always sympathized and tried to understand me. And now I'd gone and yelled the most horrible insult at her, so I'd earned exactly what I was getting. That hurt worse than even the humiliation of knowing my friends were watching it all, wide-eyed and slack-jawed, along with the guy I really liked.

Then I suddenly realized, with a sickening horror, that my LIPS were exposed! You know... BACK THERE!! I was flashing my private, most intimate parts right at Kahoku! Jesus, we'd never even been on a date yet, hell, we'd barely even talked before! And now he was seeing EVERYTHING!!

"'Aikola, Keilani!" taunted Akela. "Serves you right!"

Through it all, Suzanne Calloway stood off to one side, clutching her sides and positively bellowing with laughter, like this was the funniest thing she'd ever seen. And to her, it probably was.

Finally, after what felt like ages, Sister let up. "Now go sit down, Keilani," she pointed. "You've got a time-out."

Jesus MotherFUCK, a "time out"?! Could there BE anything more completely babyish?

I wrenched myself away from her, pulled my underwear back up, stomped over and plunked down against the fence and pouted, refusing to look at anyone.

Sister Ulalia addressed my (former) friends. "You three, leave. And don't come back here." Then, after giving me one final look of complete and utter disappointment, she went back to her normal playground duties.

"See ya, Scrawny Kay-Lawny!" called Naia, in a mocking imitation of Suzanne's Southern accent. Mocking ME, of course.

Before following them, Kahoku, who through all of this had said about as much as Makala, leaned down close to me and muttered, "Keilani... you're pathetic."

It felt like my heart had been stomped on. The guy of my dreams now hated me. My best friends were now making fun of me. And I was never, EVER getting out of here!

I hated EVERYONE! Stupid Sister Ulalia, my stupid friends, stupid Saint Sebastian and his stupid orphanage, stupid Sister Bernadette, stupid Gail the stupid social worker, the stupid boss who fired me from my stupid job, my stupid parents on their stupid trip, stupid EVERYTHING!!!

But most of all stupid fucking Suzanne Calloway.

I'd had it. I had FUCKING HAD IT!!

I stood up, breathing hard again. The hatred in my chest burned so hot it physically HURT. My clenched fists were rumbling like a volcano on the verge of eruption. I was apoplectic with rage.

Akela and Naia were getting into their car, but had to stop to see what I was going to do next.

Suzanne was so preoccupied with her own guffaws that she didn't notice me making a beeline right for her. Makala gasped and pointed as she saw how quickly I was bearing down.

"Whoa now Kay-Lawny, take it easy, Ah was just--!"

"You fucking haole BITCH--!!"

And I hauled back and I POPPED her one, right in the mouth. HARD. A lot harder than I ever thought I could, but I was so mad I didn't care. I wanted to hurt her, and I did. And it felt really, REALLY great.

For about three seconds.

And then, the horrifying reality of what I'd done started to sink in. In that moment I'd actually become a bratty little child. Not because of everyone else's beliefs about how old I was, but through my own actions. I'd just punched a kid, someone eight years my junior. Suzanne may have been mean, but she had never, ever, done anything outright violent to me.

The worst part of it is, everybody else still thought I WAS a spoiled brat acting out. Only I knew the full extent of my crime.

Oh, and Akela and Naia. And Kahoku.

Time seemed to slow to a crawl as I took it all in with helpless clarity. My hand hurt like fuck-all. And my stomach.

Suzanne reacted immediately, in a way that made me feel even worse. She didn't fight back. She didn't sic Makala on me. Instead she sank to her knees, she covered her face, and she BAWLED.

It was NOT fake, just to get me in trouble. Those tears were real. I was there, I saw it. Her lip was split and bleeding, and I could see a big bruise already starting to form where my fist had impacted. It was the most awful thing I'd ever witnessed, and I'd caused it.

Beyond the fence I heard a gasp of, "Oh my GOD!"

Makala put herself between me and Suzanne until the Sisters got there.

"KEILANI!! What the HELL are you doing?!" I'd never heard Sister Bernadette talk like that before.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm SORRY!" I wailed. I meant it, too. I would have given anything if only I could take that swing back. My hands were shaking, I was practically hyperventilating. It took every ounce of will to keep from crying myself, but I felt I no longer had the right.

Sister Ulalia went straight to Suzanne. "Let me see, dear," she whispered, trying to pull the injured girl's hand away from her bruised jaw. Turning to me, "Keilani... Hitting other people is kapu!"

Kapu.

Suzanne recovered enough to point an accusing finger at me. "Kay-Lawny's bin breakin' ALL yer rules, Sister!" she cried, loud enough for everyone on the playground to hear. "She's bin sneakin inta yer office at naht, an' usin' yer phone, an' lookin' at dirty pitchers, AH SEEN 'ER!" She sniffed, wiped her eyes with the back of her hand, and glared at me with an expression of absolute rancor. "Kay-Lawny Akawna... AH HATE YEW!!"

"Hush, keiki," soothed Sister Ulalia, wrapping an arm around the sobbing girl and leading her away.

Sister Bernadette wasn't nearly so gentle with me. She GRABBED the back of my blouse and physically dragged me across the playground toward the side entrance. "Keilani Akana, you are INCORRIGIBLE!"

The last thing I saw as I was hauled away was Akela, Naia, and Kahoku, on the other side of the fence, all staring at me with utter contempt. I knew they weren't even going to TRY coming back to help me get out, not after what they'd seen me do. I felt completely hollow inside.

"Sin is a stain on your soul, Keilani," Sister lectured as she pulled me along through the halls. "God can see it."

She took me past her office. I didn't dare ask where we were going.

"I want you to see it. I want you to remember, every time you look in the mirror, what you did to your friend."

Yeah, that's right. On top of it all, the Sisters now believed Suzanne and I were "friends".

We had come to the small room where I'd had my medical exam the morning after I'd first been brought here. Sister released me and motioned me over to the padded table.

"Fine," I said very quietly, bending over it, "Let's get this over with." I knew this time I deserved it.

"Don't you DARE tell me how to punish you!" hissed Sister Bernadette in the most dangerous whisper I've ever heard. She was livid.

I swallowed hard. If I wasn't getting another spanking, what was going to happen to me?

Sister began rummaging in a drawer for something, while reciting my new punishment. "You are confined to the orphanage until further notice. No outings, no recess, in bed by 7:30. You will do the Stations of the Cross TWICE every day. You will write a thousand-word essay on why what you did to Suzanne was wrong, and why you are sorry, and when it is finished you will read it aloud in front of the entire class."

"Okay," I answered meekly. I deserved every bit of it and worse.

But NOTHING could have prepared me for the "and worse".

Sister slammed the drawer shut, in her hands a small pair of scissors. She turned me around, facing away, and took hold of my long, black hair.

Now you've got to understand, the Hawaiian cultural tradition is to let your hair grow as long as possible. Some women even let it reach the ground and wear it up, continuing to let it go untrimmed. Being a native here, I'd basically been growing mine out since I was five. A few snips from Sister Bernadette's scissors was all it took to undo that, it was GONE.

Feeling queasy, I reached my hand back, almost afraid to touch it. I felt bare skin on the back of my neck. Yes, I still had hair, but it was now short, ending abruptly at the base of my head. I could feel the cold breath from the air conditioner against it.

I forced myself to look at my reflection in the wall mirror, and let out a shuddering gasp... I look like a fucking BOY!

I look like... Oliana.

Oh, God, I just had the most horrible thought. What if this is WHY Oliana's hair is so short? What if Suzanne abused HER to the breaking point before I came here, until she lashed out and got this same punishment? Maybe that's why Oliana never talks about it, because she's too beaten down...?

Oh, God...

I can't ask her, even if I wanted to. Oliana's scared of me now. A lot of the other girls avoid me... I think I'd rather be made fun of than shunned entirely.

After this incident, Sister decided I should be isolated from the rest of the girls, so she led me down a corridor I'd never been through before. We passed rooms with crucifixes above simple beds, and I deduced these were the Sisters' sleeping quarters. Finally she opened a door and told me this was where I'd be staying until my parents came for me. Near their own rooms, where they could keep a closer eye on me.

Sister didn't sound at all apologetic when she stated, "It's the only other bed we have."

Only... it wasn't a bed.

It was a fucking PLAYPEN!

My new room was the nursery, where the Sisters kept any orphaned babies they took in, only there weren't any at the moment. There were, however, big and colorful toys, and a mobile with different colored fish hanging from the ceiling. And my playpen. The cushion at the bottom had an absolutely babyish pattern of blue and pink teddy-bears, and the bars on the sides were just tall enough that, with my small stature, I'd have difficulty climbing in and out without help.

I stared at it for several seconds, thinking, "You CAN'T be serious...?!"

Sister noticed my reaction. "Keilani, if you are going to act like a big baby, then you are going to be treated like one."

And that was that. I was sent to bed without any dinner that night, God I was so hungry! Sister Bernadette lifted me up over the playpen's railings and set me down inside. I found if I lie diagonally in the crib I can stretch out and still fit. It was still far too early to go to sleep, so all I could do was lie awake, cover myself with a yellow blanky, suck my thumb, cry, and think about what a bad little girl I am.

Yeah, they're still making me wear the fucking diapers, too.

I'm not calling Akela and Naia again. I can't face them, not after this. I'm sure they both hate me.

Sister Bernadette keeps her office locked now. But I've found another computer. And I'll probably still keep writing about all the shit that's been done to me. It's cathartic, the only solace I can get.

So... why haven't you done anything yet? You know where I am, why the hell aren't YOU helping me?

You're... you're getting off on this, aren't you? You never intended to get me out of here, did you? You just enjoy reading about my ongoing humiliations!

Oh, GOD...

**"Keilani's Long Vacation" (Part 6)**

Ask any non-Hawaiian about the island of Moloka'i, and I guarantee you'll hear two words:

"Leper colony."

Never mind that most people don't even know the name of the place -- Kalaupapa -- or the fact that it's technically no longer even there, save for a few survivors who are too physically scarred to comfortably rejoin normal society. So they choose to remain there in a life of quiet, forgotten exile. Even though they really don't have any other alternatives.

That's how I'm feeling. Exiled. Physically scarred. Incapable of resuming normal life.

My once long, beautiful dark hair has been shorn down to a boyish length, as part of my punishment for punching Suzanne Calloway in the face. I ache inside whenever I miss feeling it on my pillow next to me, and the way it draped around my shoulders and blew in the warm tropical breeze out on the playground, all that was now gone. I still wake up every morning, and it takes a brief moment of shock before I remember it isn't there anymore, and why.

The other girls are somewhat frightened of me now, including my former friend Oliana, and rightfully so. They've started shunning me and will stop playing if it even looks like I'm going up to them, and they avoid answering back if I say anything to them. And not just because of what I did to Suzanne. The other day I did something else to make them all hate me. I'll get to that.

To be honest I don't even know why I'm still telling you all this. It's obvious you're turned on and you just want to jack yourselves off while you imagine all the humiliating things I've suffered. Bunch of fucking perverts. But I've got to talk to someone, and you're the only ones who listen.

Anyway, since the fighting incident I'd been pretty much isolated from the rest of the girls at the orphanage. While Sister Ulalia clanged her morning bell to wake the girls on the upper floor dormitories, Sister Bernadette would come to my room, turn on the lights and lift the shades while I lay in my padded playpen covered by my blanky... Long story, I'd acted like a baby so now they were treating me like one. Plus it was the only spare bed they had for me. The Sisters were clearly growing tired of my presence at Saint Sebastian's, and I could tell they were praying for my parents to finally come back.

As another part of my punishment, twice every day before I'm allowed to have breakfast or dinner, I have to do the Stations of the Cross. In case you don't know what that is, Sister Ulalia explained it to me. It's the story of the crucifixion of Jesus, broken into fourteen parts and posted around the walls. I have to go through each one in order and read about the Station and say some prayer. Jesus picks up the cross, Jesus falls down, Jesus falls down again. All it ever does is remind me of my own suffering.

This is in the orphanage chapel where the Sisters go to pray. It's always semi-dark, with candles shining on stained-glass windows, and there was always a Sister keeping vigil there, watching me to make sure I did it properly. They all took turns, and I knew some of them were irritable at being late to meals because of it.

They were forcing me to read the Bible a lot too, and I'm not even a Christian. Most recently they had me on the Book of Job, rhymes with "robe". It's about this guy, and God basically kills his whole family and takes away everything he has, then inflicts him with some terrible disease, all to see if the guy would still worship him. It's the most horrible story you could ever imagine, and Sister Ulalia sat with me in my room and made me read every word of it aloud.

The other horrible thing I had to read out loud was my punishment essay. You know, the one saying I was sorry for hitting Suzanne. Just imagine, trying to stretch that out into a thousand fucking words, and they wouldn't even let me mention any of the awful things that little cunt bitch had done to ME! In addition to the Stations and Bible I got assigned "writing time" every day, and the Sisters checked that I was actually doing it, sometimes making suggestions, slowly coercing the long-winded apology out of me.

Once it had their final approval, I had to stand in front of the entire classroom full of girls, with Sisters Ulalia and Bernadette watching, and read the whole thing, all six pages of it. I was in tears by the end, barely able to get the words out, and Suzanne sat there the whole time with a simpering smirk on her smug fucking haole face. She still had a purplish discolored mark on her lower lip where my fist had nailed her.

Suzanne herself isn't saying much to me these days. She doesn't torment me outright or call me "Scrawny Kay-Lawny" anymore, probably because she's still about half scared I'll go off on her again. Suzanne is a coward at heart. But she's gotten a lot more passive-aggressive, and still manages to get in a dig every now and then. Like the other day at lunch, one of the Sisters brought her something and she read it aloud to her best friend.

"Looky here, Makala... Ah got me a post-card from MAH PARENTS," and she said the last two words much louder and aimed squarely at the table where I sat alone. "Yep, they reckon they'll be over 'n' done with their VAY-KAY-SHUN perty soon, 'n' after that Ah'm gonna git ta GO HOME."

I, on the other hand, didn't appear to be going anywhere. The Sisters had a planned park outing for one day soon, once the rain let up, but Sister Bernadette specifically told me I wouldn't be joining them, I'd misbehaved and caused too much trouble the last time. This despite the fact that their own religion preaches forgiveness! Bunch of fucking hypocrites.

That's probably why I did what I did about a week later. That day the priest came by Saint Sebastian's to hear the Sisters' confessions, and he was still there when I went to the chapel for Stations. I didn't know his name, but I'd seen him before. He came by about once a month, and the Sisters would make me "confess my sins" too, sit and tell this guy every little thing I'd done wrong. I pretty much just made stuff up, saying what I thought he expected to hear, figuring the Sisters had already told him what "sins" they felt I should be confessing.

When I was done with that, the current Sister on "Keilani watch" went into the confessional after instructing me to sit there and wait for her. I was bored sick with the chapel, and looking around, I noticed that one of the windows was tilted open a bit. It was a warm, rainless day and the chapel doesn't have adequate air conditioning, so they must have opened it to let some of the tropical breeze in.

I went to the window, taking a rare glimpse at the outside world, and I saw it: The priest's car was in the circular driveway, and beyond it, the main gate was still open!

I could scarcely breathe. Did I dare try to escape the orphanage? I knew I'd be punished, probably another spanking with Sister Bernadette's switch, if I tried and got caught, but I also knew I'd likely never get another opportunity like this. The Sisters rarely left me alone anymore.

So I went for it. Out the chapel, down the hallway, to the main entrance. The front desk was unoccupied, it was just after noon and everybody was at lunch. When I saw this I BOLTED, slamming the front door open and hurtling down the steps and driveway as fast as my short, skinny little legs could carry me. The blood was pounding so loud in my head I couldn't tell if anyone had noticed and yelled after me, but I didn't dare turn to look back. I didn't even care that I was wearing the too-short pleated skirt that flashed my embarrassing, childish underpants to the world. I just fucking RAN, full speed, and didn't stop for six whole blocks.

With my lungs screaming I collapsed onto a sidewalk bench, clutching my chest. Christ, I was out of shape. Losing my recess privileges meant I didn't have any chance to exercise. Akela and Naia and I used to go jogging together sometimes, but that was months ago and we never pushed ourselves this hard. The sweat was pouring down my face.

Slowly I calmed down, got my breath back and saw that no one had followed me. But it was only a matter of time before they discovered I was gone. They'd probably already noticed I was missing from the chapel, I mean how long can it take a fucking nun to do a confession? I figured they'd probably search the orphanage grounds for me first, then see the open gate and guess that I'd fled through it. That bought me some time, but not much.

I had a chance to reclaim my life here. The first thing I had to do was get rid of these childish schoolgirl clothes. Back to my house. I knew that was the first place they'd come looking for me, so I had to be fast.

I forced myself to run at full speed again, trying to ignore the burning agony in my chest. Every street I went down, I was afraid the white Saint Sebastian's bus would appear, but it didn't. I staggered into my driveway and practically broke out sobbing with relief.

I knew my I.D. wasn't in the house, but my adult clothes were. That would be a start.

Front door was locked.

Key was...

...NOT under the potted palm!

Kokami! I swore aloud. Where had it gone?!

Then I remembered. Akela and Naia took it when they stopped here to get some of my clothes before trying to spring me from Saint Seb's. I cringed anew at the awful memories from that day.

I forced myself to think, there had to be another way. None of the neighbors had clothes hanging outside that I could borrow. And I didn't want to spend too much time looking, the Sisters might show up at any minute. I thought about breaking a window, but was afraid someone would see or hear, and call the police. The last thing I wanted was to get dragged off to the police station... again.

Then I remembered the bag of clothes I'd packed the day Sister Ulalia brought me here. I'd left it under the shed when she'd dragged me out after I tried to make an escape. I went around to the backyard and bent under to pull it out (in the process flashing my panties, if anyone had been watching).

It was still there, but... Kanapapiki! The bag must have gotten ripped open by a loose nail when I'd shoved it under there. All the recent rain had made the ground damp, and the exposed fabric had soaked it up, leaving everything soggy and unwearable. Fucking perfect. What now?! It would take too long for them to air-dry, and I didn't have any money for the laundromat. I'd have to get inside the house if I wanted dry clothes.

My two so-called "friends" were at U of H, clear on the other side of the island. But their place was in Kailua, I could go there and wait outside for them, then get my key back. I'd be safe there, the Sisters didn't know where Akela and Naia lived.

But at the end of our driveway I stopped, noticing the coconut-shaped mailbox on its wooden post. It was jammed full to overflowing, since I hadn't been around to collect the mail. Flipping through a handful, my blood ran cold as envelopes with scary red lettering jumped out at me:

"Past Due."

"Final Notice."

"Delinquent Account."

"Collection Agency Notified."

The electricity and phone bills hadn't been paid in months. Same with the mortgage and car payments. Jesus Motherfucking Christ, we could lose the house! My parents could come back from vacation with no place to live, all because of me!

Toward the bottom of the stack was a postcard, in Mom's handwriting:

"Aloha, Keilani! Our trip has been great, the rest of America is so big! We have hundreds of pictures to show you from San Francisco, Hollywood, and the Grand Canyon. Your father hit the jackpot in Las Vegas, so we're extending our trip a couple of months. We figured you'd appreciate having the house to yourself. Keep trying to call, but for some reason our phone hasn't been working here. We miss you, but we know you're a big girl now and can take care of yourself. Good luck in school. (Hope you remembered to enroll!) Give our love to Akela and Naia. Enjoy your long vacation away from us. Aloha au ia 'oe. A hui hou kakou."

Signed, "Makuahine and Makuakane". Mom and Dad.

I knew the real reason their phone wasn't working -- because I hadn't paid the bills! That was why I hadn't been able to contact them all this time! It took everything I had to fight back bawling right there. God what a fucking nightmare this had become!

Crying was for babies, though. I forced myself to calm down, reminded myself that I was an adult. I could still fix this. I knew there was money in my parents' bank account, I just had to get it to the right people. But to do that I absolutely HAD to get my old life back!

Akela and Naia wouldn't be done with classes until later and I couldn't wait that long. The only other thing closeby was... my old job.

The crappy touristy luau bar where I'd worked before this whole mess began. They had the traditional Hawaiian hula outfits there, or one of the other girls might loan me something more adult to wear. It was a long shot, but it was all I could think of.

I gathered up the most urgent-looking bills and tucked them into the front of my blouse, then turned and followed the street that led to the ocean, my saddle shoes sinking into the warm sand. It was a pain to walk, but the beach was the only place where the Sisters couldn't spot me while driving by.

I closed my eyes briefly and took it all in, feeling the ocean breeze and light spray on my skin, smelling the salt sea air that still carried a tinge of the recent rain, hearing the gentle shush of the surf. I'd missed it so much during all those lonely mehameha nights locked away in Saint Sebastian's, but now I couldn't enjoy it, I had too much weighing on my mind.

This stretch of sand, I realized, was the same area where I'd first been picked up by Officer Janene, that policewoman who found me naked after I'd been fired and forced to give up my work uniform. That asshole manager at the bar had put me in that situation, and the one I was in now, and I had more than a few fucking choice words to say to him!

A couple of tourist boys in swim trunks approached me, they were about my age. \*Sigh\*, no, not my REAL age, dammit, the age I LOOKED. One stayed a short distance away while the other came right up to me, his eyes gleaming with suppressed mirth.

"Hi," he said, but I didn't answer. He followed me along the beach for a bit, asking stupid questions. What's my name, did I live here, they were on vacation here, did I want to play with them. I continued to ignore him, keeping my gaze fixed firmly ahead, up the shoreline.

Then suddenly he just blurted out, "Your undies have flowers!" before scurrying back to his friend. It was loud enough that everyone nearby had to have heard it. The two of them collapsed onto the sand and rolled around, giggling.

"I said it to her!" he managed to gasp to his friend through the laughter. "Now you owe me a shaved ice!"

Damn kids. I've never liked kids much. Undoubtedly those two believed I was their age, and were just teasing a girl the way little boys do.

They were right though, the breeze blowing off the surf would lift the skirt's hem and flash everyone behind or to the side of me. I was so focused on getting to my destination I'd forgotten about it, but this incident made me fully aware.

Irritated, I tugged the back of my skirt down with one hand, holding it as best I could to hide my stupid underwear, my face flushing. Every time I heard laughter from the other beachgoers I assumed it was directed at me, the silly little girl in a school uniform, her skirt too short, marching with determined intent up the beach. By the time I got to the luau my feet hurt, and my shoes and socks were filled with sand.

The bar wasn't open yet, it was still too early. I knocked anyway, and a tall, darkly tanned girl opened the door. She looked surprised to see me there, but bent forward a bit, hands on her knees, so she could talk eye-to-eye. With the "child".

"Aloha, kaipo?" Sweetheart, she called me. "Can I help you with something?"

"Um, yeah..." I'd sort of planned on confronting the boss directly. I hadn't expected anyone else to be here. "Is Mr Keawe, the manager, in yet? I need to talk to him. See, I used to work here--"

The tall girl got an amused look on her face as she answered, "YOU used to work here? Come on, you're like ten?"

Shit. Why hadn't I come up with a better-sounding story? God I wanted a drink, but I knew they'd never serve me in a million years.

Seeing my expression, she softened a bit. "Just a minute, I'll get him." She turned and called into the back. "Hey, boss-man? I think your kid's here to see you?" Then to me, "Gotta wait out here, no one under 21's allowed inside."

Of course. She went back in, and I sat and fidgeted on the wooden steps until I heard the door open again. Dreading this conversation, I turned to face my ex-boss.

"What do you want, kid? I'm busy."

I stood up. "Mr Keawe... Don't you recognize me? It's me, Keilani. Keilani Akana. I used to work here, remember? You... um, fired me..." This wasn't off to a good start.

He studied my face, and I saw the light come on. "Oh yeah, I remember you, how could I forget. What do you want?" He seemed to notice my schoolgirl clothes for the first time. "And why are you dressed like that?" This from the asshole who sent me home fucking NAKED.

I sighed. "It's a really long story. Look, can I just borrow one of the uniforms to wear, just for a little while? After last time I think you owe me."

"I owe you?" His eyes narrowed a bit. "Have you forgotten how you acted that night you quit?"

"Quit?! I didn't fucking quit, you fucking FIRED me! Not to mention throwing me out with nothing to wear!"

"That was your choice, as I recall. When you couldn't stop giving me lip." This was getting me absolutely nowhere.

It just about killed me to do it, but I swallowed my pride. There wasn't much left of it anyway. "Look, okay, I totally understand why you fired me, but I was really hoping... Is there any chance I could have my job back? I'll start today, right now. Please, ke 'olu'olu, it would mean so much to me if you would just--"

He cut me off. "Keilani. I fired you for a reason. Remember that guy you yelled at and dumped the drink on? Well, he complained to his cruise agency, and they pulled this place off the route because of what you did. You cost me a lot of business, Akana."

I noticed the other girls were peering out through the windows, wanting to find out what was happening. And some of them didn't look happy at all to see me back.

"Well... then let me make it up to you!" I was getting desperate, I HAD to get my old life back! "I'll work for free, as long as it takes. I'll clean up fucking tourist puke, ANYTHING!"

But he just shook his head. "You're too late. Even if I wanted you back, I've already hired someone else. Now get out of here."

"Can I at least come in and use the phone?" I thought I might be able to reach Akela on her cell.

"No, you've gotta be twenty-one."

"I AM! I used to work here for fucksake!"

"Well you look ten, dressed like that. And I don't want somebody coming by and seeing you in here, and complaining to the liquor board. You've already caused me enough trouble."

The girls started turning away from the window. I heard some of them mutter agreement:

"Yeah, you tell it to her, boss-man!"

"Little bitch got what she deserved!"

And I distinctly heard one say, "God, what did she do to her hair?"

NOW what the hell was I supposed to do? I couldn't go home, and there was no easy way for me to get to the other side of the island. Even if I walked to the airport and got my parents' car, I couldn't drive. Any cop who saw me behind the wheel would instantly pull me over. Sister Ulalia had taken my license when Akela and Naia brought it, probably thinking it was a fake. Hell, I had no idea what time my friends even got out of class! I could end up waiting at their place for hours while they went out partying or whatever they did after classes these days. They had no idea I needed to see them now!

Feeling totally overwhelmed by the hopelessness of my situation, I buried my head between my knees and started to cry. God I was so pathetic, a helpless little girl who couldn't survive in the big, scary world without her mommy and daddy!

My pitiful sobbing must have carried inside, because after a few minutes the tall girl who initially greeted me opened the door and came out and knelt beside me. "Hey, don't cry, sweetheart." And she gave me one of the cloths they use to wipe the bar so I could dry my eyes. "What's the matter?"

In between choked sobs, I explained the basics of the situation: I was all alone, the only people who could help me were at U of H, and I had no way to get there.

"Well I have classes there too, how about I give you a ride? I'm Halia, by the way?" She offered her hand.

I shook it, then wiped my nose and sniffled. She pulled me up and led me over to her car. And opened the fucking BACK door.

"I can ride up front!" I complained.

"Look, I admit I don't know much about kids? But I do know if you're under a certain age, you have to ride in back?" I noticed she had the annoying habit of saying almost everything like it was a question.

"But I'm twen-- Twelve!" There was no point in trying to convince her of my real age.

"I'd just rather be safe, okay? I think there are laws or something?"

Fine, if it meant getting out of here and over to Akela and Naia faster. I climbed into the and buckled my seatbelt, and pouted. Who the hell was this Halia girl? I'd recognized all my former co-workers at the bar, but I'd never seen her before.

Then it suddenly dawned on me, Halia was my replacement! Mr Keawe must have hired her after kicking me out! My face flushed anew as I recalled the memory of that night.

"So... how long have you been working there?" I dared myself to ask.

She answered, "Uh... A few months now, I think?"

Dreading the answer, I pressed harder. "And, um, how did you get this job? I mean, did one of your friends recommend you, or what?"

"What, you wanna work here when you're older?"

I sighed. "Yeah, something like that. So how did you?"

"Oh," she said, and I saw her roll her eyes in the rearview mirror. "Well, Mr Keawe knows my uncle? And he told him he was looking for someone to replace this one girl? She was like really rude to this rich tourist malihini? And he complains and she ends up getting fired?" I winced as she went on. "The other girls said she didn't bring a change of clothes that day? And boss-man wants his uniform back? So he sends her home NAKED! Can you believe that?" She laughed. "I don't know if it's true though?"

That was more than enough. Silently, I faced the window and tried to watch the island scenery for the rest of the ride, but ended up turning my situation over and over in my mind, thinking of what would happen if I didn't get everything fixed today, and growing more and more anxious.

Finally, after an intolerably long ride, we pulled into the U of H parking lot.

"You sure you'll be okay?" Halia asked me, genuine concern in her voice.

"YES!" I snapped at her. I couldn't help it, I resented her for taking my job and laughing at my misfortune, even though she didn't know she'd done any of that.

She gave me a wounded look, wondering what brought that little outburst. "Well, I guess... malama pono, then?" Take care. She gathered her bookbag and headed off without another word to me. I felt kind of bad, but I had more important things to worry about.

I couldn't believe how long it had been since I'd last set foot on the University of Hawaii campus. Back then I'd felt so grown-up, taking college classes and easing into my adult life. Now I was agonizingly aware of eyes turning in my direction as I strode purposely across the campus. The coos of college girls, "Awww! Look at that little girl! Hi, cutie-pie!" I overheard one pair whisper that my underwear was showing. And a few guys pointed me out to their buddies for some reason, and one of them called out to me across the quad, asking whether I was an adult. I couldn't figure out why.

One girl approached me to ask, "Are you lost, ku'uipo?" But I swept past without acknowledging her. I knew where I was going, the registrar's office. I'd had five semesters here, I knew where it was, and I wound my way through the velvet-rope dividers forming a path up to an office area with a window. I had to stand on tiptoe to get my chin above the high counter.

"Kala mai ia'u...", I said to get someone to notice me. "Excuse me?"

"Can I help you, sweetie?" It was an older lady with graying hair.

"Yes, I'm trying to find... my friends, what class they have now. It's very important." I gave them Akela and Naia's info.

After working on her computer a bit, she produced a printout. Then took forever to explain in excruciating detail where the classroom was, talking slowly so I'd understand it. Finally she sent me on my way with a fond smile.

It occurred to me that normally these people wouldn't just give out students' class schedules like this, for safety reasons. But because I looked so harmlessly, even helplessly young, they'd made an exception. For once the age regression had worked to my advantage. It was about fucking time something went right.

Peering through a small window in the door, I saw Akela and Naia seated together at the back of the classroom. My two friends and I had agreed to take as many classes together as possible, even after we figured out our majors. Apparently they were still able to sign up for at least this one together. Akela's dyed red hair was easy to spot, and Naia's symbol-tanned skin next to it. They stood out in what appeared to be an older crowd, mid-20s and even a few older couples, with a number of women who were obviously pregnant. Probably around eighty people total, in a small auditorium with several rows of seats in a half-circle facing a chalkboard and projector at the front.

There was no sign of Kahoku, the indescribably hot guy I had a crush on. At least he wouldn't see me in this getup again!

I took a deep nervous breath, and knocked. The whole class looked up, and a male professor's voice cut off mid-sentence. A moment later the door opened and he stood there, a tall, slightly balding man, about 50, with glasses and a beard, dressed sharply in a sportcoat and tie.

"Yes? May I help you, little miss?"

I didn't much care for that moniker but I let it slide. "Yes, I need to speak with my friends, Akela Kamahine and Naia I'aukea, please." I stood up my straightest and spoke in my most adult voice, in an effort to counteract the schoolgirl uniform. "It'll just take a moment."

"I'm afraid we're in the middle of a lecture right now." He looked displeased.

"Please," I begged, "It's an emergency!"

He sighed, mildly annoyed, but turned, leaving me framed in the doorway, to call Akela and Naia down. The other students' amused eyes peered directly at me. Again, a couple of guys in the top row pointed in my direction and and whispered to each other. Self-consciously, I tugged the hem of my skirt down, fully aware of how I looked. I prayed there was no one else in the class who would recognize me.

Akela and Naia got up from their seats and came down to the door, with open-mouthed expressions. They looked stunned, but not entirely pleased, to see me.

"'Lani?! What are you doing here?"

"And dressed like THAT!"

"Take it outside, please," chided the professor.

"You cut your HAIR!" Naia gasped as he closed the door behind us. She reached out as if to touch it where it once was.

"No, I DIDN'T!" I batted her hand away and stamped my little foot angrily. "Sister Bernadette did! After you two ruined EVERYTHING! 'Ilio wahine!!" \*Sigh\*, I hadn't really planned to lay into them like that. If only Naia hadn't immediately made the hair comment!

"What do you mean, ruined everything?" Akela demanded, overlooking my Hawaiian insult. "We were just doing what you asked us to, 'Lani!"

"You did NOT!" I insisted. "You got me in trouble with Sister, and you made fun of me and took pictures, and you fucking brought Kahoku along to see the WHOLE THING!!" I struggled to fight back angry tears. "And Suzanne Calloway was SO MEAN to me and you just WENT ALONG WITH IT!!"

Abruptly the door opened again, before my friends could reply. It was the professor, and he did not look happy. "Either go somewhere else and talk quietly, or come back to class," he said, addressing my friends but not me. "You're a distraction."

Akela turned to go back inside. "Just wait out here. We'll talk after class, 'Lani."

"NOOOO, don't leave meeee!" I cried.

A pair of students passing by whispered, "Aww, poor baby!"

The professor rolled his eyes, but acquiesced. "Very well, but please keep her quiet," he said to Akela. "This is a place of learning."

I followed my two "friends" up to their seats, in the second row from the back. The classroom was full so Akela pointed to a spot on the floor.

"Now just sit quietly, 'Lani," she told me, "and behave yourself. We'll talk after class is done."

That's right, my friends, MY age, were lecturing ME on not causing trouble. I mean, sure, I was technically the youngest between them, but only by a couple of months. And I was definitely the most mature! Or... at least, I used to be. I fumed silently at the indignity of the whole situation.

The professor continued his lecture, occasionally gesturing at the projector screen with a long wooden pointer. The topic was on different child-rearing methods, and I quickly realized this was an introductory parenting class, hence all the couples and expectant mothers. Akela and Naia must have taken it as one of their electives... or were they thinking about having kids already? Did they have guys in their lives now? And if so, were things getting that serious? Hell, I didn't know! I'd been cut off from them for months!

I tried to focus on the lesson but couldn't. Time seemed to drag on endlessly. All I could think about was the mountain of overdue bills and what would happen to my family if we lost the house, what my parents would say. God, they'd never trust me with anything ever again!

I couldn't sit still, and I started to fidget and squirm. I HAD to get out of here and actually DO something to clean up the huge mess I'd inadvertently made. Maybe if I went to the bank and pleaded with them they'd let me have some money out of my parents' account. Anything was better than sitting here listening to this guy yack.

Except I still needed someone to take me there.

"Akela..." I whispered. She didn't respond. I got to my feet and leaned over as close to her as I could. "Akelaaaa!" More insistently this time. "I need to talk to you nowwww!"

"SHH!" whispered the girl in the aisle seat, who was trying to concentrate.

"Yeah, shut up you little brat," muttered a guy in the row behind me. Some parent he'd be, I thought.

Akela turned, irritated by my interruption, a finger to her lips. Kulikuli, she admonished, quietly shushing me.

Naia waved at me and whispered, "Hiiii, 'Lani!" as if I were a baby.

"So," came the professor's voice right next to me, making me jump. "Your name is Lani, is it?"

I looked up at him, glaring down with disapproval. I didn't want to tell my full name in case anyone else here knew me, so I just nodded.

"Well, Lani, I'm Professor Kalakona. And this is my class, and right now you are disrupting it."

"I'm sorry," I whispered quietly. "I'll be good, I promise."

Professor Kalakona shook his head. "I wish I could believe that," he said, "but you've already been warned multiple times."

And with that he took me firmly by the wrist and led me down the steps. At first I thought he was just going to send me back outside to wait, but instead he pulled me to the desk at the front of the classroom, in front of everyone.

"Now then. Seeing that our current subject is the appropriate discipline of a misbehaving child... I believe it will be helpful to present a real-life demonstration."

My stomach lurched in horror. He couldn't mean...!

Professor Kalakona sat on the edge of the desk and lifted my struggling form over his knee. I wriggled about, trying to get away, but he pulled both of my arms behind my back. Just one of his hands was big enough to wrap around both my wrists, holding them in place, which left him with one free...

"Nooo!" I whined in protest. "You can't DO this!"

"Oh, I assure you, I can teach however I please, little miss." he retorted. "I have tenure."

As the class chuckled at this remark, the Professor brought his hand swiftly down on my rear with a SWAT. Then another, and another. I felt the impact of his meaty palm through the fabric, and I was fully aware my too-short skirt was giving the entire class an unobstructed view of my flowery little-girl underpants!

"Observe how I am merely establishing dominance," Professor Kalakona said. Oh, God, he was instructing the class as he spanked me! "The important thing is to remain in control when you punish your child. Never let it escalate into a shouting match. Notice how I remain calm, whereas she is not."

Holy HELL was he ever right about that. My little legs were kicking madly as I wailed up a storm, my face fiery red.

His hand struck my panty-clad rear again. "Never too hard. It's more to put her in her place than to hurt her."

It was more than hard enough for ME! Or maybe it just the humiliation of being treated like this in front of a group of people I should have been going to college with! As I squeezed my eyes shut and the tears and sobs flowed, I prayed no one else who went to this school would recognize me.

I have no idea how long it went on, probably only a half-dozen swats, but it felt like an eternity. Finally I quieted down, and Professor Kalakona lifted me off his lap, tilted his head to look into my averted face, and asked simply, "Are we done?"

I stammered out a piteous compliance.

"And we're done," he announced to the class. "The child is once again obedient, and will remember this experience before misbehaving again."

He was right. I was ready to sit down and be a good little girl for the rest of the lesson, but then I sensed someone else had come to the front of the class. Two someones. "It's okay, Professor, we'll take her." In my post-tantrum state, Akela's voice barely registered.

"THANK you," he said, with deliberately exaggerated relief.

Akela and Naia led me, sniffling, toward the classroom door, my head turned downward.

"I've told you a million, billion times!" a mocking male voice suddenly called out from the back of the room. "I AM AN ADULT!!" I'm pretty sure it was the same dickhead who called me a little brat before.

And with that the whole class erupted into laughter, and just then I knew, I fucking KNEW, why so many people had been pointing at me and whispering as I'd made my way across the campus. On that awful day on the playground, when Akela and Naia came by, those were the exact words I'd screamed at Sister Ulalia. Which Akela had recorded on her cell phone! And had evidently circulated around the entire U of H campus!

My face burned from the degradation, bright red and tear-streaked. I forced myself not to look back, dreading the sea of camera phones that were almost certainly pointed in my direction at this very moment. I overheard the asshole chortling to his friends. "I knew it was her, I totally knew it!"

"'Lani, what the hell's the matter with you?" Akela asked me as we stepped back out onto the sun-dappled quad. "Why can't you just behave?"

"BEHAVE?!?" My rage overcame my shame enough for me to lash out at her again. "For your information, 'ILIO WAHINE, I have been treated like a fucking CHILD for the past FOUR FUCKING MONTHS!!"

(I was calling her a bitch, in case you wondered.)

Akela refused to shout back. God, she was acting so much more mature than I was. She'd definitely learned something from that class. "Well maybe the reason everyone's treating you like a child is because you act like one!"

"I am an ADULT!!" a guy passing by called out. All his friends found it hysterical, and they fucking stopped to watch! Out of the corner of my eye, I saw more people going for their phones.

Ignoring them, I stuck with Akela. "When?!" I demanded. "When did I ever act that way?" I knew it was a ridiculous question but after everything that had gone wrong today I was feeling so confrontational, I just wanted to argue with her.

"Oh, I don't know..." Her voice carried a sarcastic tone. "Maybe right now? Maybe that time at the beach? Or what about on the kahua pa'ani? You PUNCHED that poor haole girl, 'Lani! We SAW you!"

Okay, she definitely had me there. But STILL!

"All right LISTEN TO ME!" I yelled (eliciting a chorus of "Ooooh!" from the gaping onlookers). "Every fucking time I've ACTED like a child, it's because everyone fucking TREATS me like one! They just talk down to me and baby me until I can't fucking TAKE it anymore! Don't you fucking start it too!!"

Through all this, Naia stood with both hands over her mouth, eyes wide. I couldn't tell if it was tense apprehension at the drama unfolding in front of her, or if she was trying to hold back laughter. It's hard to tell with Naia sometimes, she's such a lolo. I hoped it wasn't laughter, there was plenty of that from the crowd that was slowly gathering around us.

Akela decided to do the grown-up thing and defuse the situation. "Come on, 'Lani, let's just get in the car." She took me by the shoulders and steered me through the crowd, away from the public spectacle I'd created. A few stragglers followed us into the parking lot, camera phones still pointed at me.

God, my college life was OVER! Before this I could have still slipped back into my previous life, no one would have ever had to know about Saint Sebastian's and "Scrawny Kay-Lawny" and the stupid smiling flowers. But thanks to all these videos, I knew I'd never be able to bring myself to show my face around the U of H campus ever again! I'm sure by now you've probably seen them on YouTube. I'd become a living, breathing, walking JOKE!

Naia opened the rear passenger door for me. "Little girls have to sit in the back," she teased.

I glared at her, but climbed in. What the hell else could I do? I had no other way back to the far side of the island. I crossed my arms in the back seat and pouted in barely controlled frustration.

Now if you're thinking Naia was just being mean to me for no reason, I should explain that we used to rib each other like this all the time. Hell, I used to get in plenty of jabs right back at her. But after everything I'd been through, up to and including that day, there just wasn't anything funny about it anymore. Why the hell couldn't they realize that?!

Akela turned the ignition and pulled out of the parking lot. "So where do you want to go, 'Lani?" she asked me.

Good, now we were getting somewhere. "The bank," I told her. Once I got some money, they could take me around to pay the outstanding bills in cash. Then I had another thought. "Except first can we go back to your place? I need to borrow a change of clothes."

"Aww, but you look so cuuuuute!"

"Naia, I swear to GOD..." I was getting so sick of this!

"Okay, but I think our clothes are a bit too bi--..." Seeing my experssion, Akela cut herself off, then finished with, "We'll find something that'll fit you."

"The stuff from her house should still be there." It was the first thing I'd heard out of Naia all day that didn't make me want to scream.

"Good," I said. Then remembered. "Oh, and after I get changed we need to find Kahoku, I've got to talk to him and explain all this."

My two friends exchanged uncomfortable glances in the front seats.

"Um... Keilani?" said Akela, treading carefully. "I'm... not so sure that's such a good idea..."

"Why not?!" I demanded.

She turned around in her seat, studying me to see if I could handle it. "Well, the truth is, Kahoku is... seeing someone else."

"WHAT?!" I couldn't believe this. "WHO?!"

Akela hesitated, wincing. "Well... you're probably gonna hate me for this, but... Kahoku asked me about you one day, it was after the whole thing at that orphanage... and we got to talking, I mean really talking, and..."

Unable to contain her excitement, Naia finished. "Akela and Kahoku are going out!"

"You STOLE my BOYFRIEND?!" I shrieked.

Akela suddenly got defensive. "Okay, first off? He was NEVER your boyfriend. You talked to him maybe three times. And second? You were never AROUND! He assumed you weren't interested, but then he saw you with those nuns, and it was so weird, and he wanted to know you were okay, so he asked me. And... we just sort of hit it off." A tinge of guilt crept into her voice. "Please don't be too mad, okay?"

"Stop the car!" I demanded, pounding on the back of her seat. "Stop the fucking car NNNNOOOOWWWWW!!"

"Careful, 'Lani," Naia teased, "or you'll get another spanking!" I fucking came THIS-CLOSE to punching her. I think it was only the fallout from last time, from Suzanne Calloway, that stayed my hand.

Akela complied, and I climbed out. "'Lani, WAIT!" she called after me. "We're sorry, okay? We just... we don't know how to handle you anymore, yeah? You been acting so weird lately! C'mon, get back in, okay? We can talk about this like adults."

"Yeah, I was just funnin', 'Lani," added Naia, for once looking genuinely serious. "Please don't go!"

But by this point I didn't want anything to do with either of them. I slammed the car door and stomped up the sidewalk, passing a pair of middle-aged women who chose that moment to open their mouths.

"\*Tsk\* Look at them, letting her wander around on her own like that!"

"I know! She's a child, shouldn't she be in school?"

"And look, her underwear is showing! I swear, the way little girls dress these days..."

"HEY!" I snapped at them. "It's RUDE to talk about people like that! And for your information, I am TWENTY-ONE!"

And once again I was reminded of my current state of dress, and the impact it had on my perceived age. I'd made no progress at all.

I stomped by them, down a short alley between buildings. It was narrow enough that Akela and Naia couldn't follow in the car. They made no effort to get out and come after me, they must have seen that trying to drag me back would only result in another kicking and screaming fit. It wasn't until later that I realized I'd blown my chance to get my house key back from them, but I was so angry that I didn't think about it at the time.

On the next street over, I passed a small hale ku'ai, a clothing boutique. And, aiâ, AIÂ... I am SO ashamed of what I did next! You have to believe me, I would NEVER have imagined myself capable of this, but I was so desperate, I just HAD to get back to my normal life any way I could! And it all came down to needing something to wear!

The sales clerk looked at me a bit strangely when I went inside, and asked if she could help.

"I'm just looking, thanks," I managed to get out. I silently hoped none of the raw emotion over Akela and Naia was still visibly lingering.

I browsed around the store a little, putting together an outfit in my size. I passed on the traditional, age-anonymous Hawaiian garb, opting instead for a button-down top and a matching jacket and slacks set that would give me a practical, distinctly adult look. Added a pair of heels that would enhance the effect. A bra, an actual bra, albeit an A-cup. Pantyhose, form-fitting and semi-sheer. And finally my own naughty little secret, a pair of the lacy, black thong panties I'd been denied for so long at Saint Sebastian's.

In the fitting room, I stripped bare and discarded my old uniform in a crumpled heap in one corner. Hopefully that was the last I'd ever see of it again. I took my time, luxuriating in the simple pleasure of putting on big-people clothes, admiring my new grown-up self in the mirror. Even my newly shortened hair didn't detract too much. At least it wasn't in pigtails anymore, I tried to reassure myself.

The initial euphoria didn't last long. I quickly found myself having trouble balancing wearing the heels, just from being out of practice for so long. And the thong I'd wanted so badly now felt... uncomfortable, the way it was stuck between my cheeks. The whole thing dampened my spirits. Surely I hadn't reverted that far! Was I really ready to become a big girl again? Could I really go through with this?

A sudden knock on the fitting room door startled me, and I stumbled about clumsily in the heels. "Do you need some help in there, miss?"

"Miss," she'd called me. Not "little miss" or "little girl" or "Keilani dear". Just "miss". Already I was making progress.

"Maika'i no au, I'm fine," I answered back. "Be out in a minute."

In the end I settled on just the pantyhose. With them I didn't really need underwear. Just as grown-up as the thong, and infinitely better than those awful smiling flowers. I vowed I'd take good care of these.

My schoolgirl saddle shoes, I ditched altogether. My feet were sore from being crammed into them all day. I decided I could walk around in socks until I found something better. I didn't want to go out and browse for a different pair of shoes, the clerk was probably already getting suspicious.

I opened the door a crack and peeked out, canvassing the store. There weren't any security cameras that I could see, and only the one saleswoman. I thought I might be able to get away with it.

Now you've GOT to believe me, I had every intention of paying for the outfit! But I had no money, and I knew I wouldn't be able to get any out of the bank looking like a preteen. Now that I was dressed properly, they'd take me seriously. And once I had cash, I could mail it to the store with an anonymous note explaining my situation.

\*Sigh\*, fucking best-laid plans...

The sales lady was helping someone else. It was now or never. My whole little body was trembling. I took a deep, unsteady breath in an effort to calm myself... and I BOLTED from that fitting room, between the racks of mu'u mu'us and straight out the door!

And I plowed SMACK, face-first into a uniformed police officer.

"Well, well, well," she said, grabbing the collar of my newly pilfered top so I couldn't escape. "Where do you think YOU'RE off to?"

Inwardly, I wailed in despair. Because we'd met before. It was the same officer who'd caught me naked on the beach the night I got fired! Janene, I remembered. And she did not look happy.

"Shoplifting's a serious offense, young lady," she told me. "Now are you gonna come quietly or do I have to use the cuffs?"

CUFFS?! 'Ai kae, this was really serious! I'd never been in this much trouble before in my life! My thoughts immediately went to what my parents were going to say, and I fought back another bawling outburst.

"Yeah, we've been looking for you all day," Officer Janene explained as she drove the police cruiser, with me in the back. "They reported you missing a little after noon. That lady in the shop saw you acting suspicious, and she called us. Lucky me, I get the call to respond." Then: "What's your name, kid?"

I winced at that, and what I had to tell her next. My voice quavered. "Keilani. K-Keilani... Akana."

There was a thoughtful pause from her. "Now where have I heard that name before?"

I silently begged that she wouldn't remember me.

"Ah, that's right! You're the little nudist I picked up skinny-dipping on the beach a few months back! Tried to pass yourself off as an adult." She chuckled. "Looks like you're still trying. Even got yourself a haircut, I see. Aiâ, you just can't seem to stay out of trouble, can you? Fortunately we have a place for problem girls like you..."

I know what you're thinking. But it wasn't back to Saint Sebastian's, at least not yet. It was worse.

No, I didn't end up in jail. Since Officer Janene believed I was a minor, I was taken instead to the juvenile detention center adjacent to the Kailua Police Station.

Yeah. She brought me to fucking JUVIE!

I sat at the admissions desk while she filled out some paperwork, feeling more shame and disgrace than any of my little-girl punishments had ever evoked. What was going to happen to me now? How long were they going to keep me here?

Then I had an even more horrifying thought: Officer Janene brought me here simply because, to her, I was a "youthful offender". If she somehow discovered my true age, I'd be tried as an adult and go to adult jail for sure! I'd end up carrying a criminal record for the rest of my life! And I realized, from this point forward, I now HAD to maintain this identity, to go along with being 12 years old! No more "I'm really 21," not EVER!

"You wanna call your parents?" Officer Janene looked up from her paperwork and asked me.

Yes, GOD YES, I wanted that more than I'd ever wanted anything in my life. But I couldn't. I no longer had any idea where to reach them. So I just shook my head miserably.

"All right, I'll do it for you," she said. "What's their number?"

I couldn't even get the words out.

"Lemme guess, they're still 'on vacation', like before?"

I gave a pitiful nod.

Officer Janene shrugged. "All right," she said, clearly not believing me. "We'll figure out what to do with you."

She picked up a phone on the desk and dialed it.

"Yeah, Gail, it's Janene, I got another live one for you. Pretty sure she's the kolohe from Saint Seb's."

Oh God, "Gail". I was being handed off to Ms Whitmur from Social Services again!

"Yeah, Keilani Akana, that's her." Pause. "Yeah, I know it's late." Pause. "Yeah, we can hold her for tonight, and you can pick her up in the morning." Even though I wasn't privy to the call, I could sense the social worker's irritation on the other end. "No, she didn't try to pass herself off as an adult this time. Although I did catch her in the middle of playing dress-up." Pause. "I'll tell you later." Pause. "Yeah, I know that's like three I owe you. 'Night, Gail."

She hung up, and turned to me. "All right, hands against the wall and spread your legs."

"W-what?!" I could scarcely breathe.

"It's just a pat-down," she assured me. "Keeps everyone safe."

I obeyed, though my knees were so wobbly I could hardly stand. She felt carefully through my clothes, under my arms and down my sides, looking for weapons or drugs, I guessed. My ticklishness made me fidget and squirm at her touch.

I was so scared and shaking, and I must have lost control because the next thing I knew, I felt a stream of something hot and wet on the inside of my thighs, running down my legs, soaking the front and back of the stolen outfit I was still wearing.

Officer Janene pulled her hands away and gave a little sigh of annoyance and disgust. "Do we need to get you a diaper?"

'AI KAE, the humiliation was indescribable! Through my scrunched-up, tear-streaked face, I could only shake my head. I wanted to die right then and there, rather than endure another second of this!

"Well, let's get you cleaned up at least." She led me away from the admissions desk and to a small shower room. I knew I was a big girl, and could have and should have done it myself, but I let Officer Janene unbutton and remove the shirt I'd shoplifted, sniffling the entire time. She paused briefly to examine the small stack of bills I'd salvaged from the mailbox, then tucked them into a back pocket. I didn't dare demand them back. She peeled down my sodden slacks and pantyhose. I felt so disgusting and ashamed.

She nudged my naked little body under the showerhead. "All right, wash up and I'll get you something to wear to bed." Bed, meaning I was going to be spending the night locked up here.

I heard a lock click as she shut the door. It wasn't necessary, as I had nothing to wear and absolutely nowhere left to run off to anymore. I leaned my head against the tiled wall and let the streams of water mingle with my tears.

Janene returned shortly with a towel and dried me off. I didn't resist or tell her I could do it myself. What was the point? I was a helpless little baby who couldn't do anything on her own. And of course, now I was a little thief, too. A juvenile delinquent.

She helped me into a pair of plain white cotton underpants, a long white T-shirt that actually covered them, and a clean pair of socks. I was brought to a "room" -- it didn't have any bars and they didn't call it a "cell", but it did lock from the outside. It had a sink and toilet, a small bed, and nothing else.

Officer Janene told me there was a common room where the other juvenile offenders could watch TV, play games, or just sit and talk with each other. But I was too drained from the events of the day, and too afraid of running into another Suzanne Calloway among them, so I just stayed in my room by myself. There I spent the most sleepless night of my life, going over and over in my mind what a failure I was as an adult, that maybe I deserved to be treated like I was twelve.

The next morning I was still lying on the bed, awake, when the door unlocked and I heard another familiar but dreaded voice. "Good mooorning, Keilani dear."

I felt vaguely ill as Gail Whitmur stepped up beside the bed and looked down at me with stern eyes behind her librarian glasses.

"Let's get you dressed and back home," she said, getting straight to the point. I didn't for a moment associate "home" with going back my parents' house.

Gail pulled me up into a sitting position and lifted the nightgown over my head. Then she began dressing me in a sickeningly familiar outfit: A sleeveless undershirt, white blouse, black saddle shoes, and a pleated skirt that was both too large and too short. My old orphanage uniform, rescued from the store where I'd dumped it. It seemed I would never be rid of the damn thing! Officer Janene had clearly confiscated my stolen adult clothes, and I'd never see them again.

I didn't resist, or make any effort to dress myself. I just let Gail do it all for me. She was silent the entire trip back to Saint Sebastian's, but through the rearview mirror she kept a close eye on me in the the back seat. She said nothing about the change to my hair, evidently being familiar with that particular punishment of Sister Bernadette's. We passed through the gates, which one of the nuns shut and locked immediately behind us, I noted.

Ms. Whitmur undid my seatbelt and lifted me out of the car with both arms. Then she bent down on her knees, and gripped hold of my chin with one hand, holding my face so we were eye-to-eye.

"Keilani, dear," she said sternly. "You to listen to me and listen well. The way you act, the things you do, they have serious consequences. Right now you're heading down a path, and I've seen it happen to lots of little girls your age. If you don't wise up, and learn how to behave, very soon... Then by the time you finally DO turn twenty-one, you're going to find yourself with a very screwed-up, very unhappy life."

Yeah, thanks so much for the fucking heads-up, Ms Bitchmur.

Gail spoke briefly with Sister Bernadette, and I overheard the words "court date" mixed in. It ended with the consensus that Gail would call later and they'd discuss exactly what to do with me, then she got back in her car. Shoulders slumped, I turned to go back inside, but Sister's voice stopped me.

"Keilani."

"W-what?" I murmured, almost a whisper.

"You KNOW what."

I dared myself to look up at her. She held the business end of her switch in one hand and was tapping it in her other.

I let out a long, high-pitched mewling whine.

"Up against the wall."

I did as I was told, hands against the brick façade, my little ass pointed at the front gates I was sure I'd never pass through again. Sister flipped up my skirt and pulled down my panties as she'd done so many times before.

The switch ripped across my exposed cheeks with a WHACK that echoed around the orphanage ground. I bellowed in pain at the top of my lungs.

"The Seventh Commandment, Keilani. Recite it for me."

"W-what?" I could barely force the query out.

WHACK! Another agonizing flare across my rear, and another anguished yelp from me.

"The Seventh Commandment."

"Th-thou shalt not..." I struggled furiously to recollect. "S-steal!" as I suddenly realized where Sister was going with this.

WHACK! My little knees buckled. I prayed I wouldn't piss myself again.

"That's right. Stealing goes against pono, against the aloha spirit." WHACK! "It breeds distrust. It shames you and it shames your family." WHACK! "How do you think your parents are going to feel when they find out?" That very thought had been gnawing at me relentlessly, ever since Officer Janene picked me up.

Sister Bernadette gave the switch one last WHACK for good measure, and I collapsed to my knees and curled up in a fetal position, feeling utterly drained. My throat was sore and hoarse from screaming. I stayed like that until the Mother Superior lifted me up and directed me toward the doors.

Rubbing my sore behind, I trudged dejectedly inside... and was immediately confronted by Suzanne Calloway. I'd braced myself for some crowing remark about my failed escape and recapture, but she wasn't smirking. She didn't show any amusement about my latest spanking. Instead she looked pissed.

"Yew think yer awful clever runnin' off lahk that, don'cha, Kay-Lawny?" she sneered, albeit from slightly behind her bigger, stronger friend Makala. "Sisters was all set ta take us out th' other day, but then they hadta go lookin' fer YEW. Ah ain't had hardly NO tahm outsidea this here orph'nage since Ah got here, an' yew done ruined it fer ev'r'body! Ah'm gonna GIT yew fer this, Kay-Lawny."

Terrific. Just fucking terrific. As if the repercussions of my shoplifting and the mountains of unpaid bills weren't enough for me to constantly be worrying about.

The truly nauseating thing was, Suzanne was right! The huge mess I'd landed in, it was all because I didn't think things through. If only I'd waited until everyone else had left on their field trip, that would have been the perfect time to make my escape! There would have been fewer Sisters around, no Suzanne to rat me out to them, and probably more time before they discovered I was gone. All the other girls would have gotten their day out without me wrecking it. Instead I'd impulsively rushed off and done what I wanted right then, without thinking of anyone else.

Exactly like a KID, I know... You don't have to fucking say it.

Sister Ulalia took me back to my isolated room, put me back in diapers and feety pajamas, and lifted me into my crib. I buried my face in my pillow and bawled until I fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. And that's how I ended up feeling like a Moloka'i leper.

Exiled. None of the other girls want anything to do with me anymore. They all look at me with the same contempt that was once exclusive to Suzanne Calloway. Even my former friend Oliana gives me the stink eye.

Physically scarred. I can still feel the sting of the raw red welts across my tender little ass cheeks.

Incapable of resuming normal life. I don't need to explain that one, do I?

It's completely hopeless. The only thing that's ever going to get me out of here is my parents coming home. Someone reading this has got to work at a hotel, a casino, or another tourist spot, SOMETHING! Please, I'm fucking begging you, if you come across 'Enakai and Mai'li Akana, tell them what's happening to me!

**“Keilani's Long Vacation" (Part 7)**

Okay, before I proceed any further with my latest fall from adulthood, I feel like I should explain another concept from the Hawaiian language. Last time I told you how Sister Bernadette lectured me about pono, and how my actions on the day I ran away from the orphanage were "against pono".

Pono means, roughly, doing the right thing. And there is always a right thing. Pono is the correct answer to every ethical question, regardless of any individual or religious interpretation. It is what you know to be right, even if it's not what you want, or what you think is best, or what you know you can get away with. Pono is absolute, there is no grey area. But it's different from the Sisters' Christian concept of righteousness, as that often translates to self-righteousness, or doing "what God wants us to do". Pono is also not the inverse of kapu, in the way that "good" and "evil" are opposites.

I'll use myself as an example. When I took that outfit from the clothing boutique, that was not pono. It doesn't matter that I desperately needed it to get people to take me seriously as an adult. It doesn't matter that I had every intention of paying for it later. No matter how you try to twist or rationalize or make excuses for something that's not pono, no matter how much you bury it in the back of your mind, deep down, you know what is truly, universally "right". And that's what you do, and you're at peace with your life because of it.

We native Hawaiians have it easy. All our parents, including mine, taught us the meaning of pono as we grew up. That's their kuleana, their responsibility. So it's an inexorable part of who we are. Or, in my case, how I should be. But needless to say, I was far from being at peace with my life.

I had more than enough to stress about: My upcoming court hearing for stealing from the store. The mountains of overdue, unpaid bills. The question of whether my parents would get home before it was too late. And on top of it all, Suzanne Calloway, the bane of my existence here at Saint Sebastian's, had vowed to "git" me. God only knew what that might entail.

As usual with Suzanne, I didn't have to wait very long to find out. It was the night before my court date. I was lying in the nursery playpen that had become my bed, isolated in a room in the Sisters' private cloister. The orphanage was quiet. The Sisters had a nightly prayer gathering after the girls were put to bed.

The door was locked, and there were the wrought-iron designs that served as bars on the windows. Even if I managed to open one, it was a second-floor drop, and I knew I wouldn't find the main gate unsecured. The Sisters wouldn't make that mistake again.

I heard a key in the lock, and assumed it was one of them checking in on me. They'd been doing that a lot since my recent escape attempt. So I rolled over onto my side and pretended to be asleep.

"A-LOW-haw, Scrawny!" came Suzanne's hateful, grating Southern voice. Why couldn't she just leave me alone? "Don'chew jus' look a-DOR-able in yer li'l feety pajamas?"

Ah yes, I didn't tell you about those last time, did I? They were a donation that turned up in the annual clothing drive, and of course they were just my size. They were an awful shade of pink, with bright yellow pads on the soles of the feet, an embarrassing button-up flap over the ass, and a stubborn zipper in the back that meant I couldn't easily get into and out of them without help. I'd fought a valiant struggle the first time Sister Bernadette brought them in to put on me, twisting my little body every way, trying to keep Sister's hands away from me as she forced first one foot, then the other, into the thick cloth legs. She grabbed me as I tried to crawl away, forced my arms in, then finally, zipped up the back before lifting me over the rail and into the padded playpen.

Over time I'd grown more compliant, since I always got them taken off again in the morning, swapped for my regular Saint Sebastian's uniform of plain white blouse and a skirt that was either too loose or too short. Being isolated from the other girls, I never thought anyone but the Sisters would ever see me wearing them. Of course Suzanne had a knack for ensnaring me in my most vulnerable and humiliating state.

Instinctively I sat up and scrambled back into the far corner of the pen, as far away from her as I could get, like a trapped animal. The bars were just high enough that I couldn't easily climb out on my own in my confining nightwear.

"Get the fuck OUT of here!" I yelled at her, hoping one of the Sisters would hear and come to my rescue.

"Awww, lookit th' cute li'l baby, Makala!" Suzanne cooed, and for the first time I noticed that she'd brought her silent partner in crime along. "Does th' li'l baby need a dahper change? Ah reckon Ah better check!" Suzanne easily reached over the bars, hooked her arms under mine, and began lifting me out. She was strong, but then, I'm also really small and light.

"Git 'er legs, Makala!" she instructed, and Makala took hold of my thrashing lower half by the ankles. They dropped me unceremoniously stomach-down on the nursery floor.

"HELLLLP!" I hollered at the top of my lungs. "SISTER BERNADETTE!!"

"Oh, di'n't Ah tell yew?" Suzanne asked, with badly-feigned surprise. "Ah AM Sister Bernadette!" And she rummaged under her nightgown and produced... The Mother Superior's punishment switch, pilfered from her office! My face went white.

Makala tugged on Suzanne's nightgown a bit, and pointed at herself questioningly.

"Yew? Yew kin be Sister Ooh-LA-lee-ah! Now go 'n' wake ever'body up, they ain't gonna wanna miss this!"

Makala hesitated, looked at me, then back to Suzanne, indicating a bit of concern over what I might do.

"Aww, don' worry, she ain't gonna hit nobody agin. She does that, an' Sister'll shave 'er BALD! Ain't that raht, Kay-Lawny?"

Reassured, Makala ran off to fetch like an eager puppy, leaving me alone with Suzanne.

"Ah bin thinkin' a lot about that tahm yew done hit me, Kay-Lawny," she drawled as she held me down. The bruise on her face had healed, and she was smarter now, paying attention, kneeling on my legs and holding my forearms down so I couldn't take a swing at her again even if I wanted to. "An' yew know what th' Bah-ble says? It says, if some-body strahks yew, yew oughtta turn th' other cheek."

With the switch in her hand, Suzanne undid the zipper on the back of my jammies, and I was powerless to stop her. She peeled it down, exposing my bare olive flesh, and I realized that the only thing worse than having Sister Bernadette squeeze me into childish pajamas was having Suzanne Calloway pull me out of them.

"Now Ah know yew ain't GOT much cheek ta turn," she continued, forcing my arms out of their sleeves one at a time. "But that don' matter none. Cuz it also says, if sum'un takes yer coat, yew offer 'em yer cloak as well!" And to drive that point home, she began tugging the jammies off my legs. I held onto them as best I could, but Suzanne eventually pried my fingers away and was able to finish undressing me.

Makala returned at this point, followed by a bunch of girls from their dormitory. Some of them were rubbing their eyes, looking sleepy and somewhat annoyed, others looked nervous about being in this area which was part of the Sisters' private quarters. But all of them burst into smiles and laughter and pointing when they saw me at Suzanne's mercy, naked except for the big, baggy diaper around my midsection and waist.

All of them except Oliana, once the closest thing I had to a friend, who did her best to look away out of respect for me. We hadn't spoken much since my blow-up on the playground, but I strongly suspected Suzanne had put her through similar torment before I'd ever arrived here.

"Kay-Lawny's got 'erself a big day t'morrow," Suzanne explained to her audience. "So Ah figgered we oughta git 'er up braht 'n' early!" She leaned down and whispered icily in my ear. "Yew 'member when yew done run off 'n' th' Sisters hadta spend th' whole day lookin' fer yew, an' Ah missed goin' on mah field trip?" she asked. "Well, Ah reckon since yew done ruined MAH big day, Ah'm gonna ruin YERS!"

No matter how I turned my neck, I could only catch a glimpse at the corner of my eye, but I knew she was brandishing the switch. As the other girls gathered around eagerly, Makala held my arms down as Suzanne slid the diaper off my bottom.

"Well now, Ah do believe it's all better since 'er last whuppin'!" She ran a hand over my bare olive skin as I fought back tears. "Would ya look at that, Makala. Smooth as a li'l baby's butt!"

And she raised her arm.

Instinctively, I winced.

\*tap\*

I let out a pained little whimper before it hit me that Suzanne actually... hadn't hit me. She'd just given me a tiny little play swat with the switch, not even enough to hurt. Just enough to remind me of my place here. Somehow, this didn't make it any better. She still had me naked and pinned down, with everyone else watching. I felt the tears threatening to escape.

The other girls, clearly not expecting this either, broke into surprised laughter. A few groaned in disappointment, clearly wanting to see me punished. I could see Oliana furrow her brow. Later it dawned on me that she knew Suzanne wasn't done yet.

She bent down to whisper to me again. "Ah done warned yew not ta cross me, Kay-Lawny. Yew know Ah kin do ennythang Ah want ta yew, don'cha?" I nodded, afraid to say anything lest I start bawling and be unable to stop. "Ah could beat yer nekkid li'l ass 'til it fuckin' BLEEDS, an' you cain't do nuthin' about it." The tears were coming now, I couldn't help it. "But y'know why Ah ain't gonna do that?" I just squeezed my eyes shut and shook my head no. "'S cuz Ah'm BETTER'n yew, Kay-Lawny."

I knew Suzanne wasn't being racist here, claiming she was superior to me because I was native Hawaiian and she was halakea. She was making the point that she had complete power over me, and she could have been as brutal as I was that day on the playground when I punched her in the face. Instead she'd chosen to show me that not only was she in control of me, she was in control of herself. She wasn't going to let her anger at me push her into brash, impulsive action. She was going to be more of an adult than I was.

Okay, maybe "more of an adult" is a stretch, considering what she did next. More... calculating, that's a better word. Suzanne had always been calculating.

Makala let go of one of my wrists, tugged on Suzanne's sleeve, and indicated the clock on the wall.

"Yeah, yer prob'ly raht, Sisters'll be done b'fore too long. Wouldn' want 'em ta miss out on th' show!" She climbed off my legs, and instructed, "Git 'er arms, Makala!"

Makala took hold of them and together they carried me, back legs flailing, out of the Sisters' quarters with the rest of the girls now wide awake and eagerly in tow. She kept a firm hand gripped tightly over my jaw so I couldn't scream for help, while taking care not to give me any opportunity to bite her. Down the stairs and through the main hall we went, past the classrooms, to the chapel at the far end of the orphanage. My stomach iced up in horror as I realized what Suzanne had planned.

"Yew got 'er?" Suzanne asked Makala, who nodded determinedly. "Don' let 'er git away, now." With Makala's arms wrapped tightly around my entire upper body, I was unable to prevent Suzanne from yanking the diaper completely off my legs. The velcro straps holding it in place made an intense ripping noise as they were pulled apart.

"Ah see yer finally gettin' some pubes, Kay-Lawny! 'Bout tahm, Ah reckon!" Yes, my adult pubic hair, which Suzanne herself had made me cut off to keep me looking young, was growing back.

Absolutely no one tried to stand up for me. Most of them were a little scared that siding with me would mean sharing my fate, plus I'd ruined that trip for every one of them, and none of them were happy about it. Suzanne was just the only one willing to accept the consequences of retaliating so brazenly.

As soon as the diaper was off, Suzanne and Makala pushed open the doors to the chapel with their bodies and flung mine inside! I landed in the aisle between the rows of pews, just as the Sisters turned around and saw me sprawled out naked and sobbing from the degradation, my "new" pubes on full display.

Sadly, this was not all just a horrific dream. How did I keep losing to a 13-year-old?! Of course Suzanne got in terrible trouble with the Sisters for all of this, but she didn't give a damn whether her actions were pono. She enjoyed the ass-paddling punishment she got just like always, and took care to minimize Makala's role in the prank.

Needless to say, that incident completely shattered any confidence I may have had about my court appearance, but there was nothing I could do except face it anyway. Gail Whitmur arrived at around eight the next morning, and she, along with Sisters Bernadette and Ulalia, drove me to the Kāne`ohe Courthouse for my shoplifting trial.

The courtroom was small but the hushed atmosphere still managed to make it seem cavernous and oppresive, and a feeling of guilt began to settle on me before the proceedings even started. Well, I mean, I WAS guilty, but still.

"Now Keilani," instructed Sister Bernadette, "Be sure to speak up, answer every question honestly, and please, in the name of all that is Holy... BEHAVE yourself."

She didn't need to tell me that. I was fucking petrified. It was completely different than all the adult trials I'd seen on TV shows. The courtroom seats were mostly vacant, and there wasn't a jury, just the judge. "Magistrate Kuulei Kaleleiki," the nameplate on her bench said. She didn't look friendly.

The clerk who was working at the store I'd stolen from was there, along with Officer Janene, who'd arrested me. There was also a man and another lady I didn't recognize, who I later found out were the prosecuting attorney and the store owner.

Sister Ulalia put a hand on my nervous shoulder and whispered not to be scared, that everything would turn out okay. I wasn't at all convinced that I wasn't going straight back to juvie and staying there until they decided I was 18. My court-appointed public defender consulted with Gail and the Sisters, but not with me.

Finally Judge Kaleleiki called the hearing to order. The prosecutor presented his case, the store clerk testified her version of events, that a little girl had come into the shop alone and browsed, and had taken a long time in the fitting room, so she'd gotten suspicious. When she saw Officer Janene passing by she stopped her and asked her to wait right outside, just in case. It was a good thing she did, because the little girl had changed into some expensive clothes and tried to run out of the store with them. Did she recognize the little girl? Yes, it was me, and she pointed me out. It was all on the store's video surveillance. There wasn't really any defense to present.

The judge asked me to come up and sit in the big chair next to her bench. She asked me a lot of hard questions:

Why did I try to take the clothes from the store? I answered because I liked them but couldn't afford them. It was the truth, if not the whole truth.

Did I know shoplifting was against pono? Yes, I did.

Did I know that the value of the items I took made it a "Class C Felony" under Hawaii law? I felt sick. I hadn't even looked at the price tags.

Would I ever do something like this again? No, never. I meant it, and I hoped like hell she believed me.

How old was I? I swallowed, hard, knowing full well that I was lying in a court of law... and said 12, almost 13.

Did I know what would be happening to me right now if I were an adult? I just nodded and said I'd be in jail. I could only pray they would never discover my actual age now. The repercussions were too frightful to imagine.

Finally she sent me back to my seat. I didn't cry, but I sure wanted to.

Ultimately, Judge Kaleleiki's ruling was that there was "probable cause that she has committed a delinquent act", her exact words. Then she asked the lawyers whether they thought I should be sent to juvenile detention or simply taken back to the orphanage. My stomach twisted up in a tight knot. This was it.

The court defender pointed out that no actual loss had been incurred by the store, that I'd appeared apologetic and contrite. The prosecuting attorney agreed, but stressed that I was a runaway risk, and needed to be closely monitored, and he wasn't convinced the Sisters could handle that on top of all their other duties. Sister Bernadette stated firmly that they were "keeping a better watch on her since the incident, and are in the process of arranging foster care."

"Whoa, wait, WHAT?!" I blurted out without thinking. "Foster care?!?"

A few people smirked at this, and Sister B gave me a harsh glare, but the judge ignored the outburst, and with a tap of her gavel announced that my sentence was a fine of three times the value of the articles taken, plus 40 hours of community service. Sister Bernadette breathed an audible sigh of relief, and I felt awful for having put everyone through all this. But also tremendously relieved myself.

In the end, it was decided that I could simply perform my community service... at the orphanage. Of course this tickled Suzanne to no end, seeing as how she was free to continue tormenting me. It was also a convenient excuse for the Sisters to continue keeping me separated from the other girls.

So every day from then on, I did a few hours of chores under Sister Ulalia's watch (because I still couldn't be trusted alone), while the other girls got to go outside and play. In addition to my mandated 40 hours there was also the hefty fine, and since I didn't have it and the orphanage couldn't really afford it, I had to work to make that up as well.

Most of it was simple menial tasks such as washing dishes or cleaning. Suzanne didn't interfere with my work, aside from creating little messes that I'd have to clean up, or deliberately leaving something gross on her lunchroom tray. And of course she never missed an opportunity to make a comment when she thought Sister Ulalia wouldn't overhear. "Howdy, jail-bird!" she'd whisper, or she'd call me "kanaka hana kalaima", which means criminal. I knew it was a term she'd gotten one of the other native girls to teach her, and most of the time she mangled the pronunciation with that putrid accent of hers.

She definitely didn't try anything massively humiliating like the chapel thing. Still, the way she smirked deviously whenever she caught a glimpse of me told me Suzanne still had something even bigger planned, and I couldn't shake that intuition.

I broke into a cold sweat whenever I thought about Sister Bernadette's "foster care" comment, but I didn't have to wait too long to find out what it meant. One day Gail showed up again and I was brought into the Mother Superior's office.

"Keilani..." Sister Bernadette began once Gail and I were seated. She got right to the point. "You've been staying here with us since June, and I think it's become obvious to everyone that this is not working out."

For once, the two of us agreed on something.

"You don't want to be here, and we don't..." Sister hesitated, as if she were about to say one thing but decided better of it. "Your presence here is just too disruptive to the other girls, and to the staff. So we've decided that, until a more permanent solution can be reached, you will be placed under the care of Ms Whitmur. I believe you two already know each other?"

Gail put a hand on my knee and gave me a smile that was just a liiitle too enthusiastic. "Oh, I know you're probably nervous, Keilani dear, but I just know we're going to have a lot of fun together!" Her head bobbed in an eager little nod. I felt ill. And what was this "more permanent solution" Sister mentioned?

"What about Akela and Naia?" I asked, "Can't I stay with them?" Our last aloha was on about the worst terms possible, but they'd at least tried to make up with me. They had to be better than Gail.

"Those two troublemakers? Out of the question. Fake driver's licenses and teaching you to tell lies, they're a terrible influence. Ms Whitmur has already volunteered, and she has put a lot of effort into making her home ready for you."

"I could stay with... my sister!" I was desperate, grasping for anything that might work, even the older sibling Sister Ulalia thought I had after seeing the pictures of both young me and adult me back at the house. But of course that wouldn't work, they would obviously want to meet her, and the only person on the island who looked exactly like an older me was... me, in grown-up attire.

"If only we could locate her." Sister Bernadette shook her head. "But she's proven as elusive as your parents."

"W-what about my parents?" I asked, almost afraid to hear the answer. "When they get back, how will they find me?"

"Your parents are clearly unfit to raise you, Keilani," said Sister Bernadette coldly. "No one here or at Social Services has been able to contact them. When, or rather IF, they can be located, we intend to work with the State of Hawaii to press charges of child neglect."

"Ch--... Child neglect?!" I could barely utter the words, and they quickly crumbled to tears. Was there any way left for my parents to straighten all of this out? And even if they did, it would mean I'd be unmasked as a 21-year-old felon! Either way, someone's life was going to be irredeemably ruined.

Gail tried uselessly to console me. "Shhh... Keilani dear, don't cry. It'll be okay." Only it wouldn't! "None of this is your fault." Only it WAS, ALL of it! Gail shot Sister Bernadette a glance that said, "Really? Did you have to be so harsh?"

Sister looked slightly abashed, and made the Sign of the Cross over herself, silently asking God's forgiveness. Clearly having me around was taking a strain on her, and she couldn't get me out of there soon enough.

The two went through some paperwork, obviously knowing what they were doing, and just like that I was legally under the temporary custody of one Gail Alice Whitmur. The two of us followed Sister Bernadette into my playpen room, where they packed everything I currently owned into a suitcase Gail had brought along. And what I owned wasn't much: A couple of blouse-and-skirt uniforms I'd been wearing here, my too-small beach outfit, the stupid feety pajamas, and of course those unbearable smiley-faced flower underpants. When Gail had recovered my discarded child's uniform from the store where I'd dumped it, she'd salvaged them as well.

The other girls were gathering to see me go, whispering among themselves. Evidently word of this had reached them before I'd been made aware of it. Suzanne's spying, no doubt. Finally, I was walking out the front door of Saint Sebastian's, although it wasn't like I'd always hoped it would be. I still wasn't going home. I still wasn't getting my adult life back. Gail held my hand as she led me to her car.

"Careful, Mizz Whitmur, Kay-Lawny ain't bin potty-trained! She still wets th' bed!"

My face instantly went red. God DAMN Suzanne Calloway! Gail turned and looked questioningly at Sister Bernadette, who nodded, actually confirming her lie! Even if I'd tried to explain that NO, I DIDN'T wet the bed, Suzanne and Makala held me down and tickled me until I lost control, still no one would have believed it. It was so unfair!

I wasn't convinced that going from Saint Sebastian's to Gail's wasn't a completely lateral move, but what could I do? Gail was surely expecting I'd try to run off right away, but the ironic truth was, even though I was finally away from the orphanage, I'd pretty much run out of places I could go. I no longer had the spare key to my parents' house, I'd already tried and failed to get my old job back, and Akela and Naia's place was in Kāne`ohe, the next town over, definitely too far to make it without getting caught. Besides, I wasn't about to beg them for help again, not after last time. So I was pretty much on my own.

As you've probably guessed, Gail is a piss-poor substitute for my real parents. The woman has never been married, probably hasn't even dated that much. Hell, I've dated more than her and I'm only twe...nty-one, shit, I almost typed "twelve" there! I can't believe how thoroughly it's been drilled into me at this point.

Gail did let me sit up front, but it was probably because she could keep a closer eye on me than if I'd been seated in the back. "Well, Keilani dear," she said, breaking the ice as she steered the car out of the orphanage's driveway. "I'll bet you're probably tired of that old uniform. How about we go shopping?" She seemed thrilled at the prospect of buying clothes for her new "daughter".

Do you know how long it had been since the last time I'd gone shopping? Even though I knew I wouldn't be getting any adult outfits like the one I'd stolen, it would be great to wear something, anything, different. I relaxed a bit as we rode down a highway lined with neat rows of longnecked palm trees, and took in the view of O'ahu's lush, green mountains. God I'd missed them. The tall stone walls around Saint Sebastian's meant I'd never been able to see them very well.

I was so engrossed in the scenery that I didn't pay any attention to where Gail was driving. But the brief excitement at the prospect of new clothes was crushed as soon as I realized where she was taking me. It wasn't to any of the trendy places, or even the island-themed boutiques where Akela and Naia and I used to shop. No, Gail pulled into the parking lot of... fucking Wal-Mart! Most native Hawaiians HATE Wal-Mart, because it so perfectly symbolizes the way big business interests have tromped in and taken over a large part of our beloved islands.

Gail stopped the car, unlocked her door but not mine, and came around to the passenger side. She opened the back seat and took something out which I couldn't see what it was, then finally unlocked my door. Yeah, definitely on full alert for me trying to run.

As she unbuckled my seat belt, I saw that the thing she held had a lot of straps and latches. I was appalled as I realized what it was. But, just on the off chance it wasn't, I asked Gail anyway.

"Oh, I picked this up just for you, Keilani dear. It's a safety harness."

AIÂÂÂ! I moaned to myself. It WAS exactly what I thought it was. One of those fucking child leashes you see overprotective parents use on little kids, kids much younger than me!

"Why do I have to wear a LEASH?!" I complained. "I'm not a damn dog!"

Gail made an annoyed "tsk" sound. "Language, Keilani dear! I wouldn't want to have to punish you on our first outing together." She slipped on her end of the leash, which went over her shoulders like some sort of bizarre bra, and fastened in the front. Mine was similar in design, but smaller, fastened in the back, and had the tether that connected the two together. Its other end clicked into Gail's harness, so she was the only one who could detach them.

"See, Keilani dear? We'll both be wearing one, it's not just you." Yeah, I thought bitterly, and no one's going to have any doubts about which one of us is in charge here. Gail tightened the straps on mine. It was only long enough to let me wander a few feet away from her. "We can pretend we're going backpacking together!"

Ugh, I thought. Wal-Mart was about the worst place on the island to go backpacking, and this woman was one of my last choices for an `awe`awe partner. "Um, Gail?" I asked.

"Call me Ms Whitmur," she instructed, then added, "Or mommy, if you'd like?" looking a bit hopeful.

There was no way in hell I was calling her that. I chose to disappoint her by going with "Ms Whitmur", and asked, "Can I at least pick out my own clothes?"

"Of course, Keilani dear. As long as they're appropriate for your age."

We went straight to the "Iki Kaikamahine" (or "Little Miss") section and began rummaging through the racks of apparel.

Now, I don't think I ever dressed outright slutty when I was 21. But I did like to tease and show off a little leg and midriff, especially since it diverted attention away from my lack of curves. And to that effect I did have a couple of outfits I'm not sure my parents really approved of. But then, they're pretty conservative, as was Gail. She turned out to be rather opinionated about what girls "my age" should wear. Not surprising, considering the woman wears an ankle-length skirt and has her hair up in a tight bun every time I've seen her.

She hummed annoyingly as she moved from one rack to another with me in tow, flipping through outfits, occasionally pulling something out to have a better look. Despite her earlier promise, and my protests, I ended up with a couple of hideous little frilly dresses she thought were cute. She'd hold them up under my chin and examine them from a couple of different angles, inspecting them for... I don't know what. Then she'd have me turn around and do the same thing from the back. It was like she was playing dress-up, and I was the doll. The harness kept me within arm's reach of her, and left both of her hands free.

Thankfully I also got a pair of jeans (not too low-cut), some shorts (not too short), and some more traditional Hawaiian floral dresses. I asked about makeup, but Gail said absolutely not, not until I was older.

All of this took much longer than it had to, because people Gail seemed to know kept coming up to her when they saw us together.

"Awww, she's so CUTE! Is she yours?"

"Yes, she's my new hânai." My foster child. Gail seemed to revel in the new attention she was getting because of me. "Keilani dear, say hello to Mrs Someone-Or-Other-I-Didn't-Give-A-Shit-About."

"Oooh, I just want to pinch her little cheeks!"

And Gail fucking LET them! It made me so mad, and there was nothing I could do about it! They patted my head, cooed over me every time I came out of the changing room in a different outfit... one lady even gave me a little pat on the behind! And I couldn't even protest that I wasn't a child anymore.

Of course, everyone had to comment on my leash as well. "Now that's a handy thing, it keeps her from wandering off and getting lost, do they sell those here?" No one criticized Gail for using the thing, or seemed to think it might be demeaning to me. I was astounded at the time, but I suppose it wasn't that unusual of a sight in Wal-Mart, considering what I've heard about people who shop there. I know I'd never have set foot in the place if Gail hadn't quite literally dragged me in.

She did have to unstrap it so I could try on the clothes, because she wanted to make sure they all fit properly. Which meant getting a changing room and shedding the clothes I came in with, then presenting my new outfit to all the ladies so they could "Ooh!" and "Aah!" and comment on how adorable I looked. Gail went in with me, so I wouldn't be tempted to lock myself in and cause a big scene. More than once her friends got so eager to see me that they nudged open the fitting room door and caught me half-dressed, with the stupid pink rainbow heart panties on full display! I was mortified at seeing these strange women peeking at me, what the hell was wrong with them?! What if one of the other passing shoppers turned and saw me?!

When Gail's fan club finally went away, she put the harness back around me, and I asked if we could get me some better underwear. I knew thongs were out, but I'd settle for anything plain and not outright childish. The adult women's stuff was on the opposite side of the aisle from the girls', so we could each browse a different side with the leash between us. I took advantage of that and casually scanned the adult section for something my size that Gail would approve of.

"How about these?" I asked. It was a package with several pairs of women's briefs, basic black, nothing fancy but also nothing disgustingly youthful.

But Gail said, "No, dear, those are for grown-ups, put them back."

"But they're my size! I wear an adult small!"

Gail pulled a package off one of the shelves on the girls' side. "Oh, look at these, Keilani dear! Aren't they darling?"

I willed myself to look at what she'd found... and was horrified. It was a five-pack of "days of the week" panties in pastel colors -- pink, blue, orange, yellow and green. In my size, of course. They were just about the stupidest, most infantile undergarments of all time. Neck-and-neck with the smiley flowers, but even Wal-Mart didn't seem to carry that kind. It made me wonder just where the fuck Gail had gotten them.

"I'm not wearing those!"

"Keilani dear, you said you wanted new underwear."

"Yeah but not THOSE, they're retarded!" After the little fashion show I'd been forced into, I was starting to get aggravated.

Gail suddenly got serious and knelt down, looking me directly in the eyes. "Keilani dear. I understand this is all a big change for you. I am trying very hard to make this shopping trip fun for both of us, but if you won't be a good girl..." She didn't have to finish, she knew that I knew what would happen if I misbehaved. So I squashed down the impulse to act up. Gail added the weekday panties into the cart next to my other outfits, as I silently glowered.

But the indignity didn't stop with shopping for girlish underwear with Gail. She had to get groceries, too, which meant more dragging me around the store, and I was getting impatient and fidgety.

"Are you tired, Keilani dear? Do you want to ride in the cart?"

Ride in the...! What, did she think I was fucking SIX?!

"NO!" I blurted out petulantly, and immediately wished I hadn't. That was so childish. I may have had to act 12 years old now, but that didn't mean I had to go overboard with it.

"Then behave yourself and follow me, we're almost done."

How could I do anything except follow her, with that stupid leash? As we passed down each aisle, people gave us curious or amused or fawning looks, which Gail pretended not to notice, or maybe she actually didn't, but I certainly did. She might as well have held my hand and pulled me along, that would have been marginally better.

And then things got infinitely, indescribably worse. Because in the grocery section we rounded a corner, and who do you think was standing right there?

Kahoku.

My fucking ex-crush! What the hell was he doing here?! He always seemed to be turning up in places I'd never expect to see him. Kailua Beach Park, at Saint Sebastian's with Akela and Naia, and now here at Wal-Mart! I wanted to hide, but of course being tethered to Gail meant I couldn't escape anywhere. I ducked back as far as I could so that he wouldn't see me, and mercifully he didn't. He turned the corner and went around to the next aisle.

But then a realization hit me. Kahoku was currently dating Akela. (It hurt to remind myself, but it was true.) And with Gail adopting me, Akela and Naia would soon lose track of where I was. As much as I hated to admit it, I needed someone's help to get me out of this, and they were probably my best shot. So when Gail's attention was focused on a shelf near the end of the aisle, I went around to the edge of the next one, as far as I could go.

"Kahoku!" I whispered. He didn't hear me, so I tried again a little louder. "Kahokuuu!"

That time he heard, and started a bit, apparently surprised and a little chagrined that someone he knew had caught him shopping at Wal-Mart. He turned and saw me and paused, trying to place me. "Aloha, keiki... Have we met?"

Christ, he didn't even recognize me anymore! I'm sure I looked like a shy little girl to him, since it was hard for me to look at him face to face. When Sister Ulalia had spanked me on the playground he'd seen me exposed from behind, revealing everything I had to show. I prayed he wouldn't remember, but how could he forget something like that? The leash held me back from getting any closer to him. I bit my lip, but pressed on. "Kahoku, it's me... Keilani Akana."

Even with the name, it took a second or two for him to register me. "Keilani...?" He took a few steps toward me, his expression going from curious to somewhat annoyed. Our last two meetings had left him significantly less than impressed with me. I knew I didn't have much time, Gail would be moving on soon, and taking me with her.

I tried to think of something to say. "Um... How's Akela?" Aiâ, that was awkward. Because Akela had started dating Kahoku, even though she knew I had this huge crush on him. And still sort of do, I guess. But now that I had to pretend to be 12, he was far too old for me.

"Keilani, your hair..." Remember, he hadn't seen it since Sister Bernadette's hack job. His eyes showed concern, and his hand moved toward my shoulder where it used to hang. Then he hesitated, as if he were worried how inappropriate it might look to any bystanders, for him to be touching a girl "my age" like that.

"Yes, I know." I was getting so goddamn fucking tired of hearing about my hair. Look, I know I owe you an explanation, but for now can you just tell Akela--"

Then Kahoku noticed the leash, and had to follow it around the aisle to where it met up with Gail's. She was still occupied with a shelf full of something, I didn't know what. Reading the sides of the packages, trying to choose a brand.

"Who... is she?" Kahoku asked.

I tried anxiously to keep him on topic. "Akela. Tell her I'm staying with this woman, her name is Gail Whitmur, have you got that?"

"Keilani," Kahoku asked, and had to stop and think how best to phrase the question. "Look, just be honest with me, is this..." He gestured at me, decked out in the childish clothes, the lopped hair, the harness, the whole package, and looked almost embarrassed to be asking. "Is this your new... lifestyle now? Is all of this some sort of sub/dom thing?"

"No!" I gasped, my face blushing. "Hasn't Akela explained to you? They think I'm--"

"Keilani dear, you shouldn't talk to strangers." Shit, now we had Gail's attention!

"No! Kahoku's not a stranger, Gail! Um, Ms Whitmur! Um, he and I are, uh, used to be..."

"My friends used to babysit her," Kahoku explained. "We're acquainted." I was about to get upset at the notion of me being babysat, but then I realized, or at least hoped, that Kahoku was just going along with my present situation. I mean, if he'd started insisting I was 21, things could have gotten really bad for me, given my recently acquired criminal background. In any case, his response came off natural and believable, much more so than Akela and Naia's constant stumbling over each other's words. He even managed to hide his disgust at my current appearance. From Gail, although it was still pretty apparent to me.

"Oh. Well it's nice to meet you, I'm Gail Whitmur." She held out her hand, and he shook it. I noticed she put on a coy little smile, too. Was she fucking flirting with him?!

"Kahoku Pelekai." Then: "So. You're... not Keilani's mother." It was a statement intended to tactfully ask the big question. What the hell was the deal with me?

"Oh, it's such a long story. But the short version is, the poor thing's parents..." Gail quickly corrected herself from giving out too much private information. "They haven't been available, so I'm taking care of her for now. And believe me, she's quite a handful!" She gave a little giggle -- Yes, stuffy matronly Gail Whitmur actually fucking giggled! God, was there anyone Kahoku couldn't hit it off with? Suzanne Calloway, Akela... fucking Gail! Why was I the only one who had trouble talking to him?

"Why does Keilani... need someone to take care of her?"

Noooo! I thought bitterly. I'd finally had a chance to explain things to Kahoku myself, and Gail was ruining it! I couldn't tell him I'd been mistaken for a child with Gail standing right there, and if I let Gail tell her version of everything it would just make him more confused and upset with me!

"Well, since you've met her you know how she gets sometimes. Keilani dear, please settle down."

I was busy tugging on the leash, urgently whispering "Let's gooo!" Trying to get away from Kahoku before this got any more awkward than it already was.

But Gail continued unabated. "You know how girls are at her age. She needs constant attention, she needs discipline, she needs--"

"Diapers?" Kahoku indicated the package in Gail's hands. Horrified, I realized that's what she had been browsing for this whole time!

"Why the hell are you buying THOSE?!" I demanded. Now Kahoku would think I was a bed-wetter, too!

Gail, sensing an outburst was imminent, attempted to defuse the situation. "Shhh, it's okay, Keilani dear. We'll talk about this in the car." For once she was trying to spare me some public embarrassment, but I would have none of it.

"I don't need DIAPERS!" I cried out, which was stupid because now everyone in earshot immediately turned their attention to us.

"These aren't diapers," Gail tried to reason with me. "They're Nite-Nite Pants." Like there was any fucking difference!

"I'm NOT a BABY!" As my frustration grew, my voice was becoming increasingly shrill.

"No one said you were." Gail held up the package to show me. "See, they're just like regular undies, only they're just for when you go to bed. That way if you have a little accident, it won't leave a mess."

"I DON'T WET THE BED!!"

"I'm not saying you will, Keilani dear, but it's just in case. If you ever do, you can just take them off and put them in the dirty laundry, and no one ever has to know."

But Gail would know, when she went to wash them! And she'd probably tell Sister Bernadette, and then Suzanne Calloway would find out and tease me about it every chance she got!

At the thought of Suzanne, the hot hatred erupted full-blast in my chest. I was furious with her and Makala for making me wet myself in the first place! I was furious with Gail for not believing me and buying me those stupid things and making me wear them! I was furious with Kahoku and Akela for going out with each other! I was furious with all the stupid Wal-Mart people stopping and turning to look at me! NOTHING was going my way at all, and I had had ENOUGH!

So I shouted, "NO! I DID NOT WET THE BED! SUZANNE CALLOWAY DID IT TO ME!!" And I threw myself down, sitting at the end of the aisle, pouting and fuming at the complete unfairness of it all.

"Come along, Keilani dear." Gail's tone said we were going, whether I liked it or not.

"NO!" I yelled again. Not until she put those stupid "Nite-Nite Pants" back on the shelf and said she was sorry for embarrassing me in front of everybody!

But it wasn't a discussion. Gail took hold of the harness strap between us and attempted to lift me off the floor. But I just sat there and crossed my arms and scowled, staring at Gail defiantly.

She knelt down and whispered. "Keilani, dear. I am going to count to three." She gave me a second to reconsider my actions, then began. "One..."

Kahoku made a disgusted sound. "You know what, Keilani? I have Akela now, I don't even care anymore. You have yourself a nice life." I was sure that any chance I might have had with him, if there ever had been one, was now completely and irrevocably over.

"Wait!" I cried. Mai hele! Don't go! But it was too late. He turned and pushed past the crowd, clearly ashamed to even admit he knew me, and left to finish his shopping.

But the rest of the gawking customers weren't, and they watched with satisfied amusement as Gail continued her countdown. "Two..."

"NO!" I repeated, louder. "NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NO, NOOO, NNNOOOOOO!!" And before I even realized it, I was lying on the floor on my back, kicking and flailing my arms and hollering at the top of my lungs. I didn't even hear Gail say "three". She might not have even bothered.

So, yeah. I pretty much tried to prove I wasn't a baby by... throwing a huge public tantrum. Go, me.

Gail gripped my wrist and turned me over, on my stomach. Then, right there with everyone in the store watching, she flipped up my skirt and slipped my pink rainbow underwear down until it was bunched just below the curve of my bare little ass.

"NNNNOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!" I shrieked one last time, and struggled even harder to get away. I twisted my wrist from her grasp and managed to crawl to my feet. I took off running... and promptly hit the limit of the leash. In my fury I'd forgotten about that. I tried to slip my arms out of it so I could pull it down and off my body, but I couldn't get the straps over my shoulders, it was fastened too tight. So I tried to pull it off the other way, over my head, using one hand at a time to slide the center straps up my torso, first the front side, then the back, slowly inching it up. I had to switch between the two so I could hold my blouse down with the other hand, so I wouldn't pull it off along with the harness.

But at the same time, Gail was tugging on her end of the leash, pulling me back. And as soon as she got within reach she tried to latch onto my arm again but ended up catching the back of my blouse. She pulled on it forcefully, just as I was yanking the front down to cover my flashing midriff. For an instant I felt the fabric strain... and then suddenly all of the buttons popped loose from top to bottom! Because I was so flat-chested, the Sisters had never even given me a training bra to wear, so underneath the blouse I was topless!

The other shoppers gasped, and some broke into laughter, as my tiny bare tits were revealed to the whole store! Including Kahoku! I caught a glimpse of him at the edge of the crowd, passing by again on his way to the checkout, and he turned momentarily to take one more repulsed look at the unfolding train wreck. It was horrible! I mean, Suzanne Calloway had pretty much told him how small my breasts were, so he already knew I'd been padding my bras and swimsuits, but now he was actually seeing my little exposed nubs! And since he'd seen me exposed from behind before, he now basically knew exactly what my naked little body looked like!

Gail, however, was behind me and thus unable to see what had happened to my blouse. I tried to hold the two sides together and keep my bare chest hidden, but the harness was twisted out of place, like some kind of bizarre bondage gear. My blouse was pinned beneath it, making it hard for me to stay covered. Oh, and of course I'd had my little pink pattern undies still bunched below my ass, peeking out from under the skirt. In the struggle they lost their grip and slid all the way down my legs to my ankles.

Gail pulled me back over her knees and began paddling my bare little bottom into submission.

SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!

"OWWWWW!" I screeched as Gail's palm repeatedly found its painful mark. Her face was flushed with quiet, contained anger. Adult anger, not at all like mine.

SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!

"NNOOOO!! STOP IT PU HULA WA HINIII!!" You crazy white bitch, though I wasn't sure if Gail's Hawaiian was good enough to know this. It did seem to make her even angrier, though, and her hand began falling across my cheeks with increased intensity.

SMACK! SMACK! SMACK!

Not one person came to my defense. Just like the other girls with Suzanne. Either those people all agreed with what Gail was doing, or they didn't want to get themselves directly involved. In between the horror of what was happening and my own fury, my ears caught the muttered comments of some of the onlookers.

"God, no wonder that kid needs a leash."

"Little spoiled brat."

"Yeah, give her what she deserves."

"See, THAT's what too many parents today are afraid to do!"

"You know better than to act like that little girl, don't you?" one mother asked her children. Yes, there were other kids, probably younger than me and definitely better behaved, watching the degrading drama unfold.

Exactly like she'd done before, Gail lectured me as she was spanking me, each stern word accompanied by a sharp swat. "Keilani, dear, this, nonsense, is, going, to, STOP, RIGHT, NOW! You, are, living, with, ME, now, and, you, will, learn, to, BEHAVE!"

My poor little behind was burning. And Gail was the adult, so she could do this to me for as long as she wanted, and all I could do was lie there and take it, and bawl helplessly.

Finally, she decided I'd been punished enough. She slid my underwear back up and lifted the skirt back over it. I whimpered as the fabric rubbed painfully against my poor, sore, freshly paddled cheeks. She turned me around to face her and readjusted my blouse and the harness straps as best she could to cover me. A couple of the buttons had popped completely loose and had rolled off somewhere, so the fabric hung loose in places.

"Keilani dear." She held out a hand. "Let's go." I didn't dare disobey. I took her hand and slowly crawled to my feet, and, head turned down to avoid the gaze of the spectators, followed Gail to the checkout registers at the front of the store, sniffling the entire way.

"I am an ADULT!" came a mocking male voice from behind us.

"Like I've told you a million, BILLION times!" chimed in someone else, probably his buddy, and they both laughed. It was quickly followed by sounds of amused recognition from several other people who'd suddenly gotten the reference. They'd clearly seen the video Akela had taken of me throwing a similar tantrum at Saint Sebastians, which had gone viral when she'd shown it around U of H. Now I was a fucking Internet meme!

It felt like forever before we got checked out and Gail put the groceries in the car. I was sure people were staring at me the whole time. She didn't even bother removing the harness, just unhooked mine from her own and guided me into the passenger seat. I winced. It hurt to sit, but I forced myself to remain still.

Before she started the ignition, Gail turned to me. Or at least I'm assuming she did. I stared down at my lap, unable to bring myself to look back at her.

"Keilani dear. You need to understand, you didn't just make yourself look bad back there. I'm your kahu hānai now, your foster parent. You made ME look bad."

I didn't want to hear any of it. I turned my tear-streaked face to stare out the window, and did my best to tune her out.

"Are you always like this? Did you act this way when your parents were around?"

THAT stopped me cold in my tracks. The wave of guilt returned to crush me for being such a bad daughter and getting mom and dad into so much trouble. We drove in silence (apart from my sniffling and choked sobs) to Gail's apartment. I held her hand and morosely climbed the cement steps to the third floor.

Clearly Gail's job with Social Services was her entire life. She didn't even have a TV. What would have been the living area was an office with a desk, where she worked sometimes. A small kitchen, full bathroom, and two other rooms off the main hallway. On shelves in other rooms were rows upon rows of porcelain cat figurines. I didn't see any real cats anywhere. Maybe the apartment management wouldn't let her keep any. And I felt a little bad for Gail, living all by herself, though I had to remind myself, who the hell could stand to live with her? In any case, she was no longer alone now that she had me.

One of the rooms was a spare bedroom she had all set up just for me. It was nauseatingly girly, with pink curtains and bedsheets (I really hate pink), stuffed animals and dolls, and a closet about to be filled with the girlish clothes she had bought for me today. I already knew I couldn't wear any of Gail's clothes to appear more grown-up. They were all too big, not to mention designed to look good on someone much older than me. Just how the hell old was Gail, anyway? In her forties, I thought, but I wasn't sure. Apparently I was no better at deducing Gail's actual age that she was at determining mine.

She made me a simple dinner, better than the orphanage food but nothing special, not that I deserved anything special. She did get the good pineapple juice, and even after the way I'd behaved, she let me have three glasses. Gail loosened up a bit, let her expereince of punishing me pass. Of course I could never forget. And then:

"Come on, Keilani dear, let's get you ready for bed."

It was barely seven-thirty, but I didn't complain. I was exhausted from the day's humiliations and I just wanted to be by myself. But first, Gail decided I needed a bath, and of course being a brand-new parent she just had to help me take one.

As the tap slowly filled the big porcelain tub, Gail knelt down and began helping her little girl remove her clothes. One by one she undid the buttons on my blouse, pulled one arm from its sleeve, then the other, and unfastened the safety pin that held my otherwise too large skirt in place so it could drop around my shoes. I stood before Gail, one hand across my miniscule breasts and the other splayed across the front of my pink rainbow panties, hiding as much of my exposure as possible.

Noticing, Gail smiled fondly. "Oh, Keilani dear, there's no need to feel embarrassed. Haven't we already done this before?" And we had, back on that first night when I'd come into the police station completely naked, and Gail had dressed me. Only this time the scene was playing in reverse, and that didn't make it any less embarrassing. But I didn't protest. She'd only make me go through with it anyway, and it would be more demeaning if I put up a fight and lost. But I still tried to keep myself covered.

I lifted each foot so Gail could take the skirt, then again so she could undo my shoes and pull the socks off my little feet. All that remained was the underwear, and as Gail reached for it I slid it down myself, using both hands. It was going to happen anyway, but if I did it myself I at least retained a tiny bit of control over the situation.

"Ahh!" squeaked Gail as she got her latest look at naked me. "I see someone is becoming a young lady!"

She was referring of course to my "new" pubic hair, which I didn't have the first time she saw me nude because I'd just shaved it. Involuntarily, my hands went back over my front and an intense blush crept across my face.

"Oh, it's perfectly natural, Keilani dear, it's all a part of growing up. Why, pretty soon your little chest will fill out and you'll be a full-grown woman." She couldn't possibly have known how sensitive I am about my tiny breasts, especially since I knew for a fact they weren't ever going to get any bigger.

The tub was about three-quarters full with warm, steaming water and bubble bath, so Gail turned off the tap and I gingerly stepped in and lowered myself to a sitting position. It still stung a bit, but the water felt good, relaxing after such a long and tiring day, and much more comfortable than the orphanage showers which always seemed to run cold by the time the other girls were done and I finally got to them. I piled up the bubbles around me in an effort to keep my nudity hidden.

Gail knelt down at the side of the tub, dipped a washcloth in the water, and started scrubbing my back. "Wait, what the hell are you--?" I splashed a bit as I tried to scoot away. I didn't want Gail giving me a bath!

"Oh, it's all right, Keilani dear. We're `ohana now, and this is what `ohana do."

Somehow I think Gail had been living by herself a little too long to know what families did. My parents sure as hell never bathed me! I mean, sure, maybe when I was really little, like two, but they knew I was old enough to do it myself well before I turned twelve! I realized she was still the eager new mom, just sharing a motherly moment with her new keiki, but still! Didn't Gail KNOW this wasn't the least bit appropriate?

But what could I do about it? I'd already been punished for one outburst today, I sure as hell didn't want to get sent to bed with a renewed spanking. So I just scooted myself around in the tub so I wouldn't have to look directly at her. Gail scooped up some water with her hands and poured it over my head, then uncapped a shampoo bottle and began working up a lather with her fingers.

"So, Keilani dear," she asked me. "What exactly did you do to earn a haircut from Sister Bernadette?"

Yes, Gail was apparently well aware of that particular punishment. And she might have already known the answer too, and was just seeing if I'd tell her the truth. So I just said I hit Suzanne Calloway on the playground, without giving any more details about the circumstances. There was nothing I could add that would have helped my case anyway.

"You know, I feel kind of sorry for Suzanne," Gail remarked, in a faux-offhand manner that suggested she'd thought out this conversation well in advance. "Did you know her parents went off on vacation without her, just like yours?"

No, I thought, NOT just like mine! My parents had left me in charge. Stupid thing to do, I now realized, considering what I'd gotten myself into without them. But Suzanne's had brought her along with them to O'ahu, then dumped her off at Saint Sebastian's after she'd apparently done something to warrant it. I had no idea what, Suzanne had never bragged about that (which was unusual for her), and being naked in a bathtub at Gail's didn't seem at all like the appropriate time to inquire.

"I think you blame Suzanne for a lot of your problems, Keilani dear. Don't you think maybe you need to stop doing that?"

But it WAS her fault, I thought to myself. She was the one who'd made me feel so angry and so helpless that I felt I had no other alternative. She was the reason I'd wet myself that first time, and the reason everyone's talk about it would never go away, and the reason I'd had to throw a fit over Gail buying me "Nite-Nite Pants" earlier today! It WAS Suzanne's fault! Why couldn't anyone except me see that?

"You and Suzanne have a lot in common," she continued. "You're both without your parents. You both seem to get into an awful lot of mischief. Sometimes it really surprises me that you aren't friends. I bet you could get along better with her, if you tried."

She was trying to go somewhere with this, but I didn't know where. I could tell by the way she peered over my bare shoulder, looking at my face, trying to gauge my reaction. Which was probably a pouty-looking little scowl, because I was furious she was defending my worst enemy. I sulked in silence as Gail washed and rinsed my hair, drained the water from the tub, and dried me off. My hair was still short enough that she couldn't really put it into pigtails again, but that was small consolation. Then it was time to get me into my "Nite-Nite Pants".

\*sigh\* I admit they were better than the diapers, just barely, but I still felt completely juvenile having them on. Gail was right, they looked just like little girl's underwear, with lace around the elastic and rows of little ruffles on the ass. The only difference was they had an absorbent pad concealed between the legs, in case I happened to piss in them. Which I knew I wouldn't, but maybe if I just tolerated wearing them for a few days Gail would realize I was telling the truth about not wetting the bed, and I could wear normal underwear to sleep again. Okay, maybe "normal" isn't the right word to describe panties with the fucking days of the week printed on them, but... you know what I mean.

Over them went the pink feety pajamas, brought from Saint Sebastian's. Gail zipped them up for me, fastened the buttons on the seat flap, and gave me a little motherly pat on the behind. I climbed into bed, in the room Gail had set up for me, and she tucked me in for the night.

Now, after all the energy I spent arguing how I was a big girl and I had my bodily functions under control, what do you think happened the very next goddamn morning?

Guess. Go ahead and motherfucking GUESS.

I must have slept later than normal, in the absence of Sister Ulalia's 7AM wake-up bell. The urge in my bladder is what first made me stir. It was all that pineapple juice I'd had the night before. I had no idea what time it was. The room was still completely dark and I awoke groggy and unable to recall the layout of Gail's apartment from the night before. I stepped carefully around the unfamiliar setting at first, trying to find a light switch, but I couldn't, and as the urgency in my bladder intensified, my efforts became increasingly desperate. I stumbled about in the darkness, knocking things over and bumping into my bed, disoriented and unable to locate a way out of the room. I found a door but it turned out to be a closet! It was getting critical, but finally I found the knob on my bedroom door and tore it open, making a frenzied dash to the toilet.

Only... I didn't make it in time.

The sound of my sobbing woke Gail up, and she came out in an ugly floral nightgown, with her hair down and without her librarian glasses. Seeing me sitting in the middle of the hall, sobbing, she quickly understood what had happened.

"Oh, Keilani dear... It's okay." She hugged me reassuringly, but I didn't feel very reassured. "And you see? The Nite-Nite Pants worked. There's no mess to clean up."

Yes, of course, Gail was right and I was a clueless child who didn't know anything. There was not a hint of a wet spot to be seen anywhere on my feety pajamas. Gail led me to the bathroom, unzipped them, pulled them down along with my sodden Nite-Nite Pants. I just let her, without complaint. She was clearly the only grown-up here.

She ran a bit of water in the tub and gave me a cloth to wash up with while she got my outfit for the day. "There we go! All better, Keilani dear." She held my hand as I stepped out of the tub, so I wouldn't slip, and she wrapped a towel around me and helped me dry off. "Now that wasn't so bad at all, was it?"

Yes it was, it was awful! I could only imagine what she thought of me, a 12-year-old who still couldn't control her bodily functions.

"What would you like to wear today?" She asked me. "One of your pretty new dresses?" I didn't care, it was the first time in ages I hadn't worn the stupid orphanage uniform. Gail playfully asked if I knew what day today was, and when I just shook my head no, she held up my new yellow pastel panties with the word "Friday" across the ass. Apparently she just couldn't wait to put them on me.

That was the only time I ever wet myself at Gail's, but it was enough to ensure I got a clean pair of Nite-Nite Pants every bedtime. And yes, Gail fucking checked them every morning after I got dressed. It became part of my daily routine with her. Get me up. Make me breakfast. Drop me off at Saint Sebastian's where I'd work on my debt to society until she got off work in the evening. Take me home. Dinner, bath and bedtime. On some days, she worked from home, so I got to stay there with her, but there was never anything interesting to do. All the while, thoughts of the unpaid bills and my absent parents gnawed at the back of my mind.

When I wasn't at Saint Sebastian's, I was always with Gail, so I never had any time alone where I could have run away, even if I had a place to run to. I was sure this was why the Sisters had chosen to pair me with her. I swear, she's the most boring person alive. She works every single day, even on weekends in her home office. If there was shopping, she did it before picking me up from the orphanage, clearly not wanting to risk another public meltdown. And we never went backpacking for real or even went to the beach. How can you fucking LIVE here and NOT go to the beach?!

Then again, I'd been there exactly twice in the almost five months since I came to Saint Sebastian's. Three times if you count the night I lost my job.

Most of my community service at the orphanage had me scrubbing the kitchen, or doing dishes, or folding laundry. Things that would keep me away from the other girls, so I wouldn't cause any more trouble. The only really eventful day was about a week after Gail first took me home. I was in the kitchen, cleaning trays. Sister Ulalia was on lunchroom duty, so I was alone back there, which was unusual, and meant someone could sneak in to see me.

For once, it wasn't Suzanne, but Oliana, the other victim of Sister Bernadette's hair-cutting punishment, and the least popular girl at Saint Sebastian's before I got there.

Aloha, I said cautiously, not sure why she'd chosen to approach me again. We'd barely spoken since the playground incident.

There was a sense of urgency in Oliana, as if she knew she didn't have much time. In a voice that sounded like a serious warning, she said, "You have to get out of here, Keilani!"

"What, now? I can't, Sister says I have to finish this."

"No, out of Saint Sebastian's!"

"Believe me, I've wanted to since the night they brought me in. But it's impossible, I've fucking tried everything."

"Well you need to think of something else! She's coming after you again!"

I didn't need to ask who "she" was.

"Suzanne," Oliana confirmed. "I overheard her and Makala talking... Well, Suzanne talking. Her parents are coming back next week, and she's planning something, I don't know what, but it definitely involves you."

So my intuition was right. Suzanne's stay at Saint Sebastian's was finally over, and she'd decided to "git" me one last time before she left. And if I knew Suzanne, she'd want it to be bigger than anything she'd orchestrated previously, which was already considerable.

"Ah KNEW it!"

Oliana freaked as the kitchen door burst open and Suzanne and Makala stood right there.

"Ah fuckin' KNEW it!" Suzanne snapped her fingers at Makala, pointed at Oliana. Makala understood, and grabbed her. "What'd yew say ta her?" Suzanne demanded, getting up in the smaller girl's face. "Yew better not be ruinin' mah fun, O-lee-anna!"

"I didn't," Oliana stammered. "I didn't say anything!"

Suzanne studied Oliana's face, trying to determine if she was telling the truth, then looked at me momentarily, gauging my own reaction for any sign that I knew what she was up to. Apparently my bewildered expression convinced her that I didn't.

"Yew wait out-sahd," she said, poking Oliana in the chest. "An' don' try runnin' off nowhere, cuz we'll FAHND yew!" Oliana meekly obeyed, and Suzanne turned her attention to me, a wolf's grin on her fucking haole face. "So, Kay-Lawny. Ah heard yew gotcherself quite a whuppin' from Mizz Whitmur th' other day!"

Jesus, how the fuck did she know that? Probably from eavesdropping on Sister and Gail discussing me, which I was sure they did. But I didn't want to give her any more ammo against me, so I just stayed silent.

Suzanne, of course, did not. "Shore wish Ah coulda bin there ta see it! Is yer skinny li'l ass still red?" Before I could stop her, she took hold of my dress and lifted it, then quickly busted out in a loud guffaw. "HAW-HAW-HAAAAWW! Hey Makala, didja know what day it is t'day? It's WENZ-day!" She chortled again, tugging a handful of my underwear out so Makala could see the lettering on it too.

"Pa`a ka waha," I muttered, blushing furiously. "Shut up." I slapped her hand away and smoothed my dress back down over the embarrassing orange "Wednesday" panties.

"Yer actin' awful high 'n' mighty in yer new out-fit, Kay-Lawny. What, yew think yer better'n us now? Yew think just cuz Mizz Whitmur took yew outta here, now yew git ta be lordin' it over all th' other girls? Mebbe Ah need ta remahnd yew o' somethin', Kay-Lawny. Yew maht have ever'body else here thinkin' yer twelve. But me? Ah still know the TRUTH."

That's right, she did, and she'd kept it from the Sisters, just waiting for the right time to use it against me. Suzanne put on her fake thoughtful expression. "Ah wonder if there's enny way Ah could prove to 'em all that yer really twenny-one?" she mused. "Then yew'd go ta REAL jail fer what yew done did. Stealin', an' Ah could prob'ly git a 'sault 'n' battery charge added on, too! Whadya think, Makala?"

Oh GOD, she wouldn't! Yes she fucking WOULD... but COULD she? I mean, I had been completely unsuccessful at proving my real age. I tried to think, was there any way Suzanne might pull it off? Inwardly I lamented, if only I'd gotten along better with her like Gail had suggested, she might have helped me before, back when I could still reveal myself as 21 with no life-damaging consequences.

"Yew think about THAT while yer livin' th' comfy lahf at Mizz Whitmur's. Cuz Ah ain't done with yew yet, not by a lawng shot!" She motioned to Makala that our conversation was over. "Be seein' yew 'round, Kay-Lawny."

Makala stared silently at me for a few seconds before following her out. A moment later, I heard Suzanne's grating drawl from behind the kitchen doors. "HAAWW! Looky here, Makala! O-lee-anna don't KNOW what day t'day is!"

The whole incident unnerved me for days afterward. This HAD to be it, Suzanne's grand finale, her ultimate humiliation of me before she went home. To expose me as an adult masquerading in a child's world, in front of everyone. To make sure I could never go back to my old life, to permanently ruin it. Oliana was right, I had to get away and fix things before Suzanne could go through with it. But I still had no means of escape.

My only opportunity, if you can call it that, arrived on its own that Friday night. Gail brought me home as usual, but instead of starting dinner she hustled me into the bath early and got out my pajamas and Nite-Nite Pants while I was still in the tub. "Now Keilani dear, I have to go meet with some people tonight, so I want you to be a good girl while I'm out."

"What people? Who?" I wanted to know.

"Just the Sisters and some other people, it doesn't concern you."

God this was too fucking perfect to be true. Gail was actually leaving me unsupervised? "So, I'm just staying here?"

"Yes, and I expect you to be on your best behavior for your babysitters. Oh, that's probably them now." The doorbell outside Gail's apartment had just rung. I scrambled into my PJs and followed Gail as she answered the door, where I was stunned to see--

"`E, howzit, 'Lani!"

"Hiiiii, 'Lani!!"

Fucking Akela and Naia were there! How the hell had they found me? It had to have been from Kahoku. He must have told them about his conversation with Gail, after seeing me with her at Wal-Mart. Then they'd gotten in touch with her and offered to babysit for me. Why? I wondered. Probably to try and talk to me, and maybe make up for our last meeting, but I still wasn't sure I wanted anything to do with them. I couldn't help but wonder what else Kahoku had told them about.

Naia stifled a giggle fit upon seeing me in the ridiculous pink jammies. "Awww, she's so cute!" I immediately put on a sour expression.

"Thank you so much for coming on such short notice," said Gail. "I'm sorry, we just got back and I didn't have time to throw dinner together."

"Oh, no problem, we'll just order something." Naia went to the phone to take care of that right away. "Wouldn't want Scrawny Keilani to go hungry!" she teased.

"Naia!" Akela chided. "We're supposed to be the adults here."

Gail didn't react to the "Scrawny Keilani" nickname, but I knew she'd heard it. "Are you sure you'll be all right?" she asked. "She can be a real handful sometimes."

"Oh, don't worry about us, Gail." Yeah, Akela was old enough to call her Gail. "We know 'Lani from way back, we'll take good care of her."

"Well I can't thank you enough. It shouldn't take more than a couple of hours." Then, to me, "Now you be a good little girl, Keilani dear, and do what the babysitters tell you."

Babysitters! As if I really were ten years younger than them! Of course at this point, in their eyes I probably was, considering all the public tantrums and spankings they'd seen me get. These stupid feety pajamas sure weren't helping, either.

As soon as she was out the door, I turned to my two former friends. "Thank Akua you came! Now get me the fuck out of here!"

But they made no motion to leave. "We can't, 'Lani," Akela explained patiently. "She's paying us to watch you, and keep you out of trouble."

Christ, they were treating this like a regular babysitting gig, like I actually was a kid who needed someone with them!

"But I'm NOT FUCKING TWELVE!" I cried. They knew this. They were the only ones who could get me back into my old life.

"Look, I don't know everything that's been going on with you, but it's obvious you need some help straightening it out. And we're gonna help you, but we gotta do it right, yeah? If we take you away it'll just cause more problems."

Naia hung up the phone and jumped into the conversation. "Yeah, c'mon, just be good for us, 'Lani, just for tonight."

No, didn't they understand, there wasn't TIME! Suzanne Calloway was planning something big to go down in less than a week, which meant I had to get started NOW. "But I HAVE to get away from here! I have to get back to my normal life!"

Akela shook her head. "I'm afraid it isn't that simple anymore, 'Lani."

"Yes it IS!" I stamped my foot petulantly. "You've got my house key. Take me home, I'll get my stuff and then--"

"'Lani..." Naia looked more grave than I'd ever seen her before. "'Lani, we went by your house a few days ago and... there was a foreclosure sign up in the yard. The bank changed the locks, we couldn't even get in!"

"You've really made a mōkākī of your life, 'Lani." The disappointment in Akela's voice was crushing.

I was speechless. This was un-fucking-believable. After months of trying to get back home, I now literally had no home to go back to! And, I thought as my stomach knotted up, my parents didn't either! What the hell were they going to do when they finally returned from their trip?!

"Is that why you moved in with Gail?" asked Naia. "Because you needed a place to stay?"

"But why are you letting her treat you like you're eight?"

"Did you have to pretend, so you could stay at that orphanage?"

"You know we would have let you crash with us, 'Lani. All you had to do was ask."

She was absolutely right of course, but back when that was still an option I'd decided against it. At the time I would have done everything possible to avoid having them see me like this. It seemed ridiculous now, considering how far I'd fallen since then.

The food arrived shortly after, and my new babysitters answered the door.

"`E, howzit, 'Lia!"

"Hiiiii, 'Lia!!"

"Hey... you two? So, what, you moved out of your other place?" Clearly it was someone who knew Akela and Naia.

"No, we're just babysitting tonight," said Naia. "Well c'mon in!" They moved out of the way, and I got a good look at her, and could not fucking believe it. It was that tall girl with the dark tan, from the luau bar, the one who'd taken my job! Halia, her name was.

"Hey, it's YOU!" she said, recognizing me from the time I'd gone there and failed to get my job back. She knelt down a bit to be closer to my eye level. "Hi, cutie!"

I whirled to glare at Akela and Naia. "How the hell do you know HER?" I demanded.

"It's okay, 'Lani, calm down," Akela said. "We know 'Lia from U of H. We met, we've been hanging out."

"So... you REPLACED me??" And with the same girl that took over my old job no less! She was the third person in their group now, and I was out! They'd even christened her with a friendly little nickname, just like they'd originally done with me. "'Lia", short for Halia.

"What's she talking about?" asked Halia. "I relaced her?" Then she remembered why she was here in the first place. "So, that's one order of opihi, twomahimahi, side of poi and a side of grilled pineapple?"

"Wait, you ordered from the place that FIRED me?!" This kept getting fucking worse by the minute!

"Fired you?" said Halia, confused.

"Wait, so it's true, you did get fired, 'Lani?" Naia asked. Apparently they had heard the rumors just like all my former co-workers.

Halia was clearly recalling the last time I'd been at the bar, and the first time she'd seen me. "Sweetheart, the only reason the boss-man wouldn't let you work there is because you're way too little--"

OHH, was that ever the wrong thing for her to say. Seeing my expression, Akela stepped up in an effort to ward off a scene. "Hey look, 'Lia, I'm sorry about all this, we didn't know you were working at the same place as... Here, here's what we owe you, plus tip, and we'll talk later, yeah?"

Halia seemed to understand. "Yeah, she's probably just hungry, you know how kids get? Well, you two are stuck with her, I gotta get back to work."

Naia waved. "Later, 'Lia!"

Akela shut the door, but I didn't move, I just stood there fuming.

"Come on, 'Lani, Hōo`olu, noho pono" said Naia. Please behave. She held up the paper bag with the food. "Look, we got your favorite, it'll be just like old times!"

NO, it WOULDN'T be like old times, not as long as they kept forcing me out of their circle and treating me like I really was ten years younger than them! I saw the last remnants of my old life crumbling before my eyes.

"Keilani, act your age," Akela scolded impatiently.

Only I COULDN'T! Because if I went back to being my real age I'd get arrested and charged as an adult! But how could I explain this to them? I didn't want them to know about the whole shoplifting incident.

Naia called from the kitchen where she'd taken the food. "Come on, 'Lani, come eat something, you'll feel better."

But I WOULDN'T feel better, not until I got this whole terrible mess straightened out! And the people I thought were my friends kept refusing to help me!

"Fine." Akela realized this was getting nowhere. "Naia and I are pōloli, we're gonna eat." She took my shoulders and steered me to a chair by Gail's desk. "You sit there, and when you decide you wanna stop acting like a baby, you can come eat too."

God, could there BE a more childish punishment? Clearly Akela had no interest in making up for how she'd treated me last time! Plus she'd pretty much stolen Kahoku from me, she and Naia had taken that humiliating video of me and showed it to the whole world, and now they wouldn't even let me TRY being an adult again!

"God, Kahoku was right," I overheard Akela say to Naia, but in a lower voice so maybe I wouldn't hear. "She really has gotten worse."

"What are we gonna do with her?" Naia wondered. "It's like she's a completely different person now."

Akela sighed heavily. "At this point I think the only thing that's gonna fix her is her parents coming back."

"Do you think they ever will? I mean they've been gone like forever."

"I don't know. But she obviously needs them, she can't handle living on her own."

They were talking about me as if I weren't right there in the next room! Just like parents discussing their problem child! It made me so fucking mad!

And then, as I was sitting there in "time-out" like Akela told me (because what the fuck choice did I have?), I saw them. On the end table just inside the door.

Akela's keys. She'd left them there when she came in. I recognized my now useless spare house key among them.

And I made a snap decision and I fucking grabbed them, and was out the door while Akela and Naia were still unwrapping the food.

I flew down one flight of stairs, then the second and the third, the pads of my feety pajamas scraping the concrete steps all the way. A few weeks ago I'd have been mortified to even set foot outside wearing them, where someone I knew might see me. Was it desperation to escape, or had I fallen into the role of a little girl so completely that the childish outfit didn't bother me as much as it should have?

I was already trying to think of my next move. Should I drive to Akela and Naia's place in Kāne`ohe? With her keys, I could get in and borrow an outfit. Or should I head straight to my old house and see if any of my stuff was still there? The spare key wouldn't work, but maybe I could find another way inside. Hell, I'd smash in a fucking window if I had to!

Now, where was Akela's car? I hit the button on her keychain and heard a sharp electronic chirp, and saw a set of headlights flash briefly. There it was.

"Keilani!" I heard Akela's angry voice from Gail's apartment. "Keilani you come back here right now! KEILANI, GOD DAMN IT!!" She was calling me by my complete name. Not the affectionate "'Lani", which she reserved for her fellow adult friend. No, I was Keilani, the spoiled, misbehaving little brat.

I reached the car and unlocked the driver's side. I had to scoot the seat all the way forward so I could reach the pedals. Akela's car was a stick, something I'd never really been good at handling. I put it in what I thought was reverse but turned out to be neutral. The engine revved loudly as I stomped the gas but I didn't go anywhere. I struggled with the shift some more, then peeled backwards out of the parking space, slamming on the brakes just before I hit Akela, who'd finally caught up to me. I jammed it into first, eased up on the clutch, stomped the gas, and off I went.

And promptly thumped HARD into the stone sign at the edge of the apartment complex. I hadn't driven in months. Was I really so out of practice?

The airbag burst out all around me, scaring the everloving crap out of me and half trapping me in the seat. My stomach was swarming with terrified butterflies. I'm sure I screamed just like a terrified little girl.

As I was trying to get the car backed up again, the door flew open (I realized too late that I'd forgotten to lock it) and a furious Akela grabbed me and dragged me out.

"LOOK at this!" she shrieked, hauling me around to the front of the vehicle. "Look what you did to my CAR!" There was an ugly dent in the front bumper where it had impacted the sign, and the driver's side headlight was smashed out. "Kokami, kanapapiki..." she swore, surveying the damage, then shouted, "What the hell is WRONG with you?!"

At some point during all of this Naia had reappeared. Her hands were clasped over her mouth, face wide-eyed and aghast. Neither of us had ever seen Akela get so mad before.

"I'm sorry!" I whined, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean it but I had to get away from Suzanne and you wouldn't listen and I promise I'll pay for it and--"

"HOW?!" Akela demanded fiercely. "How the hell are you gonna pay for this, Keilani?! You got no JOB... You got no HOUSE... You drop out of SCHOOL... You act like a damn KEIKI! Maybe you ARE one!"

Akela firmly took hold of my arms and forced me to lie over the hood of the car, just like Gail had done on the night she'd first picked me up from the police station. She practically tore the seat flap on my pajamas open, and tugged down the Nite-Nite pants as best she could. I knew what was coming next, and I squealed and thrashed and twisted my little body, trying my good goddamnedest to break free of my friend-turned-babysitter's grasp.

Akela fought to hold on to me. "Get her legs, Naia!"

And at those words, something snapped inside me. I instantly flashed back to Saint Sebastian's, in my feety pajamas, in my playpen room, the night before my trial, when Suzanne Calloway had burst in.

"Git 'er legs, Makala!"

And here I was reliving that exact same moment, only now my orphanage tormentors had been replaced by my two former best friends.

And I screeched, "NNNOOOOOOOOOOOO! FUCK YOU, FUCK YOU, FUCK YOU, I HATE YOOOUUUUU!! HONI KO`U `ELEMU! FUCKING `ILIO WAHINE! KOHE PIIILAUUUU!!"

The reddish tinge in Akela's hair enhanced the fury of her expression as she lifted her hand and began raining down a hail of swats on my poor little bottom. She hit HARD, hard enough to leave me gasping, able to take in just enough breath every few slaps to let out a bellow. The tears were flowing freely, running down my burning face and dripping onto the car's dented hood.

Akela paused, wincing, waving her hand back and forth to shake off the pain. And if she hurt her own hand that much you can imagine what my little ass cheeks felt like!

"Akela?" Naia interrupted timidly. "Not so hard." I thought she was coming to my defense, but then she added, "Remember what Professor Kalakona said? You're supposed to put her in her place, not hurt her."

God, now they were fucking practicing what they'd learned in parenting class on me! And it was from that same day when I'd been the unwitting demonstration subject!

Realizing how angry she was, Akela closed her eyes, took a deep composing breath, and stepped away, letting the calmer "parent" take over. Akela spanking me was bad enough, but Naia?! Of the three of us she'd always been the least mature, at least until now. Her swats were little more than forceful taps, but that made them even worse. Because they reminded me of how Suzanne had done it. Telling me she was more adult than me. Better than me.

Everybody was better than me. Here I was, dressed in babyish feety pajamas, bent over as my two former best friends gave me a bare-bottomed spanking in public!

As Naia was wrapping hers up, swirling red and blue lights hailed the appearance of a patrol car pulling into the apartment complex. That's what Naia had been doing while Akela was chasing after me, I realized. She'd called the fucking cops!

And guess which particular fucking cop she got?

That's right, fucking Officer Janene. The same one who'd found me naked on the beach and caught me shoplifting from the store. She quickly took statements from Akela and Naia to find out what had happened, whose car it was, who had been driving. She didn't seem very surprised at all to learn it had been me.

"Oh, we're well acquainted with this one," she told them. "Running away, violating curfew, indecent exposure, shoplifting..."

"Shoplifting?" whispered Naia in sad disbelief. "Oh, Keilani..."

Then Officer Janene asked Akela if she wanted to press charges. She said no. Then asked if she had to decide right now. God she looked pissed. Officer Janene said she could take a day or two to think about it.

As soon as we were back inside, Akela sent me to bed. I hadn't even gotten to eat any of the nice Hawaiian meal they'd ordered. The fabric stung my reddened ass painfully as I lay sobbing in bed, thinking about what a bad little girl I'd been. Of course they still told Gail the whole story when she got back, which meant I got read the riot act again the next morning, as soon as I got up. Akela had made it clear that she was NOT babysitting for me again. Gail was at her wit's end.

"Stealing a car?! HONESTLY, Keilani dear, I just don't know what to DO with you anymore! Maybe Sister Bernadette and I were mistaken, maybe we should have just had you sent to the juvenile center. It certainly seems like you belong there!"

There wasn't a fucking thing I could say. The fury I'd felt the previous night had subsided, leaving only shame and disappointment in myself. There was absolutely no excuse for the way I'd acted.

"Didn't your parents ever teach you about pono?" Gail demanded.

Of course they had, and of course I knew that no matter how badly I felt I'd needed it, trying to take Akela's car was not pono. And I realize now that every bad thing that has happened to me was because I'd done something that was not pono. Getting fired and ending up in the orphanage because I'd been a bitch to that customer. Having my hair forcibly cut because I'd punched Suzanne Calloway. Getting arrested because I'd tried to steal adult clothing from a store. Being spanked by Gail, Sister Bernadette, Sister Ulalia, my best friends, EVERYONE it seemed, because I just could not fucking learn to behave.

It was all on ME. I was NEVER a grown-up, I'd ALWAYS been a child, regardless of what my actual birthdate said. And a rotten, selfish, ungrateful one at that. I'd never even said mahalo to Gail for all the nice things she'd done for me. Taking me out of Saint Seb's, buying me food and clothes, giving me a place to live. I was a horrible child, and I didn't deserve all the things I'd had. Maybe I deserved to have them all taken away from me, one by one.

So I'm sure all of you are gleefully wondering, how the hell could my life get any worse?

Well, for starters... I'm not typing this on Sister Bernadette's computer anymore.

Or Gail's.

**“Keilani's Long Vacation" (Part 8)**

Chapter 8 opens with Keilani reflecting, "She wrote a song. And me? I just threw another tantrum." But she doesn't elaborate yet on what this means.  
  
Suzanne Calloway is having a party at the orphanage, celebrating her 14th birthday. (Keilani, meanwhile, is still "12".) Suzanne has been acting giddier than usual lately, and Keilani soon finds out why: Her parents -- Burt and Alexis Louise aka "Lexi-Lou" Calloway -- have finally come to take her home. When Keilani sees Suzanne's father, she flashes back to that night where she first lost her job (and her uniform). He is the asshole tourist who got her fired! There's a flashback to that night, sort of bringing the series full-circle. Also it turns out Suzanne has been scheming to get her family to adopt Keilani as her younger sister. The Sisters go along with it because "I think we need to accept the fact that your parents aren't coming back," and also Keilani has been causing so much trouble for them that they really just want her gone.  
  
Of course this is Keilani's worst nightmare, so she flees into Sister Bernadette's office where she calls the only number she still knows - Akela and Naia. Naia answers and Keilani begs her to do something, anything, to save her from the fate of becoming part of Suzanne's family, but Akela cuts in and doesn't believe her, and she's still pissed about her car being crashed in Chapter 7 so she hangs up on Keilani's pleading. Sister Bernadette gets the door unlocked, and Keilani is dragged kicking and screaming from the office. Naturally she gets one last spanking before leaving with the Calloways. Makala, Suzanne's taciturn disciple, looks devastated that Suzanne chose Keilani over her.  
  
As she loses her island, the last piece of her old identity, Keilani compares her situation to the deposition of Queen Liliuokalani, the last reigning ruler of Hawaii before the United States annexed it in the 1950s. How, while she was imprisoned, the Queen composed the famous "Aloha Oe" song. "She wrote a song, and I threw a tantrum."  
  
At this point my notes are just a series of various scenes that I hadn't stitched together in any particular order yet:  
  
Keilani's miserable cruise ride "home."  
  
Seeing Suzanne's place and learning they aren't rich, her father is just a bullshitter and scam artist who conned his way into a better Hawaii trip than they could ever honestly afford. Suzanne's mother never really wanted Suzanne to begin with and wants Keilani around even less. Insight into why Suzanne acts the way she does.  
  
Suzanne dressing Keilani in boys' clothes (recall her forcibly cut hair at the end of Chapter 5) before introducing her to her circle of friends, convincing them that "Kay-Lawny" is a boy's name and that Keilani is her adopted brother. Another angle on the "altered identity" theme of the series. Suzanne and friends going to their "swimmin' hole" which Keilani finds cold and slimy and disgusting compared to her beloved ocean. All of them stripping to underwear to go swimming in it, but Keilani is too embarrassed because now on top of everything else she has to pretend to be a boy or look like a fool in front of all of Suzanne's friends. Under Suzanne's relentless teasing Keilani mocks her, "At least I can swim!" (Suzanne's inability to swim is revealed in Chapter 4.) Suzanne responds by stripping Keilani in front of her all friends and playing "keep-away with Kay-Lawny's clothes!" They all laugh at Keilani and congratulate Suzanne for "gittin' us good" with her trick.  
  
Suzanne deliberately urinating in Keilani's bed to make her parents think she (Keilani) is a bed-wetter. Keilani shouts about how vile Suzanne is, and Suzanne shoots back a retort but ends it with, "Ain't that raht, Maka--..." She cuts herself off mid-sentence, suddenly realizing her silent partner in crime is no longer around, and for the briefest instant looks crestfallen at realizing she could have Makala here with her instead of Keilani. But quickly recovers, telling Keilani she'll write to Makala and, "tell 'er ever'thang's bin goin' on with us. She kin read real good, y'know, even though she don't talk none."  
  
LOTS of punishments for Keilani. Getting caned at the woodpile for "pertendin' ta be a boy," for "wettin' th' bed," and finally having her mouth washed out with soap for shouting swears at the Calloways. Chapter 8 ends with Keilani suffering a punishment and realizing this is her life from now on.  
  
But there's an epilogue.  
  
At some point Keilani's parents do finally get home. In fact it's not long after she herself left the island. It takes them a while to sort out everything that's happened, but once they do things move quickly. Keilani is found and brought back home. There are news reports about it. The failures in the system that refused to acknowledge her as an adult are brought to light. Under pressure, Saint Sebastian's closes, but all the girls get adopted. Makala goes to live with Suzanne. Oliana is adopted as Keilani's sister. All of this is told to us secondhand by Keilani. Her parents shield her from most of it. She's been changed, even damaged, from this experience and no one knows exactly what to do with her. She can't just resume her old life as if nothing happened. In the end, it's decided to let her continue to live out the next few years as a child until she feels ready to become an adult again.  
  
Keilani's last message to us reveals that, in order to escape all the media attention, it was arranged to have her and her family relocated to Ni'ihau, the only private Hawaiian island not open to visitors. This is a callback to the very end of Chapter 7, when Keilani writes, "I'm not typing this on Sister Bernadette's computer anymore. Or Gail's." It turns out that Keilani wrote Chapter 7 and 8 \*after\* all of this came to a close, from her new home on Ni'ihau. She reflects on the beauty of her new but still familiar home, and on her second chance at life, then says her mom is calling her and she has to come in for the night. Akela and Naia will be there soon. They're babysitting.  
  
THE END