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Death Walks In Paradise

By

Donald Barr Chidsey

When a tiny island—a jewel on the breast of the broad Pacific—became a maniac's murder-laboratory! . . .

WHEN they first examined Grant's body, they supposed he had been thrown from his horse. Yet the animal, a meek beast, fully saddled, was munching ferns not far away, and Grant had been a crack rider.

He didn't look pretty. In the moonlight, his neck seemed bloated, bruised; his chin was on his left shoulder; his mouth was open, and there was an expression of terror in his eyes. They saw that his trousers were torn at the right hip and the skin slashed there as though by a knife.

"Fall, hell!" Doc Potters rasped. "He's been choked to death!"

It made them shiver a bit. The spot was so lovely, the moonlight so gentle, apologetic. It seemed no place for death, certainly not for a hideous, distorted death like this.

The plantation manager, Rice Lauder, looked up the side of Kaiulani Pali to where foliage nodded amiably at the verge. "Couldn't have tumbled over, could he?"

"Not possibly! Why, look at that throat! Somebody must have pushed a pair of thumbs almost through the skin!"

They were dumbfounded, frightened a little too. They weren't accustomed to murder on Mauilei. Rice Lauder who, as plantation manager, was in effect governor of the place—for the plantation company owned the whole island—seemed in a sort of daze. He walked in little circles, shaking his head, muttering to himself.

"Terrible . . . terrible!" he told Kirke Walker. "God! What'll I do?"

"Send word to Honolulu, I suppose. The steamer isn't due till Thursday, but one of the Kanakas could make it in a boat."

"God!" Lauder said again. He broke a cigar in his trembling hands, threw it away. He was a big man, ordinarily quiet and self-contained; Kirke never had seen him act like this. "We certainly can't trust the Hoopono boys, anyway."

"No, this is a job for real cops."

"Yes. . . Yes, that's it." Lauder saw some Oriental house boys slinking down the path toward the overseers' enclosure, and he yelled at them: "See here! Come back here, you! It's bad enough that we've got to break the news to poor Mrs. Grant, without having you burst in there making the ladies think we're all of us slaughtered!"

The nearest thing Mauilei had to a police force were the brothers Hoopono, generally called Ed and Pete, a couple of gigantic fellows, one-quarter Portugese,

one-quarter Kanaka, the balance undetermined or undeterminable. They drew a trifling salary for keeping order among the field hands. The job was easy, for none but the five white men were permitted to have liquor, and the Filipinos were for the most part docile, quiet little fellows, concerned only with fulfilling their contracts and getting back to their own islands. The Hoopono brothers loafed, swaggered, now and then tut-tuttingly stopped a fight. They were not even permitted to carry weapons, and certainly they were not expected to show intelligence.

Doc Potters fell into step with Kirke Walker on the way down to the shore. He was a thin young fellow with glasses; on Mauilei he corresponded to a ship's physician, handling emergency cases only, sending the serious patients to Honolulu.

"Damn nasty business, Kirke. Makes me worried for Mildred."

"Yes." Kirke Walker was thinking of his own wife. "Yes, this is no place to have a killer running around loose."

"A brute too, whoever he is. No Filipino ever did this job. Isn't a one of them strong enough?"

"Must have been one of the Kanakas then. One of those fishermen over on the other side, maybe. They're all huskies."

They carried the body to the Grant home, and Lauder himself broke the news to the widow. Big, awkward fellow though he was, he handled the task admirably. The other women—Mildred Potters, Helen Walker and Eunice Sanderson, wife of the store manager—stayed with the widow while the men whispered in conference in front of the bungalow.

"You say it couldn't have been a Filipino, Doc?"

"No. This was a big man. Crazy too, if you ask me. If those cuts aren't the

work of a lunatic I don't know what is!"

"Why?"

"Why? Because somebody simply carved a design in the poor fellow's hip, that's why! Six short, straight cuts, each exactly the same length—and they cross exactly in the center. As neat as though they were stenciled there. Really nothing but scratches. A sharp knife, I'd say, or maybe a razor. But here's the strangest part about the whole business—I can't be sure, yet, but those cuts seem to have hardly bled at all, so it's my impression George was dead when they were made!"

HARRY SANDERSON looked a little sick. He was a six-footer, with strong shoulders and arms but a weak stomach. Rice Lauder shook his big head, and pressed his lower lip with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand. Kirke stared past the fronds of a coco tree to where the huge Hawaiian moon sailed gloriously through a silver-washed sky.

"We must get him tonight, whoever he is," Lauder decided. "It must be one of the fishermen. We'll arrest all four of them."

"We can't go and leave the women here!"

"No. No, we can't do that. We'll leave one man to watch this house. We'll draw lots to see who it is, and the rest of us will take the Hoopono boys and go over to the other side of the island."

Mauilei was tiny, only seven miles across at its widest point. Kaiulani, a long-extinct volcano, rose richly red-brown in the center, but most of the land was flat and planted with sugar cane. The slopes were covered with pineapple groves. Except where the cane was tall, it was not a place where any man could hide against an earnest search.

"As the manager," Lauder decreed, "and also as the only unmarried man in the crowd, I'm going along, of course.

But you others pull one of these slips out of my hat. The shortest one stays here."

Kirke Walker drew the shortest lot.

He had his pistol, and in addition he got a double-barrelled shotgun out of his house. He sat in a wicker chair on the screened *lanai* of the Grant house.

"Now you won't stir away till we get back," Doc Potters begged. "I don't want to have anything happen to Mildred—"

Lauder said: "Come on! The sooner we start the sooner we'll get back."

It was very quiet after they'd gone. Kirke sat alert and grim, the shotgun across his knees. Coco palms rattled and chattered overhead, and occasionally a banana frond on the south side of the house slapped half-heartedly against the screen. The women, indoors, were still; Kirke hoped that they were sleeping. Five houses faced one another solemnly across a tiny oval garden, and the air was heavy with the scent of jasmine.

Kirke could hear the shush-shush of wavelets on the beach. Half a mile down the shore were huddled the houses of the field hands, each like its neighbor, each utterly silent—for the Filipinos, stricken with terror, were keeping inside their homes tonight.

Helen came out. "She's been sleeping a little. We got her to take a couple of aspirin."

Kirke only grunted.

"It couldn't have been anybody but one of the fishermen?"

"I don't see how," Kirke said. "The Filipinos aren't big enough, and the Hoopono boys were able to account for themselves."

There were four fishermen. They lived on what they grew and caught, and what they could sell to the Filipinos. Their huts, on the far side of the island, they occupied on sufferance, for the plantation company owned these, as it owned every-

thing else on Maui. But the fishermen were genial; sometimes they were useful too, so they were permitted to remain. They were all that was left of the original Hawaiians who had once occupied this island. Four fishermen, two of them with fat, affable wives—these were the only representatives of the Polynesian race in Maui. It is a dying race. It couldn't take it.

Yet, seeing them, you would suppose them capable of surviving anything. Each was magnificently muscled, tall, athletic. Swimming or handling an open boat, they could put most white men to shame. Three of them had outrigger canoes equipped with sails, in which they sometimes visited other islands. The fourth man, Kimamu, owned a twenty-seven foot ketch. They didn't use the boats for fishing. They didn't have to. The Pacific brought fish almost to their doors, and wading between shore and reef, using only spears or seines, they were able to catch enough to supply a population three times that of Maui.

"God knows they're big enough. . . Any one of them could pick you and me up and knock our heads together."

Helen cried: "Please don't talk about it! I—I'm so scared!"

She kissed him and ran back into the house.

LAUDER and Sanderson and the Hoo-ponos returned shortly before dawn, escorting three of the fishermen and the two native women.

"Kimamu wasn't home," Lauder explained. "The rest say he went off in his ketch yesterday afternoon—they don't know where. He has a habit of taking little trips. So we drew lots, and Doc Potters got the job of waiting, in case he comes home within the next few hours."

Kirke asked: "What are you going to do with them?"

"I don't know." Lauder dropped into a chair, wiped his face with a handkerchief. "I suppose we'd better hold them a little while and ask 'em questions. Hold them till the police come, anyway."

"If you do that," Kirke pointed out, "we'll have nobody to send to Honolulu. We'd just have to wait for the mailboat Thursday."

"That's what I told him," Sanderson said.

"I know, I know! But I don't feel I can take the responsibility of letting them go. They all tell the same story—that they were together all evening, just sitting around talking and singing and whanging a guitar or something. It sounds all right, but I'm no detective and I don't want to let them go until somebody who knows something about this sort of thing has talked with them. We'll keep them locked up in the storeroom."

"What do they say about Kimamu?"

"Just that he went out in his boat around four o'clock in the afternoon, and none of them saw him come back."

"Kimamu lived a little apart from the others, several hundred yards away, around a point of land. He was huge, good-natured, fond of music, but he was shy, even among his fellow Kanakas.

"Looks like he's the man, then?"

"I'm afraid it does," Lauder said. "He must have sailed around to the south shore somewhere and hidden his boat. Then he went to that path underneath the pali and waited for Grant coming in. He always was a little crazy, from what they tell me. I told Doc Potters that if he shows up, to arrest him right away and bring him here."

"Nice spot to leave Doc in."

"I didn't know what else to do! I'll send the Hoo-pono boys around as soon as they've had some breakfast."

Kirke rose, stretching his legs.

"I'll go with them," he decided. "I need the exercise, and I couldn't sleep if I tried. Rest of you come home by the path?"

"Pete and Ed and the prisoners did, but Harry and I spread out on each side, hoping we might come across Kimamu hiding somewhere."

"I'll ride," Kirke said, "and I'll take Doc's horse around to him, while I'm at it. Doc's probably good and tired."

"I only hope he hasn't fallen asleep."

And it seemed, when Kirke and the Hoopono brothers approached the hut in which Kimamu lived, that this was what had happened. They could see Potters sprawling in a chair in front of the hut, his head back, his legs outstretched, his arms dangling, like a man who slumbers heavily, gratefully, without dreams. His eyeglasses glittered in the light of a sun reluctantly rising.

The little cove was deserted. There was no sign of the ketch, or of any other craft. And except for the hut, and the white-clad figure of Potters, the land, too, might have been a virgin paradise nestling by the side of the Pacific. The sand was white and smooth and even. A row of palms hid from sight the sugar cane fields which covered so much of Mauilei's surface. Dainty and serene, with none of the usual sternness of mountains, Kaiulani spread her slopes against the dawn.

"This is a hell of a way to keep watch," cried Kirke. "As a cop, Doc, you're not such a bad surgeon."

The figure in the chair didn't stir. And suddenly Kirke Walker was frightened. He dismounted, scurried to the hut.

"Doc! Doc! What's the trouble?"

There wasn't much of the blood—amazingly little! It came from a gash in the middle of the forehead, and some of it had sauntered down the right side of the nose and for a time dripped off the

chin. It had hardened, and was stiff and dark.

One blow had done this. But a terrible blow. The skull had been crushed like a coconut pounded between rocks.

What was more, the trousers had been ripped away at the right hip, and that hip had been slashed six times by a razor or knife. The slashes were fourteen or fifteen inches long, and crossed one another precisely in the center. There was almost no blood on the hip.

Kirke backed away. He lighted a cigarette, using four matches. Pete and Ed Hoopono stood staring at the corpse.

"He's dead all right," Kirke said tonelessly. "You two look around and see if you can see any signs of Kimamu. Don't go far."

Kirke himself searched the hut. There was little to see. Kimamu's furniture, in addition to the chair, consisted of a couple of *tapa* mats, a pillow, a frying pan, and fishing equipment. Kirke found two knives, but neither was stained. He found nothing else remarkable. He called to the Hoopono brothers.

"Stay here and watch for Kimamu. If he comes, jump on him! Don't give him a chance to talk or anything, understand? Jump on him!"

He rode back. Kaiulani beamed down upon him; coco palms tossed their tousled heads; water hissed and churned out by the reef barely reached the white sand of the shore in tumbling, gurgling innocence, making light of its rage of a few minutes earlier. But somehow Mauilei didn't seem a paradise to Kirke Walker any longer. It was a very beautiful place, the most beautiful he'd ever seen; but it wasn't Eden.

NOT much work was done that day. The field hands were sent out to burn cut cane on the west side of the island, far from the place where the fishermen

lived, but Lauder granted their plea that ten of their number, armed with clubs and knives, be left at the settlement.

"Only fair, I suppose," he told Kirke, "with somebody like Kimamu roaming around loose. . ."

The Filipinos, small and jumpy, were under the command of their own foreman. The only surviving white men, Lauder and Kirke and Sanderson, were busy with other matters. One of them was at all times inside the overseers' enclosure, within sight of the five bungalows. The women remained in Kirke's house most of the time. It was the largest bungalow of the five, and was officially the manager's residence, but Lauder, being alone, had turned it over to his first assistant, Kirke. The women kept a couple of shotguns there now.

Nothing more was learned from the fishermen. Kirke thought them innocent, thought that one of them should be dispatched to Honolulu without delay, and Sanderson agreed, but Rice Lauder would not consent.

"How do we know they aren't lying to us about Kimamu? I can't take the chance. The mailboat will be here tomorrow morning."

"It's funny about Kimamu," Sanderson murmured.

It was funny about Kimamu. None of them doubted that he was the killer, yet they found no sign of him. Kirke and Lauder made a complete circuit of the island, examining every foot of shore, but they could see no trace of Kimamu's ketch. They supposed that he had sunk it.

"Crazy thing to do, but then he's certainly mad anyway," Lauder said. "He must be hiding in that field of cane just back of his hut."

There were not more than fifteen acres of the tall cane. It was ripe for cutting—indeed, the cutting was to have been

started that day, but the Filipinos quite naturally objected and Lauder did not insist. The cane was higher even than Kimamu's head, and the killer might hide there indefinitely unless a large force hunted him out. Lauder suggested to the Filipino foremen that they organize a posse of their fellow countrymen to search the place under the supervision of the white men, but the Filipinos refused.

"You can't blame them," Lauder sighed. "But the three of us alone could never do it. It'd take twenty men to search that place."

Ed and Pete Hoopono were kept at Kimamu's hut, on the chance that the fisherman might sneak back. They were nervous about it. Either of them would have faced three or four men in open fight, but a maniac was something different.

As for the bodies, they were stored in the icehouse. It shocked Sanderson—shocked them all a little—but it was the only thing to do. After all, this was the Tropics.

In the late afternoon, Kirke Walker dropped into a settee on the *lanai* of his bungalow. The women were inside. In front, on the steps, Harry Sanderson sat, big, solemn, his tanned face drawn with weariness. The field hands, coming in from work, did not chatter as they did ordinarily: they were speechless, scared.

Kirke was asleep almost instantly. He was to sleep for two hours, at the end of which time Sanderson should awaken him.

But it was his own wife, Helen, who awakened him. "I—I'm worried, Kirke! I think something's happened!"

Kirke sat up smartly, his eyes wide open. It was dark. The moon had not yet risen, but he knew without looking at his watch that he had been sleeping at least half an hour longer than he should have slept.

"Better get inside, honey. I'll let you know."

He went to the screen door, called softly to Sanderson. There was no reply. He stepped outside.

The night was utterly still. It was only about eight o'clock, but no light showed from the Filipino settlement, and there was not even the sound of a barking dog.

RICE LAUDER, like Kirke, had been allotted a few hours of sleep. Kirke was supposed to have awakened him at eight o'clock, after relieving Sanderson. The manager's house, only about 200 feet away, was dark and still. Kirke whistled, called. No answer.

"Don't go away, dear!" Helen was just inside the screen door. "I know something terrible has happened again. I can feel it!"

Kirke drew his pistol.

"Go back inside and tell the others not to worry when they hear shots. I'm going to fire a couple in the air."

The pistol was a thirty-eight, and its explosions were loud and sudden, shattering the still night air. Kirke smiled grimly when he imagined the panic they would create in the Filipino settlement.

For a few minutes there was no response. Kirke was about to fire again when Lauder appeared at the front door of his house.

"What is it? Is that you, Walker? What's happened?"

"I can't find Harry Sanderson anywhere. He was supposed to stay right in front of the house here until he woke me up, at seven-thirty."

The manager hurried down the steps, around the little garden. His face gleamed with sweat, and his hands trembled.

"Good God! you don't suppose—I mean, you don't think—?"

"I don't know. Stay here till I get

some flashlights. One of us ought to look."

"I'll look. You get the flashlights."

Kirke didn't object to this arrangement. After all, Lauder was the unmarried man. But he waited anxiously on the steps while he listened to the manager tramp through the shrubbery.

Once he called: "He might have gone down to the store?"

Sanderson was the keeper of the store, another plantation property, about half a mile away on the edge of the Filipino settlement.

"He wouldn't have gone that far without letting one of us know."

The manager's voice came now from the garden behind his own bungalow, which was opposite Kirke's. He seemed to have been poking around back there for some time. Kirke could not see him.

"Why don't you try this house, then?"

Lauder did not answer, but presently Kirke heard him running back.

Helen had appeared at the screen door, whispering: "What is it, dear? What's happened to Harry?"

"I don't know," Kirke said, "but you'd better get inside."

Rice Lauder was not a man to move fast, and Kirke, stiffening, knew the moment he heard those hurrying footsteps that Sanderson had been found.

The manager burst into sight, gasping, panting. "Walker! Walker! He's over there—He's—"

Kirke asked quietly: "Is he dead?"

Lauder sat on the lowest step. He put his elbows on his knees and rocked back and forth. Great blobs of sweat rolled down his face.

"I ask you, is he dead?"

The manager raised and lowered his head, slowly, solemnly.

"He's dead—yes." The voice was no more than a whisper. "Choked, I guess.

Pulled half apart, the way it looks. I could hardly recognize him, except for his clothes!"

Kirke waited. Somehow he knew that there was more. In a moment Lauder swallowed hard, found voice again.

"His gun hadn't been taken. I've got that. But his clothing's torn away—away from the right hip. He's been cut by a knife or something. Six cuts, all the same, crossing in the middle!" Lauder put his face in his hands. He still was rocking back and forth. "You'll have to tell them. I—I haven't got the nerve."

Kirke, very slowly, with dragging feet, went into the house.

Helen stood in the middle of the living room, Grace Grant and Mildred Potters were lying down, half-doped by exhaustion and sedatives. Eunice Sanderson was trying to make coffee. They looked thin and pitifully weak, these four young women. They looked as though they should be safe in some city apartment, not crouching in an island bungalow lighted only by one oil lamp.

Kirke said without preliminaries: "Harry's been killed."

EUNICE SANDERSON nodded slowly, as though she'd known that this was what he was going to say. She sat down. She continued to nod, muttering something, looking as though she wished she could weep. Grace Grant and Mildred Potters didn't seem to understand.

Kirke said to Helen: "I hate to go away, but Mr. Lauder and I will have to take the body down to the store and make sure the Kanakas are still locked up. The Hooponos are over on the other side of the island, and you couldn't dislodge one of those Filipinos with dynamite."

"I think it's the Filipinos who did it," Helen said. "A lot of them, maybe. Some secret society. I never did trust them."

Kirke shook his head. "No, it's Kimamu all right. . . This case was the same as the others. Somebody powerful. More like a gorilla than a man."

She clung to him now. She'd been brave, but she was horribly tired, and panic was beginning to scratch at her reason.

"Don't go, Kirke! Stay here! Stay till it's daylight, anyway!"

"I can't. I hate to go, but I've got to. Meanwhile—" He took her by the shoulders, gently but commandingly, as though he was shaking her out of sleep. "You're perfectly safe locked in here, and you have the shotguns. There are no more firearms on the island. We've checked them all, and we're sure of that. You stay here, and don't answer any knock until either Mr. Lauder or I call out to you."

She promised him, and he kissed her quietly.

"I won't be long," he muttered, and went out.

They carried Harry Sanderson between them, Kirke going first, holding the legs. Sanderson was heavy, and the path was not even. They moved cautiously, the shrubbery brushing them on each side. Kirke felt, and assumed that Lauder behind him felt, that even together they were in acute danger.

They were the only white men left alive on Mauilei.

"Those marks on the hip each time . . . My wife suggested some kind of secret society among the field hands, but of course that's nonsense. The way I figure it is that Kimamu must have been cut that way by a white man, somehow. Years ago, maybe. And it's been preying on his mind ever since. And now he's gone stark mad—

"He was a queer cuss anyway," Kirke pursued. "Wasn't born here, you know. Came from Molakai. A man might go

mad like that, suddenly, I suppose, after brooding over scars for years."

"I suppose," Lauder panted.

"There's no other way I can think of to account for those marks."

They left the corpse of Sanderson in the back-room of the store. Neither was eager to go into the dark ice-house with its canvas-wrapped figures of the maniac's first victims. There would be time for that in the morning.

The store-house they found firmly locked. They walked around it, examining the windows, but found no sign of a break. One of the Kanakas hissed at them from behind a barred window.

"What happen? What that shooting, hey?"

"You all right? You all in there?"

"Sure."

"Hear anything funny?"

"Hear two shots. What happen? You kill Kimamu?"

"Not yet," Rice Lauder said grimly. "Go back to sleep."

Kirke walked a little behind the manager on the way up the path to the enclosure. On either side the flowers were thick, abandoned, throwing perfume into the balmy air. Almost anything might lurk among them. . . Tuberoses and tiger-lilies, tall poinsettias, lehua, carnations, bougainvillea and poinciana high and fragrant: perhaps they concealed a wild-eyed killer? All the blooms in the world couldn't lull the violence latent in these islands. They'd been born of violence—mighty volcanos had torn open the ocean bottom to bring them into being. And the volcanos lingered, here, there, in unexpected places behind the flowers, cloaked in exquisite beauty, lovely but terrible, fatal.

"I want another look at that place where you found Harry," Kirke said when they'd reached the enclosure.

"All right. I'll stay on the steps here."

KIRKE walked around the oval garden, along the side of Lauder's bungalow, through the garden behind the bungalow, till he came to a spongy sea of nasturtiums, trampled and torn in the center.

Why had Sanderson come here? It seemed scarcely possible that he'd been killed in front of Kirke's house, but even if that had happened, why was the body dragged so far?

Kirke began to prowl, flashing the beam of his light back and forth, leaning very low, frowning. He never could be sure, afterward, whether he heard a foot-step in the bushes behind him, or whether some instinct had tugged at his muscles. He could not remember any cause and effect. All he could remember was throwing himself upon the ground.

Something thudded against him—something massive, heavy—knocking the breath from him. A knee or elbow struck his ribs. A huge, hairy hand fumbled for an instant at his throat, but he'd lowered his chin swiftly, and now he was rolling, threshing about among the nasturtiums. He was dizzy, stunned. But even in that horrible instant he was aware that he had saved his own life by falling flat.

The thing was gone. It moved with amazing speed. Kirke, sitting up, caught no more than a fleet glimpse of it—a monstrous, bounding shape—as it sprang into the shadows alongside of Rice Lauder's house.

He would have shot at it, even shot blindly into the shadows, but for the fact that the thing apparently was running toward the enclosure, and the fact that Lauder, hearing the noise, might run toward his own house. Kirke was afraid of killing Lauder by mistake.

He struggled to his feet. He ran across the garden, across Lauder's little lawn, out into the enclosure.

The manager was where Kirke had left

him, but he was on his feet now, his pistol drawn, staring wildly along the path which led past the Potters house up toward the nearest pineapple grove.

"Did you see him?"

"Up this way!" Lauder waved his pistol, started for the pineapple grove. "He saw me, and turned out this way!"

Kirke raced after him.

"Was it Kimamu?"

"Yes," Lauder called back. "I had a good look, too."

The manager was much heavier than Kirke, but his legs were longer, and Kirke, still panting from the struggle in the nasturtium bed, was barely able to keep him in sight. Lauder stumbled out into the pineapple grove. The plants were thick there, but low. Nobody could have hidden behind them. Besides, now the moon was up, shining full and mightily; and the pineapple plants, from blurred shadows, had become bright and proud; they extended in even rows up the slope toward the shrubbery which blocked the entrance of the path leading over Kaiulani.

"Up that way," Lauder yelled, pointed to the pali path. "I saw him jump into those bushes! Come on!"

Kirke would have hesitated. He confessed this to himself. He was as brave, he thought, as the next man—but he would have hesitated before diving into black shadows after a mad, kill-crazy Kanaka. But Rice Lauder, usually so mild in manner, and so slow, was crossing the pineapple grove in long strides, lost to all sense of caution. Kirke ran after him. You can't let a man plunge into danger like that alone.

The shadows were really not so dark, once he got to them. This was no jungle foliage—merely sumac and oleander, with the strong, confident moonlight blasting their defenses easily, penetrating them as a million silver javelins.

Kirke heard his companion thumping ahead. He called: "Shouldn't—we stick—together?"

"Come on! He's taking the path along the pali, trying to get back to that tall cane. If we get him before he reaches it—"

THE Kaiulani Pali path led almost directly across the middle of the island. It was too steep for horses, but not dangerous for a man on foot if he knew it as well as Kirke Walker did. There you were high above the fields of pineapples and cane, the graceful sweep of the beaches, the saucy coco palms, the smooth flat assurance of lagoons which indented Mauilei's shore, the steaming reefs beyond, the boundless and superb Pacific.

But it was not the view which stopped Kirke Walker in his tracks just after he'd burst through the last of the sumac. It was the sight of Kimamu.

The fisherman was a good three-quarters of a mile away, just inside the reef, and he was sailing for his own little cove and his hut there. But there could be no mistake about the ketch. Kirke had seen it a hundred times in the past—the giant in the stern, too. His features were not discernable, but only Kimamu could handle a boat like that, and only Kimamu would be sailing at this hour—sailing and singing, while he strummed a steel-stringed guitar. Even his voice came to them on the sweet-scented breeze.

*Mau loa no ko'u mahalo nui,
I ka nani punono o Kahana!*

Kimamu's voice was firm and round and full; it seemed not a mere man singing, but the voice of Paradise itself. Plaintive, bewitching, all the fascination of Wawaii was thick in that voice, in that view of the fields and the shore and the sea. A better man than Kirke might have stopped, gasping.

Rice Lauder didn't stop. Like Kirke he had a pistol in his right hand. Like Kirke again, he had seen and heard Kimamu. He wheeled.

Kirke started to raise his gun, started to step back. The barrel of Lauder's pistol struck him just over the left ear. He fell to his knees, wildly waving his arms to catch his balance. His own pistol flew from his grasp, went over the verge.

Lauder kicked him. The shards, brown and brittle, and the loose brown dirt, slid away underneath Kirke's knees and underneath the heels of his hands. He seized a bush. Lauder kicked him again.

His legs went over, hung in space. The bush came half out of the loose dirt—it was a tiny thing, not much more than a large weed.

"You were very smart! You guessed that somebody had scars, eh?"

Kirke gasped: "Pull me up!"

"Pull you up?" The manager seemed to think that this was very funny indeed. His face was not more than three feet from Kirke's, and Kirke wondered, now, looking into those mad blue eyes, how he ever had supposed this man to be sane. "Pull you up? I'm going to shoot you through the neck. Right through the neck!"

Kirke saw the pistol raised. He even saw Lauder's thumb cock it, heard the sharp *click*. Why hadn't he guessed this? reason it by the simple process of elimination? It was all so easy to understand—now that it was too late.

*U ka home ia ka wahine,
Puuwai aloha a Inia—*

Full and firm the voice, and the song was in slow waltz time. But Rice Lauder's voice was much closer.

"I won't cut you now. I'll do that later. There are other white hips to cut first, eh?" He uncocked the pistol, lowered it. He chuckled a little, nodding his head

confidently as though certain that Kirke would comprehend the humor of all this. "I won't shoot you. I want no noise, because of the hips. I'll push you over."

He was quieter now. He even lighted a cigarette.

Kirke couldn't stir. One movement, even a slight one, would send him sliding over the edge.

"Yes, it was smart, guessing about the scars. Once a man cut me that way. Three-four years ago, back on the mainland. He hated me because I'd gotten his sister in trouble. And I hated him! I hated him so much that sometimes I thought I'd go mad."

Now he was squatting on his heels, close to Kirke, talking softly, intimately. The cigarette smoke drifted past Kirke's face.

"**WE** had a fight, that man and I. I would have killed him there with my bare hands, only I slipped and fell and hit my head on the stone floor. I guess it knocked me out for a minute. When I came to, there he was leaning over me slashing my hip with a razor. He was laughing like a crazy man, and slashing me back and forth. It didn't hurt. I was so dizzy I couldn't move. He slashed me six times, all the while yelling something about putting his brand on me to remember him by . . ."

*He pua ua miliani ia,
E ka malualua Kii Wai!*

Rice Lauder said: "Sings nicely, doesn't he?" Then he glowered at his cigarette, and his voice got higher, sharper. "I never saw that man again. I went looking for him to kill him, but he'd left the city. I was starting after him when I heard he'd been killed in an automobile accident. I never got a chance to slash his right hip, the way he'd done to me. Or to choke him to death. If I could

have done that, it wouldn't have mattered so much, being branded that way. . . ."

Kirke asked cautiously: "Why must you treat other people that way, then? What have *they* done to you?"

"I don't know . . ." The manager sighed, frowned. He seemed puzzled, and passed his hand across his brow. "I got to thinking that people must know about the brand—about what they'd think of me when they did know. I got this job out here to be away from everybody. I didn't want anybody to know about my scars. I kept thinking of them. I never let anybody see me in locker rooms or bath houses or places like that. I never permitted my houseboy to hang around while I was dressing. And I still wanted to cut that man's hip the way he'd cut mine. But he was dead.

"I got to thinking, finally, that if I could mark somebody else that way, then people wouldn't be pointing me out alone as the branded one. They might even forget about my brand. So after a while I decided to cut somebody else's hip, and yesterday I killed Grant."

He said it simply. He had murdered George Grant. That was all.

Kirke cried: "Can't you—stop it?"

"Stop it? Why should I? I *enjoy* it! I killed Grant, and that was going to be all. But then I found I *enjoy* it. Not so much the killing itself as the carving. I like to feel my knife cut through skin! And I've got yours yet, and four other hips. Think of those four other hips, Walker! Four white, soft hips!"

"If you don't help me to get up here, I'll—"

"Potters was a fool, so I decided to kill him too." He laughed. His voice was rich with hysteria, and his eyes were wild, enormous. "So then I killed big Sanderson. And then you went there yourself. I simply sneaked around the other side of my house and jumped on

you. Only you heard me coming, or something . . . I ran back to where I'd been, and when you came out I told you I'd just seen Kimamu running away. If you hadn't believed me, I'd have shot you dead on the spot."

"Listen, Lauder. You mustn't let yourself go this way. Why don't you pull me up, and then we'll walk back to the—"

"Pull you up?" His laugh was high and terrible. He leaned closer, placed the lighted end of his cigarette against the back of Kirke's left hand. Kirke screamed, but he did not dare to release his grip on the bush. "Pull you up? Huh!"

He stretched out a long right leg. He was mad, but cunning too. He was careful not to get too close to the edge. Gently, with his toe, he began to jab at the base of the half-uprotted bush.

Kirke felt the bush quiver, give a little. The roots rose twitchingly, reluctantly from the dirt—at first. Then they came out faster, snap-snap-snap. Then all that remained came at once.

KIRKE knew the exact instant he went over. Yet it seemed a slow process. He slid a little . . . dirt and shards rustled around him . . . the bush came free in his hands, and he released it and started to scrabble for a grip. Until that instant he'd been without motion, almost afraid to breathe. He knew he might as well have continued that way, gone soundlessly. But he scabbled and fought. He could hear Kimamu's song, and he could hear the soapy laugh of Rice Lauder. He wished he could scream, to drown these noises. But he couldn't even scream.

He went over feet first, and it felt like a cold, cold wind swishing up through his body. It hurt most in the chest.

His knees, and immediately afterward his face, struck something scratchy but not firm. He heard a click of angry,

snapped bushes against his left side. He knew when he had started to fall, but he didn't know when he stopped. His chest hurt cruelly. For some time he was conscious only of this.

Very carefully he looked around. From a slight distance the Kaiulani Pali looks unbroken, sheer; but in fact it is blotched by tiny pockets of softness in which ferns and stiff, tough weeds spout defiantly. He had fallen against one of these.

He looked up. Impossible. He looked down. It *could* be done. A man *could* climb down there.

Of course, he thought, he could yell. If he had heard Kimamu's voice, could the fisherman hear his? Probably not, for the breeze was off the ocean. Would anybody hear his voice, now?

Yes, somebody would hear it. Rice Lauder, descending the pali path or skirting the pineapple grove, would hear it. And from the base of the pali Lauder, abandoning his plan of silence in this emergency, could pick him off deliberately, pump bullet after bullet into him.

So he didn't yell. Instead, he started down the side of the pali, using feet and fingernails, elbows and knees, even sometimes his chin. His pistol would be below, somewhere. In this moonlight he might find it. He might yet get back to the enclosure, to his own house, and his wife, before Rice Lauder got there.

But he mustn't permit himself to think of this. . . . If he thought of it he would try to go rapidly, and if he did that he was as good as dead. He knew what it was like below. Tall rocks, sharp as spears, bunched close together.

He must not think about Rice Lauder, or about the four white hips, or even about his pistol. He must go slowly, slowly. . . .

HELEN WALKER at first wasn't sure of the voice. She picked up a

shotgun before she went to the door. She had the sole responsibility here now, and she was taking no chances. Grace Grant and Mildred Potters were asleep at last, fully asleep. Harry Sanderson's widow was awake, but too stunned by grief to know or care what was going on; she sat in a corner, staring blankly at nothing, sometimes sobbing a bit.

"Who is it? Who's there?"

"It's me, Mrs. Walker. Mr. Lauder."

Now she was sure of the voice. She placed the shotgun in a corner, unlatched the door, stepped out on the *lanai*.

Even through the screen door of the *lanai* she could recognize Rice Lauder, massive, broad-headed. But she saw nobody with him. She crossed the *lanai* swiftly.

"Where's Kirke? Don't tell me anything has—"

"He's all right. He's coming along in a few minutes. Had to stop down by the store for a little while. Open up, Mrs. Walker."

She'd forgotten to unlock the screen door.

"Are you sure he's—You're not just trying to—to—"

"I'm absolutely sure of it. Please let me in."

He was holding both hands behind him, and his chin was low, pressing against his chest. Helen sensed something strange about him. If she had been able to see his eyes she would have understood; but he held his head so low that his hat shadowed his features.

She opened the screen door.

"Get back in the house, Helen! Get back!"

Kirke had appeared from the direction of the pali path, running hard. A pistol gleamed in his right hand.

"Get away from that door!"

Rice Lauder whirled. He had a small axe in his left hand, a pistol in his right.

Helen threw herself upon the floor of the *lanai*.

Lauder fired twice. He was yelling something, but nobody could hear him. Kirke fired three times. All of these explosions, heard from nearby, were smeared into one terrific rattle of sound like a burst from a machine gun.

The manager of the Mauilei Plantation dropped his arms. He took one step to the left, a nervously measured step. Then he took another, hesitantly. He was like a man trying to sidle out through a door in order to finish an embarrassing conversation.

Not a dozen feet away, Kirke Walker waited. His pistol was raised and cocked, aimed at Lauder's face. He had one cartridge left.

He never was obliged to use that cartridge. Rice Lauder stared uncomprehendingly at him for a little while, then blubbered something meaningless between loose lips. He shook his head. He made a sound like a man trying to cough very quietly. Then he collapsed. Everything in his body seemed to have been severed at the same instant. He thudded to his knees, toppled sideways, and was still.

THE mailboat captain had permitted half a cigar to burn unnoticed while he listened, pop-eyed, to the tale.

"So all the time you thought it was this—"

"Here's the fellow we thought it was, coming here now."

A native, a Polynesian Samson, stormed into the office. His rich, red-brown skin did not show bruises readily, but it was obvious that he'd been in a fight. One eye was closed and his face was puffed and swollen. Blood was clotted on his dark red lips. There was more blood on the knuckles of his ham-like hands.

"Them two damn Hooponos! Them grab me when I—"

"I know, Kimamu, I know. It was all a mistake."

"I go sail in my boat! Two days I sail! I come back singing sweet song, sweet Kanaka song! And them two damn Hooponos they try to—!"

"It is a shame, but you mustn't get sore at them. They were only obeying orders. Look, Kimamu. Tell you what I'll do to make up. I send you big jug *okulehau*, hey? Big jug good *ti oke*, two year old, hey?"

The giant grinned, forgetful of his split and swollen lips. The plantation officials always had been strict about liquor on Mauilei.

"I send it to you, hey? Then you forget about them Hooponos?"

"Sure! *Okulehau!* Then I sing. I sing you Kanaka song."

Already the fight was erased from Kimamu's memory. Sing! What could be more natural? He threw back his head, his throat muscles tightened.

Mau loa no ko'u mahalo nui,

I ka nani punono o Kahana!

Kirke Walker rose hastily. "Some other time, Kimamu. You got nice voice, Kimamu. Sweet voice. But not that song, hey?"

"Sure. I sing you any song, Mist' Walker. You bring me *okulehau*, I sing you any song. You nice man, Mist' Walker. I wish you manager plantation, not Mist' Lauder, hey?"

"I guess I am, now," muttered Kirke. "But if you like me so much, Kimamu, then not that song, see?"

"Sure," said the fisherman. "*Okulehau.*"

And he went away singing. But not that song.