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Book Club Kit





Dear Reader:

If you've read any of my other books, you know that Hawai'i is my home and I have a deep and abounding love for these islands. I was born and raised on O'ahu and grew up on my grandparents' stories of life during the war - from picking up hitchhiking marines with their lion, Roscoe, to nearly getting shot for being on the street at night, to housing homesick soldiers on weekends. Even forty years later, the war and those men were always on their minds. Hawai'i is the only state where war was literally on our doorstep. Many people view our islands as purely a sunny vacation spot, but we are so much more than beaches and coconut trees.

People always ask how I find my book ideas. Though the first two are loosely based on my grandmother's life and stories, I found my idea for *Red Sky Over Hawai'i* while out hiking. One day several years ago, I came upon a rustic old house tucked away in a remote part of Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. You would never even know it's there. Needless to say, I was intrigued. When I dug deeper and found the house was originally built as a hideaway house in 1941 in case of a Japanese invasion, I knew I would write a book about it someday. A year or so later, I met a woman who told me about her friend's mother, who had been a little girl during the attack on Pearl Harbor, and how her parents had been taken away by the FBI and held for over a year because they were German. Though I knew about Japanese interned here in WWII, I had never heard that Germans were, too. I tracked down that story, which broke my heart, and decided I would merge the two and loosely base my story on them. I've always been fascinated at how ordinary people band together during crises, and at the human capacity for resilience, so I knew I would include that as a theme in my book.

As far as the setting goes, this book was a pleasure to write because Volcano is one of my favorite places in the world. I have been going there since I was a young girl and have explored every single trail in the park, from Mauna Loa road, to Halema'uma'u (Kilauea's main crater), all the way down Chain of Craters road to the coast where the lava flows out to the sea. I know it like the back of my hand. In my book, I wanted to give the reader the same feeling I get when I'm there, and the sights and sounds and smells, whether it be the crunch of lava underfoot, the whirring of the wings of the honeycreepers (tiny forest birds), or the scent of the sulphur that permeates the air.

I hope you enjoy the read!

Sara Ackerman

A Night in Hawai'i

MUSIC

Hawaiian Slack Key guitar is one of the finest traditions of acoustic guitar in the world. Gabby Pahinui, Makaha Sons of Ni'i'hau, Ledward Kaapana, and Rev. Dennis Kamakahi are but a few of the best. Get yourself in the island mood with the Slack Key Guitar Radio on Pandora.



COCKTAILS

VOLCANO LEMONADE

- 1.5 oz Kuleana Rum Works Huihui
- .5 oz. Fresh Lemon Juice
- .5 oz. Honey
- 4-5 Mint Leaves
- Several ohelo berries
(or blueberries)
- 1-2 Grains Hawaiian Sea Salt

Gently muddle all ingredients except rum. Add rum and ice, gently shake, strain, and serve over ice.

LI HING MUI MARGARITA

Salty and sweet and classic Hawai'i. Li hing mui powder takes a regular margarita and ramps it up a notch.

Directions: Make your favorite margarita, and instead of dipping the glass rim in salt, dip it in li hing mui powder.

If you aren't in Hawai'i, it can be easily ordered online.

A Night in Hawaii



MENU

ONOLICIOUS TERI BURGERS TOPPED WITH GRILLED PINEAPPLE



1 pound organic Ground Turkey or Beef
1/4 cup bread crumbs
2- 3 cloves minced garlic
1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro
4 rings canned pineapple, save juice for
teriyaki sauce below
1 red onion cut into 1/3-inch slices
(Vegetarians use your favorite veggie
burger!)

TERIYAKI SAUCE:

1/4 cup reserved pineapple juice from
canned pineapple above
1/2 cup soy sauce or tamari sauce
2 tablespoons rice vinegar
1 tablespoon honey
1 teaspoon minced garlic about 1 clove
2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
1 tablespoon cornstarch

Prepare the teri sauce in a small
saucepan over medium heat. Combine
the pineapple juice, soy sauce, rice
vinegar, honey, garlic, and ginger. Cover
and bring to a boil. Once boiling, remove
the lid and cook for 1 minute, stirring
constantly.

While you wait for the sauce to boil,
whisk the cornstarch and 1 tablespoon
water together in a small bowl. Add to
sauce once it's boiling. Cook for one
additional minute, until the sauce
begins to thicken. Remove from heat.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the
ground meat, panko, garlic, ginger,
black pepper, cilantro, and half the teri
sauce. Mix just until combined, and be
careful not to compact the meat. Shape
into patties. Place in the refrigerator
for 30 minutes.

Set aside some of the remaining teri
sauce for serving, reserving the rest for
grilling. Preheat the grill to medium high
and lightly oil the grates. Grill the rings
of pineapple and red onion slices until
caramelized and tender, about 3
minutes per side
Grill the meat to your taste & add buns
toward the end.

Serve the burgers on buns, brushed with
sauce and topped with grilled pineapple
and red onion.

A Night in Hawai'i

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Lana puts herself in danger of arrest by sheltering her German and Japanese neighbors and friends and lying about their identities. What would you have done in her position?
2. Suspected sympathizers were hauled away within hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor, some kept for the duration of the war. Not only Japanese, but German's and Italians, too. Do you believe this was justified because the country was at war? Or do you feel that it was a violation of human rights?
3. Both Lana and Coco possess intuitive powers that seem to grow stronger at Kilauea Volcano, a place long considered sacred. Do you believe in the untapped power of the human mind? Or heightened energy of certain places?
4. Animals play a big role in the book, as both companions and healers. Have you ever thought about what you would do with your animals if you experienced war firsthand?
5. Lana experiences guilt and regret over not reconciling with her father while he was still alive. Do you feel that her reasons for staying away were justifiable? Do you think she should have forgiven him sooner?
6. Over time, Lana and her housemates grow to be as close as family. Have you experienced bonding during times of great stress? Do you think that she and the girls, and Mochi and Benji, would continue to see each other after the war?
7. Fred and Ingrid Wagner were separated from their two daughters without warning and with no idea of how long it would be for. How do you think you would cope with such a situation?
8. War is known to bring out the worst in people, but it can also bring out the best, and stories of courage and hope and survival abound. How did the characters in the book react to the pressures of war on their doorstep?
9. Before Pearl Harbor, there were many signs of a Japanese attack looming. Do you think you would have taken precautions and built an escape house or bomb shelter or anything else along those lines?
10. Lana does everything in her power to make Christmas special for the kids, despite her own struggles and grief. Do you think it was important to keep up the tradition of Christmas, even in such dark times?
11. Grant is unknowingly caught between working at the detainment camp and getting to know the two Wagner girls. When he finds out the truth about their parents, how do you feel he handled it? Did you want him to do more to try and help them? Could he have?
12. To what degree do you think the hideaway house played a role in Lana's journey?

An Interview With The Author

From Pages Ago Book Club & Linda's Book Obsession

1. What was your favorite part of the story to write? Was it delving into WWII? Maybe a character? The gorgeous Hawaii setting?

I always love writing about setting, which to me is its own character, but even more so for this novel. It was fascinating, too, to dive deeper into the history of Volcano during the war. I had no idea that it was such an important military hub! And along the lines of setting, I am a big fan of magical realism, so it was fun to add a touch of that to my story. If you've ever been to Volcano, you know it is quite an enchanting place with a powerful energy. I enjoyed the exploration of the "unexplained phenomena" throughout the book. I also fell in love with Coco, the young German girl. She turned out to have so much spunk and be such a little trooper.

2. We love how relatable we always find historical fiction to be even when it takes place in sometimes a vastly different time. We were wondering if as you were writing this story, there were any elements that you personally related you?

The one thing that really comes to mind for this book is Lana's father, Jack. I had recently lost my own father, so writing about Jack and the exploration of grief and the father/daughter relationship was very personal. I used a lot of my own father's attributes (he was an architect and engineer and loved the Volcano) and some anecdotes from my own life experiences with my dad. The flashback when Lana and Jack go hiking to Waimanu Valley, for example. I went there with my father and it was one of those trips you never forget--miserable but amazing and lifechanging at the same time. The timing was perfect for me to write this, though I didn't realize it until the story got underway.

3. Between the themes of family, love, and everything else, it's obvious there's a lot to take away from your book. We'd love to hear, though, what's one thing you wish for readers to walk away from your book with?

I would love readers to walk away with the understanding that we as humans need to stick together, especially in tough times. And we need to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. There are certainly a lot of parallels to what went on back then with the detainment camps (a big part of the story) and what is happening now in the world. I think my last line sums it up nicely!

4. What was your motivation in becoming an author and writer? What did you do before you were a writer?

There have been times throughout my life when I finished a book and thought, I want to be able to write one! I've always loved reading and writing, and used to compile books of my poems and give them out as gifts every year for Christmas. But it wasn't until more recently--about 8 years ago--that I sat down and started writing my first novel. I was hooked right away, but I didn't land an agent and publishing deal until my fourth one (Island of Sweet Pies and Soldiers). When I started, I knew it would be a long process. I had a Post-It note that said Patience & Perseverance stuck to my door frame. That was my mantra.

5. Now onto your beautiful writing. What is your favorite part of the writing process? How about the most challenging?

Aw, thank you! I love the feeling of being surprised as I go. When new characters or ideas pop up along the way, it's similar to that OOOHHH feeling you get when reading. I love wondering what happens next, and the only way to find out is to keep writing.

The hardest part? The beginning, the middle and the end, lol. Seriously, though. Starting off is scary and intimidating, but also exciting. And then there is always that middle section that feels like it's sagging. I think to myself, yikes how I am I going to keep this story going for another forty thousand words? And then when I approach the ending, I wonder how on earth I am going to wrap up all these loose ends and give the reader that soul satisfying ending. But I have faith in the process, and know I can come back later and work on it. Having a great editor helps, too. Patience & Perseverance is my motto.

6. What are some of your favorite books and who is/are some authors that have inspired you in your own writing?

My all time favorites are Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver, The Secret Life of Bees by Sue Monk Kidd, any book by Alice Hoffman, and my most recent is Where The Crawdads Sing. These authors all have such a beautiful way with words and sent me down the path of writing.

7. It's not just humans who form our found families, it's animals too. Lana loves animals, even if she isn't sure how to make space for them in her life. I love this line, where she thinks upon seeing a horse, "Something about the warm and big presence of the animal pried open her heart." Why did you include animals in the story?

I include animals in all of my books. I love animals and I can't imagine my life without them, or writing books without them. In fact, animals inhabit all of my novels in some way, shape or form - dogs, cats, donkeys, sea turtles, a featherless chicken, endangered Hawaiian crows, horses, and even a lion. Not only do animals have so much to give us and teach us, they can also reveal much about the characters in a novel, making them seem more human and more relatable.

8. Lastly, we'd love to learn more about you, Sara! What are some of your hobbies/interests outside of writing?

I am definitely a nature girl. I grew up on Oahu and spent every possible moment in the ocean, swimming or surfing or paddling Hawaiian outrigger canoes. I also love yoga and hiking and am a plant/bird nerd. At night, you'll often find me stargazing (the Hawaiians developed a brilliant ocean navigation system) on the beach, in my yard, or high on Mauna Kea in a secret spot. I also love to pick berries and fruit, and bake pies (hence the idea for Island of Sweet Pies and Soldiers, my first book). Animals are also a big part of my life, and I have a dog and three cats. My dream is to have an animal sanctuary someday. Finally, I love to read. Can't forget that!