

CHAPTER  
**10**

## Section 1

LITERATURE SELECTION *from Hawaii*  
by James A. Michener

*The following excerpt from Michener's sweeping saga deals with the power struggle between native Hawaiians and American sugar planters. As you read this excerpt, think about how the planters seized power from the Hawaiian monarchy. Please be advised that one of the white characters uses an offensive racial epithet.*

The revolution that overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy and passed the government into the hands of the sugar planters was under way. In her palace, the wild-willed queen shuddered as she saw American troops file ashore to invade her territory. She was disposed to fight them, for she knew that this was a cruel perversion of the ordinary relationships between sovereign nations, but the sugar planters quickly immobilized her loyal troops, and she was left defenseless, a stubborn, anachronistic woman in her mid-fifties, regal in appearance but totally unaware that the nineteenth century was ebbing to a close and taking with it the concepts of government to which she adhered.

However, in the dying moments of her reign she was not completely without support, for after her troops were disbanded without firing a shot, a squad of volunteer loyalists materialized from the alleys of Honolulu and marched out to defend their queen. In their ranks, and typical of their quality, waddled the old kanaka [a Hawaiian of Polynesian descent] maile [a vine with fragrant leaves and bark] gatherer, Kimo. He had a musket that he had grabbed from a man in a pool hall and he held his uniform—a pair of sagging pants and that was all—about his waist with a length of red rope. His hair had not been combed for some days, he needed a shave and he was barefooted, but like his companions he gave every evidence of being willing to die for his queen. The sparkling American troops with new rifles watched in amazement as the volunteers marched up to give them battle, but a courageous officer in whites ran unarmed to the leader of the irregulars and said, “There’s no war. The queen has abdicated.”

“She’s what?” the leader of the loyalists asked.

“She’s abdicated,” the young American said.

Then he shouted, “Anybody here speak Hawaiian?”

A haole [a person who is not a native Hawaiian] bystander idled up and asked, “What you want, General?”

“Tell these men that there is to be no war. The queen has abdicated.”

“Sure,” the haole agreed. Turning to Kimo and his men he said, “Eh, you kanaka! Liliuokalani pau. She go home. You pau too. You go home.”

And so far as the actual fighting was concerned, in this manner the revolution ended. Kimo trundled his unused musket back to the poolroom and listened to the gibes of his friends. Then in great disturbance of spirit, for he knew that he had participated in the death of a world he had loved—the horses prancing in gold tassels, the royal guard marching in bright uniforms, the queen going forth in a gilt carriage—he walked slowly down Beretania Street and up Nuuanu to the small house where he lived with his wife Apikela and his Chinese family. He went directly to bed and lay there without talking or laughing until he died.

The provisional government, with Micah Hale as its ostensible head and the sugar planters directing from behind, swept away the seventeenth-century anachronisms proposed by Queen Liliuokalani. Each act of the efficient new government was directed toward one clear goal: union with America. David Hale and Micah Whipple were rushed to Washington to force a Treaty of Annexation through the Senate before congenial President Harrison and his Republicans left office on March 4, because it was known that the newly elected President, Grover Cleveland, opposed what had been happening in Hawaii; and soon frantic appeals for moral support were speeding back to Honolulu, for the treaty commissioners Hale and Whipple reported: “There is considerable opposition to the manner in which the revolution was carried out. Cannot Micah Hale make a strong statement, relying upon his faultless reputation to give it force? Else we are lost.”

It was under these circumstances, in February, 1893, that Micah Hale retired to his study on King Street and wrote for a New York journal: “Any sane

man looking at these islands today has got to admit that they require supervision by the United States of America. The indigenous citizens are for the most part illiterate, steeped in idolatry, committed to vain shows of monarchical display and totally unsuited to govern themselves." In these harsh but true words, the son of a missionary, in his seventy-first year, summarized what his group had accomplished; but since he wrote as a profound patriot and as one who loved Hawaii above all else, he did not understand what he was saying. Furthermore, he went on to point out a great truth that others both in Hawaii and America were overlooking: "Hawaii cannot lie idle and unwanted in the middle of the Pacific. The islands seem to lie close to America, but they also lie close to Canada and on the route from that great land to Australia and New Zealand. There is every reason for Hawaii to become Canadian. They also lie close to Russia-in-Asia and except for an accident of history might even now belong to that great power. And to anyone who has sailed from Honolulu to Yokohama or to Shanghai, these islands lie perilously close to Japan and China. For more than half a century I have believed that their destiny lies with America, but it is not as I once thought an inevitable destiny. If at this crucial moment of history, our logical destiny is frustrated, an illogical one will triumph and Hawaii, the gem of the Pacific, will belong to Canada or to Russia or to Japan. It is to prevent such a catastrophe that we pray for the United States to accept us now." This widely reprinted article was taken from the Hale mansion on King Street by Wild Whip Hoxworth and delivered to one of his ships, waiting in the harbor, but as old Micah Hale handed it to his nephew, he was freshly appalled that he should be using such an evil agent to accomplish so good a purpose.

Micah's plea achieved nothing, for Louisiana and Colorado sugar interests prevented the lame-duck Senate of February, 1893, from jamming the Treaty of Annexation through, and five days after Grover Cleveland assumed the Presidency he sternly withdrew the treaty and rebuked those who had sought to foist it upon the American public. Now doleful news reached Hawaii. The Secretary of State wrote: "The United States will not accept the Hawaiian Islands on the terms under which they have been offered. It would lower our national standard to endorse a selfish and dishonorable scheme of a lot of adventurers. I oppose taking these islands by force and fraud, for there is such a thing as international morality."

President Cleveland was of a similar opinion and personally dispatched an investigator to Honolulu to inquire into America's role in the unsavory revolution, and by one of the tricks of history the investigator turned out to be a Democrat from Georgia and a member of a family that had once held slaves. When preliminary news of his appointment reached Hawaii, the Committee of Nine were apprehensive lest he report against them, but when his slave-holding status was revealed, they sighed with visible relief. "As a good Southerner he'll understand our problems," John Janders told the conspirators, and they all agreed.

But Whip Hoxworth, considering the matter carefully, judged: "We may be in for deep trouble. Since Cleveland's investigator comes from Georgia, he probably despises \_\_\_\_\_."

"Of course he does," Janders agreed. "He'll see through these Hawaiians right away."

"I doubt it," Whip cautioned. "Granted that he hates niggers. As a sensible human being he'll try to compensate and prove that he doesn't hate other people with dark skins."

"Why would he do that?" Janders demanded.

"Don't ask me why!" Whip replied. "Just watch."

And when the investigator arrived he did exactly as Whip had predicted. Hating Negroes at home, he had to like Hawaiians abroad. It was a profound compulsion and it permitted him, a Georgia man, to understand the revolution better than any other American understood it at the time. He talked principally with Hawaiians, was bedazzled by the idea of speaking directly with a queen, became an ardent royalist, and suppressed evidence given by white men. His report to President Cleveland was a crushing rebuke to the sugar men; they had, he discovered, conspired with the American Minister to overthrow a duly constituted government; they had worked in league with the captain of an American vessel; they had deposed the queen against the will of the Hawaiian people; they had done all this for personal gain; and it was his opinion that Queen Liliuokalani, a virtuous woman, should be restored to her throne.

His report aroused such a storm in Washington that David Hale and Micah Whipple saw there was no hope of forcing the United States to accept Hawaii, and they returned to Honolulu with the glum prediction: "We will never become part of America while Grover Cleveland is President. His Secretary of State is already asking, 'Should not the

great wrong done to a feeble state by an abuse of the authority of the United States be undone by restoring the legitimate government?" There's even talk of restoring the queen by force of American arms."

"What would happen to us?" members of the Committee asked.

"Since you're American subjects," a consular official explained, "you'd be arrested, hauled off to Washington, and tried for conspiring to overthrow a friendly power."

"Oh, no!" the conspirators protested. "We're Hawaiian subjects. Our citizenship is here."

September and October, 1893, were uneasy months in Hawaii, and Wild Whip's gang maintained power by only a nervous margin. Each arriving ship brought ominous news from Washington, where sentiment had swung strongly in favor of Queen Liliuokalani, and it was generally assumed that she would shortly be restored to power; but just before this was about to occur the obstinate woman committed an act so appalling to the Americans that she forever discredited the monarchy. What Wild Whip had been unable to gain for himself, the queen won for him.

Late in the year President Cleveland dispatched a second investigator to check upon the specific terms under which Liliuokalani should be returned to her throne, for as Cleveland pointed out, America never wished to profit from the misfortunes of her neighbors. The new investigator plunged the Committee of Nine into despair by announcing that the annexation of Hawaii by America was no longer even under discussion, whereupon he entered into formal discussions with the queen as to what steps she wanted America to take in restoring her crown.

No difficulties were encountered, and the investigator had to smile when the queen pointed out, "One of the charges made against us most often, sir, was that we were a small kingdom overly given to a love of luxurious display. To this charge I must plead guilty, because from the first our kings selected as their advisers men of the missionary group, and we found that no men on earth love panoply and richly caparisoned horses and bright uniforms and medals more than men who have long been dressed in New England homespun. I have four pictures here of state occasions. You see the men loaded with gold and medals. They aren't Hawaiians. They're Americans. They demanded the pomp of royalty, and we pampered them."

"Speaking of the Americans," the investigator asked, "what kind of amnesty will you provide for the revolutionists?"

"Amnesty?" Queen Liliuokalani asked, inclining her large and expressive head toward the American. "I don't understand."

"Amnesty," the investigator explained condescendingly. "It means . . ."

"I know what the word means," Liliuokalani interrupted. "But what does it mean in this circumstance?"

"Hawaii's undergone some unfortunate trouble. It's over. You're restored to your throne. President Cleveland assumes that you'll issue a proclamation of general amnesty. It's usually done."

"Amnesty!" the powerful queen repeated incredulously.

"If not amnesty, what did you have in mind?"

"Beheading, of course," the queen replied.

"What was that?"

"The rebels will have to be beheaded. It's the custom of the islands. He who acts against the throne is beheaded."

The American investigator gasped, then swallowed hard. "Your Excellency," he said, "are you aware that there are over sixty American citizens involved?"

"I did not know the number of traitors, and I do not think of them as Americans. They have always claimed to be Hawaiians, and they shall be beheaded."

"All sixty?" the investigator asked.

"Why not?" Liliuokalani asked.

"I think I had better report to President Cleveland," the perspiring investigator gulped, excusing himself from the august presence; and that night he wrote: "There are factors here which we may not have considered adequately in the past." After that there was no more talk of restoring the monarchy.

## Activity Options

1. Acting as the investigator sent to Honolulu by President Cleveland, write up your report on the U.S. role in the revolution. Then share your report with classmates.
2. With a partner, role-play a conversation between a native Hawaiian and a sugar planter on the topic of Hawaii's political problems. Draw on information in this excerpt as well as in your textbook to prepare for your role.