

A LOVE STORY  
A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY  
A SACRED HAWAIIAN PLACE

*A Song for Hāna  
eʻo the Spirit of Lehoʻula*

Text & Images by  
**George Kinder**

I wish first to thank the kūpuna of Hāna for their wisdom and aloha, which connect us to the ancestors and to the truth inside ourselves. I wish also to thank all those who have kept the land of Hāna accessible for so long to Hāna residents. My deepest gratitude goes to Bach, Blake, Ryokan, Dylan, the kāhuna of the slack key guitar, and all those who play Hawaiian music and dance the hula in Hāna for their daily inspiration to create.



A Song for Hāna  
&  
the Spirit of Leho'ula



To Kathy

Morning she searched the field  
All day the kitchen table  
blazed with flowers



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To My Readers

Although I wrote *A Song for Hāna & the Spirit of Lebo'ula* as an attempt to save the coastal land in Hāna from development, the book was never intended to be primarily about the saving of that land. It is also about the larger environment, where landscapes of ocean, earth and air are threatened constantly by human encroachments. When the poem speaks of Hāna it is about that sacred place, 'the last Hawaiian place,' and it is about the earth. The poem, as metaphor, speaks though to still larger ground. It speaks to the terrain just inside our skin, the landscape of our spirit, the place in which our own ground crumbles beneath us, our own swirling seas threaten to devour us. More than anything, it is a poem about this inner landscape, how we threaten it, how we fall asleep to it, and how by waking up our inner world we save the land around us.

*A Song for Hāna* is a poem of my own daily journey for many years across these landscapes, searching for the present moment, trying to understand what it means not to get lost, to face (as part of that) my own anxieties and concerns, and to undertake, for hours a day, a spiritual practice that took me deeper and deeper into the landscapes of Hāna and of myself.

Part of my work involved getting to know the history and stories of the ancient ones, the ancestors of the Hawaiian people who walked the same stretch of coast before me, and to speak to them in my own way. Humbled by the experience of finding a personal connection with them, and a mutual love of the land and its spirit, I knew no way to talk of the experiences I found other than to personify the spirits that I conversed with in the forms of ancient Hawaii. I truly hope that, as a man originating in a different culture, I have offended no one. What I learned felt universal, applicable to all cultures, and urgent to tell.

The six chapters are organized both as a physical and as a spiritual journey. To guide you on this journey, I've used photographs of the landscape and scans of local vegetation. All images were taken along this single mile of Hawaiian coast. I've also employed several

poetic forms. There are poems, prose poems and prose pieces. The prose pieces are usually meant as transitions to move the action of the story. The shorter poems are designed to capture a momentary experience. Longer poems elaborate on the meaning of experiences described in the narrative. The longest narrative poems expand upon the journey's meaning and occupy much of the dialogue between the spirits of Pele, Leho'ula and myself.

I invite you to explore the images and poetry in whatever way feels natural to you. Visually, each two-page spread is a moment in time. Just as every moment is different from every other, so each spread is meant to be different. Sometimes words so intermingle with the life of the earth or the life of the sea that it takes some effort to discern them. This is also as it is meant to be. You may wish to survey the landscape page-by-page from above, alighting on a particular poem that draws you with its shape or its placement or its connection with an image. Or perhaps you will wish to start from the beginning of the book and read straight through. *A Song for Hāna* invites many readings, and I am grateful for them all.

Finally, while this book employs endangered Hāna as metaphor for the earth, and for our eroding inner landscapes, I am deeply concerned with the threat development poses to Hāna the place, and am committed to preserving this sacred coast, and to supporting Hawaiian culture. Given this commitment, I thought for a long time about the share of the profits that will go to Hāna and its people. I considered ten percent because of the spiritual tradition of tithing. But it did not feel nearly enough. I then considered one-hundred percent, because I want to save the land and give back to Hāna and its traditional culture in every way I can. But I realized that if I donated one-hundred percent of the profits, I could not then afford to give nearly the amount of time or energy that I would like to support these causes. So I settled on at least fifty percent of the profits and much time and energy. This feels like a gift in balance, and I am happy to have you join with me in its giving. At the back of this volume are lists of organizations and people who have contributed much to Hāna or to this book.

With aloha from Hāna,

George Kinder



## Contents

### The Gate to the Garden 7

In which I wrestle with my tasks and responsibilities and the daily news, and am called by the sea, by the wind, by Leho'ula to enter the pastures and do the spiritual work that is Hāna.

### Entering the Pastures 15

In which I discover that my path to Leho'ula, and to my spiritual practice, is apparently blocked by developers, by threats to the environment, and I am urged by a descendant of ali'i to save the land.

### Pele and Her Friends 39

In which Pele, the goddess of fire and the volcano; Ku'ulakai, the god of the fish; his son Ai'ai; Kamapua'a, the god of the pigs; and St. Francis all give encouragement, as I pursue my spiritual quest.

### Searching for Leho'ula 57

In which I get down to business, doing my spiritual practice along the beach of Leho'ula, and in which it becomes clear that the ancient Leho'ula is none other than the present moment that I yearn for.

### Leho'ula 79

At last Leho'ula reveals herself, an 'iwi, a beautiful young woman, a goddess of wisdom and of all times. Leho'ula and I lose ourselves in passionate embrace, spat with each other, reconcile, and part as true lovers. Leho'ula passes on her teachings and promises to live in my song.

### Walking Back 97

In which I grieve Leho'ula's passing, celebrate my new understanding and begin to integrate my spiritual practice with my daily life.

### Glossary 106

### Resources

Organizations Supporting Hāna 107  
 People Who Have Contributed 108  
 Serenity Point Press 112



I have used my words as flailing torch  
to sear others with my shame

But look!

It's not the stories; it's the fire that is real

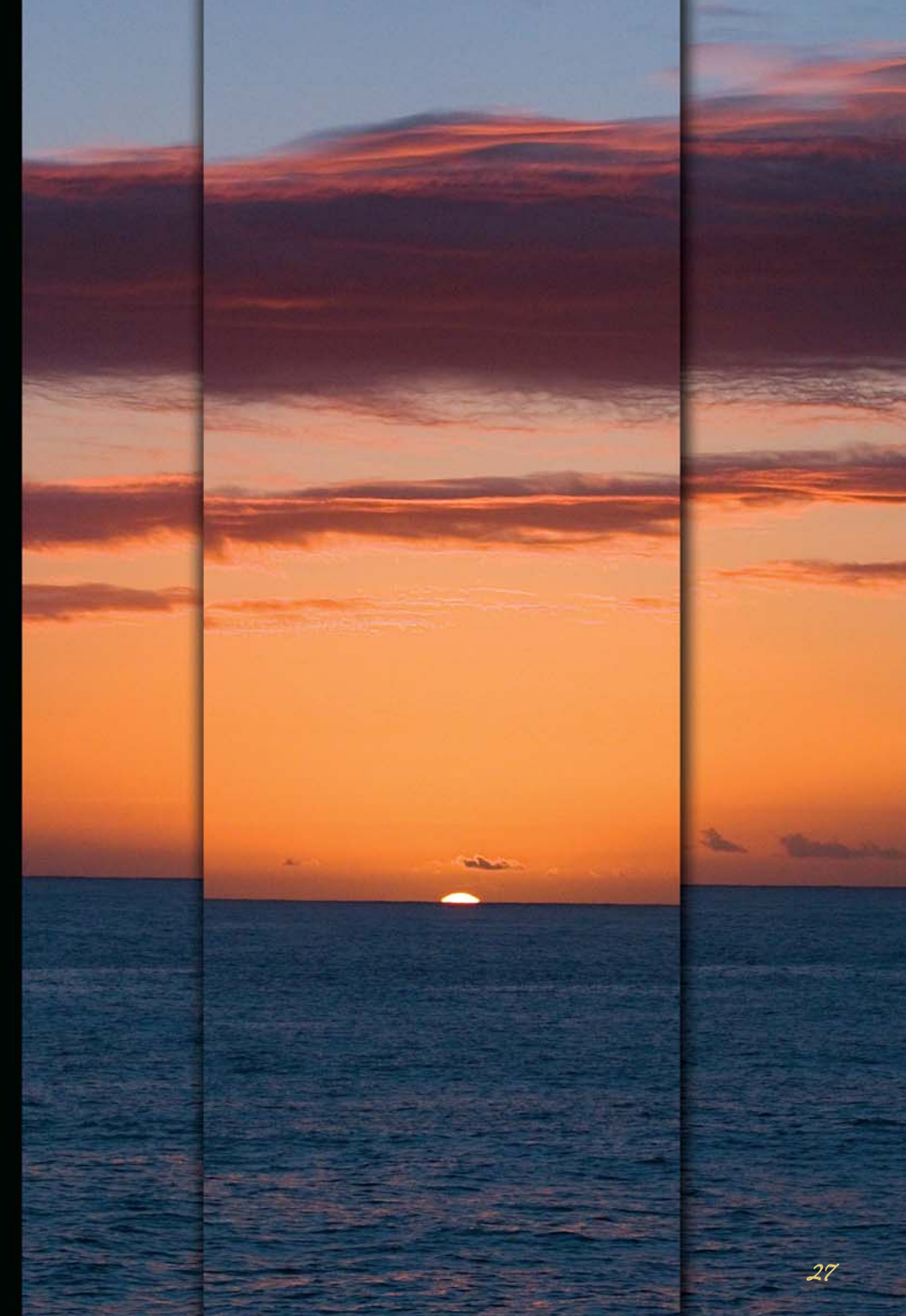
It is the face of God, this fire  
until, all burned away

I see myself

Such a tortured war we live in  
with just these fragments of ourselves and others remaining  
rather than how, free of time and space  
we are the whirling winds where light comes from  
and the sources of the singing  
that arises from the ocean to the sky

Instead, hidden under such reasonable garb,  
we make our spiritual reasons for war  
for deceit for murder for fraud for theft for divorce  
or for ripping up a pasture  
that runs down from the mountain to the sea  
as if it were a whale

Only the inner pasture is quiet  
Only where birds chirp inside is alive





I had known him as a gracious man, a man of silent wisdom and great depth, one who wore the title of ali'i naturally.



“You must stop this,” he said as I told him of the sales of the land. “You must stop this,” he bellowed. I marveled and imagined, as the voice echoed through the phone line, that it was not the voice of my friend, but the voice of Hawaiian ancestors. “You must stop this,” he chanted. “It is your destiny! It is your destiny.” I hung up the phone, shaken, honored, awed. What was this old man who had yelled at me over the phone? Who did he think he was? How could I do anything? I had no one’s respect. I did not hold reins of power.



Each time we met, without fail, he would draw me aside and say,  
“Live in Aloha, the message of Hawaii is Aloha.  
It’s our message to the world.”  
*But shouldn’t we fight? Isn’t there a battle?*  
“Your greatest weapon is Aloha.”

Watching a new wave wash over my toes  
It reaches for the farthest shore  
and falls back

I think of Ai'ai's father  
Every day adding knowledge to his life  
Adding volumes to his shelves

Only to fall back, one sudden day,  
to the sea of his being  
Only the faintest trace  
of his teachings  
remaining

In the sand





I don't think I understood a word of what she said, so stunned was I to see her. As she spoke it seemed the land was becoming human. The smallest grain of sand sparkled with life. The cliffs of Ka iwi o Pele gently shook into Kamapua'a's bold form, each tree a warrior, guarding the land, calling its warning out to all Hawaii. Even the clouds seemed to sing. The sun burst forth godlike, and the air lifted the earth up in its warm embrace.

On Ālau, the great god Maui stands, hauling his islands up from the sea. Ai'ai and Ku'ulakai, like dolphins, leap from the ocean to dance through the sky with the 'iwi Leho'ula. Standing tall, they hold the long sandy tresses of Leho'ula's veil as she sails across the bay. Pele gathers her cloak around the sun, shining its light on her friends. The words of Leho'ula bleed from her dress, they echo in the hills, stirring the breezes.

Here on the beach of Leho'ula, leaning on my knapsack, feeling the words of the wind, I watch the passionate heart of the ocean cascading toward my feet and listen to the celebrations of the birds of wonder crying out the rising of the sun.



Meeting moments at Leho'ula  
In the long hours of the day  
In the rainy season  
In all your years

The world turns inside out  
And the deep peace within  
Spreads across the landscape  
Across the wild ocean  
Across every changing moment

The world keeps shifting  
And the inner peace keeps arising  
It's like the world keeps getting anxious  
Keeps being born and dying  
And with what you have deep inside  
You keep bringing it to rest

You might call it spiritual work  
Or you might call it suffering  
transformed into wisdom  
I like to call it the song of Hāna.





*A Song for Hāna & the Spirit of Leho‘ula* is a love story that unfolds across the majesty of the Hāna coast, a sacred place threatened by development. In *A Song for Hāna* the author, lost and distracted, becomes engaged with figures of ancient Hawaii, is transformed by the experience, and comes to the spirit of the place and of himself in the hands of Leho‘ula, heroine of old Hawaii.

You can read this book as a narrative, an adventure, or as a spiritual journey. You can explore each two-page spread as a meditation. Or you can simply enjoy the gorgeous images, relax into and savor the beauty of the Hāna coast, ‘the last Hawaiian place.’

## HELP SAVE THE HĀNA COAST

Fifty percent of the profits from this book will be dedicated to help preserve the Hāna coast, and to preserve and support traditional Hawaiian culture.

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