

# MOON RUNNING

All my life I've been running. At first from homework and responsibilities, or even for fun. But most recently I've been running from my past. My mom was never there for me. She left when I was just 3 weeks old. But now I'm 13 and have accepted the fact that I'll never know her. My dad died when war broke out in our small town on the island of Kahoolawe in Hawaii. Most people will tell you that island is deserted. I'll tell you it didn't used to be. But as soon as the war broke out between the town, it became just that. My dad died trying to help people out. I now live with my Oma and Opa in Honolulu. I run on shores and the inner tropical forests of the island whenever I can. Most of all, I love to run by moonlight. My feet pounding against the cold dark ground, heart beating in my chest. Leaping, bounding over rocks only by moonlight. Sometimes it feels like I'm running on the moon and not just by its light.

"Aloha, Lelani," someone says, breaking me out of my daze. It's just Ms. Carpenter. She just moved from New York and pronounces "Aloha" like "Hahola". "Aloha, Mrs. Carpenter," I say. Finally, I'm back at Oma and Opa's house. It's a little, blue cabin on the bay with palm trees blocking the entire view of the house except the front door. I slow down when I'm right in front of the house. If Oma and Opa knew how much I ran, they would send me away to a boarding school in Georgia. "Leilani Lilo Hina Hernandez," my Oma yells. Oh no. She saw me, she saw me run. Georgia, here I come.

"I can't believe you were running. Have we taught you nothing, little girl? We didn't want to do this, but you will attend boarding school in the fall. The school semester starts in five days. We leave tomorrow. Do you understand? No. More. Running," my Oma shouts.

Tonight is my last night to run. I have to make it count. At midnight I get out of my bed and crawl under it. I release a board from under my bed, and my worn, faded blue running shoes and my purple, Nike shorts fall to the floor. My Oma and Opa got rid of all my athletic clothes except for these. I have to hide them from my grandparents. I go to my dresser and pick out a blue tank top. Weird, I think. The moon isn't out. I don't mean it's at the crescent phase or the clouds are covering it. The moon just wasn't there. I didn't think. I decided to run anyways. My feet pounding against the pitch black gravel, my heart pounding in my chest. I don't know where I'm going, but I'm running, and that's all that matters. I run in the pitch black for miles. But a blue light shines up ahead. It's right in between the local pharmacy and the poke bowl place. Strange place for a light to be coming from this late at night. I slow down to a jog. The blue light becomes blinding. It pierces my eyes. Normally I can handle bright light because of the recurring bright, Honolulu sun. I had to divert my eyes from this light. Then, as if this was part of a crazy dream, the light formed into a beautiful woman.

She had almond skin with bright, blue eyes. She was wearing a purple, silk dress that seemed to float around her like clouds. On top of her dress she had a lei made of Arabian Jasmine and a haku of the greenest leaves on her head. She glowed like a full moon on a cloudless night. The most mesmerizing thing she was wearing was a necklace made of glittering, pear-shaped moonstones. Fact is, she looked liked me. We both have the same

smooth skin and bright blue eyes. Except she was wearing the most beautiful clothing and necklace I had ever seen. And I was just a 13 year old girl wearing torn sneakers and Nike shorts hidden from my grandparents.

"Hello, child," she said.

I was so startled, I almost ran away but something was drawing me to her. Something couldn't place.

"Who, who are you?" I stumbled.

"I am Hina, Goddess of the Moon."

This was a prank. Hina, as in the mother of Maui. One of the oldest gods in Hawaiian mythology. But there was still that feeling, like a fish is drawn to a hook. I could feel this woman was important, but I just didn't know how.

"Ok, so why would you tell me that?" I responded, skeptically.

"Right, I should have told you this first. I am your mother."

No, now I knew this was a prank. But she seemed so serious. That feeling inside me was growing stronger now, more than ever saying:

*This is your mother Lelani. She can help you. You need to trust her.*

So many questions filled my head. Simple ones. But they could not be answered. One question emerged. How? How can this woman be my mother? How did this happen to me? How come this happened now?

"So, if you really are my mom why are you here now? Why not when my dad died?" I questioned strongly.

All that confidence was drained out of her face as I said those words. All the radiance and glow around her seemed to disappear.

"He died while helping people out of our village during war time," I continued.

"Lelani, did you seem him die?" Hina questioned.

"Well.. no" I responded, hesitantly.

"Did you actually hear the gun shots?" she asked.

"No," I answered.

"Then I will have to assume he has been taken by Kū the God of War," Hina said with a sigh.

She was telling the truth. This was most definitely not a prank now.

"Hina, m-m-mother can we save him?" I stuttered.

"I cannot, but fortunately I believe you can be my next moon runner."