

# Prologue

Oily light from torches, notched into the walls of the cave, cast the kahuna's imposing shadow on the curved rock wall behind him. His head was bent, his hand upon a spear protruding from the chest of a near lifeless man at his feet. The large, deep cave receded into the darkness beyond the torchlight. The sound of distant chanting echoed off the walls in muffled cadence. Just outside the broad opening, several sizable warriors stood and faced the shoreline, their spears raised menacingly.

The kahuna, chanting now repeatedly, knelt beside the injured one.

*Noho ka Uhane o ke Akua ma ka naau*  
The Spirit of God lives in the heart

*Na ke Akua wale no ke hoola i ka uhane*  
Only God can heal the soul

*Ke ola ka uhane ua ola ke kino*  
When the soul is healed the body is whole

With one hand on the man's chest, he gripped the shank of the spear where it entered the body. Slowly, forcefully he withdrew the jagged stone point. The man on the floor coughed up blood and groaned. Ikaika, the injured one, had purposely stepped in front of Kamaka, the kahuna, to shield him from an enemy's thrown spear. Again, another loud groan, then silence.

As the spear clattered on the stone floor of the cave, Kamaka placed his hands over the bloodied wound. He prayed with all the faith and hope the Divine Spirit had inspired in him as the spiritual guardian of his people. With the mind of Spirit, he

reached into the stricken body. Where there was damage, he saw only fresh new cells, tissues, bone, and blood. As he held this vision of wholeness in his mind, the skin began to pull together. Soon the jagged wound was no more.

The vision had become physical. It was not yet Ikaika's time to pass. The kahuna could see this in the man's life record, using the art of spiritual sight and healing that his beloved teacher had so long ago imparted to him. As the man opened his eyes, Kamaka helped him to sit up and held a gourd of water to his lips.

"The record has been cleared, Ikaika, my brother (for he was indeed the kahuna's older brother). You should feel no more ill effects. Are you able to stand?"

"I think so..." came the reply as he shakily got to his knees.

Kamaka reached an arm behind him to help as Ikaika stood up on wobbly legs. Then they hugged. When they parted there were tears on both faces.

"Well, little brother, you are a good one to have around these days. Those men must have been Poe's spies. I recognized one of them, just before I saw the spears in the air."

"'Ae, it was Oriata and one of the villagers here; many on the south shore feel it was wrong to resist the invaders. I fear that there are many more on this island who would betray us as well. Thank you for saving my life, Ikaika. That first thrown spear was meant for me. Nice catch!" Kamaka laughed as he patted his brother on the shoulder. "By the way, our faithful friends are still chanting for you in the back of the cave. Perhaps you should go and show them you are well."

"My pleasure," he said with a wink.

Rubbing his chest, which was still caked with his blood, Ikaika grabbed a torch from the wall, and walked slowly toward the chanters at the back of the cave. Giving them his familiar, broad, friendly smile, he said:

"What's all the noise about? Did somebody die?"

# Chapter 1



## The Awakening

**T**he night before Kamaka was to go with his father up the mountain to the great forest, he had a dream:

*Gliding like smoke between the great trees the boy breathed in the damp, earthy life of the forest. The loamy floor was a soft, thick stippled mosaic of over-laid leaves. A half moon highlighted each sickle-shaped leaf with a silvery glow. A deep silence lay over the ancient stand of koa trees like a sacred mantle. He was searching for the tree that would be chosen for the new canoe. As he weaved effortlessly through the aged sentinels, suddenly there it was before him, tall and majestic. It was not apparent why this tree would be chosen, and yet it was unmistakably clear to the boy's mind: This was the one. He touched the dark, moist bark and felt its life and saw its story of creation in his thought. Somehow this tree marked the beginning of a new and different life for the boy. This he also felt.*

“Kamaka! Get up, we need to go. The others are waiting.” It was Ikaika, excited about the upcoming adventure. His raspy whisper was inches from Kamaka’s ear so as not to awaken the others in the sleeping-house.

The trek up the rugged mountain to the koa forest would take two days. They needed to use the early daylight to their advantage for navigating the narrow mountain ridges. Kamaka walked next to his brother. Strapped to his back he carried one of the large

## KAMAKA

fishes wrapped tightly in banana leaves. The fish, caught the day before, was to be a sacrifice to the forest spirit. Keola, his father, walked in front accompanied by the kahuna, Mahoe. It was Mahoe who would choose which tree to be taken. Ikaika and six other men carried tools, food, rope, and supplies—everything that would be needed to fell the great tree and to guide it down the mountain.

As the small party moved up the slope in the predawn light, Kamaka and his brother laughed and jumped from rock to rock like two mountain goats. The sky above them mimicked the two boys by announcing the coming of the sun as it jumped from cloud to cloud with every hue of red and gold and yellow and violet. Later, as they were resting a few moments from the strenuous climb, Kamaka relayed his recent dream to Ikaika.

“And so, do you think it will be the same tree you saw in your dream?” Ikaika asked somewhat skeptically.

“I know the tree. I felt its life. It will be the one the kahuna chooses. You will see. Don’t tell father or the others.” Kamaka’s conviction aroused Ikaika’s curiosity,

“How can you be so sure?”

“It is like it has already happened.” Kamaka had a puzzled expression on his young face. “I don’t know why.”

Here was a mystery that he would not fully understand for many years. The two boys carried their secret up the mountain and slept with it that night under a waxing gibbous moon and starlit sky.

The next morning a cool, swirling mist covered the party as they ate a hasty meal before continuing their journey. Later, the mist turned to light rain and for several hours slowed their progress. The trail was slippery, and the men and boys were both soaked with perspiration and cooled by the rain as they struggled up the slopes in the thick red mud. It was late afternoon before the skies cleared and they arrived at the koa forest.

A dense mat of sickle-shaped leaves covered the forest floor and muffled their footsteps as they entered the sanctuary of the

## KAMAKA

great trees. When the sun finally escaped the clouds and found its way through the forest canopy, the very air became etched with the riotous squawks, calls and songs of countless birds, who were also glad that the rain had ended. Accompanied by the northerly trade winds, the warm shafts of sunlight soon helped to dry off the tired travelers.

Mahoe, the kahuna and leader of the group, held up his hand to stop, withdrew a few paces from the group and began a low rhythmical chant, asking the spirit of the forest to direct him to the proper tree. When he had finished the chant, he turned and looked about.

“We will rest here for the night. Prepare an imu (cooking fire) for the sacrifice while I choose the tree to be cut.” Pointing to Kamaka he said, “You will come with me; the others will remain here.” Smiling, Kamaka handed his fish to his brother (who winked at him), then he turned to follow the kahuna.

They picked their way through the low, damp brush and roots of the forest understory for several minutes, then Mahoe turned and looked at the boy:

“Kamaka, do you know why it is that you are with me now?”

Kamaka gazed up at the kahuna’s deeply bronzed face in the afternoon light. Was he afraid of this man? The marked horizontal lines on the broad forehead showed a definite sternness. But the raised brows above the large, inquiring eyes, and the parenthetical lines surrounding the full lips and chin, slightly turned up in the hint of a smile, spoke otherwise. No, this is a man to love and trust.

Mahoe stood tall and straight, his forearms and biceps were knotted by long hours of wielding an adz in the hale wa’a, where canoes are built. Around his neck was tied a small circular amulet of smooth, flat whale bone, carved with two concentric rings with a dot in the center, representing the spiritual path of the kahuna.

Kamaka knew now he could share his secret with this man.

“Yes, I think so, father. It is because the night before I was

## KAMAKA

shown in a dream which tree you would choose. Did you have the same dream?”

Mahoe regarded the inquiring face looking up at him.

It was a face yet unmarked by time. Here, he thought, was the same wonder that had launched his own adventure into the world of spirit. He could see there in those young eyes the fire of I'o, eager to ignite once more the world of men.

“No, Kamaka, my dream was different, I was directed by the Spirit to bring you here. Now I must use my outer sight to pick a tree that will serve to make a good canoe for Keawe, the fisherman. You must not interfere with my search or which tree I choose. Do you understand?”

“Yes, father.”

“After I have chosen, we will talk. Follow behind and watch.”

Mahoe moved through the forest, followed a few paces back by the boy. When the kahuna inspected a tree, he would study it for straightness and girth. He noted the height and location of the lower branches and finally how and where the tree would fall. At times he would place his hand on a tree and listen to its inner voice. After nearly an hour, Mahoe turned to Kamaka and smiled.

“Do you know which one I chose, Kamaka?”

“Yes, father. It was the third tree you looked at.”

The kahuna's inquisitive gaze searched long and deeply into the spirit of the young boy before a smile graced it again.

“How can you be so sure?” he asked, testing the boy's certainty.

“It was the same tree in my dream. Why did I have the dream? Why does it seem as though the dream was always there waiting for me?” The enigma danced around in his young mind, filling him with thoughts that there were no words for. And then suddenly, the youthful face, squinched in deep concentration, visibly relaxed. “It wasn't just about the tree, was it, father? It was about me.”

Mahoe studied the ineffable process the Spirit was unfolding in the boy's mind. “We will talk later about this, Kamaka.”

## KAMAKA

Nodding his head and pointing back the way they had come, he said, “Now we must begin the work.”

Before the felling of the great tree could begin, the offerings had to be prepared. A pit had been dug by the men and hot coals from the campfire placed inside, along with small rocks. The fish, with kalo roots and breadfruit, were wrapped in banana and kalo leaves, then set upon the coals. All was covered over with more leaves and dirt. While the food cooked, the men cleared away the underbrush from around the chosen tree. Later, a portion of the meal wrapped in a red cloth was set aside for the Spirit. The remainder was enthusiastically eaten by the hungry workers.

Muted conversation ensued around the campfire that evening. Fatigued from the trek up the mountain and filled with a comfortable meal, the quiet sounds of the forest soon brought a deep, uninterrupted sleep to the woodcutting party.

The next morning Keawe (whose canoe the tree was destined to become) was the first to awaken to the bird songs. He roused the men with his deep base chant “E Ala E” (Awaken) to the morning sun:

*E ala e, ka lâ i ka hikina,*  
Awaken/Arise, the sun in the east,  
*I ka moana, ka moana hohonu,*  
From the ocean, the ocean deep,  
*Pi'i ka lewa, ka lewa nu'u,*  
Climbing (to) the heaven, the heaven highest,  
*I ka hikina, aia ka lâ, e ala e!*  
In the east, there is the sun, awaken!

A hasty breakfast of poi, dried fish, and water was eaten as the sun lifted into a cloudless sky.

It was a short walk to the work site which was near the edge of the first line of trees. Mahoe chose which direction the tree should fall, and had the men remove any large rocks or small trees that might deflect it from that path.

There were ten in the party, including the two boys and the

## KAMAKA

kahuna. The tree was nearly three feet in diameter. The hard, dense wood of the koa tree would require at least two days for the men working with stone axes to fell the tree.

Before the work began, Mahoe chanted a prayer to Mokuali'i, the name given to the spirit who guides canoe builders:

*O Mokuali'i, great one,  
We have come up to cut this tree.  
It is straight and wide and strong.  
I ask you to prepare this tree for sacrifice.  
Let the spirit that is in this tree  
Live on in the life of the canoe  
It will become, bringing safety,  
Happiness and prosperity to the owner.  
Guide our hands and our eyes,  
Let our axes strike true.  
Take away our fears,  
Let our arms be strong  
Until the work is done.  
Amama, the prayer is freed.*

Later in the day Mahoe and Kamaka were sitting on a fallen log near the mountain ridge, some distance from the other workers who were pounding away noisily at the tree. They had been discussing Kamaka's dream. The valley below them opened upon a meadow of tall grass. A gentle breeze played in the grass. Far below, the great sea shepherded broken lines of blue and white toward the shore.

"Some dreams are thoughts, some come from fear or happiness, and some can be messages, all moving through the great world of the mind. The thoughts and dreams of the mind are like the wind in the grass below," Mahoe explained to the boy as he stretched out his hand.

"See how each little breath of wind touches down and disturbs the grass here and there like playful children. The wind itself cannot be seen, only its effect on the grass. Thoughts also cannot



## KAMAKA

be seen, only their effects. Your mind was thinking about our journey and the selection of the tree, thus it drew the dream to it. Your dream was always there waiting for you. In time you will learn to direct your thought and feel the thoughts of others. But most importantly you will learn to discover the thoughts of the Great One, where all true dreams and thoughts reside.”

Mahoe was watching the boy carefully as he spoke these last words. The kahuna’s wisdom reflected in his large, gentle eyes: deep brown with flecks of gray, a pattern repeated in the long braid that lay across his shoulder. He was nearly fifty years old, but with the well-muscled arms and legs of a craftsman who knew and loved hard work.

Kamaka looked up at the master, sensing that his life was about to change. His spine tingled as he turned over the master’s words in his mind, causing him to shiver imperceptibly.

“Will you teach me, father, about finding and directing the thoughts that I seek?”

“We will see...” Mahoe said as he arose, nudging the boy lightly on the shoulder. It was time to check on the progress of the work.

The great tree fell gracefully to the ground the next evening, cushioned by a hundred branches. Its top took one last mighty swat at the earth as it came to rest. The small group watched in silent awe as the sound reverberated across the valley and shook the earth beneath their feet. As the dust settled the men put up their tools. It was closing on night and they were tired and elated and hungry. There would be a lively celebration at the fire this evening after the meal.

“Mokuali’i was indeed working with us today, Mahoe. The tree fell true to your directions. It is a good sign.”

This was spoken by Keawe, the canoe owner. Others nodded in assent. Mahoe smiled but remained silent. Indeed, the tree had fallen just where the kahuna had indicated, its tip pointing toward the ocean. One of the men stood, raised his arms over his head, and mimicked the final moments of the great tree, falling

## KAMAKA

and slapping the ground with his hands. There was a round of laughter and applause.

“You will be able to empty your nets many times, Keawe, before having to return to shore.” This was from Kamaka’s father, Keola the fisherman, possibly the strongest man in the group. He was well loved in the village. With a generous and kind disposition, he was always slow to anger. “The canoe will be at least 10 paces long when it is finished!”

Kamaka watched with interest as the men were sitting about the small fire finishing their evening meal. The firelight highlighted different aspects of each man: here, a cheek and an arm; there, a shining brow with eyes deep in shadow; another, bright eyes reflecting the red embers; one, with only the feet warmed by the fire showing. The resultant collection of parts illumined by the fire created but one image and one vision. The canoe became a reality that night created by the fire of like-minded thoughts. Was this what Mahoe meant? The thought is what creates, the doing comes after? The boy smiled as he curled up next to his brother and fell asleep.

That night after the others had drifted off to sleep, Mahoe took Keola aside. Both sat in the moonlight on the fallen log that overlooked the dark valley below. Bright stars reflected in the kahuna’s eyes as he spoke:

“Keola, I have need of an apprentice. Kamaka has shown signs of inner spirit-sight. Would you be willing to give the boy up to be trained as a kahuna?”

Keola looked at Mahoe for a long moment, then down at his upturned hands in his lap. They showed the hard, heavily calloused palms of a fisherman. Both of his sons had already shown promise as able seamen. He had never considered any other option for the boys. It was true that the younger one often had a far away, detached mien about him. He breathed a long sigh and smiled at the kahuna.

“Kamaka’s mother and I would be honored to have our son trained as a kahuna.”

## KAMAKA

He knew giving up his younger son to the kahuna meant longer days and more years at sea, but the honor of having a kahuna in the family would be worth the sacrifice. His wife would also feel the pain of loss but would agree with the decision.

Kamaka's dream that night was a familiar one, which he was finally beginning to understand:

*The people of the village were seated about a central fire. Their eyes were upon him. Sparks from the fire rose to greet the great sparks in the sky overhead. Kamaka was standing and talking of the many gifts of the Great One. "Each of you is attached to a star." He raised his hand to the firmament above. "You bring light and wisdom to our home. The more you seek to understand and accept this, the more mana will flow down from your star and fill you!"*

The next morning's phase began the project of preparing the tree for the trip downhill to the village. Under the kahuna's careful guidance an area was marked out that would avoid any major intersecting branches. This began by removing the branches and sectioning off approximately 30 feet of the tree trunk.

Then came the task of roughing out the basic shape of the canoe. The bark had to be removed from this section of the tree and the dark wood roughly shaped inside and out into the upturned bow and stern of a very large canoe. This was done with the adz as well as the axe—the adz scooping out the inner wood and the axe removing the outer excess material. Again, this required the skillful eye of the kahuna. An error at this stage could destroy all their work and render the tree useless. Finally, the remaining tree would be light enough for the men to maneuver it down the mountain. There, in the shade of the hale wa'a, after it had time to cure, it would be expertly crafted into a beautiful seagoing vessel.

It was every canoe owner's dream to ride the partially hollowed out log all the way down the slopes, guiding and manipulating it with a heavy pole, while other men managed ropes tethered

## KAMAKA

to the log to slow its descent. It was a dangerous undertaking and men had died or been seriously injured in the process. Most often it was the canoe owner or the kahuna who rode in and maneuvered the canoe. Kamaka knew that Mahoe would not ride it, choosing to let the younger man have the honor.

“Will you ride it down the hill, Keawe?” Kamaka asked after breakfast several days later, knowing the answer even before he asked it.

“'Ae (yes), I have already discussed this with Mahoe, Kamaka. I will guide the canoe down to the village, unless, of course, you want to do it.”

The laughter from the other men was loud and friendly. It would take all the strength of a powerful man to guide the canoe over the rocks, logs and crevices; a crag or sharp drop-off could spell disaster. The boy's embarrassment showed plainly on his face, yet he laughed heartily with the others.

“Thank you, but not this time, I think, Keawe. Perhaps in a few years...” Kamaka tried his best to keep a serious face. His father slapped him on the back and raised the boy's arm to feel his incipient bicep.

“'Ae, Keawe, in a few years he may very well be ready,” he announced, proud to have a son who would now surely become a great kahuna.

**T**wo days later in the early morning after a short breakfast and a long blessing from Mahoe, Keawe stood in the bow of the roughly hollowed-out canoe. In his hands was a long, sturdy pole. Looking down the slope of the mountain and the hazards of the path he was about to negotiate, he felt the adrenalin surge into his system accompanied by the anticipated pride in his new craft. The route, though well worn and familiar to the men, was only slightly less treacherous than the original trail, and this due only to familiarity. It was still a virtual, dryland rapids with all the hidden holes and boulders and traps, lacking only a raging current.

## KAMAKA

Temporary holes were drilled near where the gunwales of the canoe would be on both sides fore and aft. Thick ropes were attached to enable the men to restrain and guide the descent of the heavy craft. It was then rolled on short logs from its position in the forest to the edge of the mountain. There the men took up their positions on the four ropes, two per line. At a nod from Keawe, after he braced himself near the bow, the canoe was pulled over the edge.

From the brow of the mountain, Mahoe, Ikaika and Kamaka watched the descent begin. Anticipation had been building over the camp like an electrical storm for two days. Now the shouts and grunts of the men transformed the power of the storm into focused action. Each movement of the men below was echoed in the body shifts of the observers, as though they were able to control the event from where they stood. The sun was just beginning to peek over the mountain as the kahuna and two excited boys chased down the slope after the rumbling canoe.

As they descended, jumping over rocks and sliding down the steep slopes on their rears, they could hear Keawe shouting directions as he pushed and heaved on his long pole:

“Drop the bow! Lower! Lower! Slow it down some. Watch that big rock! Stern, pull to the right now! More! Good!”

The first exhausting steep pitch was accomplished without incident, the sun now bright in the morning sky. The men, their bodies shiny with sweat, were able to rest briefly in the upper meadow, the two boys supplying water from a pigskin bag that Ikaika carried on his back. The canoe was then dragged through the tall grass to the edge of the next slope. This process continued pitch after pitch until early afternoon. A lunch break was called by Keawe, and the men and boys gathered for a much-welcomed meal of dried pork, breadfruit, and water.

“The next drop is a bad one,” Keawe told them, sitting on a rock chewing some dried breadfruit.

“I was with Makana years ago when his canoe got wedged in the gully and we couldn’t get it out. Probably still there.”

## KAMAKA

Keola, the boys' father, spoke: "I was there too. Makana kept shouting, 'Straight down! Straight down!' We should have pulled up the bow and crossed the gully, but it was too late."

Upon hearing the discussion, the two boys decided to go to the edge of the slope and look for themselves. They could see a long, narrow gully as it traversed the steep lava slope, cut by many years of tropical downpours. The wrecked remains of at least two canoes were still hopelessly jammed in the V-shaped trench. Their father was right. The gully had to be crossed diagonally. This would entail releasing the ropes on the downhill side of the canoe and putting all hands on the upper ropes. It was a tricky maneuver at best and one which would leave Keawe with only his pole to guide the downhill side of the canoe.

Beginning the descent Keawe tightened his grip on the pole, his lips pulled back in a toothy grimace as he scanned the gully ahead. The deep gouge in the rock face zig-zagged its way across their path. The rotting, wooden remains of failed descents choked the groove here and there, marking the graves of lost dreams.

The terrain here was all lava rock. Even the bone hardened soles of the men's feet would take a beating as they strained against the weight of the canoe. Gathering momentum as they approached the gully crossing, Keawe shouted:

"Downhill side, drop your ropes, go pull uphill now!"

With four men on a rope they were able to pull the nose of the canoe uphill and slow its progress so it would cross the gully diagonally. The canoe began to cross the gully and was nearly astraddle it, when one of the men in front tripped and lost his grip on the rope while trying to jump across the channel. The sudden loss of momentum was greater than the remaining men could handle, and the nose began to shift downhill into the gully. Keawe jammed his pole into the ditch in an attempt to stop the downhill progress, but the force of the canoe striking the pole instantly ejected him from the canoe before he could release his grip. He was thrown into the gully with the canoe above about to fall on him. The kahuna and boys were right behind and saw

## KAMAKA

the event unfolding. Ikaika ran to grab the dropped rope. Mahoe raised his arm and shouted something. The canoe suddenly stopped short just before dropping into the gully. Kamaka and one of the men picked up some stones and wedged them under the canoe to keep it from moving. Mahoe jumped into the gully to tend to Keawe. He was scraped up and bleeding but still able to stand. The kahuna and Kamaka helped him out of the danger zone.

“Are you all right, dear friend?” Keawe was sitting on a rock with the kahuna inspecting a wound on the man’s head.

“’Ae, Mahoe. Thank you. What stopped the canoe? In another instant it would have fallen on me.”

Mahoe smiled and put his hand on Keawe’s shoulder. “Your wounds will heal. It wasn’t your time to die. Now let’s get off this rock and find a place to rest for the night.”

The crew arrived the following day at the foot of the mountain as it stepped into the sea, while the sun was still high overhead. Happy cries of victory could be heard up and down the valley. The task now was to float the unfinished canoe down to the hale wa'a towed behind two other canoes. There it would be left in the shade to dry before Mahoe and other helpers could begin their work.

And there, in the hale wa'a, the apprenticeship of Kamaka would begin.