



Moloka'i: A Novel

By Alan Brennert

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Young Rachel Kalama, growing up in idyllic Honolulu in the 1890s, is part of a big, loving Hawaiian family, and dreams of seeing the far-off lands that her father, a merchant seaman, often visits. But at the age of seven, Rachel and her dreams are shattered by the discovery that she has leprosy. Forcibly removed from her family, she is sent to Kalaupapa, the isolated leper colony on the island of Moloka'i.

In her exile she finds a family of friends to replace the family she's lost: a native healer, Haleola, who becomes her adopted "auntie" and makes Rachel aware of the rich culture and mythology of her people; Sister Mary Catherine Voorhies, one of the Franciscan sisters who care for young girls at Kalaupapa; and the beautiful, worldly Leilani, who harbors a surprising secret. At Kalaupapa she also meets the man she will one day marry.

True to historical accounts, *Moloka'i* is the story of an extraordinary human drama, the full scope and pathos of which has never been told before in fiction. But Rachel's life, though shadowed by disease, isolation, and tragedy, is also one of joy, courage, and dignity. This is a story about life, not death; hope, not despair. It is not about the failings of flesh, but the strength of the human spirit.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Compellingly original in its conceit, Brennert's sweeping debut novel tracks the grim struggle of a Hawaiian woman who contracts leprosy as a child in Honolulu during the 1890s and is deported to the island of Moloka'i, where she grows to adulthood at the quarantined settlement of Kalaupapa. Rachel Kalama is the plucky, seven-year-old heroine whose family is devastated when first her uncle Pono and then she develop leprous sores and are quarantined with the disease. While Rachel's symptoms remain mild during her youth, she watches others her age dying from the disease in near total isolation from family and friends. Rachel finds happiness when she meets Kenji Utagawa, a fellow leprosy victim whose illness brings shame on his Japanese family. After a tender courtship, Rachel and Kenji marry and have a daughter, but the birth of their healthy baby brings as much grief as joy, when they must give her up for adoption to prevent infection. The couple cope with the loss of their daughter and settle into a productive working life until Kenji tries to stop a quarantined U.S. soldier from beating up his girlfriend and is tragically killed in the subsequent fight. The poignant concluding chapters portray Rachel's final years after sulfa drugs are discovered as a cure, leaving her free to abandon Moloka'i and seek out her family and daughter. Brennert's compassion makes Rachel a memorable character, and his smooth storytelling vividly brings early 20th-century Hawaii to life. Leprosy may seem a macabre subject, but Brennert transforms the material into a touching, lovely account of a woman's journey as she rises above the limitations of a devastating illness.

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Review

"A generous portrait of a brave full life in a beautiful land that's both prison and refuge. Alan Brennert has brought eighty years of little-known history to engrossingly specific life--as inspiring as it is heartbreaking."

Review

"A dazzling historical novel."--*The Washington Post*

"*Moloka'i* is a haunting story of tragedy in a Pacific paradise."--Robert Morgan, author of *Gap Creek*

"Alan Brennert draws on historical accounts of Kalaupapa and weaves in traditional Hawaiian stories and customs.... *Moloka'i* is the story of people who had much taken from them but also gained an unexpected new family and community in the process."--*Chicago Tribune*

"[An] absorbing novel...Brennert evokes the evolution of--and hardships on--Moloka'i in engaging prose that conveys a strong sense of place."--*National Geographic Traveler*

"Moving and elegiac." --*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*

"Compellingly original...Brennert's compassion makes Rachel a memorable character, and his smooth storytelling vividly brings early twentieth-century Hawai'i to life." --*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Phyllis Callahan:

The experience that you get from Moloka'i: A Novel is the more deep you looking the information that hide inside the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to know but Moloka'i: A Novel giving you joy feeling of reading. The article writer conveys their point in specific way that can be understood by anyone who read the item because the author of this book is well-known enough. This book also makes your vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this Moloka'i: A Novel instantly.

Deb Valdez:

Playing with family in a park, coming to see the ocean world or hanging out with buddies is thing that usually you will have done when you have spare time, and then why you don't try point that really opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not sense tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition info. Even you love Moloka'i: A Novel, it is possible to enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hang type is it? Oh seriously its mind hangout guys. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its known as reading friends.

Veronica Lopez:

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