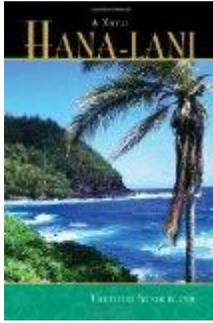


# Hana-lani by Christine Sunderland



Reviewed by Douglas R. Cobb

Sexy, sweet, and touching are three words I'd use to describe the fantastic novel, *Hana-lani*, by the talented author Christine Sunderland. There is a definite theme of hope and the possibility for redemption that runs through the novel, but *Hana-lani*'s tone never gets heavy. Reading it is like breathing in a fresh breath of island air, and its depiction of rural Hawaiian life in Hana-lani, the old family home of one of the novel's main characters, old Nani Lei, is guaranteed to lift your spirits and brighten your day. Materialistic and beautiful Meredith Campbell, 36, who might have stepped right out of the TV program *Sex In the City*, seems to come from an entirely different world than Nani-Lei, her widowed 52-year-old grandson, Henry, and his six-year-old daughter, Lucy. What will it take for these two people, Meredith and Henry, to meet each other, fall in love, and to change their lives for the better?

City girl Meredith Campbell seems to have it all: a great paying job, a rockin' body, and a handsome lover who is a doctor. Her life in San Francisco is sweet, but Meredith is also very self-centered, and believes her body will ensure her happiness. She doesn't like being around children, she thinks going to visit her father in a Florida home is a waste of time. Also, she thinks, and past experience in general has shown, that with her attractive body and by flirting with men she can get almost anything she wants. She's not an evil person, but she is one who knows what she wants and is not above using her natural charms to get it.

One day, her world starts to unravel. She loses her job, and discovers Nick, the doctor who is also her live-in boyfriend, in her bed with his ex-wife. Meredith decides to get away from it all, and though Nick has cheated on her, she has fantasies of his tracking her down in Hawaii and riding shirtless up to her on a beach. At first, Meredith seemed too shallow to me, and I didn't especially like her character, to be honest. As I continued to read, though, I became more and more intrigued with her character and wondered what could possibly happen to change her for the better and to turn her life around.

It turns out that it took the small plane she's in to crash, killing the drug-running pilot of it whom she's had sex with the night before, to begin heading her life in a different direction. The expected and anticipated arrival of Nick never comes, it's the rainy season, there's not much for her to do, and she seeks to leave and return to San Francisco and look for a different job. The trouble is, all flights have been canceled due to the weather. A shady guy she meets offers her a flight in return for sex, and though she is not really attracted to the dude, she agrees to the

arrangement because she wants off the island so badly and doesn't care about any potential consequences. Both engines fail, and the plane crashes, despite the pilot's efforts to glide it in for a landing.

Fortunately for Meredith, the plane crashes near Hana-lani. Lucy notices a "wisp of smoke," curling into the air across the acres of field surrounding the house, and she leads her Nani tutu (grandmother) to the smoldering wreckage of the plane. There are not the most advanced medical facilities on the island, but though Meredith is unconscious for a few days and is cut on her face and thigh, her injuries don't seem all that severe. Nani tutu has her brought to Hana-lani to personally care for her there, while she recovers.

Henry is a professor of history who is on a sabbatical to work on a book his deceased wife, Maria, had planned on writing and getting published. He is lost in his many shelves of books, and just wants to concentrate on researching and writing the book, as a way to honor Maria's memory, if nothing else. He tolerates Meredith's presence, but at first, doesn't want much to do with her, believing (rightly, at the time) that she is shallow. How can he find himself again, and deal with the terrible loss he's suffered at the death of his wife?

*Hana-lani* is a beautifully written, poignant novel about vastly different worlds colliding. Its descriptions of Hawaii will make you want to take the next flight to the islands to see for yourselves their beauty. Also, I really enjoyed the quotations the author, Christine Sunderland, uses from T.S. Eliot's "*Four Quartets*." He is one of my favorite poets, though I'm more familiar with his other poems, like "*The Wasteland*." *Hana-lani* is a novel that rises above most romance novels, and is a work of literature that I enjoyed reading. It's still light-hearted enough and a fun enough read to appeal to anyone who loves the Romance genre, though. I highly recommend this novel. Check out *Hana-lani* today!

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