

***Hana-lani: A Novel***

Christine Sunderland

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Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views (1/11)

Losing her job and discovering that her boyfriend is unfaithful, Meredith Campbell decides to leave city life for an idyllic vacation on Maui. This is a vacation that she thinks will have others looking to pamper and cater to her every whim. She also hopes that her absence might make her errant boyfriend come running back to reunite with her. Being in a beautiful place that will also allow her to show off her gorgeous physical assets, she thinks that everything should go off without a hitch. For Meredith, beauty is all about what is on the outside.

When Meredith is involved in a plane crash, her plans are taken away from her. Instead of being at a beautiful resort, she finds herself at Hana-lani, the home of Nani-Lei and her family. Nani-lei is an old woman, who carries a great deal of wisdom. In her house is Henry, who is still grieving from the loss of his wife Maria. Maria was Nani-Lei's granddaughter. Henry is focused on finishing writing a book that his wife began. His six-year-old daughter, Lucy, is also living with them.

Meredith ends up at Hana-lani because the clinics are too full. Meredith needs a place to recover from injuries that she sustained in the plane crash. At first, Meredith does not appreciate the beauty and healing powers of this place. She feels the need to hide out because her face is scarred. Not yet recognizing the importance of inner beauty, she cannot go back to face her superficial friends. The house also has a phone that works intermittently. Time off from the outside world gives Meredith a chance to reflect upon how she has been living her life. Her conversations with Nani-lei also teach her a great deal. Finding that she is also growing closer to Lucy and Henry, the three begin to start healing in their own ways.

Once again, Meredith is handed an unexpected tragic situation. This time, however, she finds herself coping in a different way. Dealing with the pain of the situation, she finds herself better able to handle it, and she also sees the value of the lessons that she has learned from her experiences on Hana-lani. Meredith is no longer the same person that came to the islands.

“Hana-lani” is a beautifully written story. I have always found the islands of Hawaii to carry a special magic about them. In this story, not only the beauty of the place helps others heal, the people do as well. Reading about Meredith's journey left me with the feeling that we should all stop and take a look at our lives and not only see where we are headed, but how we are allowing ourselves to get there.