



From Chapter 1, The Scientist's Inquiry

Gavin McCall eased his lean six-foot frame into the chair, quickly scanning Maile's collection on Pacific island history and lore. Next to the books stood a large shark-skin drum, worn smooth from generations of thumping palms.

The anthropologist leaned back in her chair and eyed the astronomer. Self-assurance lined his rugged face, a look she had seen all too often on haoles. "You work on Mauna Kea."

"Yeah, we're studying a volcano on one of Jupiter's moons, a monstrous cone named after your goddess Pele."

"And you want some background for your paper."

"Yeah." He sank deep into the chair, pulling out his notebook and pen.

"History or legend?"

"Both, I guess." He smiled warmly, his green eyes twinkling.

Maile proceeded to tell the astronomer the story of the goddess. She shared the simple version, good enough for a haole scientist, skipping over the deepest meanings of the tale. But she told it vividly, with resonant voice, flashing eyes, and the storytelling skills inherited from her mother. Gavin could see it all: Pele leaving the mysterious ancestral land Kahiki, guided over the ocean by her shark brother Kamohoali'i; her embattled search for a home in the volcanic archipelago, eventually reaching the island of Hawai'i; her fierce romances with obsessive lovers and battles with jealous rivals; Pele lovingly building mountains, or angrily burning villages when she felt betrayed—stories revealing the islanders' love and reverence for a deity that can create and destroy.

Each episode intrigued McCall, but he grew just as interested in watching Maile's expressive face, and soon ceased taking notes. Staring at her bold features, he could visualize the fiery beauty and formidable will of the volcano goddess.

"And these stories," she said, wrapping up, "only hint at the depth of her power, this woman god so commanding that she once even humbled Hawai'i's mightiest king. But that's another story." Maile relaxed back in her chair.

"Marvelous tale! And first rate in the telling!"

Maile smiled. "Today you will find people whose devotion to Pele has never flagged, even as the islands themselves have changed beyond belief."

"Are you saying some islanders *still* believe in this goddess?"

"More than believe." Maile leaned forward. "Many worship her."



"Ya know, Maile, this place could get under a bloke's skin."