

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
A Leap of Faith – Escape to Hawaii
by Judith Ingram

The places life had taken me, the paths I followed were always what I considered to be a leap of faith. Yet, many were hard lessons leaving heartache and disappointment in the graves of disillusion. The rise and fall of love, like waves in high and low tide, washed over me time and time again, always landing on my feet, picking up and carrying on. I'd given a lot in my lifetime, lost so much. Material things were meaningless in my pursuit of love. But I gave so much more, I surrendered and sacrificed more than I should have to those who took and drained my body, soul and mind, and sadly, at the expense of my own children. Yet, it was for them that I believed I was searching for a stable life, a childhood dream that had consumed me since my own disenchanted childhood. That dream never came to pass, and the reality of that has left a deep scar.

When they had grown up, and went on to build their own dreams, as broken and torn as my heart was, I still believed in love ... I still believed. Love had not lost its passion, though it was not as powerful. By then, I saw love differently, perhaps more maturely. It wasn't about the high, the sexual attraction, and the fantasy any longer. It was deeper, perhaps companionship, perhaps mutual goals, affection and the warmth of contentment. This is what I focused on.

It wasn't until my final attempt at finding love, of sharing a loving relationship, that I was utterly shattered and crippled into the painful admission that love, any kind of love was not meant for me. It took giving nearly everything I had for one last hope, one last leap of faith, but the overwhelming reality finally opened my eyes when my heart was sealed closed.

It began when I decided to put a personal profile on a dating service, and out of hundreds of responses, I would end up marrying a man from Maui. He was down to earth, single for many years, very kind, and we had a lot in common ... especially our values and spirituality.

He wasn't rich, and actually barely hanging on when we met. He was looking to get off Island, and that was perfect for me. I didn't want to give up my home, move away from my family, and quit my decades long career in real estate. He had lived on Maui for twenty years or so, having built a machine shop business, repairing and building engines. He wanted out of that business and was ready to get back to the mainland - which prompted him to sign up on the dating service - like me, he wanted a new life. He already had a buyer who wanted to take over his business and purchase all the machinery. He had already told his close friends he planned to leave the Island ... leaving decades of memories behind.

After months of email conversations, text messages, sharing photos and lots of phone calls, we grew closer together. When he said he bought a ticket to come meet me, I was both surprised and shocked - we were about to take things to the next level. I was very excited, and a bit nervous ... especially since my prior online experience was most horrible. When he came walking off the plane, I knew at first glance that my feelings were intact, and standing face to face in harmony was such a relief that he was who I knew him to be. For the next four days I took him on a tour

of my area, which he loved and was eager to come and start a new life with me. We stayed up each night into the early morning hours just talking and cuddling. He was a real gentleman. The day before he left, he asked me to marry him. I was so excited.

When he left and went back to Maui, it wasn't long after when the New York twin towers were hit and all flights were grounded that September of 2001. Our plans were put on hold. He had told me that he sold most of his belongings, and either dumped or gave away most everything else he owned. He was able to put what little personal belongings he had left on a shipping container headed to Oregon, including his classic Chevy El Camino. Everyone's emotions were intensified at that time, and we were concerned when he would be able to get a flight out.

Once he made it safely, we started our new life together. It wasn't much longer when we married. It was a simple ceremony at my house with a few friends and family. Every morning I would get up and get off to work, while he lounged around all day. He had told me before he left Maui that he would need some time to rest, after so many years of having an intense workload, and the hustle of the move. I wanted to give him that time, feeling confident he would be back on his feet within days, or at the most a few weeks. When a couple of months had passed, and he hadn't even looked for a job, I realized he seemingly appeared quite content being a house husband. He kept the house clean, the yard upkeep, and because he enjoyed cooking, he made most of the dinners. But then I became more and more concerned as I certainly was not looking for a house husband. I tried my best to encourage him to find a job.

When he told me he decided to get his real estate license, I wasn't thrilled about that at all. Real estate wasn't doing so good then, and the agents were all struggling to make a living. And frankly, he really didn't have the personality to be a successful Realtor. Yet, he went forward with his desire and spent most all the money he had arrived with on real estate school, on testing, on his license, Board of Realtors and MLS fees.

While I woke up every morning to an early alarm clock, he slept in, and went off to real estate school at his leisure. After a couple of months, he passed his tests and got his license. He came to work at my office. Being that I was the Office Manager and had talked my boss into hiring him, even though he too didn't think my husband had what it took.

After a couple of months, and only one closing - that I actually provided for him - he realized he didn't have that salesmanship ability. At least the commission on that one sale reimbursed him for all the loss of funds he had invested. Then we talked about opening a computer school. He was very smart and intelligent on hardware and software, and with my experience, it sounded like a great idea. We decided to look for office space that was affordable. I talked to my boss - the owner/broker where I worked - on coming aboard, since I knew his high lease payment was burying him every month. He agreed, and I would continue running the office. The two agents we had working with us had already decided to leave, making the decision much easier for him.

My husband and I figured with the real estate office we could afford to secure a new location for our business ventures. My boss was pretty much a one-man show, a multi-million-dollar producer, though he had a few agents working under him, they weren't doing so well. His commissions alone could pay my salary and support the office. Not finding a rental that we

wanted, a perfect place came available for sale. I talked my husband into buying a building. My boss had a client who was selling a vacated old four bay school bus garage that included a small unfinished office space. He gave us a good deal on the purchase, and then we spent thousands of dollars creating a beautiful enlarged office space for the real estate area, and a smaller private space for the computer school. We did all the work ourselves from building walls to sheet rock, installing a bathroom to laying carpet. I even hand made the curtains and painted the outside. I also painted a huge rainbow on the street-facing wall. In the back there were still two huge bays to do something with, so he opened a car detail and paint shop.

A lot of the things he shipped from Maui were his giant tool boxes, filled with so many tools I'd never seen before, but he had already expressed that he didn't want to be mechanic ... and had told me not to tell anyone he had such a skill, or else everyone and their cousin will want him to fix their car. Which made me wonder why he brought all his tools and tool boxes. They must have meant a lot to him to pay for the weight on shipping ... though I never questioned him on that.

Well, it took a while to get it all done, and then my husband and my boss had a falling out, so the real estate office deal fell through. I was really saddened by that because it was what we needed to support the place. The loan payment was a thousand dollars a month, and with the utilities, phone and internet service, it was a lot more than we could bring in, even though we tried so hard to make it work. Eventually, we ended up turning the building back to the seller, leaving him with all our hard work and investment cost ... plus, we owned a month payment so we left all the computers, desks, furniture, and shop equipment as payment. We had even opened a thrift store and filled it with secondhand items, as well as used jewelry and antique dolls that we would purchase weekly at the auction. I really enjoyed going to the auction. We had high hopes, and the seller got it all, so he would let us out of the contract without legal action.

My boss stayed at his office, and I continued to work there while doing computer classes in the evenings and weekends at our Computer School. My husband was keeping busy detailing cars, and had painted two. One day my husband and were talking about Maui, and I told him that someday I would love to go there and see the Island. He said let's go, making hint of a belated honeymoon. I was shocked, and thrilled. We booked a flight on his credit card, and a condo for 5 days.

From the moment we stepped off the plane I was in paradise. My husband had made arrangements for a friend to pick us up and take us to our vacation condo. I was in awe of the huge plants growing everywhere, plants that I had as houseplants. I had no idea they could grow so gigantic. The next morning his friend took us to get my husband's race car ... which was stored at a friend's place Upcountry. While there he took me all round the Island, introduced me to his friends, as we spent the evenings walking in warm winds along the beach ... watching amazing sunsets, listening to crashing waves. I was in love with Hawaii the very first day. I immediately I thought, 'I want to live here'. When I told my husband that, I was surprised when he said he would be ok with returning. He never did seem very happy living in Oregon. He said he might enjoy a different adventure there with me. I think he missed the Island life.

I called my daughter in Oregon and told her to put a For Sale sign in the yard, letting her know what my plan was. She agreed to put her number on the sign for all showings while we were away. I told my husband that if I get a call from a serious buyer, it's a sign that it's meant to be. Two days before leaving, I got that call.

When I answered my cell phone, there was a woman who said my daughter had just showed the house, and her and her husband just love it, telling me it was perfect because it was close to her daughter's family. She said they had been looking for months in the area to be closer to them, and happened to be there for a birthday celebration, when they saw my For Sale sign in the yard. She went on to tell me that their home in Klamath Falls just went into escrow and they had 30 days to move. At that point they were thinking of storing everything and living at their daughter and son-in-law's until they found a home. She said they wanted to make an offer right now, at full price. We made the deal over the phone, and I promised her I wouldn't take another offer until we met, but that we wouldn't be back for a couple of more days. She said that they were planning to leave the next morning and return to Klamath Falls, but would postpone their departure to meet with us. She wanted to know exactly when our flight to Portland would land and the three-hour drive home timeframe, because she said, "We'll be at your front door waiting," and that is exactly what happened.

When we arrived home that early evening, I couldn't believe it. The woman and her husband were sitting on our front porch in their own lawn chairs waiting for us. We hadn't even unpacked the car when I was sitting at the kitchen table writing an all-cash offer with a thirty-day close. Knowing we only had a month to pack and make all the arrangements for the move, I quit my job to focus solely on preparing for my new future ... to prepare for the biggest leap of faith of my life ... the biggest sacrifice of my life, too.

Every day we had a garage sale, all day long. I had a ton of stuff, plus we were able to box up as much as we could from the thrift store before turning the keys over, and we put those items with the rest of the garage sale. As I watched nearly everything I own, all the things I had dragged around for decades just disappear, I was sad, but hopeful of a better life. Whatever didn't sell - with time running out - so much went to the Goodwill. I was down to a quarter of what I had owned ... the least amount I had ever owned. But it all had to go because the cost was too much to ship. All my furniture was sold. The giant flat screen TV less than a year old ... gone at half price. My beautiful cherry wood bedroom set - with one of the best mattresses I have ever slept in - was one of the last items to disappear, at a cheap price that made me cry. We had to sleep on the floor for a few nights. And even my Great Grandmothers' dresser - which was very hard and painful to let go - also had sold for far less than it was worth. What people were unwilling to pay for all my precious treasures was so very sad and very disappointing. I gave up a lot, and some things I gave to friends, like a cherished antique oak buffet I bought in Denver, Colorado.

In my mind I felt it was worth it, worth making such a crazy decision because I thought I would live there forever. Little did I know ...

My husband gave up a lot too including all his tool boxes and tools ... because he wasn't taking them back to Maui, and he was heartbroken too when people offered so little for them. He even sold his classic Chevy El Camino, after he spent a thousand dollars to ship it over, and couldn't afford to ship it back. Whatever we had left - which was so little - we then loaded a UHaul truck and drove to Eugene where we rented a large wooden shipping crate. We packed it all in and drove away. It all happened so fast, the whirlwind hit again.

The day after the house escrow closed, with funds in hand, we loaded our travel bags into my Honda and headed to San Francisco, the only place where I could ship my car. We took a taxi to the motel after my car was handed over to the shipping place, and in the early morning we took the motel shuttle to the airport. The entire ordeal was pushed to the limit with the longest flight I had ever experienced.

Not too many people have an opportunity to live in Hawaii, and I never imaged I ever would, let alone even visit the Island on a vacation. When we reached Maui, I was totally exhausted. My husband's friend was waiting at the airport and took us to his condo in Kahului, where we planned to stay a few days while finding a place of our own. The next day he took us Upcountry to get my husband's race car. We picked up a newspaper to try and find a rental and stopped in at Starbucks in Kihei so I could get a blended mocha coffee. As we were entering the door, another friend of my husbands was coming out. He was surprised to see him back, because when he left, no one thought he would ever return.

His friend, Steve, came back in and sat down at a table with us to visit. My husband told him we just got back last night and was looking for a place to live. It was like a miracle when Steve invited us to stay in his condo. He told us he had rented it out to a group of young exchange students from Japan for part of the summer and they had just left. When he went to the condo, he found it totally trashed. He said he was looking to hire someone to clean it up and repair the damage, and was relieved to know my husband could do the job. It was win win.

We made arrangements with Steve that he would let us live there rent free for six months while he pays for the cost of all material. After that, he only required us to pay the monthly HOA fee. Of course, we also had to pay our electricity. I couldn't believe it! Talk about perfect timing.

My husband told me he once lived there as a roommate with Steve so he was familiar with the place. When Steve took us to the condo located in Kihei at very nice condo complex, I was both excited and relieved, because the rentals we had seen in the paper were very expensive, and I thought we might have to live with other people, since that is what my husband had told me so many had to do. But when I saw the condo, even a total mess, it was absolutely wonderful, and located right across the road from the ocean beach.

The shipping container from Oregon didn't leave the dock for many weeks due to a strike, and it didn't get to Maui for a couple of months. We only had what we brought on the plane to get us by so it was nice that the condo was fully furnished, including dishes, pots and pans, and linens. When the shipping container finally arrived, the crate stayed in the warehouse in Kahului where I paid a monthly storage fee. After leaving Starbucks we went back to his friends place to get our things and moved right in. Steve wasn't kidding, the place was really torn up. The first thing we

did was take out bags and bags of garbage and scrub the kitchen and bathrooms. We then painted the entire place, retiled all the flooring, and repaired the wood planks on the staircase leading to the bedroom loft, including retiling the showers. We practically remodeled the entire condo, which took about six months – only because my husband was so slow in getting things done, and even Steve was getting impatient. It was a two-bedroom, two full bath condo with a lovely lanai facing the ocean view, and the doves were astounding, flying in and out. I started to put bird seed out and every day more doves would come, until there were over thirty at a time. Some flew inside and we would let them come and go. Of course, they pooped all over, including below on their lanai, and the complaints put a stop to that. I was disappointed when management told me I had to stop feeding them.

We were on the fifth floor where we could hear the waves crashing, and sometimes at midnight I would just listen ... trying to drown out the road noise. Every night we saw beautiful sunsets over the sea. Many evenings we would put on our flipflops and walked down to the beach, watching the waves crashing against the sandy shore, walking barefoot in the sand. When we weren't working on the condo we were traveling around the Island. He took me all over, even to some of the most remote areas. We went out to eat at various restaurants, including one that Willy Nelson owned.

After we had been there a couple of months, and things were slowly getting done on the condo, I tried to encourage my husband to look for work, even a parttime job. My funds were gradually dwindling away from the sale of my house after having to pay for everything from food to utilities to everyday expenses. As it was in Oregon, he wasn't thrilled about that, yet, I wasn't going to spend all my funds to support him forever.

Thankfully, my Honda had arrived and I was so happy to have my car back that when I got in it, I started to cry. It's all I had at the moment that brought me some familiar comfort. Then I had invited Dani to fly over. She was out of school and working at the time. I was hoping she would love it there and want to move there with us. I had promised her I would bring her over when we were settled. I paid \$1,000 to fly her over during Christmas for a week. She stayed in the loft most of the time talking to her boyfriend. Apparently, they had a huge fight before she left and she didn't seem happy to be away from him.

I tried to make the most of her time while there, but all she wanted to do was get back to Oregon. We had taken her on tour around the Island, and out to eat at some very nice places. One night we had prime rib dinner at a beachside restaurant, and despite being totally stuffed, she forced it all down, saying it tasted so good she couldn't stop. On the way back to the condo we stopped at the store and while my husband went in, I stayed in the car with Dani. She wasn't feeling too good by then, and ended up vomiting her entire dinner in the parking lot. I was very disappointed that she did that, as the meal was so expensive. I was even more disappointed that she didn't want to live there. Things may have been so much different if she had. I was sad to see her leave.

Things began to get a little tense between me and my husband because of my insistence he get a job. He put some effort into it, like he did in Oregon, always telling me that there was no work. One day I finally told him if he wasn't going to go to work, then I would look for a job, and that

is exactly what I did. I went online and began looking. I sent my resume to a few available ads and was contacted by a woman who wanted to meet me. She set a place and time to meet at a coffee shop. Since our things still hadn't arrived yet, I didn't have a nice outfit to wear to the interview. But I really didn't care, I was only going in hopes my husband would get motivated himself. I really didn't want to go to work, but I thought this might force him to seek a job too.

When my husband drove me to the coffee shop, he waited for me in the car. When I walked toward the coffee shop, I saw a very well dressed younger and attractive woman sitting outside at a table. She waived to me as I went to the table. I felt a little uncomfortable in my shorts and flip flops as I sat down, apologizing for my attire, informing her that all my things were on a ship and should arrive soon. She didn't seem bothered by my unprofessional appearance ... it was, I suppose, after all Maui ... the 'Hang Loose' kind of mindset.

I wasn't sure what the job was, only that they were looking for a personal assistant. After she introduced herself as Katy, we chatted for a while, telling me what they were looking for, a personal assistant to her. So, she had a huge decision in the process, although her boss had final word. She said they were both impressed with my resume. She said I would mostly be working in the office with her doing paperwork, writing letters, filing, and sometimes arranging meetings. It sounded like a fun and easy position. Katy said she would like Grant, the man who I would be working for, to meet me. She made a call, and in a few minutes a shiny black Mercedes pulled up and a fairly attractive man in his fifties got out of the back seat. He walked over to us, casually dressed, sunglasses and cap, and introduced himself. We didn't shake hands. Katy introduced me as he sat down. "Aloha," he said while Katy told him a little about me. He sat for few minutes and asked me some personal questions like how long had I lived on Maui, and if I enjoyed living there. He looked down at my feet and made a humorous remark, "Nice flip flops," with a grin. I smiled as he stood up and said it was nice meeting me. I said the same and he walked away.

It didn't take long for me to figure out that he was actually parked in view of us, perhaps even listening to our interview, waiting for her call should she find someone worth meeting. He seemed nice, but I really couldn't tell much from the few minutes he stayed. Katy then thanked me for coming and said she'd call me later with his decision, letting me know they had dozens of applicants, and that she had been interviewing for over a week. She said he was very particular in whom he chose.

When we left, I told my husband I didn't think I got it. However, about hour later Katy called and asked me if I could come to his home for a second interview. She gave me the address in Wailea and set an appointment time for the next day. My husband drove me out there so I would know my way the following day. Wailea is where most all the wealthy live, and where all the high price hotels were, golf courses and fine dining. It was also where Steve also owned a fine dining restaurant on a golf course, and where he lived as well.

The area where the man lived was in a gated community, and Katy had given me the code to get in. The next morning I arrived at his house, which was more like a mansion. It was huge with a six-bay car garage filled with expensive cars, and a white limo parked in the driveway. I was greeted at the door by Katy and followed her into the living area. Although I was blown away by

the surroundings, I didn't act impressed and kept my professional composure. A few minutes later another lady showed up and we sat together waiting for Grant to appear. The other lady looked timid, her eyes enlarged with awe at the beauty and impressive furnishings, including huge statues, Persian rugs, original art and wall paintings. It really was something out of the movies with very expensive and luxurious furniture, but I didn't show any emotion as if none of it impressed me, and honestly, I may have been blown away, but none of it really impressed me. I suppose I was shocked that I could actually get a job working there. Whereas the other lady was gushing over everything and I could see on Katy's face that she knew Grant wasn't going to be flattered by her.

When Grant arrived, he greeted us and walked us around so we would know the layout of the place. We went into the backyard where there was a large swimming pool and a separate Jacuzzi spa, surrounded by tropical plants and waterfalls ... and more life-size Roman type statues, both male and female. He then took us upstairs in the elevator to his office. I had never been in a house so lavish and huge, which later I learned was worth over thirty million. In all my real estate years I had never seen a house like that, and I had seen many beautiful homes in the two to four million dollar range. The other lady was falling all over herself totally enthralled, and it was obvious he was ignoring her. I had made one comment to him when I said he had a beautiful home. When we entered the office room, Katy was sitting at her desk and there were two other desks with computers. He pointed to one asking me to sit there, and pointed to the other asking the other lady to have a seat. He then gave us instructions to type a letter he had handwritten, asking Katy to give it to us. The writing was almost unreadable, as I secretly gasped.

The computers were turned off and when he said to proceed, I turned it on and found the Microsoft Word program and began to type. I heard the other lady at the other desk saying she couldn't get the computer to load, and he snapped at her to fix it, which she said she didn't know how to do. Katy stood up and said that computer had been having issues. He snapped at her again, asking why she can't fix it and she said she was trying the best she could. His intimidation was written all over her red face. I felt sorry for her, and since I had a lot of computer experience, I kindly offered to help, in which he snapped at me to continue with my task. I finished typing the letter and printed it out. He was impressed, but disappointed in the other lady as she sat there struggling to figure out how to boot up the computer. When he became impatient with her, he then said he wanted to take us to lunch and chat a little more, so he had his limo driver take up to a very fancy restaurant where the other lady, browsing the menu, mentioned how expensive the food was. He seemed offended by her comment and made a rude remark that perhaps she'd be more satisfied at McDonalds. The look on her face was total humiliation.

As we sat there eating, he asked me lots of questions and we had a very nice visit before returning to his home. He hardly spoke to the other lady. When we got back to his home, he asked me to step aside and asked if I wanted the job, which I said yes. He then told me as my first assignment was to tell the other lady she didn't get it, and he walked away, leaving me alone with her. Before I said anything to her, she asked if I could give her a ride back to her house since her husband dropped her off and she didn't want wait for him to come because she wanted to leave immediately. She seemed almost desperate to get out of there. On the way back to Kihei

I didn't feel as bad as I did after I saw her reaction to the ordeal she had been through. When I told her what he said, she expressed how relieved she was. She said he intimidated her so much she admitted she had to hold back tears.

When I told my husband I got the job, he didn't seem too thrilled about it. When I started work the next day, I put on my nicest clothes, which weren't that nice, but I did wear shoes and not flip flops. I also wore a little makeup, but pulled my hair into a ponytail. That morning when I arrived, Katy was waiting at the door and escorted me upstairs to the office. We didn't take the elevator. The staircase was massive with an elegant railing and polished hardwood flooring. I sat down at the desk I had sat before and when Grant entered the room he welcomed me, and then he asked if I knew how to fix the other computer. I told him I would take a look at it. I managed to find the problem, repairing the corrupted files. He was very pleased and told me I would be sitting at that desk from now on. He then handed over a few sheets of paper with his scribbles written on them and asked me to type them up, then left. Katy helped me to read the words I was struggling with, telling me she had worked for him for nearly ten years, saying it took her awhile to make out his writing too. She was very nice and helpful. Around lunch time she took me downstairs to the kitchen. I had never seen a kitchen so big, and actually there were two kitchens. On the counter was many dishes with various food, and it appeared catered, which every day Katy ordered the meals that were brought in.

At the end of my first day Grant met with me in the office before leaving. He asked how the day went and I said fine. He said he understood that all my things hadn't arrived from the mainland and stressed how important it was that I look appropriate for the job, telling me that he often has high profile guests. When he was done talking, he handed me five one-hundred-dollar bills and told me to go shopping and get a few nice dresses. I thanked him for his generosity, letting him know my appreciation for his understanding.

When I left work that first day, it was a Friday which gave me the weekend to go shopping. While my husband had gone fishing, I headed over to Ross where I was able to buy a several dresses and a nice pair of shoes. When I showed up on Monday, Grant made comment on how nice I looked. He seemed pleased each day with the outfits I purchased, and occasionally he continued to hand me money, saying things like, "Take your husband out for a nice dinner," or "Get yourself something nice." He really seemed to take interest in me for some reason, but never in an improper manner. Katy often left earlier than me, and sometimes he would come into the office at the end of the day to chat. He would tell me stories of his travels around the world, the businesses he has owned, and would express that he saw a lot of potential in me. He told me when he sees someone like me who is smart, beautiful, intelligent and confident, he likes to help them. He said he had made millionaires of many people, and he saw that kind of level for me. He mentioned names of famous people he knew, saying he had even met the Pope. I tried not to wow over what he was saying, being mature about it, which I knew he respected in a person's demeanor. I think that's what he admired most.

When I told my husband these things, he seemed to get jealous, perhaps even felt threatened, though he didn't say, but his attitude was obvious. I told Grant that my husband was looking for work and so he wanted to help me by hiring him to do work on one of his rental properties. I also

thought that if my husband got to know Grant, he wouldn't feel threatened. I was happy that Grant wanted to help us, and could see hope that my husband had a good paying job, thinking it could lead into full-time work. Grant owned several homes on Island and had taken me in the limo around Maui to show them off. The one he needed work on had just become vacant. Basically, it needed cleaned, shampooed, painted inside walls and some landscape upkeep. Among the tasks Grant wanted done was to paint the driveway.

My husband came to meet him at his house and saw for the first time where I worked ... expressing later how appalled he was over the nude statues, calling them pornography. I insisted they were works of art, very expensive works of art, but he drew a very negative attitude after that. It was the one and only time he ever came again. Grant had one of his workers take him to the rental house and show him what all needed to be done, and the next day my husband started work. Every day Grant would go by and see what he had done, and after a couple of weeks he was upset that he was taking so long to get the jobs finished. One day, after work, Grant came into the office and sat down. Katy had already left for the day. He looked into my eyes very seriously and expressed most directly that my husband was a loser. He ranted how it had been two days that my husband was painting the driveway, telling me he's using a paint brush. He couldn't believe my husband was using a paint brush. He fired him and had his guy go over and roll it out in a couple in hours.

He told me I could do so much better. He said he couldn't understand how I could be with someone like that, and all I could do was listen. I was stunned, and the sad truth was, he was right, but I wasn't going to leave my husband ... I believed in the vows of marriage, my faith and my hope ... even after my fourth marriage. Grant assured me that my place there was not at risk, and felt bad for going off like that. We never talked about it again. My husband seemed glad that Grant fired him, and I almost felt like he did it on purpose. He continued to show resentment toward my job, and there were times I really didn't want to go home ... didn't want to be around his negative attitude. I would tell him to get a job, then I will quit. That would shut him up.

One day Grant took me to the house where my husband had been working and showed me around. It was a big two-story house with a lovely landscaped backyard and swimming pool. When he was finished showing me the place, he said we could live there, rent free, if I wanted, no strings attached ... and no hard feelings with my husband. He just wanted to help me live a better life, knowing we were living in a friend's condo, and time was running out there. Steve told us he decided to sell it when the place was finished, and it was pretty much finished. When I saw the house, I was thankful and excited. When I told my husband what he had offered, my husband refused to live there. It really upset him that I would consider it. As hard as it was, I had to turn Grant down, and he thought it was very foolish.

The longer I worked there, the more generous Grant was. One day he took me into his bedroom vault and showed me some very interesting collectables. While in there he gave me a roll of Maui dollars - something considered as souvenirs. He was proud of his collectable casino chips from a casino he once owned back in the day, handing me several, saying they weren't worth anything anymore. He also gave me a rare silver dollar. One thing I enjoyed was when he would take me for casual limo rides around the Island where we sat and discussed ideas he had for

business ventures, wanting my thoughts and advice. He was always a gentleman to me, and that is what I tried to get my husband to see, which never happened.

One day before leaving the office he told me he was having a very important gathering the following day from some important men flying in, and he asked me to wear something especially nice. By then, our things had finally arrived and I was able to wear some of my jewelry and nicer attire. From time to time, we would go through our things stored in the warehouse and dig out what we wanted.

The next day when I showed up for work the house was full of workers, cleaning and preparing for the guests. The limo driver arrived with about 6 women, dressed to the hilt, and were seated at the long dining table, waiting for the arrival of Grant. I was getting a cup a coffee before heading up to the office when I saw him arranging the ladies around the table, leaving seats between them for the male guests. I stayed upstairs most of the time while he entertained them. After a while the ladies left and the men got down to business. I thought it strange that he had the ladies come and sit at the table, and I assumed they were paid for their service. I was right about my assumption when one day he told me had an escort company, and had flown the ladies in from Las Vegas on his private jet. After everyone had left, Katy said let's eat, and we went downstairs to the kitchen where there was so much food. Some food I had never tasted before. It was a delicious buffet. It was all cleaned up by the time Katy and I left.

On another day, Katy told me that Grant had a lady friend flying in from Las Vegas and he wanted everything to be perfect. His master bedroom was also upstairs with a giant bathroom that had a huge spa tub. He had turned the water on to fill the tub to take a bath and forgot about it. He was out back while Katy and I were in the office working when we heard the limo driver, Jake, screaming downstairs. We both jumped up and ran down the stairs as fast as we could, not understanding what he was yelling until we saw the water pouring from the ceiling. Katy knew immediately it was the spa tub and dashed back upstairs to turn the water off. I stood there in near shock looking around the area where water poured through, sick to see all the damage going on and being totally helpless. Water was running down the walls, soaking everything to the floor and into the Persian rugs. In the kitchen the water was flowing off the marble counters and into the stovetop grills and flooding the floor. Grant came running in from outside and yelled to call someone. I ran upstairs and called someone to immediately come.

It was almost time for me to leave and so Grant told me to go ahead, and not to worry about it. Just then a van pulled up with several women and a few men. They quickly unloaded all their equipment and rushed into the house. None could speak any English, which I learned the next day when I returned. Some of the women had come back earlier in the morning to finish cleaning. When I arrived, I saw Grant with Katy in his bedroom seated at a table having a meeting, as they often did. I went back downstairs to get a cup of coffee when I noticed the laundry room had baskets filled with dry towels, so I thought I would be helpful and start folding them until their meeting was finished. The laundry room had about five or six built-in washers and driers, with a very long folding table and lots of cupboards.

After a few minutes I heard Grant on the intercom telling me to come upstairs. As I approached the staircase, he was coming down and we met face to face. He asked me what I was doing in the laundry room, and I told him I was folding towels, though I think he must have already known that through his security camera. He asked me, very directly, "Are you the maid?" I said no. He asked me if I wanted to be a maid or a personal assistant. I told him a personal assistant. Then he said, "A personal assistance doesn't do maids work." I told him I was just trying to help, and he told me that's not my job. I didn't say a word, I just went upstairs to my desk and began working. Katy didn't say anything either. She was very loyal to him and would never say a bad word. She once told me he isn't on Maui all year, and comes about every six months off and on ... and expressed that she works all year long regardless. Her and her husband lived in one of his houses, which I knew when Grant was showing me around. She was well paid too, by the expensive taste she had in clothes, shoes, and jewelry, as well as her nice car.

I had not seen that side of him before, and I really didn't like him treating me like that, especially when I saw him being very rude to the maids that day. Since they didn't speak English, there was a communication problem, and I heard him belittling one for not making his bed right. They didn't understand the things he was ordering them to do and he got upset and told them all to leave. He told Katy that she needed to get workers over there that can speak English in a very gruff manner - and since I was the one who called for help, I felt responsible. I stayed in the office to avoid him until I left for the day. I was glad it was Friday!

The weekend came and I was feeling unsatisfied working for a man who had no respect for people below him. I also was starting to distrust him for the negative things he had said about my husband, trying to lure me into his web. He talked about becoming involved in his escort business, saying he wanted to start it up in Maui and needed someone to run the show. The more he tried to convince me that I deserved a better life than my husband could ever provide, and how he would take me all over the world and introduce me to very powerful people, the more I became frightened of him. Maybe my husband was right, he wasn't a good man, and I began to look at him differently.

A couple of weeks later I thought if over very seriously and decided I couldn't continue working for him, but much of my decision had to do my husband's attitude. I called Grant and told him I had to quit. It was a brief conversation and he didn't say anything. I never saw or heard from again. For a while, I stayed at home, going crazy over all the endless traffic noise below. Day and night, 24/7 cars, buses, trucks swooshed by on the main road that I had endured for as long as I could. The echo was intensive until one day it really got to me. I escaped into the bathroom and shut door, turned on the water and just for a moment of peace and quiet, I sat there. Oh, how I missed the peace and quiet of home.

One morning I was in the bedroom when I heard yelling outside the window. I looked through the blinds to see a man standing on the balcony railing, and a woman screaming at him, which I couldn't understand what she was yelling, but I knew instantly the man was about to jump. I ran into the living room and told my husband. He quickly ran out the door to see what was going on and suddenly the man leaped over the balcony to the ground, five stories down. I ran outside and looked over the railing to see the man lying on the cement walkway, only a foot away from the

manicured lawn. My husband took off down the stairs and rushed to the man to see if he was alive, and he had pulse but was unconscious. Someone had called the ambulance and the man was taken away. We later learned he was brain dead and had died. It was such a horrible sight to see.

After that, and my husband still not working, I went back online to look for another job. I just couldn't sit around there all day doing nothing. I emailed my resume to an ad that only said they were looking for a part-time office assistant. I received a call almost immediately for an interview. When the woman, who introduced herself as Rosie, told me she was the owner of Maui Real Estate, I was hesitate to continue with the conversation. When I had left Oregon, I left real estate. I let my license expire after ten years and said that's it. However, I did go to the interview and I did get hired after meeting with Rosie, which only took less than a half hour. We had very interesting visit after learning we had a lot in common. She said she had almost given up on finding someone qualified and was thrilled with all my knowledgeable experience, and my computer skills were a huge plus. In all the years of their business, they never had a company logo, which I created for them.

I worked Monday through Friday for four hours a day, mostly assisting the Office Manager, who happened to be her daughter-in-law. I became, what she once expressed, was one her most irreplaceable employees. She had attended a nationwide Real Estate Brokers conference in Las Vegas and was asked to be one of the speakers. To my surprise she told hundreds of Brokers across the nation that because of me, I took them to the next level, which had increased their success. She told me after making that statement that several Brokers wanted to know if I would be interested in taking on more work. When Rosie told me this, I was deeply touched, but I assured her that I didn't want to work for anyone else, or take time away from my responsibility with her. She was very thankful, admitting to being afraid she might risk losing me. We had a good laugh, though, I did feel quite honored.

When my husband said we were invited to a friend's luau, telling me they cook a pig in an underground pit, I was excited. My husband was also a drummer, and had stored his drums at another friends before leaving to Oregon, and upon his return, he kept them there since we had no place for them at the condo. His friend had told us that he was having a few of Willie Nelson's band guys at the party, and asked my husband to bring his drums. I was quite impressed with my husband's talent. Some said Willie might show up, but he never did. The couple where the luau was being held Upcountry, was also where the woman had a huge greenhouse where she grew and sold orchids and gardenias. The aroma was amazing! They also raised a variety of birds, some in small cages and some in huge cages. That was a great experience to remember.

My husband finally took a job doing condo maintenance, and with the funds he was bringing in, he wanted to take me to Lahaina for my birthday for a wonderful dinner cruise out to sea. Afterwards we walked the sidewalks of old town browsing the shops, sitting along the oceanfront watching the sunset. I was amazed at the banyan tree that grows there, its beauty and strength. I have always had a strong connection to trees. When we departed the cruise ship, I was given a handmade rose weaved from a thick brown paper like material, in which I still have to this day. And on that day, I had worn a seashell barrette that was handmade and given to me

about twelve years earlier, made from the beach of Hawaii, which also still have to this day. As anything in life, I try to remember and cherish the precious moments. It's what has always helped me through the life's maze.

After my husband got the job doing maintenance work for a nearby condo complex, he wasn't happy working there. He was having to spend a lot of time at work, and over time, his attitude grew more depressing. After nearly a year, my time on Island was wearing on me. The traffic noise never ceased day and night, driving me crazy, plus, I was missing the four seasons. My job was going fine, but it was just an office job. I never really got to know anyone closely. I felt no attachment, other than to Rosie. It seemed nothing ever changed there, every day the same weather, the same routine.

Until then, I never liked the wind, but grew to appreciate those trade winds to endure the heat. I realized that going to Maui for a vacation was one thing, living there was another. Perhaps if we didn't live on the main coastal route right in the middle between Wailea to Kahului, it might have been different. Kihei may have given us a cheap place to live, but it wasn't the most pleasant place, yet it would be the only place we could ever afford, and knowing that, was my entire driving force to leave.

I told my husband I wasn't happy there any longer, and wanted to move back home. I told him, before all my funds are gone, I want to buy another house. He was all for that, but he didn't want to go back to Oregon. He wanted us to have a new beginning where we could start fresh. I decided that was a good idea. He had seen where I lived, met my friends and family, and I had seen where he lived, and met his friends ... some like family. Perhaps that is what we needed, a place where we knew no one, and no one knew us.

When we began looking online for a home, somewhere, anywhere, we had no particular place in mind. We somehow found that place in the Ozarks of Arkansas. Once we decided on the area we desired to live, we only sought homes there. It seemed we couldn't agree on what house we liked, until my husband convince me to make an offer on the house I didn't care much for, but he saw great potential. It wasn't perfect, but I finally surrendered and told him I would call the realtor in the morning. I went to bed that night and prayed that in the morning there would be the right one we both would like because I was sad at what I knew I had to do otherwise ... make the best of it. Time was of essence, as they say. Winter was coming on the mainland.

When my husband went off to work that next morning and I got online and started looking one last time before making that call. I pulled up the homes for sale on MLS and there it was, there was the home I dreamed of. I knew my husband would feel the same way. When he got home, I showed him, telling him I couldn't make the call on the other house until had seen that one. He was in awe, and glad I hadn't made an offer on the other. Everything about it was perfect. The next morning, I called that realtor.

The homes in that area, called Ozark Acres, were very inexpensive. I was able to purchase the home, on a quarter acre, with a full price cash offer. It took every dollar I had to do it. Every dollar left over from the sale of my home in Oregon. I hired a whole house inspector that the Realtor arranged as she wouldn't sell us the home to us unless we did. The reason was because

we were purchasing the house sight unseen. When we received the detailed inspection report, and was satisfied, we wrote up the offer and passed paperwork back and forth through email. We could see there was some work to be done on the place, but at the price we got it for, it wasn't anything we couldn't handle.

When I knew for sure the deal went through, I went to Rosie to tell her I was leaving Maui and give her my two-week notice. She was very unhappy about that, but I didn't want to lose my job, so I made a proposal where I could take my job with me and she was thrilled to give it a try. I knew I would have to work hard to proof to her I could live anywhere and do what I do. She was relieved and hopeful, as I, that it would work out. And you know what, it worked out for twelve years! I think that was the real reason I went to Maui, among other reasons. That job was a life savior.

My leap of faith didn't bring the life I had imagined, it did, however, bring me an opportunity for a secure job, with a good salary that I may have never had if I stayed in Oregon. When things fell apart in Oregon with my old boss, I felt my future in real estate was finished. Little did I know, real estate wasn't finished with me.

Although I am thankful I had that experience, I wish I had left everything in storage in Oregon, as that was probably the biggest waste of funds I had ever spent, the most I had ever given up, the hardest sacrifice I had ever made. I had spent thousands in moving expenses over the course of my travels, with lots of losses along the way, and many sacrifices, yet, none compared to this one brief journey.

Once again, I was starting over, and looking forward to another new beginning in the Ozarks of Arkansas. Maui turned out, as everything always did, not finding my dream come true ... as I continued to believe that dream would someday come. My faith could not fail me.