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Chapter One
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Abigail Patience Kendall felt anything but patient.

Her teeth jarred each time Uncle Samuel's buck-board wagon hit a rut in the dirt road leading down the mountainside. Riding in the back among the empty baskets held only one benefit: She jostled next to Luke Quiggley, her fourteen-year-old best friend.

But Luke was snoozing in the noonday sun. With a mischievous flip of her wrist, Abby tossed her long hair off her shoulder and grinned with satisfaction when it struck him in the face.

"Hey!" Luke growled in mock anger.

She bit her lip to keep from smiling and looked innocently around at their surroundings. They'd been traveling a narrow dirt road surrounded by thick vegetation, where the Hawaiian trade winds couldn't reach them. But now the wagon began to lurch down the rock-strewn path toward an open spot on the mountainside.

Suddenly the cool breeze struck Abby in the face.

“Look!” Her cinnamon curls blew around her face as she pointed to the breathtaking view. “Our bay!”

Luke nodded at the sea. “Two ships are anchored off Kailua.” As Luke and Abby drank in the beauty of turquoise water and white sandy beaches far below, a look passed between them. They remembered Captain Chandler’s ship anchored there and the adventure that had brought them to Oahu.

The wagon descended on this steeper grade and began to pick up speed. “Whoa, Petunia!” Uncle Samuel roared. Abby saw him yank back on the reins as they veered closer to the cliff. She glanced at her younger sister sitting beside Uncle Samuel on the front seat. Little Sarah was clutching his arm with both hands. But there was no calming Petunia. The horse snorted in fright as the unexpected feel of the wagon harness pushed against her.

“The wagon’s going too fast!” Abby screamed.

Luke bounced up and peered over the side. “We’re just a few feet from the edge!” That edge, Abby knew, plunged one hundred feet to the beach!

“Whoa, girl,” Uncle Samuel urged, “take it easy . . . you’re doing fine.” But the horse had been spooked, and the load gathered momentum on the downhill path. Suddenly a wheel dipped into a rut, flinging Abby against Luke. The wagon careened closer to the drop-off and teetered on the ledge.

“Move!” Luke gasped as he thrust Abby to the other side of the wagon. The horse whinnied in panic as the wheel pitched free of the hole, and the

wagon jerked away from the cliff. Within seconds the road began to level out, and Uncle Samuel got Petunia under control.

Abby still gripped the side of the wagon with white knuckles. Her sunburned face had paled and her deep blue eyes were as wide as saucers. “Abby,” Luke said, a smile tugging at his lips, “you can breathe again.”

For an instant, she appeared startled. Then color flooded her face. “You . . . you rascal!” she shot back. For good measure, she whacked him playfully with the empty basket she’d brought along. “You know I hate heights!”

“It’s okay to be scared,” Luke said kindly. “See, I knew everything would be all right ’cause of *this*.” As he dug into his pocket and pulled out his “lucky” white rabbit’s foot on a chain, Abby groaned in frustration. But Luke gave her a teasing wink to let her know he didn’t really mean it.

Or does he? Abby wondered. *When we faced danger a few months back, Luke prayed for the first time in years. But I haven’t seen him talk to God since.* She had begun to worry about him again.

Then she remembered his quick actions to move her away from the ledge. Abby shook her head and gazed fondly at him. Who would have guessed when he moved to California more than three years ago that the lonely orphan boy from Pennsylvania would become her best friend?

The scent of *pikake* and plumeria trees rose in the heat along with the dust kicked up by the horse. As

the path led away from the cliff and back through trees, Abby reached out and plucked two wide leaves from a banana tree. She held one out to Luke while shading herself with the other. “Forgot your bonnet again?” he asked, amusement on his tanned face.

“Yep.” Abby stared at the back of eight-year-old Sarah’s head. Even *she* had remembered her calico bonnet.

What I really want, Abby thought, is a new tortoise comb to pile all this hair on top of my head. That would keep my neck cool. But she knew there was no money for that. Not after hearing her parents’ discussion last night. They had thought everyone was asleep, but the ranch-house walls were too thin to hide Pa’s emotional words—words that kept returning to Abby.

“We’re out of money, Charlotte!” Pa had said.

Then Ma’s voice came through with quiet confidence. “The Lord will see us through, Thomas. He’s never let us down.”

“But it’s never been this bad! At least in California we had our own vegetable garden. We’ve walked into a disaster! Samuel’s been too sick to plant a garden or keep the cattle ranch going. It took all our money to get here. And there’s no harvest, Charlotte! Do you know what that means?”

Abby had held her breath, waiting for Ma’s answer: “We still have dried beans . . . and a little flour.”

Pa’s tortured tone had come through loud and clear. “How long will that last? I’ve got no money for more . . . and I doubt Samuel has, either.”

Sarah's whine brought Abby back to the present. "Are we there yet?"

Uncle Samuel slapped the reins lightly against the mare's back and rubbed his shaggy beard. "Almost. See that hill?" He pointed ahead. "On the other side is Kailua and the mercantile your ma asked us to visit."

"What's at the mercantile, Uncle?" Abby asked. Sarah turned to gaze up into his face.

"Everything your heart could desire . . . cloth and food and leather goods. Last time I was in, I saw some white dishes with blue flowers on them." He clucked encouragement to the horse. "And there's ribbon candy that comes from Boston. Mmm . . . I love the peppermints. We'll have to see if there's any left."

Sarah jumped up and leaned forward. "Hurry up, Uncle! We gotta git us some of that candy before it's all gone!"

All gone, all gone . . . the money's all gone, Abby thought miserably. If Uncle Samuel had money, it should go for cornmeal and flour, like Ma had suggested. Not ribbon candy and tortoise combs. Surely Uncle Samuel must have money if he's talking about candy. . . .



When the wagon reached a rise in the dirt road, they began the last descent that led to the small

town. Abby fanned herself with the banana leaf and hoped she'd see Olani, the Hawaiian chieftess who'd become her good friend. Entering Kailua, they passed the blacksmith shop and whitewashed church with the wooden cross on top. Soon Uncle Samuel's voice rang out, "Whoa, Petunia." He drew in the reins as he pulled up to the hitching post in front of the mercantile.

Abby and Luke scrambled out after Uncle Samuel, who held his arms up for Sarah. When she leapt into them gleefully, Abby cringed. *Poor Uncle Samuel!* Her father's older brother was as thin as a sapling since recovering from his illness. But he caught Sarah in midair and smiled at her enthusiasm.

"Let's go git us some candy!" Sarah urged, her slate blue eyes dancing with hope.

"Little Britches," Samuel said, "you and your family are just the medicine this poor old biologist needed to get well."

That's probably true, Abby thought as she retrieved the basket and they made their way into the dark interior of the little store.

When she'd first arrived at Uncle Samuel's ranch house, she'd been shocked. It wasn't only his haggard looks—he was an older version of Pa with a shaggy beard and long, pale-brown hair graying at the temples. But his house looked like a crowded storage shed, each bookshelf packed with birds' nests, dried flowers, rocks, and bugs in canning jars. Seashells, driftwood, and stuffed birds lined the kitchen

cupboards where food supplies should have been. And Ma had already cleaned up some by the time Abby and Luke had finally arrived from their adventure of being lost at sea and getting tangled up in a mutiny.

Pa had immediately set to work building storage shelves so Ma could organize and start cooking for their thin uncle. Abby thought back fondly to the hours she and Luke had helped Uncle Samuel catalog and label the many Hawaiian artifacts he intended to save.

“Why’s he need to label this stuff?” Luke had asked, amazed at the mess.

“Because he thinks someday it’ll be important to have a record of it,” Abby explained.

Just then Uncle Samuel had walked in and said, “That’s right, young lady.” He’d picked up an intricately carved paddle used by the Hawaiians on their canoe trips from island to island. “These wonderful people are dying out. The sailors and whalers from other nations have brought disease to paradise.”

He set down the paddle with a shake of his head.

“Already, I’d say half of the Hawaiians are dead from it. Someday there will be even less of them. And when that happens, their way of life will disappear, too.”

Abby’s heart had stumbled at the thought. Not Olani and Kimo, her wonderful Hawaiian friends who’d helped her and Luke out of an awful jam! She thought of Olani, whose long, white hair made her look like the royalty she was. As bighearted as

she was big-boned, Olani fondly called thirteen-year-old Abby a “little-bitty thing.”

“Where’s the candy?” Sarah asked, jolting Abby from her memory. Abby looked around the crowded store. Barrels of flour and sugar occupied much of the floor space, but tables of calico cloth, pots, pans, and dishes also jammed the place. Herbs, onions, and garlic braids hung from the ceiling, imported, she knew, from California. Horse saddles, leather boots, and Stetson hats adorned the back wall. But Uncle Samuel and Sarah were winding their way toward the counter, where large glass containers held bright ribbons of hard candy.

“I want the red and white ones!” Sarah beamed up at Uncle Samuel, as if he were her hero.

He smiled at the clerk. “How are you, Kipini?” Then he cocked his head at his little niece. “We need supplies—flour, cornmeal, and a few sweets.”

The Hawaiian woman’s round brown eyes crinkled in the corners with kindness. “*Aloha*, Samuel. Long time no see. You mo’ better from sickness?” Her black hair was piled on top of her head with two tortoise combs, Abby noticed. And her dress, a full blue muumuu, looked cool and comfortable.

“Almost myself again,” Uncle Samuel answered.

Abby came forward, peering longingly over her sister’s white-blond braid to the glass case that displayed brushes and tortoise combs. Kipini dragged a basket of ripe green apples across the top of the case toward Samuel and Sarah. “We get these

apples two days ago from Oregon ship. Maybe you want some?"

Abby eyed the apples. "Oh, I could make a juicy pie for dinner!" Back in California she'd baked plenty of pies and fruit cobblers. She eagerly set her empty basket on the counter, her mouth almost watering with anticipation.

"Good idea." Samuel removed his money from his pocket, then noticed a paper sign hanging behind Kipini. "Flour prices have gone up?" he asked solemnly.

Something in Uncle Samuel's voice made Abby glance up. His lips were pursed, and he looked worried.

Kipini kept piling apples in the basket as she answered. "Prices go up, yes. We no get the shipload we expect. There is not so much to go around."

Uncle Samuel laid a hand on Kipini's to stop her. "I've decided against the apples for now. Let's concentrate on the flour and cornmeal."

Abby swallowed as Luke turned from the leather goods and gave her a questioning look. She shook her head sadly. *Uncle Samuel doesn't have money for apples!* Her heart picked up speed. If Ma and Pa didn't have money, and Uncle Samuel was almost out, what were they going to eat? His cattle were gone, and there was no crop to harvest. His last four chickens would eat better than anyone—they would always have a plentiful supply of bugs to eat in the barnyard! Abby dug her fingernails into her palms.

“I’ve never seen the righteous begging for bread,” she’d heard Ma say. But Pa was right. *Things have never looked this bad*, Abby thought. *How is God going to supply now?*

Kipini scooped several pounds of flour into the center of a large banana leaf. She did the same with cornmeal, then wrapped each package snugly and put them in the basket. Pocketing the few coins Uncle Samuel offered, she selected two tart green apples and set them on top of the bundles. “I treat *kamali*’i, your children,” she said with a serene expression.

Uncle Samuel rubbed his salt-and-pepper beard and cleared his throat. “Thank you kindly, Kipini.” Then they headed out into the afternoon sunlight.

Luke and Abby climbed in the wagon while Samuel lifted Sarah onto the seat. “I’m sorry we couldn’t get any candy, Little Britches.”

“But we did! See?” Sarah opened her fist and revealed a long piece of red ribbon candy. “Enough for all of us.” She began to break off pieces and hand them out. “Kipi-nini gave it to me.” Abby and Luke giggled at Sarah’s mangled version of *Kipini*.

Uncle Samuel chuckled and flapped the reins. The wagon jerked away from the mercantile as he murmured, “I love these people. . . . Their hearts are as big as the sea.” Eyeing the sand dunes at the end of the dirt road, he suggested, “Why don’t we stop by the water since we’re already here?”

Luke whooped and Abby’s face lit up. Sarah crunched her candy happily. Within five minutes,

Uncle Samuel drove the buckboard off the track and tied Petunia's reins to a low bush. The mare began eating leaves as the kids flew across the sugar-sand beach to the sparkling water. Tossing aside his shirt and boots, Luke dove into a breaking wave. Abby and Sarah hiked up their dresses to their knees and squealed with delight when the frothy wave swept over their legs and drenched their clothes. With each wash of seawater, the bubbles foaming into mermaid lace, Abby's concerns began to evaporate.



An hour later, after walking along the beach and gathering shells, they headed back to the wagon. Uncle Samuel had been telling them how no two shells were exactly alike. "Luke," Uncle Samuel asked as they got back to the wagon, "may I borrow your knife?"

"Sure." Luke fished it out of his shirt pocket and handed it over.

Samuel took one of the green apples and cut horizontally through it. "Look," he said, indicating the center. "What do you see?"

Sarah crowded in close. "There's a star inside!"

Abby glanced at her uncle, who loved to give lessons. "I didn't know the seeds were in the shape of a star."

He grinned at them. “You never know where you’ll find stars,” he continued. “Something special is hidden inside each of you, too.”

“Hidden treasure?” Abby teased. Then her breath caught, for her words instantly reminded her of something—something so important, and yet she’d forgotten. . . .

“Exactly,” Uncle Samuel explained. “The Lord put special talents in each one of you, talents that are like seeds waiting to bear fruit. Luke, Sarah, Abby,” he addressed each one in turn, “you’re each unique. I’ll enjoy seeing what fruit your lives bear.” Then he cut the apple in quarters and handed out the pieces.

The sweet-and-sour apple jolted Abby’s tastebuds as an idea exploded in her mind. *Hidden treasure!* Why hadn’t she thought of it before? She still had the treasure map from their previous voyage with Captain Chandler! It had been so easy to push the map to the back of her mind these past three months, enjoying the security of her family—and getting to know her sweet uncle again.

Why, maybe one of my hidden talents is treasure hunting, she thought. *Gold doubloons, silver dollars, jewels to grace Ma’s lovely neck. . . . Abby’s eyes glistened. If I find the treasure, I could solve my parents’ problem!*

It was simple. All she had to do was follow the map she’d copied from Jackal, the blackhearted mutineer who’d caused them so much trouble on

the way to Oahu. But at the thought of Jackal, her stomach tightened. Suddenly the gold was forgotten. The brawny pirate had promised to get even with her for dropping the original treasure map into the sea. She shivered, remembering the savage look on his face when he'd yelled, "I'll git ye!"

But he's in the stockade, the Honolulu prison, Abby reminded herself. He can't get me. He can't.

"Hop in, young 'uns," Uncle Samuel urged as he lifted Sarah high. He tugged Petunia away from the half-eaten bush. "Supper will be ready by the time we get home." Horse hoofs thudded softly on the dry dirt. As they passed through Kailua again, the air was filled with the sound of receding waves. Then they headed up the slope that led home.

All the while, Abby pondered her idea. The hidden treasure was just like that green apple: both sweet and tart. Sweet with the promise of wealth, and tart with the threat of unknown danger. Petunia plodded on the sunbaked earth, setting up a rhythm that pounded in Abby's mind. *Should I go?* she asked herself over and over. *Can I really find a hidden treasure that will change our lives?*