

# The Gecko Princess

By  
Kai Bertrand

## 1

*"I was going to have a bad day."*



"Kalei, wake up!" My brother Kaponu said. He was standing next to my bed at 6:30 in the morning. Most people, women especially, think Kaponu is good-looking and charming. He is 22, over 6 feet tall, tanned, and muscled with a killer smile. He is one hell of a cook and a sweetheart but sometimes he can also be a terrible nag.

"Huhn?" I was still dreaming and was trying to distinguish between what was real and what was the dream. It was weird, everything was greenish, and felt sticky. I had a sudden urge to wash my hands. I glanced out the window and there was a bright green Anole lizard sitting outside my window resting on a stalk of

red ginger. It was staring at me. When I moved, it ran away.

“The council is here to see you again.” Kaponono said pulling my attention away from the window.

The council my brother was referring to is the Kahuna Council. They are a group of Hawaiian shamans who continue to hold to the ancient ways. People go to them for help on everything and anything. It didn't matter if their situation was worldly or spiritual. Whether it was a disobedient child or something in the house was going bump in the night, they could probably help.

Our kahunas hold the ancient knowledge. They are our people of power, and in my house, they are ohana - family. The members of the council come to spend time with my grandfather almost every day. He knows them all very well as he used to be their leader. He stepped down from the post over a year ago.

The council had come once before to see me, and I didn't like what happened afterwards. I had a feeling this time would be no different. As Kaponono was standing right next to the bed, it was too late for me to pretend I was still asleep. At least this time, they had come on a Saturday. I could go back to bed when they left.

I like to sleep in.

Kapono saw I was awake by the scowl on my face and walked out leaving the door open. The last time the council was here, I walked to the bathroom to do the routine before greeting them. Everyone stopped talking as I walked into the hallway. I looked like a walking disaster area last time.

This time, I had no idea what my face looked like, but I knew my hair was a mess. I rolled it up into a bun before leaving my room. I had to make sure it wouldn't look like a wild animal had built a nest on my head during the night.

I passed the doorway to the parlor and everyone saw me. They paused but then went on talking. I guess after last time, they weren't surprised by my appearance. They also know me well enough to know I was going to do the morning routine before they were going to get any face time with me.

I washed my face twice. I couldn't go out there with makapiapia at the corners of my eyes. I looked into my light brown eyes afterwards and I looked reasonably awake. I double checked to make sure my long brown hair wouldn't unravel from the bun, and then I took care of other things. I straightened my t-shirt, smoothed my shorts, and went out to see them.

Kapono was wearing his "cooks like it hot" apron and was making breakfast...for everyone. He dropped out of community college to be a chef. He was waiting for the start of the next semester at the vocational school he planned to attend. He had another couple of months

to wait before the new classes started. He was getting ready for it by pretending he was already working in a restaurant. He was making everyone's eggs to order.

They were all seated at the table. I took my place next to my grandfather and grabbed the cup of tea waiting for me. I took a sip and looked over the lip of the cup at the others.

On my right sat my grandfather, Kaliko Mala was on my left, Eddie Santos sat next to her, and kitty corner to me was Ikaika Lewis. All the senior members of the council were here. As Ikaika was sitting in Kapono's usual seat, Kapono would sit next to my grandfather.

My older brother Kalani usually sat directly across from me on my grandfather's other side. He must not be home. He never misses a meal. The chair however was currently empty. Kapono already had bacon, rice, and toast on the table. We were just waiting for the eggs.

He breezed around the table putting everyone's plate down with a flourish. He double checked to make sure everyone had everything they needed before sitting down. He's also the perfect host. I will never admit it, but I'm a little jealous about it. I poured shoyu over my eggs and rice and started eating. If they were over this early in the morning, it was probably not good news. I would rather hear it with a full stomach instead of an empty one.

My grandfather took a few bites and nodded at my brother, his way of saying it was delicious, and then put his fork down. That told me it was time to start talking.

He looked at me with an amused look on his face. He knows I hate to wake up early and how grouchy I am when I do. He is a brown, wrinkled raisin in his 70's. He is kind, gentle, and sharp as a tack. He might seem like he's not all there, but don't even think of pulling a fast one on him. Nothing escapes his notice.

I was determined to put this off as long as I could and I shoved a piece of bacon in my mouth and began to chew...slowly.

My grandfather gave me his amused look again and waited patiently. My brother started giving me the eye because he knew I was stalling.

"Where's Kalani?" I asked with my mouth full.

"He got up at 3:30 to go fishing," answered Kapono.

Kalani and Kapono look alike, tall, dark, and handsome. Kapono is slightly taller, Kalani, more muscular. They are both in great shape. I am the middle kid and the only girl. I am 5'6" and considered the chubby one in the family as both my brothers spend as much time surfing and playing sports as they can. I spend my time reading. My grandfather is a stick compared to me.

We live with him in a four bedroom house in Kalihi Valley. I have always had my own room. The boys had to share a room when my parents still lived here. My father is a career military man. He put in for a transfer three years ago and now lives in Washington State. Wherever my dad goes, my mom goes. For a little while, I moved to Seattle until my grandfather got pneumonia

and my parents asked me to move back home to help out.

When they moved, my parents gave their room to Kalani. Shortly after that, he bought a condo and moved out. He owned it for over a year and had nothing in it but a bed. He was always over at our house anyway. My grandfather said it was a matter of time before he moved back in.

After my encounter with the Gods of Hawaii a couple of months ago, I slept for several days. It was during that time Kalani decided to sell his place and move back in. He said it was to make sure he was around to help if the family needed him. We all knew it wasn't the only reason he moved back. He would probably never admit it, but he was lonely.

After Kaponu answered my question, I couldn't think of anything else to ask. Everyone looked like they wanted to get down to business. I sighed. That was my grandfather's cue that I was ready.

"Kalei, the council, has a question for you." He said.

"What?" I asked belligerently, dreading the answer. Ikaika looked at me and said, "We think it's time."

"Was that a question?" I asked looking at my grandfather who frowned at me.

Ikaika Lewis is the Council's main muscle and is a warrior to the bone. He has long, wavy, dark brown hair shot through with gray. He normally kept it braided and hanging straight down the middle of his back. Even his braid looked like it could kick butt. He is in his 50's

and he works out regularly. He runs at least five miles almost every day. He had probably already done his run for today. He rarely spoke. He preferred to communicate through gestures and eye contact. When he did speak, his voice was soft and low, almost like a growl. His face normally held a patient serious expression.

Today was different, he looked worried. I didn't like that look. He never worried about anything. If he was worried about something, and they were here to speak to me about that something, I was going to have a bad day.

"We think it's time." He said again giving me a stern look. It was his way of letting me know he was having none of my nonsense today.

"For what?" I asked knowing what the answer would be.

Kaliko spoke up, "To begin your training as a kahuna."

Kaliko Mala is also in her 50's, but she is overweight and bossy. Her long brown hair was braided and rolled up in a tight bun on top of her head. Her chubby, round, tanned face held the usual disapproving frown. She and the other members have been at odds over many things during the time she has been on the council. She is a powerful kahuna, and despite the challenge of her personality, no one doubts she cares deeply for the traditions.

My grandfather likes to remind me once in a while we don't have to like everyone, but it's always best to try to work with people. Even the ones we don't like. It can sometimes make things go smoother. Even after all these years, I still don't know her well, and I still don't like her very much. Lucky for me I'm not a kahuna so I don't have to deal with her often. When I do have to deal with her though, trying is definitely the word.

"No." I was digging in my heels and that was that. I knew they couldn't force me. It was a choice I had to make, and my choice was no.

"You heard it for yourself," said my grandfather looking a smug, which was unusual for him. He usually didn't gloat over things. There must have been an argument about it before Kaponu was sent to wake me.

"Kalei?" this from Eddie, "You know your grandfather taught me everything I know about being a kahuna. It was strange for a full blooded Portuguese man to embrace ancient Hawaiian ways, but it is who, and what, I am. I feel you are the same." He said sincerely.

Eddie Santos is in his 50's with a small round belly and balding head. His wife and kids have been trying for years to get him to stop wearing his hair in the comb over style. He only has about three hairs long enough to cover the top. It just isn't worth the effort. He is a kind man with lightly tanned skin, dark brown eyes, and a hearty laugh. He is intelligent and insightful. He trusted and followed his instincts without hesitation. He is also

full of jokes, all of them, bad. His wife told him if he talked about the chicken crossing the road one more time she would be chasing him across the road with a butcher knife. He is the new leader of the Kahuna Council.

The previous leader had been killed a few months ago, by the council. My grandfather said Lincoln Kala was a good man who made a bad choice and that was all he would say about it.

“Uncle, you are a kahuna, and according to grandpa, a good one, but being a kahuna is not for me.” I said with the stubbornness they expected from me. I called him uncle as it is pretty common to address men and women older than you as uncle and auntie whether or not they are actually related. It’s a sign of respect.

My grandfather shook his head. “I told you guys you were wasting your time.” He said looking satisfied. I felt Uncle Ikaika looking at me again. When he chooses to, he has an intense piercing way of looking at people. He has the ability to look right into and through your soul. He can tell you what he saw when he was done.

“You are kahuna,” he said, “If the time is not now, so be it, but it will be eventually. Your soul sings the chants of the ancient ones. It’s a matter of time.” I shrugged as I didn’t know what else to do. While it is true, I come from a line of kahuna, not everyone in the line is called to it. I honestly believed that if the gods were calling me, they had the wrong number.

“You got me out of bed for this?” I asked cutting my eyes at Kaponu, who immediately wiped the grin from his face.

“No, that’s not all,” said Kaliko.

Great.

I started eating again while waiting for her to continue.

“We are getting messages from the gods.” She said. I thought about the last time I had heard that cryptic response and cringed. I nearly died not long after I heard those words. A repeat performance I did not want.

“You get messages all the time.” I said dismissively taking a big bite of toast.

“It involved you, again.” She said.

“What now?” I asked with my mouth full.

“The messages say someone is looking for you,” she said.

“What for?” I asked soaking up egg yolk with the crust of my toast.

“We’re not really sure, but someone dreamed you were at the Halona Blowhole talking to a green man.” Kaliko said.

“A green man? Was he really tall, jolly, and likes vegetables?” I quipped. She frowned at me.

I knew I was being a smart ass, but I was still recovering from the last time someone dreamed about

me. I was lucky I could recover. The person who had the dream was killed. He went fishing and ended up as fish food. It was a shark attack and his body was never found. He was killed because the gods had chosen him to give me a message. I didn't want someone else to suffer the same fate.

"Who had the dream?" I asked hesitantly. Everyone paused for a second and looked at each other. Ikaika nodded at Kaliko, who sighed and said, "Alika."

"Wonderful." I said.

If you want to read more you can get the book in Paperback or Digital ebook editions from Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

[www.kaibertrand.com](http://www.kaibertrand.com)