

WHAT'S ALOHA

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EXT. DESERT OVERLOOK - EARLY MORNING

A barren ridgeline outside Las Vegas. Jagged rocks. Joshua trees clawing at the sky. The first light of day creeps across the horizon.

MICHAEL JORDAN (late 40s), A former Navy SEAL officer, now co-founder and top-producing Broker Salesperson of a national real estate firm — stands near the edge, hoodie up, alone.

Still. No phone. No earbuds. Just breath.

CLOSE ON his eyes — scanning the horizon like he's still on watch.

FLASH MEMORY - WAR ZONE:

- A different desert. Hotter. Harsher.

- Michael ducks behind a Humvee as dust clouds erupt from mortar fire.

- He yells something we can't hear — muffled in the chaos.

BACK TO PRESENT:

The wind shifts. Michael flinches — subtle but involuntary.

He breathes in. Holds. Breathes out.

Then — he starts jogging.

Not frantic. Not fast. Just steady.

A familiar rhythm. One he's kept for years.

Each stride a choice — to move, to sweat, to stay in control.

A routine that kept him alive overseas. That keeps him grounded now.

CLOSE ON his face: focus. Effort. A man keeping himself together through motion.

The city skyline glimmers in the far distance.

He doesn't stop.

INT. CORPORATE BOARDROOM - DAY

A sleek, glass-walled office high above the Las Vegas Strip.

Michael (composed but distant) presents to a table of sharp-suited executives. He wears success with ease...but not peace.

Behind him, slides flip across a large monitor:

"INTERNATIONAL MARKET EXPANSION - Q3 PROJECTED ACQUISITIONS."

Michael points with a laser. His voice is steady, but his eyes linger a moment too long on the screen.

MICHAEL

...Vegas remains our anchor market,
but the influx of foreign capital
into O'ahu's luxury corridor - we're
talking \$1.2 billion last quarter
alone - makes it a strategic next
move.

He clicks again. Data populates the screen.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But it's not just the money. It's
the lifestyle. Buyers are leaving
Silicon Valley, Hong Kong, Sydney -
not because they have to... but
because they can. They want
sanctuary. Sunlight. Space.

A JUNIOR EXECUTIVE leans over to pass a coffee. A hand jerks, the cup spills - hot liquid splashes Michael's sleeve.

FLASH CUT - WAR ZONE MEMORY

- Blood-soaked hands.
- A cry for a corpsman.
- Dust, gunfire - a downed SEAL grips Michael's arm, eyes wide.

INT. BACK TO BOARDROOM

Michael flinches. A tremor in his hand. His laser pointer drops slightly.

Silence.

One of the SENIOR EXECUTIVES leans forward, concerned.

SENIOR EXECUTIVE

Mike, why don't you take a minute?

Michael nods stiffly, regains composure.

INT. HR EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE - LATER

Michael sits across from a woman in her 50s with kind eyes. The atmosphere is private, calm – a contrast to the boardroom.

She gestures to a digital tablet on the desk.

HR EXECUTIVE

You've given this company everything..

Michael interrupts.

MICHAEL

I'm fine. Just got caught off guard.

HR EXECUTIVE

Come on Michael. You need to rest. Doctor's orders...That's not a request.

Michael signs the tablet. The HR rep taps a key – confirmation sent.

MICHAEL

How long?

HR EXECUTIVE (CONT'D)

Two weeks. Take your pick... anywhere but here.

He exhales. Nods once. Stands and leaves – the decision made, but far from easy.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dim. Still. The glow of the Strip seeps through half-drawn blinds.

Michael stands near a bookshelf. Pulls down a photo album – military-issue leather, edges worn.

He flips through slowly:

- A younger Michael in Navy dress whites beside LT IKAIKA MAHELONA – both grinning, arms slung tight.

- His son, barefoot and beaming, chasing waves at Bellows Beach.

- His wife, sun in her eyes, cradling them both in a half-hug, windblown and wild.

Michael lingers.

Then closes it.

Beneath the album: a folded brochure.

“Rediscover O’ahu – Where Aloha Lives.”

He unfolds it. Sunsets. Waterfalls. Hula hands frozen mid-motion.

Tucked behind the flap – an old newspaper clipping, yellowed but kept:

“LT Ikaika Mahelona Laid to Rest at National Cemetery of the Pacific.”

Michael stares at the headline.

A long breath in.

Then – he opens his laptop.

ON SCREEN: HAWAIIAN AIRLINES – BOOK A FLIGHT

A blinking cursor waits.

He types. Clicks through.

When the final confirmation appears –

ROUNDTrip: LAS → HNL → LAS – CONFIRMED

Michael exhales. Closes the laptop.

Not peace.

But choice.

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Michael finishes the last stretch of a predawn run – breath steady, body loose from effort.

He enters – breath visible in the cold air, sweat at his collar.

Shoes off. Keys down.

In the bedroom, he wipes down. Moves with purpose.

At the dresser:

- A sealed envelope, slightly worn.

Michael picks it up. Slides it into the outer pocket of his carry-on.

The zipper snags. He adjusts. Smooths it out. Closes it.

He folds a shirt, places it neatly in the bag. No hesitation. No excess.

Checks his phone.

ON SCREEN: SUBJECT: MANDATORY STRESS LEAVE CONFIRMATION

FROM: HR Department - Las Vegas HQ

He locks the screen. Doesn't open it.

A final glance around the room.

Then as takes off his sweaty clothes, he heads to the shower.

EXT. LAS VEGAS AIRPORT - DEPARTURES CURB - LATER MORNING

Michael stands beside a black LYFT SUV, duffel over one shoulder. The driver unloads a garment bag and offers a respectful nod before pulling away.

He lingers at the curb.

Sunlight bounces off the terminal glass. Travelers hustle past. Parents wrangle kids. A newlywed couple giggles over matching passport covers.

Michael watches them – amused, briefly.

He smirks.

MICHAEL

(dryly, to himself)

Hope they packed patience... and SPF 90.

He checks his phone. No new messages.

A beat.

He exhales, lifts his bag, and heads inside.

INT. LAS VEGAS AIRPORT - GATE B14 - LATER

Michael sits alone.

Around him:

- A honeymoon couple shares a quiet moment.
- A child clutches a plush turtle.
- A man FaceTimes his grandkids in Hilo.

Michael slowly twists a coffee stirrer between his fingers.

Over the intercom, a cheerful pre-board announcement kicks in. Michael doesn't react — but the child near him suddenly drops their turtle and starts wailing.

Michael leans down, picks it up, and returns it — his face stoic.

MICHAEL

(gently, to the kid)

He's tough. Just got back from deployment.

The kid snuffles. Clutches the turtle tighter.

Michael's hand brushes the outer pocket of his bag — where a sealed envelope still rests... the letter he never mailed.

He gently pats the envelope — a small, human gesture.
Protective.

GATE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Final boarding call for Hawaiian
Airlines Flight 238 to Honolulu.
All passengers, please proceed to
Gate B14.

Michael rises.

Moves toward the gate — not with anticipation, but like
someone reporting for duty.

MONTAGE — HAWAI'I ARRIVAL — DAY

- The open-air breezeways of Honolulu International Airport,
bathed in golden light.
- A local ukulele player strums near a "Welcome to Hawai'i"
sign.
- A child runs into the arms of waiting grandparents.
Laughter echoes.
- An auntie scoops shave ice from a food truck, rainbow
flavors spilling over.
- A surfer boards a city bus — board under one arm, saltwater
still dripping.

INSIDE THE PLANE:

Michael's flight taxis to the gate. He stares out the window
— face unreadable, but taking it all in.

INTERCUT:

- A newlywed couple embraces beneath a rainbow near Diamond
Head.
- Tourists gather around a map kiosk, sunburned and smiling.
- A school marching band plays outside baggage claim — off-
key but proud.

BACK TO:

Michael steps off the jet bridge into the open air.

He stops. Breathes in.

Different air. Different weight. Same silence.

EXT. HAWAII AIRPORT ARRIVALS - DAY

Michael exits the terminal into the dense sunlight and open air.

He slows at the curb. Notices:

- A tourist couple greeted with a flurry of leis and laughter.

- A local uncle struggling with luggage - Maile, in the distance, casually helps him load a cart.

Michael watches, unnoticed.

He steps into the rideshare line.

A LYFT vehicle pulls up. The driver waves. Michael hesitates.

Then gets in.

Behind him, families reunite. Kids eat malasadas. A taxi honks. Life moves.

But Michael just sits in the back seat, looking out the window.

A visitor with history.

INT. ARCHITECTURE FIRM - DOWNTOWN HONOLULU - DAY

MAILE KAIWIKI, 30s, Native Hawaiian, thoughtful behind the wheel - beauty grounded by purpose - stands at her desk - still, surrounded by motion.

Whiteboards full of coastal luxury projects.

Team meetings buzzing.

A slide deck up on a screen: "Phase II: Beachfront Spa Expansion - Maui."

She stares at her monitor. It reflects her face, but she looks far away.

MALE COLLEAGUE (O.S.)

You're still in for Friday's site visit, yeah?

Maile snaps back.

MAILE

Actually...

Margo (50s, polished, driven) politely interjects.

MARGO

Hey Maile, can I talk to you in my
office for a minute?

Maile nods and follows.

INT. SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Glass walls. A stunning view of the ocean.

Margo, now behind her desk, looks up from her laptop as Maile enters.

MARGO

I read your email.

A beat.

MARGO (CONT'D)

"Time to design something
different." That's a bold line.

Maile exhales.

MAILE

I wanted this job since I was
nineteen.

A beat.

MAILE (CONT'D)

I finished school. Got licensed.
Passed everything. I earned this.

Margo softens.

MAILE (CONT'D)

But something's missing.

Margo glances at the resignation email again. She understands.

MARGO

You're talented. You know that,
right?

MAILE

I do. But I'm not fulfilled.

Maile glances at the ocean view behind Margo's desk.

MAILE (CONT'D)

Not by beachfront spas or infinity
pools for people flying in from
everywhere but here.

A beat.

MAILE (CONT'D)

I need to live aloha. Not just
design it.

They lock eyes. Respect — and truth — in the silence.

MARGO

Leave the door open behind you.
Just in case.

Maile nods. Breathes. A quiet, heavy exhale.

INT. FIRM - LATER

Maile walks out, box in hand.

Inside:

- A potted plumeria cutting
- Her favorite sketchbook
- A photo of her and her mom, arms wrapped tight, beaming
outside her UH graduation

She steps through the glass doors and into the light.

Outside, the street hums.

Inside, her chair sits empty.

She doesn't look back.

EXT. HONOLULU STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

Maile drives in silence, elbow propped on the window.

Warm trade winds drift through the open glass.

On the passenger seat: a cardboard box of office belongings.

Tucked inside – a plumeria cutting, her sketchbook, and a graduation photo with her mother.

The city rushes by, blurred and buzzing:

- A tour group lines up outside a shrimp truck, snapping selfies.

- A "COMING SOON: LUXURY LIVING" banner stretches across a crumbling warehouse.

- Cranes swing above newly framed condo towers.

She slows at a red light.

Across the intersection – a mural:

Queen Lili'uokalani, rendered in blues and greens, regal and serene.

Waves curl around her. Hands folded in quiet power.

Her gaze – calm. Knowing. Watching.

Maile stares at her. The noise fades.

The mural seems to breathe – still and powerful.

MAILE
(softly)
I'm doing it, Mom.

The light turns green.

She inhales – deep, steady.

Then drives forward.

A new life – just ahead.

EXT. FOODLAND - ALA MOANA CENTER - EARLY AFTERNOON

Trade winds ruffle reusable bags and sunhats. Locals move with ease; visitors try to keep up.

Maile exits with a lunch bag and bottle of water. She looks like someone carrying more than groceries – her office badge still clipped to her tote.

She heads toward her car, lost in thought.

Just ahead – Michael, athletic and unbothered in board shorts and a tee, a Hale Koa keycard looped through one finger.

They nearly brush shoulders.

MICHAEL

Sorry about that–

They both stop. Eye contact.

Something lingers – recognition not of faces, but of energy.

MAILE

You're good.

MICHAEL

I usually walk into traffic, not people.

A brief smile from her. Then a beat.

MAILE

You visiting?

MICHAEL

Vegas. Here for a reset, I guess.

She nods. Looks him over again – nothing flashy, but present.

MAILE

Real estate?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Something like that.

MAILE

That why you're here? Scouting resorts?

MICHAEL

Nah. Just trying to breathe.

That hits for her — not in a dramatic way, but enough to pause.

MAILE

Well. Good luck breathing.

She heads off, but glances back once — just for a second.

Michael watches her go. Then enters the store.

EXT. KAIMUKĪ NEIGHBORHOOD - LATE AFTERNOON

Maile turns onto the street she's called home for the past two years.

Her usual parking spot is taken — a lifted Tacoma, not Kainoa's, just one of his friends. The kind of thing he always brushed off.

She pulls up halfway down the block. Parks. Exhales.

INT. MAILE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She rests her hand on the office box in the passenger seat — her sketchbook, the plumeria cutting, the photo with her mom.

A quiet pause.

Then — she opens the door.

EXT. KAINOA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

She walks toward the house.

Through the screen door:

KAINOA (30s, good-looking in that effortless, island-cool way — surfer build, easy charm) is gaming on the couch, headset on, flanked by two friends.

Energy drinks and empty takeout boxes litter the table.

They don't notice her.

INT. KAINOA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She steps inside. No greeting.

The room hums with game sounds and button clicks.

Maile walks past them, silent, down the hallway.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She gathers what's left:

A duffel bag. A worn jacket.

A few books from the nightstand.

A framed photo of her and Kainoa. She studies it - then sets it facedown.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maile reappears, bag over her shoulder.

As she opens the front door, a book falls -

KAINOA

Yo, that's cap - I carried that round.

(beat)

Babe... where you going?

Maile pauses in the doorway, picks up the book.
Turns back just enough to say-

MAILE

Bye, Kainoa.

She steps outside.

EXT. KAINOA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The door shuts behind her.

Quiet. Final.

She walks to her car. Duffel over her shoulder.

She doesn't look back.

EXT. AUNTY NOELANI'S HOUSE - MĀNOA VALLEY - EVENING

Nestled in the green folds of Mānoa, the house is humble, lived-in, and full of warmth.

Potted ti plants line the porch. Slippers rest by the front door. A porch light flickers on with the falling dusk.

Maile pulls into the driveway.

FLASHBACK - EARLIER THAT DAY

INT. KAINOA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Maile zips a duffel. Grabs her sketchbook.
Pauses at the framed photo of her and Kainoa.
Turns it facedown.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She crosses behind Kainoa and his friends — gaming, shouting, laughing.
No one notices.

KAINOA

Babe... where you going?

She pauses at the door.
Turns back just enough to say—

MAILE

Bye, Kainoa.

BACK TO PRESENT:

EXT. AUNTY NOELANI'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Maile steps out slowly, shoulders the duffel, sketchbook under one arm, office box in hand.

The screen door creaks open before she can knock. Standing there is **AUNTY NOELANI** (60s, Hawai'i-raised and no-nonsense, with a heart as big as her mouth and eyes that miss nothing).

AUNTY NOELANI

Was wondering when you'd come.

Maile swallows the lump in her throat.

MAILE

I wasn't sure if—

AUNTY NOELANI

Hush. You hungry?

Maile nods.

AUNTY NOELANI (CONT'D)

Then come. We eat. Then you sleep.
Talk story tomorrow.

Maile steps inside.
The door closes gently behind her – but firm enough to say:
You're home now.

EXT. WAIKĪKĪ – EARLY MORNING

Michael's first day back on the island, walks alone along the beach path waiting for his room at the Hale Koa to be ready –

He exits the hotel in tailored slacks, leather shoes, and a crisp button-down – sharp, but out of place.

Local families and hotel guests pass by in slippers and boardshorts.

A LOCAL UNCLE (60s, relaxed) nods as he strolls past in faded surf shorts and rubber slippers.

Michael nods back, polite but stiff.

He adjusts his collar and keeps walking.

He's out of place in a collared shirt and slacks. Tourists jog past in aloha wear and flip-flops.

He finally stops.

Ahead: a bronze statue of Duke Kahanamoku, draped in fresh leis.

Children take pictures. A local uncle quietly sweeps leaves from the base.

Michael watches. He doesn't know the full story – but something in the image humbles him.

He sits on a shaded bench facing the ocean.

From his coat pocket, he pulls out the envelope.

Still sealed. Still unsent.

He looks out at the surf – calm but endless.

And for the first time since landing, Michael lets himself feel the weight of it all.

He doesn't cry. He just breathes — like the island is reminding him how.

INT. HALE KOA HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

A quiet hum of vacationers checking in. Military families. Veterans in caps. Kids running toward the gift shop.

Michael enters outdoor lobby — instantly still.

This place isn't just a hotel. It's a memory.

He looks around:

- A wall of military portraits.
- A bronze plaque honoring fallen service members.
- A quiet flag gently lit in the corner.

INT. HALE KOA HOTEL LOBBY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A younger MICHAEL — crisp in uniform — walks hand-in-hand with his wife and young son through the sunlit lobby.

Laughter. The kind that fills your chest.

His SON breaks into a playful sprint — full of life, energy, joy.

From the other side of the lobby —
LT IKAIKA MAHELONA strides into frame. Late 30s, Polynesian, confident and warm-hearted with a magnetic grin.

He claps Michael on the shoulder — teasing him in smooth, local **pidgin**.

LT IKAIKA

(chuckling)

Ho, Brah — look at you. Pressed
like one parade float! You tryin'
win Most Handsome or what?

Michael laughs, rolling his eyes.

YOUNG MICHAEL

Tryin' keep up with you, bro.

Their easy brotherhood — undeniable.

The four of them — a moment frozen in time.

BACK TO PRESENT

INT. HALE KOA HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Michael blinks — memory fading.

He's back in the quiet, polished lobby.

A polite young woman in a blue Aloha shirt stands at the **front desk**, smiling.

CLERK

Aloha, Mr. Jordan. Welcome back to the Hale Koa.

MICHAEL

Yeah. It's been a while.

She checks the screen.

CLERK

You're in the same wing as before. Ocean view ya?

Michael nods, grateful for the continuity.

He signs the form and takes the key card.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Let us know if there's anything you need.

MICHAEL

Thanks. Just... peace and quiet.

He turns to walk away — but stops near the lobby's memorial plaque.

Runs a finger lightly over a name: LT Ikaika Mahelona.

Michael lingers.

A silent nod. A weight acknowledged.

Then —

CLERK

Oh — heads up, sir. We have these fliers for the new VA clinic opened out in Kapolei.

I've heard good things. State-of-the-art.

MICHAEL

(softly, surprised)

Hmmm

Michael nods, files that away, and takes the flier.

Then he walks on — carrying both memory and silence.

INT. AUNTY NOELANI'S KITCHEN — MORNING

Sunlight filters through woven bamboo blinds. Birds chirp outside. The scent of papaya and fresh coffee fills the air.

Maile stands at the kitchen counter, barefoot, hair pulled back. She flips through an old sketchbook — the pages soft at the edges.

Inside:

- Hand-drawn floorplans for modest homes.
- Notes in pencil: "ohana-ready," "stacked storage," "adaptable for rain."
- A clipped headline: "Luxury Development Approved — Residents Push Back."

Behind her, Aunty Noelani slices papaya with calm precision. She glances at Maile — and the silence around her — before speaking gently:

AUNTY NOELANI

That boy let you walk out with all your things?

Maile doesn't look up.
Just a quiet nod.

MAILE

He didn't even look up from his game.

A beat.

MAILE (CONT'D)

I left the job too.

Now Aunty stops slicing. Turns fully to her.

AUNTY NOELANI

You cleared the whole table.

Maile half-smiles — tired, but honest.

MAILE

It was all noise.
None of it felt like mine anymore.

Aunty plates a half-papaya.
Sets it in front of her, matter-of-fact.

AUNTY NOELANI

You're not the only one that
forgets who they are out there.

(beat)
Good thing this house remembers.

Maile finally looks at her. The tightness in her jaw eases.

MAILE

I didn't know where else to go.

Aunty shrugs.

AUNTY NOELANI

You didn't need to.
This is home.

(beat)
Your mama's aloha still lives in these walls.
You just needed to come back and feel it again.

They hold each other's eyes. A moment of quiet recognition.

AUNTY NOELANI (CONT'D)

Now eat. Then go sleep.
You look like you've been fighting
ghosts.

Maile picks up her fork.
Softly, like a ritual:

MAILE

Mahalo, Aunty.

She takes a bite. Exhales.
Outside, the valley mist lifts.

EXT. DANIEL K. AKAKA VA CLINIC - KAPOLEI - DAY

Modern, clean lines. The new facility gleams under the West O'ahu sun.

A Lyft slows to a stop at the curb.

Michael steps out.

He thanks the driver with a nod, then watches the car pull away.

He stands for a beat — surveying the building.

Not quite sure why he's here, but here all the same.

INT. VA LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Inside: a mural honoring Hawai'i's service members.

Veterans wait patiently. Some chat quietly near a coffee station.

Michael scans the room like it's familiar but distant. He approaches the front desk.

MICHAEL

Just stopping by.

Wanted to check out the new setup —
maybe grab some vitamin M if I can.

RECEPTIONIST

(smiles)

You can get Motrin at the second
window to your left, Commander. And
welcome back.

Michael nods, steps away.

VOICE (O.S.)

Well I'll be damned. MJ?

Michael turns.

DARIUS WASHINGTON (late 40s to early 50s, African-American, retired E-8, relaxed but sharp) approaches, wearing a faded Army tee and local-style slippers. He breaks into a grin and opens his arms.

DARIUS

Lieutenant Commander Michael
Jordan.

Same name, but can't hoop to save
your life! Still looking like you
left the Pentagon yesterday.

MICHAEL

(smirks)

First Sergeant Darius Washington.
Still got jokes...

Didn't figure you for VA strolls.

DARIUS

Easy, Commander — I stayed a Master
Sergeant.

Didn't want to babysit paperwork...
or grown men's drama.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Wife made me come. Something about
"aging gracefully." I said I'd
rather age loudly.

They laugh. Clap hands in a half-hug — the kind built on
shared deployments and near-misses.

MICHAEL

You stayed.

DARIUS

Yeah. Married a local girl,
remember? Built a life out here.
Couldn't leave even if I tried —
her cousins would find me.

MICHAEL

(Knowingly smiles)

Respect.

DARIUS

You just visiting or hiding?

Michael shrugs.

MICHAEL

Doctor called it "mandatory R&R."
We'll see... Figured I'd cruise a
bit. Didn't expect to run into a
relic.

DARIUS

(grins)

Let me buy you lunch before you
offend another Vet.

Michael chuckles — the first genuine laugh in days.

MICHAEL

I'm in. You driving?

DARIUS

You still hate island traffic?

MICHAEL

With a passion.

Darius gestures to Michael's still-pristine slacks.

DARIUS

(grinning, mock-serious)

You brought slacks to Kapolei? Must
really be in denial.

They exit together – a sense of groundedness beginning to return.

EXT. COMMUNITY LOT - WAIALUA - AFTERNOON

Red dirt. Overgrown grass. An old construction trailer covered in graffiti.

The land is quiet now – but it could be something.

Maile parks her car at the edge of the lot and steps out, sketchbook in hand.

She walks the perimeter, eyes scanning – not just seeing, but imagining.

- Modular homes lined with native plants.
- Open-air gathering space.
- Kids playing where dust now settles.

She kneels. Runs her hand through the soil.

FLASH MEMORY:

A younger Maile, fresh out of college, stands proudly on this lot in a hard hat, animatedly explaining her first design concept to skeptical investors.

Behind her, her mother, wrapped in a lightweight scarf despite the warm sun, watches silently – tired but proud.

Her hand rests gently on Maile's back for strength... and maybe to borrow some, too.

The wind picks up. The murmur of tools.

Maile's mother tucks stray hair beneath her wrap – smile radiant, eyes quietly weary.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Silence again.

Maile wipes her eyes. Flips open the sketchbook.

Pencil to page. Ideas flow again.

She scrawls a title at the top:

"Real Homes. For Real People."

Behind her, a VOICE calls out.

AUNTY NOELANI (O.S.)

You always come here when your
heart's full or empty?

Maile turns. Aunty stands beside a pickup, arms crossed.

MAILE

Both. Today it's both.

AUNTY NOELANI

Good. That means you're alive.

She tosses Maile a bag of malasadas.

AUNTY NOELANI (CONT'D)

Eat. Then draw. We've got work to
do.

They sit on the truck bed, malasadas in hand, ideas between
them.

Hope in the dust. A plan taking shape.

EXT. NATIONAL MEMORIAL CEMETERY OF THE PACIFIC (PUNCHBOWL) -
LATE AFTERNOON

Golden hour.

A wide view of the solemn grounds — rows of headstones ripple
across the landscape like quiet waves.

Michael walks slowly along a paved pathway.

In his hand: a single plumeria bloom.

He stops a respectful distance away from one headstone. Reads
it from afar.

MICHAEL

LT IKAIKA MAHELONA. U.S. NAVY.
Beloved Son, Friend, Warrior of the
Pacific.

Michael doesn't approach directly.

Instead, he remains on the path – back straight, hands folded.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Still keeping me in check, huh?

A pause.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I made it back. Don't know what I'm doing here yet... But I'm here.

The wind stirs the trees. Flags flutter in perfect silence.

FLASH MEMORY:

- Michael, Ikaika, and Darius on base, laughing over lunch trays.

- Ikaika offering advice after Michael gets a call – unseen but heavy.

- Michael clutching a sealed envelope. Ikaika putting a hand on his shoulder.

BACK TO PRESENT:

Michael steps to the side of the path, places the plumeria at the edge of the grass – not intruding, just remembering.

He lingers for a moment. No tears. Just breath.

Then he walks back toward the exit – steady, but not the same man who arrived.

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Lush greenery. Rows of kalo (taro), ti leaves, and native herbs line a modest garden plot tucked behind a community center.

Maile walks alongside Aunty Noelani, who carries a bucket of compost. Chickens cluck nearby.

Other locals tend the beds:

- A teenager pulls weeds with headphones in.

- An elder auntie hums a mele as she waters young plants.

- A father shows his toddler how to pat the soil.

AUNTY NOELANI

When we talk about feeding the
people... It's not just food. It's
identity.

Maile stops at an empty plot.

MAILE

This one's open?

AUNTY NOELANI

It's yours. Been waiting.

Maile kneels, runs her fingers through the soil. Rich. Ready.

MAILE

I used to draft land like this from
a desk on the 30th floor.

AUNTY NOELANI

Now you feel it. Different kind of
blueprint, yeah?

MAILE

One you can live in.

Maile smiles. A beat of clarity.

Behind them, a child hands her a small plant in a repurposed
Spam can.

Maile gently sets it in the earth. Covers the roots.

AUNTY NOELANI

This is where Aloha lives. Not in
brochures. Not in high rises. Here
— where hands touch hands.

Maile looks up. Breathes in.

She exhales. The soil still on her hands.

Not cleaned off. Just... accepted.

EXT. KAPI'OLANI PARK - DAWN

A soft gray stillness blankets the park. Banyan trees sway gently. The scent of salt and plumeria hangs in the air.

Michael jogs the outer loop path — steady, focused. Not chasing time, just chasing breath.

Near a cluster of monkeypod trees, he slows at a public fitness zone — simple but sturdy:

- Pull-up bars.
- Parallel bars.
- A push-up station with worn grips.

He nods to an early riser stretching on a nearby bench. The other man nods back — the quiet exchange of regulars.

Michael drops into motion.

- Push-ups. Slow. Clean. Controlled.
- Dips on the parallel bars. Shoulders steady.
- Pull-ups. Grit in his breath. Back taut with effort.

Every rep grounded — not performative, just purposeful.

CLOSE ON his hands — gripping the bar. Callused. Committed.

Nearby, a younger man watches, impressed. Michael doesn't notice.

He finishes, breath heavy but even.

Walks to a bench facing Diamond Head. Pulls a water bottle from his side pouch.

CLOSE ON the koa keychain — clipped to the strap, swaying slightly.

He takes a long sip. Wipes sweat with a towel.

Sits. For just a beat.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

(low, even)

Still here. Still moving.

He stands.

Jogging again – looping back toward the sunrise.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUNSET BEACH PARK - EARLY EVENING

The golden light begins to fade. A calm hush falls over the shoreline.

Families gather for pau hana. Keiki run barefoot through the sand. Someone strums a ukulele in the distance.

Maile stands barefoot near the edge of the beach park.

Her hands are dusty from the garden, her sketchbook tucked under her arm.

She watches aunties and uncles set up laulau trays and folding tables under a canopy – a small community dinner beginning.

Across the park – not far but not close – Michael walks the perimeter of the beach, hands in pockets, taking it in.

He's not ready to join. Not yet.

He sees the gathering, nods respectfully to the older folks, and sits on a nearby bench facing the ocean.

Maile, unaware of him, lifts her sketchbook and begins to draw again – this time without hesitation.

Michael, unaware of her, pulls the sealed envelope from his pocket – the one we glimpsed earlier – and just holds it.

A gust of wind brushes past.

Michael closes his eyes. Lets the breeze hit him. Not peace, but permission.

CUT TO:

WIDE SHOT – Michael and Maile, opposite ends of the same frame.

Separated by space.

United by something quieter.

Two souls, still healing.

Still searching.

Almost ready.

As the sun slips behind the horizon, the screen fades to black.

TITLE CARD: WHAT'S ALOHA

INT. KAKA'AKO CAFE - LUNCH HOUR

Trendy but low-key. Exposed concrete, local art, the clatter of silverware.

Maile sips an iced coffee, her resignation still sinking in.

JESSE (30s, gay, sharp-witted, loyal) plops down across from her, still in firm-branded polo. He sets a musubi on the table.

JESSE

I swiped this from the intern fridge. Consider it severance.

MAILE (SMIRKING)

You're gonna get yourself fired.

JESSE

Girl... that might be the dream.

She studies him — not joking.

MAILE

You thinking about it?

JESSE

Let's just say — your exit lit a few light bulbs.

(pauses)

They wanted me to pitch that new luxury thing on Kaua'i. Said I bring "cultural flair."

MAILE

Gross.

JESSE

Right? I told them my flair is reserved for liberation only.

They laugh, then fall into a familiar quiet.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I'm proud of you, Maile. Takes guts to walk.

MAILE

Still waiting for the brave part to kick in.

JESSE

It already did.

He raises his coffee. She raises hers.

JESSE (CONT'D)

To building something real.

They clink. A friendship recalibrated. A future unwritten.

EXT. HALE KOA HOTEL - POOLSIDE BAR - NIGHT

Soft torchlight flickers. Local music plays gently from a speaker nearby.

Michael sits at the bar, sipping a club soda. No phone. No laptop. Just presence.

Nearby, a couple debates zipline tours. A group of sailors celebrates loudly. Michael watches it all — detached but alert.

Then — a familiar voice:

DARIUS (O.S.)

You always order drinks like you're undercover?

MICHAEL

Old habits. Hard to drop.

Darius slides onto the next stool, sipping a Longboard Lager.

DARIUS

That's why I switched to beer.
Keeps me honest.

They share a beat — relaxed silence.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

So. You gonna pretend this is a
vacation, or admit you're running?

MICHAEL

I buried a son.
And a friend.

My job feels like a warzone in a
suit.
And I haven't opened a letter I
wrote... years ago.

DARIUS

Heavy.
(beat)

We buried a friend.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

Darius signals the bartender for another. Michael just
exhales.

DARIUS

This island doesn't fix you.
But it'll strip you down till you
figure out what matters.

Michael nods.

MICHAEL

That's what scares me.

They clink glasses – lightly.

DARIUS

Also – Navy guy hiding out at an
Army hotel?
Ballsy.

Michael smirks.

MICHAEL

At least the beer's cold.
And the Army's finally good for
something.

Darius laughs, shakes his head.

DARIUS

Don't let the front desk hear that.
(beat)

You still got tomorrow morning
free?

MICHAEL

I guess.

DARIUS

Come down to the booth. Food pantry
run. Light lifting. Good people.
No speeches. No name tags.

Michael considers, then nods.

MICHAEL

You voluntelling me?

DARIUS

Nah. Just giving you something to
carry that won't break you.

MICHAEL

All right. I'll show up.

DARIUS

Start there.

They sip in silence. The night hums around them.

EXT. KAILUA BEACH - DAY

Sunlight dances on turquoise water. The beach is quiet, peaceful.

Maile and Jesse walk barefoot near the shoreline, shoes in hand.

JESSE

You know, most people quit their
job after they have another one
lined up.

MAILE

Yeah, well...

most people don't feel like their
soul's on the clearance rack.

JESSE

Touché.

They walk a few beats in silence. A small wave splashes
Jesse's foot.

JESSE (CONT'D)

I get it though. You had to stop
pretending it still meant
something.

MAILE

It used to. Before it became luxury
condos for ghost investors.

JESSE

And now?

MAILE

Now... I want to design something
people can actually live in.

Something that helps them stay here.

JESSE

Sounds... wildly unprofitable. But noble.

She laughs – real this time.

MAILE

You're such a jerk.

JESSE

A supportive jerk.

They stop, gazing out at the horizon.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Whatever you build next – just promise it's yours. Unapologetically.

She nods.

MAILE

Deal.

EXT. BEACHFRONT SHACK - DAY

A simple pop-up near the shoreline. Nothing flashy – just a folding table, collapsible chairs, a shade canopy, and a clean whiteboard sign in bold marker:

"Affordable Design Help – Saturdays with Maile"

Maile sets out her tablet, stylus, solar-powered charger, and a few laminated resource guides.

Aunty Noelani places a thermos and a reusable container of sliced fruit on the table.

AUNTY NOELANI

You sure this is what architects do now?

MAILE (SMILING)

If not, I'm redefining the job description.

A local couple approaches – young, tired, hopeful.

YOUNG WOMAN

We heard you help people with home stuff?

MAILE

I can walk you through options.

Let's start with what land you've got – or hope to get.

They sit. Maile opens her tablet, begins sketching with her stylus – fast, fluid, practiced.

AUNTY NOELANI
(quietly, watching)

Your mother would love this.
You're not just drawing...you're listening.

Maile glances up. Nods. Keeps drawing.

The camera pulls back – Maile in her element, surrounded by island breeze and honest intention.

EXT. POP-UP CAFE – HONOLULU – LATE AFTERNOON

Maile and Jesse stand barefoot in line, still sandy from the beach. A food truck hums behind them, island music playing softly.

Across the street, MICHAEL unloads donation boxes at a community booth. He pauses to help an elderly woman fix the wheel on her cart.

JESSE

Is that sexy Mainland from Foodland?

Maile suppresses a smile.

MAILE

Michael. He said he's in real estate. Vegas.

JESSE

Mmm. Real estate with farmer's
market arms. Not bad.

Maile rolls her eyes, but her gaze lingers.

JESSE (CONT'D)

You sure that was just one run-in?

MAILE

It was. Grocery store. That's it.

JESSE

Uh-huh. And now we're just
happening to spot him doing
community service in soft lighting?

They both glance across the street — Michael gently hands a
child a fresh snack pack.

JESSE (CONT'D)

That man's got quiet energy. Like,
fix-your-sink-and-leave-before-
sunrise vibes.

MAILE

You don't even know him.

JESSE

True. But I know a good side
profile when I see one.

A beat. Maile hides her grin.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Girl. That wasn't just a look.

Maile laughs despite herself. Their food order is called.
They head off together — but Maile glances back once more.

INT. AUNTY NOELANI'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The table is full — laulau, poke, lomi salmon, rice. Laughter
floats through the air.

Maile sits between Aunty Noelani and Jesse, who's mid-story with chopsticks waving.

JESSE

So I told him, "Honey, if you can't pronounce lomi lomi, you definitely can't handle it."

The table erupts. Laughter, head shakes. Jesse bows dramatically.

AUNTY NOELANI

You always bring the good energy, Jesse.

JESSE

It's a burden I bear with grace.

Maile chuckles, more relaxed than we've seen her in days. She soaks in the moment — the food, the rhythm, the warmth of it all.

Jesse spots the worn sketchbook beside Maile's plate.

JESSE (CONT'D)

Please tell me that means what I think it means.

MAILE

Maybe.

JESSE

Girl. Just say it. You're designing again.

Maile shrugs, but there's a spark in her eyes.

MAILE

Just playing with ideas. That's all.

AUNTY NOELANI

Good. That's where all the best ones start.

A quiet beat. Maile looks down at her hands – then around the table – like she's grounding herself.

JESSE

Whatever it is, you know I'm here
for it.

Maile gives a small, grateful nod.

AUNTY NOELANI

Same. You got ohana on both sides
of that sketchbook.

They clink glasses – water, tea, wine. No toast needed.

Maile looks around once more – this time, truly seeing it:
home, belonging, aloha.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT - BALCONY

Quiet. Dim. The balcony door is open. Breeze moves the
curtains gently.

Michael sits at the small desk. The sealed envelope is in
front of him – same one from earlier.

He picks it up. Turns it over. Starts to open it.

FLASHBACK - INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Michael kneels beside a hospital bed, holding his young son's
hand – around 9 or 10 years old, pale but alert.

MICHAEL

I'll carry you in everything I do.

No matter where I go, you're with
me.

His son looks up at him, a faint smile beneath tired eyes.

MICHAEL'S SON

Then don't stop going.

BACK TO PRESENT - BALCONY

Michael lowers the envelope. Breath caught. He doesn't open
it.

He exhales. Closes his eyes.

The ocean breeze lifts the corner of the envelope slightly – just enough to flutter.

But it stays sealed.

A long moment.

Michael gently slides the envelope beneath a closed notebook. Then sits still, staring out into the night.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - KE OLA WORKSHOP - MORNING

A worn but vibrant building near the shoreline. Children laugh in the background. A painted sign reads:

"Ke Ola Workshop - Housing Talk & Design Session"

Maile stands before a small group seated under a tent canopy.

Local families. Kupuna. Parents holding infants. A few teenagers in school shirts.

She clicks through a basic slideshow on a portable screen – sketches, sample floor plans, modular homes adapted for multigenerational use.

MAILE

These aren't dream homes.

They're homes you can dream in.

Real space, real land, for real families.

She gestures to her tablet, where she live-sketches one idea.

A hand goes up – an older UNCLE in a wheelchair.

UNCLE HUGO

So what's the catch?

MAILE

The catch is that we stop waiting for someone else to fix this. We design smarter. Build smaller. Work together.

MAILE (CONT'D)

I'm not running the show — I'm just helping organize.

We're all in this together.

Soft applause. Someone nods. Someone wipes an eye.

Aunty Noelani watches from the back — proud but quiet.

A child toddles up beside Maile, peeking at her sketches. She gently taps the screen for him.

As Maile continues, we see it:

She's not just talking.

She's leading.

EXT. FARMERS MARKET - DAY

Rows of colorful tents buzz with life. Ukulele music drifts from a speaker. The scent of grilled fish, sugarcane, and plumeria floats in the warm air.

MICHAEL moves stiffly through the crowd — overdressed in slacks and a tucked-in button-up. Sunglasses perched just-so. Sweat beads on his forehead.

He's clearly trying not to look like a mainlander...

And failing.

A HONEY VENDOR (50s, Native Hawaiian) eyes him, amused.

HONEY VENDOR

You lost, braddah — or just melting?

MICHAEL

Just browsing.
(beat)
Been a while since I was back.

HONEY VENDOR

Ahh, one of those.
(grins)
Well then — welcome home.

He hands Michael a sample spoon.

Michael fumbles – sticky honey lands right on his sleeve.

MICHAEL
(sighs)
Perfect. Tactical syrup.

Nearby, MAILE watches from behind a woodcraft booth. She sips coconut water, amused.

WOODWORKER

Friend of yours?

MAILE

Nope. But he's definitely not from
around here.

Michael tries wiping the honey with a napkin – it shreds.
He leans, accidentally nudges a stack of bamboo coasters.

The vendor catches them just in time.

HONEY VENDOR

Careful now. This place'll humble
you quick.

MICHAEL

Gravity works different in
paradise.

He forces a polite smile.
Catches Maile's eyes – just for a beat.

She looks away, hiding a smirk.

Michael samples the honey, nods his thanks, and begins to
move on – mildly humiliated, but holding composure.

Maile watches. Curious. Just a little entertained.

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON

The market is winding down. Vendors pack up. A trade wind
rustles the palm fronds overhead.

MICHAEL walks toward his rental car, still holding a half-
melted shave ice. His shirt sticks to his back. Collar
wilted.

He drops his keys. Bends to pick them up –
His sunglasses skid across the pavement.
A hand scoops them up before he can.

MAILE (O.S.)

Careful – you're running out of
accessories.

MICHAEL
(glancing up)

You again.

MAILE

Didn't think I'd see you still
upright after that honey incident.

MICHAEL

Sticky situations build character.

MAILE

So does dressing for the weather.

She eyes his sweaty shirt. He shrugs, mock-defeated.

MICHAEL

I came prepared. Just... not
appropriately.

MAILE

Happens to the best of us.
(beat)
Usually tourists, though.

MICHAEL

Not a tourist. Just a slow re-
entry.

She studies him. He holds her gaze this time – no sunglasses
to hide behind.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Michael.

MAILE

I remember.
(beat)

Maile.

They shake hands again — more casual now. A flicker of a smile from both.

MAILE (CONT'D)
(staring at his hand)

Still a little sticky?

MICHAEL

Down to 30% sugar content. That's progress.

She grins.

MAILE

Well... at least you're cooling off.

She nods to the shave ice in his hand.

MICHAEL

Trying to blend in.

MAILE

You might need a little more than food coloring and ice.

She starts to head toward her car.

MICHAEL

If I promised to dress weather-appropriate...
How's next Saturday?

She stops. Turns slightly.

MAILE

We'll see if you've acclimated by then.

She smiles — then walks off, braid swinging, keys jingling.

Michael watches her go.

Not love. Not yet.
But definitely intrigued.
And maybe... hopeful.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Golden hour light filters through the lanai. Outside, faint sounds of waves and distant laughter drift in.

MICHAEL steps in and shuts the door behind him.

He peels off his soaked dress shirt and tosses it toward the bathroom – misses completely.

He sighs, then opens the closet.

Inside:

- A row of neatly pressed polos, slacks, and dress shoes.
- Beside them: a folded stack of local-style tees and board shorts, tags still on.

He hesitates.

Reaches past the polos and picks up a soft, faded shirt:

"Support Local Farmers" – vibrant green, printed with a cartoon kalo plant.

MICHAEL

reading the shirt, dryly

Support... local... farmers.

He holds it up against himself, then walks to the mirror.

Checks his reflection.

Tilts his head.

Raises an eyebrow.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Not... terrible.

He throws it on. It hangs just a little too loose.

He tugs the sleeves, considers it again.

Then — grabs his sunglasses and tries a “casual” pose.
Fails. Chuckles to himself. Shakes his head.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(smirking)

Yeah, no. One shirt at a time.
He tosses it onto the bed — still a maybe.
Then walks to the nightstand. Opens the drawer.
The sealed envelope sits inside. He picks it up.
Turns it over. Again.
Long beat.
Then, gently, he slides it beneath a book.
Not throwing it away. Not yet.
But lowering the volume of the past.
He exhales, walks out to the lanai.
The view: a soft twilight settling over Diamond Head.
Michael leans on the rail, barefoot now.
The local tee still sitting on the bed behind him.

EXT. SECLUDED BEACHFRONT - NIGHT

The beach glows under a half-moon. A gentle tide hushes the background.
Michael walks slowly along the edge of the sand, barefoot now, slacks rolled up. Still in a collared shirt — untucked — but it's progress.
He stops near the edge of the property, where a small plaque sits:
“Dedicated to Those Who Served and Remembered Aloha.”
He reads it. Then looks out toward the ocean.
Nearby, a group of local teens jokes around, tossing a football. Barefoot. Joyful. Effortless.
Michael watches them a moment, unseen.

A moment passes.

He steps out — just enough to let the ocean touch his feet.

He breathes in.

Watches the water roll in. Then out.

Back.

Then out.

INT. MAILE'S ROOM - NIGHT

A softly lit room. Simple. Peaceful. A desk. Some folded architectural drawings. A faded lei hangs near a picture frame on the wall.

Maile sits cross-legged on her bed, hair damp from a shower. She's reviewing notes from the community workshop, scribbling thoughts in a notepad.

She stops. Looks up.

Her eyes drift to the photo:

Maile, in her graduation gown, arm around her mother — bald under a hat, eyes shining.

Maile crosses to it.

Touches the frame.

MAILE

(softly)

I think I'm finally building
something... worth it.

She sits back on the bed, notebook in hand.

She sketches something — not for work, not for a client.

A tiny home. Rain catch system. Solar grid. Garden bed.

A place someone could live.

A place her mom might have smiled at.

Maile stares at it a moment.

Then, like muscle memory — she reaches for her phone.

Stops herself.

She smiles instead.

EXT. SHAVE ICE STAND - SIDE TABLE - AFTERNOON

A quieter spot near the market.

Michael and Maile sit at a shaded picnic table with their shave ice.

The crowd hums in the background.

They've relaxed slightly - Michael in a more casual shirt, Maile sipping slowly.

MAILE

(gesturing with her spoon)

So - you came here to pause.

You think it's working?

MICHAEL

Maybe. Some days.

(beat)

This place... has a way of asking questions

I don't have answers to.

MAILE

Or answers you're finally willing to hear.

Michael studies her. Respect. Curiosity.

MICHAEL

You always speak in riddles?

MAILE

Only when I'm being honest.

They both smile - gently.

Maile sets down her cup and reaches into her bag.

She pulls out a folded slip of paper. Sketch lines across one side.

MAILE (CONT'D)

Ever been to Ka'ena Point?

MICHAEL

No. Just heard it's the end of the road.

MAILE

Some say it's where souls leap into the next world.

MICHAEL

(deadpan)

That a warning or an invite?

MAILE

(laughs softly)

Depends on the company.

She hands him the paper.

MAILE (CONT'D)

Sunset tomorrow. You game?

Michael folds the paper carefully, thoughtful.

MICHAEL

You bring the sketches — I'll bring the slippers.

(beat, smirking)

And try not to trip into the next world.

They share a small laugh. Comfortable.

Unforced.

EXT. OVERGROWN LOT - DAY

A dusty, overgrown parcel of land. Ocean breeze sways the tall grass. The lot overlooks a residential valley — mostly older homes, some abandoned, others clinging to life.

Maile stands near the edge, holding a clipboard and tablet. Her sketchbook is tucked under one arm — pages already marked with rough ideas. She's dressed island-smart — work-ready, rooted.

A local contact, MANA (50s, quiet but sharp-eyed), unlocks the rusted gate.

MANA

City's letting it sit. Could've
done something with it years ago.

MAILE

Still can.

She walks the perimeter. Pauses. Stares out at the open land.

She flips open the sketchbook briefly — rough pencil site notes already drawn — then switches to the tablet for digital overlays. She sketches quickly — not just one home, but five.

Compact. Functional. Beautiful.

MAILE (CONT'D)

It doesn't have to be big. Just
enough to matter.

Mana watches her work.

MANA

Your mom would've loved this.

Maile nods, not breaking stride.

MAILE

That's the point.

A strong gust hits — papers flutter. She catches them.

Then smiles.

She sees it now.

EXT. KA'ENA POINT TRAILHEAD - SUNSET

Remote. Rugged coastline. Wind combs through dry grass along the ridgeline.

Michael walks the gravel path — brand-new slippers, cargo shorts, and a soft local tee.
He still carries himself like a man used to dress shoes, but something's softened.

As he rounds a bend—

Maile is already there, seated cross-legged on a flat rock, sketchbook resting on her knees.
She looks up, surprised — but not displeased.

MAILE

Didn't think you'd actually show.

MICHAEL

I said sunset, didn't I?

She rises to greet him.
He instinctively offers a handshake. She takes it this time — warm, firm, a small grin.

MAILE

Still playing it safe?

MICHAEL

Figured I'd earn my way past the handshake.

MAILE

You brought the slippers. That's progress.

They share a soft laugh.

Michael sits beside her — not too close, but closer than before. They both face the horizon.
The ocean sprawls endlessly below, lit by golden light.

MICHAEL

You sketch what's here... or what's missing?

MAILE

Sometimes both.

She turns her sketchbook toward him:

- A rough outline of the cliff edge.
- Two small figures.
- A minimalist lookout tucked into the ridge. Natural wood. Open roof.

MAILE (CONT'D)

Thought this spot deserved a place
to sit.
To stay.

MICHAEL

(quietly)

Feels like somewhere I'd come back
to.

(beat)

You always design for places like
this?

MAILE

(pauses)

Not always.
This one... I did for me.

The breeze lifts strands of her hair. He watches her — not
intrusively, just... present.

MICHAEL

Thanks for the invite.

MAILE

There's more I could show you — if
you're not flying out just yet.

(beat, soft)

Some places that haven't been
swallowed by concrete... not yet.

MICHAEL

Good call.

They sit together, quietly – two people no longer running. Just sun. Wind. And something beginning to root itself in solid ground.

INT. HALE KOA HOTEL - NIGHT

Michael sits at the desk in his dimly lit hotel room. Surf sounds drift in through the open lanai.

On his laptop – a new email draft.

ON SCREEN: Subject: New Direction – Draft Outline

Team – met someone here doing incredible work with community housing. Small-scale, sustainable, culturally respectful builds. Got me thinking... what if we launched that division we talked about – but did it right?

He stares at the screen.

Types:

I think I found the right person to lead it.

His finger hovers over "Send."

A long beat.

He presses the key.

Whoosh.

Email sent.

Michael leans back. He exhales – the kind that comes with clarity.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH OUTSIDE COFFEE SHOP - KAILUA TOWN - EARLY MORNING

Birdsong. The scent of pastries drifts through the air. Surfboards stacked outside a nearby van.

Michael stands under the eave, tapping his phone. He's just finished a morning walk – board shorts, new slippers, local coffee in hand.

The phone buzzes. He hesitates... then answers.

MICHAEL

(into phone)

Yeah. I'm still out here.

INT. OFFICE - LAS VEGAS - INTERCUT

His partner, JESSICA (mid-40s, sharp but fair), is in a glass conference room surrounded by blueprints and renderings.

JESSICA

They want your eyes on a new vertical build. O'ahu again. Big investors. Could be fast-tracked.

MICHAEL

Thought we agreed — no personal projects while I was gone.

JESSICA

You're not on vacation.
You're on "mandatory health leave."
And they asked for you,
specifically.

Michael looks toward the beach. A father hoists a toddler on his shoulders.

MICHAEL

Timing's not ideal.

JESSICA

If we don't jump in, someone else will.
At least review the specs.

MICHAEL

Email it.

She pauses.

JESSICA

You okay?

MICHAEL

Still breathing.

He hangs up.

Michael leans against the wall. He takes a sip of his coffee — doesn't taste it.

His gaze drifts to a bulletin board — flyers for 'āina clean-ups, surf lessons, and an upcoming town meeting about development concerns.

One flyer reads:

"COMMUNITY MEETING - SAY NO TO THE RIDGE BUILD."

Michael stares at it.

He pulls a pen from his pocket. Jots a single note on a hotel notepad:

"Kipuka Project — follow up?"

He folds the page. Slips it next to the sealed envelope in his bag.

Buzz.

A new text appears on his phone screen.

MAILE (TEXT): You still game to see more of Paradise?

Michael reads it. Smiles — small, but real.

EXT. LĀ'IE POINT - MIDDAY

Crashing surf. Sharp cliffs. A natural sea arch juts from the shoreline like a forgotten relic.

Maile and Michael stand near the edge — shoes off, hair windblown.

They've hiked here together, water bottles half-empty, a shared lunch in a biodegradable bag between them.

Michael snaps a photo with his phone.

MAILE

Don't post it. Some places should stay untagged.

MICHAEL

Noted. Just sending it to my son—
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
(catching himself)

—to a friend.

She glances at him. A soft pause.

MAILE

This was one of my mom's favorite
places. She used to say the ocean
here wasn't just blue — it was
bold.

Michael nods, respecting the shift in tone.

MICHAEL

She sounds like someone worth
listening to.

MAILE

She was.

Maile looks out toward the arch.

MAILE (CONT'D)

I read something last night.
There's a new resort plan on the
west side. Massive footprint.

Supposed to "blend" with the land.

You ever heard of Pacific Edge Development?

Michael tenses — just slightly. His face stays neutral.

MICHAEL

Let's just say... they've crossed
my desk before.

MAILE

My old firm might've drafted the
early concepts. Before I quit.
It didn't sit right.

You can't "blend" if you bulldoze everything first.

Beat.

MICHAEL

What if someone tried to do it
right?

MAILE

Then they'd start by asking the
people who actually live here.

She looks at him — curious, not accusing.

MAILE (CONT'D)

Why? You thinking about getting
into Hawai'i real estate?

MICHAEL

I'm just... observing.
Trying not to step on coral.

MAILE

That friend... you almost said
"son."
(beat)

You don't have to tell me anything.
(smiles)

But if you ever do — I'll listen.

Michael looks at her — surprised, maybe grateful. He says
nothing.

Maile turns her gaze back to the sea. Michael joins her.

Beside her feet, her sketchbook peeks from the edge of her
bag — untouched this time. The view says enough.

The ocean rises and falls.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER COURTYARD - EVENING

Twinkle lights. Food trucks. Keiki play tag near folding
chairs. Locals gather with music playing low.

A flyer posted on a bulletin board:
"COMMUNITY MEETING - SAY NO TO THE RIDGE BUILD."

Maile stands near a folding table, helping an elder stack
sign-in sheets and petitions.

Michael arrives in a tucked-in short-sleeve aloha shirt and chinos – a halfway nod to both business and local. Still slightly out of place, but trying. He carries a printout in a manila folder.

Maile sees him, smiles. He walks over.

MAILE

Didn't think you'd come.

MICHAEL

Didn't think I'd find parking.

She hands him a pamphlet.

MAILE

They're trying to put a luxury
build
right over the ridge trail.
Ancient paths, burial sites – all
at risk.
This isn't NIMBY – it's survival.

Michael opens the folder, half-showing her a map. High-level renderings. Development footprints.

MICHAEL

I got these this morning. Pacific
Edge sent them over.
They're requesting early-stage
feedback...and my name's on the
list.

Maile's smile fades – just slightly.

MAILE

You're consulting?

MICHAEL

Not officially. Not yet.
(beat)

I wanted to see the site. Talk to
people. Talk to you.

MAILE

You didn't think to mention that
yesterday?

MICHAEL

I didn't know what it was
yesterday. Not really.

She exhales, sets down the pamphlet.

MAILE

They always say that.
(beat)

"I didn't know." Until it's done.
Until it's paved.

MICHAEL

I'm not the enemy.

MAILE

I didn't say you were.

Silence.

The courtyard dims as the sun drops lower. The music fades
out.

A community elder stands and taps a mic.

ELDER (O.S.)

Aloha mai kākou. Mahalo for showing
up tonight...

Michael steps back, giving Maile space.
She doesn't follow.

INT. MICHAEL AT HALE KOA - EARLY MORNING

Soft morning light filters in through sheer curtains. A local
radio station hums in the background - Hawaiian slack key,
barely audible.

Michael sits alone at the small kitchen table, untouched
coffee growing cold.

Before him:

- A printed packet of development renderings
- A flyer from the community meeting
- His folded return ticket to Las Vegas

The renderings are clipped together, slightly crumpled at the edges.

He flips through them — sharp lines over lush land.
Concrete replacing coastline.

A long beat.

He sets them aside.
Reaches for his phone.
Thumbs hover over Maile's contact.

He doesn't call.

Instead, he scrolls to a photo of the beach they visited.
He lingers on it.
Then closes the phone.

EXT. SMALL PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Michael steps out onto the patio.

The view: Diamond Head in the distance, ocean glinting beyond rooftops.

He breathes it in — not quite at peace, not quite ready to leave.
But something is shifting.

INT. LYFT RIDE - O'AHU STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

A quiet ride. Michael sits in the back of a clean rideshare, the city blurring past the window. Island music plays low from the front. The DRIVER hums along, unaware.

Michael holds a folded flier in his hand —

"VETERANS PEER SUPPORT - O'AHU VETERAN CENTER."

He unfolds it. Folds it again.

Breathing shallow. Eyes distant.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMBAT MEMORY - WAR ZONE - DUSK (MICHAEL'S MIND)

Sound FADES INTO a distant ringing.

Muted YELLING. Boots scuff the dirt.
The air is thick with dust. A nearby HUMVEE is engulfed in smoke. Explosions echo faintly behind it.

Michael crouches behind cover, his breath heavy and uneven. Blood drips from his temple. The world spins, muffled and disoriented.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Still watching my six...

A sharp FLASH of light and sound – another blast hits closer.

A young Polynesian man – LT IKAIKA MAHELONA – sprints into frame.
Without hesitation, he throws himself toward Michael, pushing him into deeper cover just as another BLAST goes off behind them.

IKAIKA

I got you, brother. GO!

Ikaika turns to cover Michael's escape, weapon drawn.

Time slows. Michael stares – his ears ringing. The dust floats like ash.
A final blinding flash engulfs the scene.

INT. LYFT RIDE - CONTINUOUS

Michael jolts slightly – a subtle inhale.
The Driver glances at him in the mirror, then returns his gaze to the road.
No words.

Michael steadies his breathing, unfolding the flier one last time –
This time, he doesn't refold it.

The car turns onto a quiet street in Salt Lake.

INT. O'AHU VETERAN CENTER - SALT LAKE - EARLY EVENING

The fluorescent hum is softened by warm-toned string lights draped along the wall.

A small circle of chairs. Folding tables line the back with brewed coffee, laminated resources, and a donation jar.

A bulletin board reads:

"VETERANS PEER SUPPORT - YOU ARE NOT ALONE."

DARIUS sits among the group. Comfortable. Present.
A few Vets nod as he sips from a chipped "Army Strong" mug.

He doesn't lead the group – but his presence helps hold it.

The door creaks.

Michael enters quietly – not late, but deliberately the last to arrive.

He scans the circle and recognizes Darius. Their eyes meet – a quick, silent exchange.

Darius gives the slightest nod.

No invitation. No expectation.

Michael finds a seat near the edge of the circle.

GROUP FACILITATOR

Evening, everyone. Mahalo for
showing up.

This is peer support – no ranks, no pressure.
Talk story if you feel like it.
Or just be here. That's enough.

The circle breathes together.

A younger Vet speaks up, nervous at first.

YOUNG VET

I lost my unit brother last year.
He texted me the night before.
I didn't check it 'til the next
morning.

(beat)

I still carry that.

A few nods – nothing performative. Just shared weight.

An older woman clears her throat.

OLDER WOMAN VET

Fourth of July hit different this
year. Heard the fireworks and hit
the floor – didn't even think, just
dropped. Took me hours to calm back
down.

She gives a quiet laugh. It's not funny, but it helps.

A pause.

Then — Michael's voice.

MICHAEL

Navy.
(beat)

I was stationed here once.
Some of the best... and worst years
of my life.
(beat)
I'm just visiting now. Saw a flier
a few weeks ago. Kept folding it.
Unfolding it. Then I stopped
folding it. And showed up.

Several Vets nod.
Not surprised — just seeing him.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I've lost people.
(beat)

Still figuring out how to carry
that... without letting it carry
me.

Silence — not awkward. Just understood.

Then — Darius speaks. Calm, grounded.

DARIUS

Some of us hold onto stories so
long... we forget our hands are
full.
(beat)

This group reminds me to set mine
down sometimes. Even just for an
hour.
(Another pause.)

Then:

OLDER VET (O.S.)

Glad you showed up, brother.
That's how it starts.

Michael nods — more to himself than anyone.
His shoulders settle.

The room holds him now.

EXT. O'AHU VETERAN CENTER - SALT LAKE - NIGHT

The last of the group filters out beneath dim streetlamps.

The building glows softly behind them — warm, lived-in.

Michael steps out, deep in thought.

Darius waits near the sidewalk, sipping the end of his
coffee.

He doesn't speak right away.

A comfortable silence.

Then —

DARIUS

You held your own in there.

Michael nods, no bravado — just a quiet acknowledgment.

MICHAEL

Didn't think I'd say anything.

Then I did.

Darius chuckles, gentle.

DARIUS

That's how it starts.
(beat)

You just... keep showing up.

Michael exhales, gaze drifting up toward the starlit sky.

MICHAEL

Feels different here.

Not easier. Just... honest.

DARIUS

That's Hawai'i for you. She doesn't
let you lie to yourself for long.

A pause. Darius looks over.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

You thinking about coming back?

Michael doesn't answer right away.

MICHAEL

We'll see...

Darius nods. No pressure.

They stand there together a moment longer — Veterans,
friends, no words needed.

FADE OUT.

EXT. FARMERS MARKET - LATE MORNING

A sunlit lot filled with white tents and a hum of chatter.
Colorful produce, crafts, handmade soaps, local honey.

Michael wanders through, sunglasses on, moving slowly.
He samples a pineapple slice handed to him by a smiling
vendor.

He pauses at a booth selling locally made wood crafts —
surfboard coasters, carved bowls.

The VENDOR (50s, Native Hawaiian) catches his eye.

VENDOR

Gifts or guilt?

MICHAEL

(surprised, then smiles)

Maybe both.

Michael picks up a koa wood keychain, shaped like the island
of O'ahu.

VENDOR

Made from a fallen tree, not cut.
Still got mana if you ask me.

Michael turns it in his hand. Buys it without a word.

From a distance — we see Maile walking the opposite direction
with a canvas tote of vegetables.
She sees him.
He sees her.

A pause — a breath between them.

Then Maile gives a small nod.
Michael nods back.

They don't move toward each other — not yet —
but the tension has softened.

EXT. CURBSIDE PICK-UP AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Michael climbs into the back of a waiting Lyft.
He tucks the koa keychain into his bag — next to the still-
unopened envelope.

A beat.

He takes out a jar of honey from the market bag.
Leaves the envelope untouched.

EXT. MAILE'S AUNTY'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Michael arrives with the mason jar of honey,
knocking awkwardly on the gate.

Aunty Noelani opens it — surprised but welcoming.

MICHAEL

Thought I owed Maile a proper
return for the honey... and maybe
to say I didn't mean to disappear
at the farmers market.

NOELANI

(laughs)

Maile's not here, but you're just
in time — we need another body to
help set up for my niece's wedding
tomorrow.

MICHAEL

That sounds... serious.

NOELANI

It's Hawai'i, not Vegas.
It's always serious and casual. You
in?

MICHAEL
(small grin)

Yeah. I'm in.

EXT. BEACHFRONT PAVILION - LATE AFTERNOON

A light breeze dances through hanging ferns and plumeria petals.

A modest wedding setup — folding chairs on the lawn, tiki torches unlit for now.

The ocean glows gold behind it.

Michael steps cautiously into the crowd, wearing a fitted aloha shirt

and casual linen pants — a clear shift from his earlier mainland attire.

He carries a simple gift bag. Looks around, unsure.

Maile spots him from a few chairs over —

a flicker of surprise, then something softer.

She glances at Aunty Noelani, who gives a knowing smirk.

Maile gestures toward the empty seat beside her.

Michael walks over. Sits.

AUNTY NOELANI
(smiling)

Good. I hate empty chairs at a wedding.

He smiles politely.

EXT. WEDDING ALTAR - CONTINUOUS

A young couple – Maile's cousin and her partner –

stand hand in hand beneath a simple arch wrapped in ti leaves and orchids.

The PASTOR (50s, local, calm presence) speaks with quiet authority.

PASTOR

Before you say your vows, I want to
remind you both –

aloha isn't just a word we say

instead of hello or goodbye.

It means love. Compassion.
Patience.

But also – sacrifice. Presence.
Breath.

It's not something you hold...

It's something you live.

Michael blinks – absorbing this like a truth he didn't know
he needed.

Maile's eyes – a flicker of something unspoken.

EXT. WEDDING RECEPTION AREA - SUNSET

Laughter. Slippers kicked off. Children running around a
grassy patch

lit with string lights. Island music plays softly in the
background

(potential placement).

Michael and Maile stand near a food table,
sipping lilikoi drinks from mason jars.

MICHAEL

That pastor... he wasn't just
talking to them, was he?

MAILE
(smiling)

No. He wasn't.

They stand in comfortable silence.

The camera lingers as the sun begins to set behind them.

EXT. RECEPTION PARKING AREA - LATER

Cars idle. Distant laughter lingers in the night air.

Michael waits near the curb, checking his phone for his Lyft.

He loosens his collar, still in his wedding guest attire.

Maile leans against her truck a few paces away, sipping water.

MAILE
You clean up alright.

MICHAEL
You too.

Beat.

MAILE
Didn't think you'd stay that long.

MICHAEL
Didn't think I'd dance.

MAILE
Wasn't bad. Little stiff.

MICHAEL
It's the boots.

She chuckles. Then:

MAILE
You still run?

Michael glances over, curious.

MICHAEL

Still train.

MAILE

Kapi'olani Park. Tomorrow. Late afternoon.

MICHAEL

You inviting me to a date or a workout?

MAILE

Depends how fast you are.

She tosses him a look, climbs into her truck.

MAILE (CONT'D)

Don't be late, mainland.

The truck rumbles to life and pulls away.

Michael watches her go — a flicker of something new behind his eyes.

His phone buzzes. He checks the screen.

His Lyft is here.

He turns toward the curb, still smiling.

EXT. RECEPTION PARKING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Michael checks his phone again.
His Lyft rolls to a stop at the curb.

Before he moves—

MAILE

You want a ride instead?

Michael glances up — surprised.
Maile's truck door is already open. Engine idling.

MICHAEL

You sure?

She gives him a look — soft, playful.

MAILE

Get in, mainland.

INT. MAILE'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

They drive in quiet.

The radio hums low — some local love song drifting through.

Michael watches the island roll past his window,
but every now and then — he glances at Maile.

She doesn't look back. But she's smiling too.

EXT. HALE KOA HOTEL - CURB - NIGHT

Maile's truck slows to a stop.

MICHAEL

Thanks for the lift.

MAILE

See you tomorrow?

MICHAEL

Yeah. Kapi'olani Park. Late
afternoon.

He steps out. She doesn't drive off immediately.
Just watches him walk inside.

Then — she pulls away.

INT. MAILE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Moonlight spills in through slatted windows. A
quiet stillness fills the space.

Maile sits cross-legged on the bed, barefoot,
sketchbook open in her lap.

She sketches — not a building this time, but a
memory: Two silhouetted figures standing at a wedding
altar by the sea.

The lines are loose. Emotional. Honest.

She pauses. Her pencil lingers mid-air.

Then she flips the page.

This time — she sketches a small, simple home.

The kind her mother once dreamed of.

Nothing flashy. But rooted. Real. Hawaii.

A soft knock at the door.

AUNTY NOELANI (O.S.)

Maile girl... you still awake?

MAILE

Yeah.

The door opens slightly. Aunty peers in.

NOELANI

You good?

MAILE
(quietly)

I think I am.

Aunty nods, satisfied.

NOELANI

Okay then. Sleep easy.

She closes the door gently.

Maile looks back at her sketch.

She underlines a single word at the bottom of the page: Aloha.

EXT. KAPI'OLANI PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

A soft island breeze cuts through the banyan trees. Long shadows stretch across the grass as the sun lowers.

Michael waits near a public fitness station — pull-up bars, parallel bars, and a push-up platform. He stretches his shoulders, already mid-warmup.

Maile approaches in joggers and a tank top, hair tied back. She slows as she nears.

MAILE

Didn't think you'd actually show.

MICHAEL

Didn't think you were serious.

MAILE

I was curious.

Michael nods to the bars.

MICHAEL

Pull-up test. Let's see what we're working with.

MAILE (eyeing it)

MAILE

Is this how you treat all your dates?

MICHAEL

This isn't a date. It's a diagnostic.

She rolls her eyes, hops up, and manages a clean rep.

MAILE

Ha. Still got it.

MICHAEL

Respect.

She drops down. He follows with a set — fluid, quiet, controlled.

MAILE

You train like someone who doesn't stop moving.

MICHAEL

Can't afford to. Not yet.

They move through a circuit — nothing competitive, just present.

Breath. Sweat. A rhythm forms.

A beat of stillness.

MAILE

I used to come here with my dad.
He'd make me race him to the banyan
tree and back. Said losing builds
character. He never let me win.

MICHAEL

Sounds like good parenting.

MAILE

Some days I hated it.
But I always came back.

A small smile passes between them.

Michael grabs his water bottle. Offers it to her.

MAILE (CONT'D)

I'm good. I've got my own.

MICHAEL

Figures.

They laugh — easy now.

They sit on the low wall, catching their breath. Watching the
sun begin to set.

MAILE

You ever think about staying?

MICHAEL

Lately? Yeah.

She nods, thoughtful.

A long pause – not awkward, just full.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Thanks for the workout.

MAILE

Thanks for showing up.

INT. LOCAL CO-WORKING SPACE - DAY

Muted sounds of keyboard taps, coffee grinders, and soft conversation.

Michael sits at a small table, laptop open. He's dressed local-casual – board shorts, short-sleeve button-up, slippers. Blended in now – quietly, confidently.

On his screen:

- A simplified rendering of the Kipuka Project
- Native landscaping. Minimal build. Communal gardens.
- Annotations in his handwriting: "Preserve view plane," "Community-access priority," "Elder consultation required"

Beside the laptop – a binder. The original Pacific Edge folder now stuffed with edits. A manila envelope half-sealed but unsigned.

He glances at an email draft addressed to Jessica:

Subject: Kipuka Proposal – Community-First Version

I understand this isn't what the investors envisioned.
But this is what I can stand behind.
If that's a deal-breaker, I'm okay with that.

Aloha,
Michael

He hovers a moment. Then hits Send.

A long exhale. Not relief – resolve.

Michael stands, gathers his things – but leaves the Pacific Edge folder on the table. Deliberately.

On his way out, he drops a dollar into the donation jar beside the coffee bar.

INTERCUT - INT. HALE KOA HOTEL ROOM - SAME NIGHT

A quiet, familiar space — not luxurious, but meaningful.

Michael lies on top of the neatly made bed, still dressed, looking up at the ceiling fan.

A folded American flag rests on the dresser.

Framed artwork of Diamond Head hangs beside the sliding lanai door.

He flips through a few flyers picked up from the front desk and bulletin boards:

- Kamehameha Schools Community Build Project
- Veterans Resource Fair - West O'ahu
- "Reconnecting with Culture" Workshop - Hosted by Kupu Hawai'i

He sets them aside.

On the nightstand: the koa wood keychain, shaped like O'ahu.

He picks it up — thumb tracing the island's outline.

His phone lights up with a calendar alert:

"Flight to Vegas - 2 days"

Michael silences it.

Doesn't move for a long beat.

He stands and walks to the sliding glass door.

Looks out at the dark silhouette of the ocean —

And the hotel lawn where his son once played tag.

The memory still aches.

But it no longer owns him.

INT. MAILE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maile closes her sketchbook.

Her hand lingers on the word:

Aloha.

EXT. KAINOA'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

Sunlight filters through ironwood trees.
Birds chirp, distant – too peaceful for what this once was.

Maile steps from her truck, solo.
Hair pulled back, keys in hand. Calm. Composed.

She walks to the front door. Knocks – twice.

No answer.

She waits a beat... then tries the handle. It's unlocked.

She steps inside.

INT. KAINOA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house is quiet now. No friends. No gaming. Just an empty
soda can and the hum of a fan.

She walks down the hall without pause.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maile opens the closet.
The last of her things: a pair of heels, a sketchbook she
thought she lost, and a hoodie she used to steal.

She places them in her bag.

Stops at the dresser mirror. Looks at herself.
No sadness. Just... done.

She turns. Walks out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kainoa appears – bleary-eyed, rubbing sleep from his face.

KAINOA

Maile...?

Maile startles – just for a moment – then keeps walking.

KAINOA (CONT'D)

Didn't think you'd really come
back.

MAILE

I didn't come back.

(beat)

Just came to finish leaving.

She opens the door.

KAINOA

What? You found someone else?

She pauses. Looks over her shoulder — not cold, but clear.

MAILE

I found myself.

She steps outside.

EXT. KAINOA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Maile walks to her truck.

Duffel in one hand. Sketchbook in the other.

She tosses both into the cab.

Closes the door.

A deep breath.

Then — she drives off.

EXT. HALE KOA HOTEL - EARLY MORNING

Birdsong. Soft sunrise over Waikīkī.

Michael walks the hotel grounds — not hurried,
just present.

He stops near a banyan tree beside a bronze
memorial plaque dedicated to service members.

He reads the inscription. Then sits on a nearby bench.

The same koa keychain is in his hand again — now
looped around his fingers like a worry stone.

A group of young soldiers jogs past, their cadence
call fading into the distance.

Michael watches them go, a flicker of pride and grief on his face. Then — a voice:

MAILE (O.S.)

You know, you're hard to find when
you're not dodging farmers markets.

He looks up, surprised.

MAILE (CONT'D)

Aunty said you might be here.

Michael stands. Maile walks toward him — casual, composed, but there's a spark of warmth in her eyes.

MICHAEL

Didn't expect to see you here.

MAILE

I didn't expect to want to. But...
here we are.

A silence filled with surf and birds and something just beginning to shift.

MICHAEL

This place... We used to come here
when we were stationed.

First time my boy ever saw the
ocean was right over there.
(he gestures)

He ran full speed and tripped in
the sand. Took him weeks to stop
calling jellyfish "ocean monsters."

MAILE

(smiles softly)

Sounds like he lived aloha better
than most adults.

Michael nods, eyes misting — but he holds steady.

MAILE (CONT'D)

I was thinking... Maybe you'd want
to see what aloha looks like now.
Like, today.

MICHAEL

What'd you have in mind?

MAILE

You trust me?

MICHAEL
(scared honesty)

I don't know. But I'd like to try.

Maile gestures toward the parking lot.

MAILE

Then grab your slippers. We've got
one more adventure.

MICHAEL

If it's another market, I'm there

EXT. NORTH SHORE - MIDDAY

Rolling green. Curving roads hugged by coastline.

Maile's truck climbs a narrow hill above the famous surf
breaks.

Inside the truck: windows down — island music hums
low from the stereo. Michael rides passenger side, wearing a
local baseball cap, and his new slippers.

He looks more relaxed than we've ever seen him.

MICHAEL

You always drive like this?

MAILE

Only when I'm happy.

MICHAEL
(scanning the view)

Can't argue with the reason.

EXT. SCENIC LOOKOUT - MOMENTS LATER

They park. Step out. The view opens — blue ocean stretching endlessly beneath cliffside palms.

A handful of locals sell fresh mango and coconut water under a tarp tent nearby.

Michael walks to the edge. Takes it in.

MICHAEL

I forgot places like this exist.
Places that don't want anything
from you.

Maile joins him, holding two mason jars of coconut water.

MAILE

Places like this just remind you
what you already have.

She hands him one.

MAILE (CONT'D)

You've got good instincts.

Even if they've been buried under
spreadsheets and stress.

MICHAEL

I didn't know I was allowed to have
instincts anymore.

They sip. Pause.

MAILE

You ever think about staying?

MICHAEL

(beat)

Can't. Got a return flight in two days.

MAILE

Flights change.

He looks at her. Really looks.

Then —

MICHAEL

I'll think about it.
(beat)

She smirks, then elbows him lightly.

MAILE

Good. Cause we're late for the next thing.

MICHAEL

Another farmers market?

MAILE

Better. You'll see.

They head back to the truck.

INT. MAILE'S DESIGN SPACE - LATE AFTERNOON

A repurposed shed behind Aunty Noelani's home — open-air, breezy, filled with sketches, reclaimed wood samples, and community build layouts. It's humble but vibrant — like Maile herself.

Michael sits on a stool, watching Maile explain a hand-drawn model to a local teenager. The teen nods, then heads out.

MAILE
(gesturing to the model)

We're hoping to break ground by summer. Just three homes at first – but they're designed for families priced out of the market.

Michael walks closer. His eyes scan her sketches.

MICHAEL

You've built something here.

MAILE

Not alone. But yeah... I'm starting to feel like me again.

A pause. He leans against the table, careful.

MICHAEL

Back in Vegas, I've been considering opening a new division – something community-focused.

Smaller-scale projects. Ethically built. I was gonna wait, but... I think you'd be perfect to lead it.

Maile stills.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You'd have full creative control. Remote flexibility – or, if you wanted, relocation. It's yours, Maile. I believe in what you're doing.

She steps back slightly – not in rejection, but in reflection.

MAILE

That's... a beautiful offer.
(beat)
And a few months ago, I might've jumped at it.

Michael nods slowly, already sensing her truth.

MAILE (CONT'D)

But what I'm building isn't just
about the designs. It's the land.
The people. The quiet mornings. The
hard conversations.
It's this place.

MICHAEL
(sincerely)

You don't have to explain.

MAILE

I do, though. Because I don't want
you to think I'm saying no to you.

Michael offers a small smile.

MICHAEL
I don't.

Maile walks over. Stands close.

MAILE

But if there's ever a version of
that offer... here...
I'm listening.

Michael looks at her. The moment stretches — real, grounded,
unfinished in the best way.

MICHAEL

Then I guess I've got some thinking
to do.

They both smile — not with certainty, but with understanding.

FADE TO:

EXT. HALEIWA BEACH PARK - SUNSET

The ocean glows copper. Waves lap gently in the background.

A half-dozen folding tables are set up beneath ironwood
trees. Aunties scoop mac salad into paper plates. Uncles
stand by a smoking grill — teriyaki chicken and buttered corn
in rotation.

A Bluetooth speaker plays Kalapana. The vibe is local, unhurried.

Maile laughs with Jesse and Aunty Noelani near the dessert table.

Michael sits on a low bench, helping a young kid open a juice pouch. He's not leading, not standing out — just part of the moment.

A local uncle claps him on the back as he walks by with a plate. Michael smiles, relaxed.

Maile watches from a distance. She catches herself smiling.

Their eyes meet — a moment without performance.

Jesse notices.

JESSE

That your "not a date" workout
buddy?

MAILE

(shaking her head)
He's... just helping organize.
We're all in this together.

JESSE

(chuckling)
If you say so.

Back across the park, Michael grabs a plate of food. He hesitates — then walks over to stand beside Maile.

They both look out at the ocean. Silent. Comfortable.

No big declarations. Just shared air.

As the sun dips lower, the music swells.

The sky turns golden.

FADE TO:

EXT. KUALOA VALLEY - SUNSET

Verdant cliffs stretch into the clouds. Mist curls around ridges as golden light pours across the grass.

Michael and Maile hike a narrow trail in silence. They aren't talking much – and they don't need to.

Michael wears a breathable linen shirt. His mainland shoes are gone. Just slippers now.

At a lookout, they stop. The valley opens wide before them – untouched, sacred.

Michael places something down beside a native tree:
A folded slip of paper. A sealed envelope.

Maile glances.

MAILE

That the letter you never mailed?

Michael nods.

MICHAEL

To my son.
Thought I was writing it for him...
turns out I was writing it for me.

Maile stands beside him, quiet.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

This place...
It's not a restart. It's not a
retreat. It's just... truth.

Maile leans her head on his shoulder.

MAILE

Maybe that's what aloha really is.
When you stop running from the
truth, and you live with it
instead.

Michael exhales. It's not relief – it's release.

MICHAEL

I'm starting to understand.

He looks out – not just at the view, but at the possibility
of staying.

The light begins to fade.

They stay standing – together – until dusk.

FADE TO:

EXT. HALE KOA HOTEL - MORNING

Ocean breeze rolls through the open courtyard. The American flag flutters beside the Hawaiian flag.

Michael exits the lobby with his duffel bag. His clothes are island-appropriate now – clean, simple, grounded.

He pauses. Takes a long breath of the salt air.

INT. LYFT - MOMENTS LATER

Michael sits quietly in the backseat, bag beside him.

The driver glances in the rearview.

DRIVER

Heading to the airport?

Michael looks out the window. Palms sway. A canoe team glides across the water.

He doesn't answer right away.

DRIVER (CONT'D)

Everything okay, sir?

Michael finally replies – softly.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

EXT. LYFT - SAME

The car rolls past a scenic stretch. Michael's eyes catch something:

A bulletin board in front of a community center.

A flyer reads:

"KĪPUKA PROJECT - LOCAL DESIGNERS NEEDED - BUILDING ALOHA"

He leans forward.

MICHAEL

Actually... mind taking a detour?

DRIVER

Where to?

MICHAEL

Just a place I need to see again.

EXT. MAILE'S WORKSPACE - LATER

Michael walks up the driveway. The gate is open.

From inside, we hear Maile's laughter. Kids hammering a build kit. Island music playing softly.

Michael stops just short of the entrance.

He smiles.

Then reaches into his pocket –
and pulls out the Las Vegas return ticket.

He tears it in half. Not a goodbye, but a beginning.

FADE TO BLACK.

TAGLINE (OVER BLACK):

"Aloha can't be owned – but you can live it."

THE END

EARLY CONCEPT LINES - "WHAT'S ALOHA 2"

Logline Preview: Now living full-time in O'ahu, Michael partners with Maile to transform an abandoned coastal plot into a thriving, culturally-rooted housing village – but when a mainland investor threatens the land's future, they must rally the community, face their pasts, and prove that aloha is more than a greeting – it's a legacy.

Tone: Inspirational drama with romantic depth, community stakes, and subtle humor.

Tagline: To live aloha is one thing. To fight for it – that's something else.