



DRAGONFRUIT

MALIA MATTOCH MCMANUS



HAWAI'I, 1891.

As the heiress to a plantation fortune, Eliza Dawson occupies a privileged place in the opulent court of Hawaii's King Kalākaua. But her secret plan to marry the son of an opium tycoon collapses when political crisis forces him to China. Pregnant and desperate to keep her child, Eliza must wed an opportunistic rancher on the remote island of Moloka'i.

After a devastating fire, Eliza makes a daring escape to Honolulu on the eve of the American overthrow and joins the clandestine fight to restore the Hawaiian monarchy.

When a mysterious figure from Moloka'i reveals powerful secrets, only one man can help Eliza find the truth—her first love. But soon, their search for answers threatens to unravel the life she's rebuilt in a dramatically changed Hawai'i.

Dragonfruit is both a vivid portrait of Hawai'i in a time of historic upheaval and the story of a woman shaped by love, betrayal, and the intoxicating power of the past.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Malia Mattoch McManus was born and raised in Kailua, Hawai'i. After a decade reporting and anchoring local news in Honolulu, Malia began researching *Dragonfruit*. Parts of her own family arrived in Hawai'i in the 1800's as both ship captains and sugar plantation workers.

Dragonfruit is Malia's second published book but first novel. She also wrote *The Hawaiian House Now* and continues to write and report for Hawai'i publications. She lives on O'ahu with her family.





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My father is funding the impending rebellion against these soldiers, against the government they prop up. He gives me messages written on sheets of newspaper wrapped around ginger or gardenias from our garden, and I deliver these to the Queen's household.

This may end with us in prison at the Reef. Abram is jailing Hawaiians rumored to have spoken in favor of the Queen. He's arresting organists, teachers, innocents. Yet he's never had these men search my newspaper-wrapped flowers, or the blanket of my golden-haired child. His soldiers do not see who I truly am. I am a good American wife. I am a plantation heiress. I am the granddaughter of a Calvinist missionary who came to this pagan land before it was conquered by Christianity, then sugar, then America.

I am the perfect traitor to the privilege of my birth. I am the ideal rebel messenger.

Eliza Dawson

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The 1887 Constitution of the Kingdom of Hawai'i was a legal document forced upon King Kalākaua by white American anti-monarchists who dubbed themselves, "The Hawaiian League." It divested Kalākaua and the Hawaiian monarchy of nearly all authority and stripped the voting rights of Asians and the majority of Hawaiians. It became known as the Bayonet Constitution.

Since *Dragonfruit* is a work of fiction, one of the first questions people have asked is, which of the characters are real? All members of the royal family represented in this book are true characters, whom I tried to portray in an accurate but spirited manner as I found their letters and historical descriptions captivating. The same holds true of Robert Louis Stevenson.

The missionary families portrayed are all entirely fictional, with the exception of the brief mention of President Dole. However, the opinions portrayed by those fictional characters are in keeping with the writings some, though not all, missionary figures left behind regarding this historical period. Some families participated in the overthrow, while others did not.

The Chinese tycoon Khan Ahsang is inspired by many real life figures who came to the Sandalwood Mountains and left having made their fortunes. He is a fictional character, but delve into our state's history and you will find many figures of equal vibrancy. The Chinese community continues to play a key part in the state's cultural fabric.

The Hawaiian legends described in this book were told to me and, I think, every other child growing up here; they managed to keep my siblings and me watchful and wide-eyed on many a windy night. I appreciate all the people who shared them with us.

I thank Nainoa Thompson for having included me in a group of visitors welcomed so warmly into the homes of patients living at Kalaupapa. I could not have created a fictional night there without having experienced a true visit with the amazing people who live there.

Many Native Hawaiians continue to struggle with challenges stemming from the traumatic events portrayed in this book. I hope this book honors that past in the way I meant it to, and that the future will hold increased opportunities in this beautiful place we call home.

Historical photos on the following page are courtesy of Hawaii State Archives Digital Collection



Sugar plantation at Aiea, Oahu



King Kalākaua



Princess Ka'iulani



Queen Lili'uokalani



Kalaupapa Settlement on Moloka'i



The Annexation, Iolani Palace



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CONTACT

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Malia Mattoch McManus

maliamattoch@gmail.com

www.maliamattochmcmanus.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: [Maliamattochmcmanus](https://www.facebook.com/maliamattochmcmanus)

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