



# House of Thieves

*Kaui Hart Hemmings*

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## **House of Thieves** Kaui Hart Hemmings

In her debut collection of short stories, *House of Thieves*, Kaui Hart Hemmings has set the magnificent islands of Hawaii as a backdrop to describe bold frustrated adolescents and adults as they wrestle with themselves and each other over the age-old issues of deprived freedom, misguided love, being cool, and being true; and as they experience together the loneliness of feeling miserable in paradise.

The nine stories in *House of Thieves* are told from varied points of view--a father, a child, a young woman, an adolescent boy, and more. Rooted in the circumstances and situations of island people, they reveal the mundane cycle of small triumphs and tragedies that make up the lives of ordinary people everywhere. A single mother's discovery of a pornographic magazine in her thirteen-year-old son's room sends her down a spiral of jealousy that ultimately guarantees her loss of him. A middle-aged man struggles with this secret hatred for his brother and finds a way to enact a revenge whose absolute destructiveness promises to heal him. A white man who is left by his native Hawaiian wife struggles to understand why he and his daughter, abandoned together, feel such deep resentment for each other. A boy who insists on the illusion of his happy family suddenly recognizes his father's lack of real love and comes to "the understanding that certain things are severed and they can't grow back again, the sorrow from loving a place that doesn't love you back."

Hemmings' tart, confident voice plunges headfirst into the unfamiliar world of a Hawaii far from the tourist track, providing glimpses of the islands' divisive racial and class issues, as well as the proud heritage of kings and warriors and the legacy of colonialists and missionaries. Her unceremonious dealing with issues like drugs, sex, and abandonment and her entirely unself-conscious prose allow her stories to wash effortlessly like an ocean wave, portraying with unsentimental insight and wry humor the complex forces that bind family members together in love and hate.

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