



# Moloka'i: A Novel

By Alan Brennert

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This richly imagined novel, set in Hawai'i more than a century ago, is an extraordinary epic of a little-known time and place---and a deeply moving testament to the resiliency of the human spirit.

Rachel Kalama, a spirited seven-year-old Hawaiian girl, dreams of visiting far-off lands like her father, a merchant seaman. Then one day a rose-colored mark appears on her skin, and those dreams are stolen from her. Taken from her home and family, Rachel is sent to Kalaupapa, the quarantined leprosy settlement on the island of Moloka'i. Here her life is supposed to end---but instead she discovers it is only just beginning.

With a vibrant cast of vividly realized characters, *Moloka'i* is the true-to-life chronicle of a people who embraced life in the face of death. Such is the warmth, humor, and compassion of this novel that "few readers will remain unchanged by Rachel's story" (mostlyfiction.com).

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## Moloka'i: A Novel By Alan Brennert Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Compellingly original in its conceit, Brennert's sweeping debut novel tracks the grim struggle of a Hawaiian woman who contracts leprosy as a child in Honolulu during the 1890s and is deported to the island of Moloka'i, where she grows to adulthood at the quarantined settlement of Kalaupapa. Rachel Kalama is the plucky, seven-year-old heroine whose family is devastated when first her uncle Pono and then she develop leprosy sores and are quarantined with the disease. While Rachel's symptoms remain mild during her youth, she watches others her age dying from the disease in near total isolation from family and friends. Rachel finds happiness when she meets Kenji Utagawa, a fellow leprosy victim whose illness brings shame on his Japanese family. After a tender courtship, Rachel and Kenji marry and have a daughter, but the birth of their healthy baby brings as much grief as joy, when they must give her up for adoption to prevent infection. The couple cope with the loss of their daughter and settle into a productive working life until Kenji tries to stop a quarantined U.S. soldier from beating up his girlfriend and is tragically killed in the subsequent fight. The poignant concluding chapters portray Rachel's final years after sulfa drugs are discovered as a cure, leaving her free to abandon Moloka'i and seek out her family and daughter. Brennert's compassion makes Rachel a memorable character, and his smooth storytelling vividly brings early 20th-century Hawaii to life. Leprosy may seem a macabre subject, but Brennert transforms the material into a touching, lovely account of a woman's journey as she rises above the limitations of a devastating illness.

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## Review

"A dazzling historical novel." ?*The Washington Post*

"*Moloka'i* is a haunting story of tragedy in a Pacific paradise." ?*Robert Morgan, author of Gap Creek*

"Alan Brennert draws on historical accounts of Kalaupapa and weaves in traditional Hawaiian stories and customs.... *Moloka'i* is the story of people who had much taken from them but also gained an unexpected new family and community in the process." ?*Chicago Tribune*

"[An] absorbing novel...Brennert evokes the evolution of--and hardships on--Moloka'i in engaging prose that conveys a strong sense of place." ?*National Geographic Traveler*

"Moving and elegiac." ?*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*

"Compellingly original...Brennert's compassion makes Rachel a memorable character, and his smooth storytelling vividly brings early twentieth-century Hawai'i to life." ?*Publishers Weekly (starred review)*

## About the Author

**Alan Brennert** is a novelist (*Time and Chance*) as well as an Emmy Award-winning screenwriter (*L.A. Law*). He lives in Southern California, but his heart is in Hawai'i.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **John McGinnis:**

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