

**The Lifeguard**

by

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FADE IN

Green.

Lush, tropical vegetation as seen from above.

A flight through the broad bowl of a valley, its base cut into deep ravines by constant streams of rainwater from the peaks above.

Suddenly, green becomes deep blue.

The rolling Pacific.

The flight continues along the shoreline, past mile after mile of sheer cliff facing, crashing waves and the occasional picturesque beach.

TITLE OVER:

Na Pali Coast

Kaua`i, Hawai`i

And not a soul in sight.

Moving faster past jagged patches of rocks and swirling surf, the untamed coastline comes to an abrupt end.

Ahead, a miles-long stretch of pristine white sand.

EXT. POLIHALE BEACH -- DAY

A well-muscled, short-haired NATIVE HAWAIIAN MAN (late 30's) sits high in a lifeguard stand.

A sign at the stand's base screams

WARNING: HIGH SURF ADVISORY, DANGEROUS CURRENTS

Tacked up on the wall behind him is a laminated lifeguard's license - a photo and full name: Kaikona Keahi.

On his chest, above his heart - a tattoo of a woman's face. Realistically rendered, she smiles warmly.

Kaikona spots a MAN'S HEAD sticking up like a cork in the water a hundred yards off shore. Unnoticed by beach-goers, the sight makes him sit up in his chair.

KAIKONA (V.O.)  
Movies always get drownings wrong.

Caught in a rip current, the head moves away from shore -  
seemingly against the tide - and out to open sea.

KAIKONA (V.O.)  
Arms don't flail above the water.  
There are few cries for help. A  
victim usually doesn't have the  
strength for either.

He stands and brings a pair of binoculars to his eyes.

KAIKONA (V.O.)  
It's a quiet thing. An easy thing  
to miss.

BINOCULAR P.O.V. - its chin jutting up for air, the head is  
enveloped by the ocean.

KAIKONA (V.O.)  
Of course, every second counts.

Kaikona watches the surface of the water intently.

He does not move.

Each second that passes is its own eternity.

The sound of FLAMES

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD -- LATE AFTERNOON

Smoke clouds billow nearby. Part of the field has been set  
ablaze to burn out cane leaves, facilitating the harvest.

A group of YOUNG MEN dressed in gloves, long pants and  
long-sleeved work shirts cut cane with machetes under the  
still-blazing sun.

Sweating profusely, they gather the cut stalks and throw  
them on to the flatbed of a waiting truck.

A YOUNG KAIKONA (16 years old) is among them. He works  
hard, not noticing that the crew has stopped around him.

HELEMANO  
Kaikona...

No response. HELEMANO (17, also native Hawaiian) takes off a glove and throws it at Kaikona, striking him in the face.

Startled, Kaikona immediately squares himself to fight. Helemano smiles and points at his watch.

Behind them, the rest of the crew is climbing into the back of a massive pick-up truck, which carries a stack of surfboards. Kaikona runs to join them.

EXT. BEACH -- DUSK

The cane crew rests, their surfboards leaning against the pick-up. A few rinse themselves of sea salt with large drinking-fountain bottles filled with fresh water.

Helemano looks out to the ocean wide-eyed.

HELEMANO

Holy shit!

Kaikona is pushing himself up on his board at the top of a cresting wave with a massive face.

HELEMANO

AHHHHH! Go Kai!

The ride is brief, the wipe out magnificent. The crew winces collectively.

HELEMANO

Fucker's brave.

CREW WORKER #1

Fucker's crazy.

EXT. STRIP MALL -- NIGHT

A beer bottle smashes against a supermarket wall.

The pick-up truck skids to a stop in the parking lot. Two of the cane crew hop out and head into the store.

CO-WORKER #1

Couple more sixes?

HELEMANO

A case!

Kaikona and Helemano wait in the back of the truck.

KAIKONA  
(mocking)

A case!

Helemano laughs and throws an empty at him. Kaikona catches it, smiling. The two boys could pass for brothers.

HELEMANO  
You comin' out on Kalani's boat  
tomorrow? Ahi's running out in the  
channel.

KAIKONA  
Can't.

HELEMANO  
Just a couple hours. He won't even  
know you're gone.

A dark mood descends on Kaikona.

A STIFLED SHOUT nearby.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Keep it the fuck down.

Kaikona and Helemano turn to see a pair of WHITE TOURISTS squabbling. The woman is crying. The man is trying to force her into the open door of a rented car.

TOURIST MAN  
Get in the car. We're going back  
to the hotel.

TOURIST WOMAN  
(slurring)  
I want to go home! I want to go  
home now...

The man slaps her soundly on the side of her head.

Kaikona and Helemano flinch at the severity of the blow.

The woman whimpers and allows herself to be manhandled into the car. Once in her seat, she SCREAMS until the man clamps a hand over her mouth.

Kaikona jumps out of the truck and moves toward the car as if he's being pulled forward by forces beyond his control.

HELEMANO

Kai...

Kaikona doesn't stop.

KAIKONA

Hey.

The man doesn't answer. He closes the passenger door and ambles toward the driver's side of the car.

KAIKONA

Hey, I'm talking to you!

TOURIST MAN

Turn around, punk.

Helemano jumps out of the pick-up and starts to run over.

KAIKONA

You're a big man, huh?

The man throws his keys in the open car window and moves to meet Kaikona. He's a good half-a-foot taller and has fifty pounds on the young Hawaiian.

TOURIST MAN

You want some of hers?

They pick up speed on approaching one another.

The tourist swings hard. Kaikona ducks the roundhouse and catches the man with a quick right to the back of the head as he passes, sending him sprawling forward.

Before he can scramble to his feet, Kaikona hits him again opening up the skin above his eye. Blood.

A COUPLE exits the supermarket and stops to watch, keeping their distance.

Helemano hesitates a few paces away from the brawl.

HELEMANO

Kaikona, no!

The tourist lunges forward blindly.

Kaikona catches him with an uppercut to the stomach. He runs the man backward and slams him into his car, pinning him - breathless - against the passenger door.

Inside, the woman is shocked silent. She tries to open her door but can't.

Kaikona overwhelms the man with body shots.

More BYSTANDERS stop and stare as they exit the supermarket. One of them runs back into the store.

Trying to regroup, the tourist lands some wild punches, but they are useless. Kaikona lets loose with a rain of blows.

KAIKONA  
A real tough guy!

The man drops his hands, giving Kaikona open access. He renews his assault, holding the man up with punches.

The woman in the car SCREAMS.

Helemano finally pulls Kaikona off and the man collapses, his head slamming into the pavement.

The woman jumps out of the car and kneels beside him, hysterical. Helemano investigates.

HELEMANO  
Ohhh. This is not good, Kai.

Helemano gingerly lifts the man's head, but it lolls back, a bloody mess.

HELEMANO  
Shit, I think he's dead.

Kaikona dances nervously in place.

A POLICE SIREN WAILS in the distance.

Kaikona dashes off into the night. Helemano gives chase but quickly stops and runs back to the truck.

EXT. MAKAWELI HOUSING UNITS -- NIGHT

Kaikona vaults up the front steps of one of a string of run down plantation shacks.

INT. HOME / LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Dirty dishes on a filthy table. Disrepair. Disarray.

In a far corner of the room, the blue glow of a TV screen alights KAIKONA'S FATHER (pushing 40, but looking older). He's asleep in a ratty easy chair, a beer can in his lap.

He's wearing the same kind of long-sleeved workshirt Kaikona harvested cane in.

Careful not to wake him, Kaikona moves down the hall to his  
BEDROOM

where he pulls a small, framed photo of an attractive, dark-haired YOUNG GIRL - who looks to be around his age - out of the back of his nightstand drawer.

He knots the photo in a plastic bag and shoves it into the pocket of his trunks.

He removes a loose wallboard and lifts a coffee can from the space behind it, pulls out a wad of cash.

KAIKONA'S DAD (O.S.)  
Where's that from?

His father stands in the bedroom doorway, swaying slightly. Kaikona pockets the money.

KAIKONA'S DAD  
You holdin' out on me? I gotta pay  
for everything?

Kaikona tries to slide out of the room. His father grabs him by the scruff of his neck.

KAIKONA'S DAD  
Where you goin' now?

He grabs his father's arm and twists it up behind his back.

Kaikona pushes him down the hall and into the living room. Stumbling forward, his father trips and flies face-first into a TV tray and the wall behind it.

His face is bloodied. Getting up, he smiles horribly.

KAIKONA'S DAD  
That's more like it.

Kaikona runs to the front door, enraged.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Kaikona exits just as Helemano pulls up in the pick-up, alone. Kaikona jumps in the passenger seat.

KAIKONA

Go.

HELEMANO

What's going on?

KAIKONA

Drive!

Helemano makes a tight, gravel-spitting U-turn.

INT. PICK-UP TRUCK / MOVING -- A LITTLE WHILE LATER

The truck speeds along a dark beach road.

HELEMANO

You've gotta go back. People saw you.

KAIKONA

You've gotta help me. Right now.

Kaikona takes out his wallet. He also pulls out the wad of cash. He hands it all to Helemano.

KAIKONA

Take this. After you drop me-

HELEMANO

What are you talking about? Drop you where?

KAIKONA

Goddamn it, just listen! After you drop me off, go to the airport. Right away. Promise.

HELEMANO

O.K., I promise.

KAIKONA

Buy a one-way ticket. Anywhere on the mainland that's cheap. Use my name and driver's license. Go to a ticket window with a *haole* agent, understand? They won't look twice

(MORE)

KAIKONA (CONT'D)  
at the picture. When you get  
there, fly right back. Different  
airline. Use your name. Get it?  
There's more than enough there.  
Keep the rest.

HELEMANO  
Why don't you just go?

KAIKONA  
Where am I gonna go? Huh? Where  
the hell am I gonna go?

EXT. KE'E BEACH -- LATER

The truck passes a sign announcing Ke'e Beach just before  
the road dead-ends.

Kaikona jumps out and takes his surfboard.

KAIKONA  
You were never here.

Helemano nods, speechless. They shake hands.

Kaikona runs down the empty beach and jumps on his board in  
a reef-enclosed lagoon.

In the distance, jutting out at various points along the  
moonlit coastline, the awesome cliffs of Na Pali loom.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE OVER:

15 YEARS LATER

EXT. KE'E BEACH -- MORNING

Just past sunrise on the same beach Kaikona made his exit.

A young couple (TODD & LISA, both around 30) launch a sit-  
on-top, two-man kayak into the reef enclosure. Modest  
provisions are strapped aboard.

Lisa's face is recognizable as the one tattooed on older  
Kaikona's chest.

She wears a life-vest. Todd doesn't. He holds the kayak steady in knee-deep water.

TODD  
You're sitting up front.

LISA  
No way.

TODD  
If you're in back, you've got to steer.

Lisa takes the front seat with trepidation. Todd hands her a double-ended paddle and hops in behind her, excited.

They paddle out slowly around the pink and pudgy bodies of the early-bird tourist snorkeling set.

EXT. OPEN OCEAN -- CONTINUOUS

Leaving the reef, they enter choppy open seas. The kayak's sudden pitching and rolling frightens Lisa.

LISA  
Todd...

TODD  
You're doing great. Just keep paddling, it's rougher near shore.

The kayak bucks sharply on hitting a small, cresting wave.

LISA  
No! No. This is no good.

TODD  
You're O.K. Focus. Eyes front and back straight, right? Keep your weight evenly distributed.

Lisa concentrates on Todd's instructions as they approach a small ocean swell.

TODD  
There's a bump coming. Stay loose, you're taking us right over it.

They jump the swell cleanly. Lisa lets out a little yelp as they do.

TODD  
Well, all right! See that?

Lisa laughs loudly, relieved and a little proud.

TODD  
That's my girl!

Ahead of them - Na Pali.

TODD (V.O.)  
And don't stop pitching until you  
close...

INT. KAUA`I HYATT -- TOPAZ ROOM -- DAY

A ritzy hotel conference room darkened for presentation.

Twenty casually dressed SALESPEOPLE sit at tables that  
horseshoes around a projector. A market share pie-chart  
barely lights the room.

Todd stands beside the screen that carries the image.

TODD  
Do you need to hear anything else?

An ASSISTANT opens drapes and the room is flooded with  
light. Outside: the hotel's gloriously landscaped atrium.

Green. Clipped and trimmed. Tamed.

TODD  
O.K., here's something else. Stay  
on top of your lists. Take a buyer  
to lunch. Take their boss. Three  
times a week minimum. Not the same  
buyer, of course, they'll think  
you're stalking them.

He waits for a laugh and gets it.

TODD  
Be tenacious. Where there's a will,  
there's a way.

Even dressed casually, Todd is a fashion plate. No  
sartorial detail is left unattended.

TODD

Want to add anything, Jack?

To Todd's right, JACK RENGLE (55, graying, dapper).

RENGLE

Yeah. Make your numbers and I'll be happy to drag you all back to Hawai'i for next year's meeting.

A satisfied round of applause from the troops.

RENGLE

One of you falls short, though, and no one leaves Manhattan.

Laughter.

RENGLE

Ever.

Guffaws.

RENGLE

We hit the links first thing in the AM. Check in with Todd here for your foursome assignments.

Everybody rises, stretches, gathers their things.

TODD

Tomorrow's no good. I told you, I've got plans with Lisa.

RENGLE

You're not really doing that?

A co-worker overhears.

CO-WORKER

Doing what?

RENGLE

You know we pitch Triarc Wednesday. I need you there.

TODD

I'll be back on Tuesday.

CO-WORKER

Doing what?

They move towards the door.

TODD  
We're kayaking the Na Pali Coast.

CO-WORKER  
I think I read about that.

TODD  
Totally isolated, beautiful  
beaches, crystal clear water. No  
roads in, though. Takes an eleven-  
mile hike to get there by foot.

CO-WORKER  
Sweet. What tour company? Maybe me  
and Peg'll tag along.

TODD  
No tour company.

CO-WORKER  
You're shittin' me, right? Isn't  
that open ocean?

TODD  
We're sticking to the shoreline.

EXT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE TOPAZ ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Lisa sits on the floor across from the doorway. She spots  
Todd next to Rengle and brightens, sitting up to wave.

Todd sees her and smiles. He gestures for her to wait.

RENGLE  
What does this one do?

TODD  
Lisa's a social worker. And she's  
the only one, Jack.

Rengle rolls his eyes.

RENGLE  
Where did you meet a social worker?

TODD  
Really want to know? The subway.

RENGLE

The subway?

TODD

Ubers are for prima donnas. You want to meet a real woman, ride the downtown 4.

EXT. KALALAU BEACH -- DAY

SIX NAKED TWENTY-SOMETHINGS, an equal mix of men and women, sun themselves in front of a wooden shade canopy in this postcard setting come to life.

Even undressed, adornment defines them. Extremely short hair. Extremely long hair. Dreadlocks. Tattoos. Body piercing. Scarification.

For want of a single descriptor, let's call them DROPOUTS.

Down the beach, ANOTHER DROPOUT spots a kayak rounding the cliff bluff on the far right of their ocean view. He yells up to the others.

SEVENTH DROPOUT

Movie!

The dropouts sit up and stare out at the boat. A FEW MORE DROPOUTS, in various stages of undress, emerge from the vegetation behind the beach at the call.

They take their seats near the others and watch the boat make its way in. A joint is fired up and makes the rounds.

EXT. KAYAK -- OCEAN -- CONTINUOUS

Todd and Lisa paddle. They're both worn out, but Lisa looks especially overwrought.

Even at a distance, Lisa can see the size of the big waves breaking near shore. Getting closer, growing swells rock the boat. She's extremely nervous.

LISA

What's happening?

TODD

Ocean's picking up again. Keep it together, you're doing great.

Lisa spots a chartered fishing boat coming towards them from the other direction. She's noticeably relieved.

LISA

That boat. They'll take us.

TODD

Take us where?

Todd continues paddling toward shore. A swell lifts the kayak a good three-feet high. Lisa goes pale white.

LISA

I, I can't do this. Those waves are too big. That boat can take me back to the hotel.

TODD

Back to the hotel? We're here! You're going to finish this and I'm going to help you.

LISA

(panicking)

No! Please, you're not listening to me! This, this-

Todd is focused on the wave set and the best time to land.

TODD

Now! Hit it hard!

Todd paddles furiously to make the space between the wave that broke in front of them and the one coming up from behind. Startled, Lisa joins in with chaotic strokes.

The advancing wave catches the kayak low in its crest and - for a few brief seconds - they ride it like pros. But Lisa's frantic paddle work throws the nose of the boat off.

Frightened, she jumps out and the kayak is flipped hard.

Todd and Lisa are separated in the pounding surf.

On shore, the dropouts groan at the sight of the crash. A few of them laugh loudly. None of them get up to help.

Todd comes up looking for Lisa. He spots her. She's swimming toward the next wave, out to open sea.

He swims to her quickly. She's in a panicked shock. He grabs her and spins her around.

TODD

What the hell are you doing?

LISA

Let go! LET GO!

Another wave breaks on them. Separated briefly, Todd makes his way back to Lisa. She is crying hysterically. He grabs her again, angry.

TODD

Turn around!

LISA

NO!

Another wave crashes over them. Lisa comes to the surface overwhelmed, choking. Todd is a few strokes away and moving toward her when a hand grabs her arm.

KAIKONA

Now 30 years old, Kaikona is vital and composed - with long black hair and dark, burning eyes.

He holds Lisa firmly with two hands by her upper arms and locks eyes with her.

KAIKONA

Look at me.

His voice is loud enough to break the din of the ocean but still reassuring.

Lisa immediately relaxes.

KAIKONA

Take off your life-vest.

LISA

What?

Todd makes his way toward them.

KAIKONA

Take off the lifevest or you'll drown.

(to Todd)

Get your paddles if you can find them. Forget everything else.

They both do as they're told.

Kaikona has one eye on the ocean. He keeps Lisa's back to the surf and stays cool even though a large wave is gathering momentum right behind them.

KAIKONA

When I say dive we go under. Stay under until I pull you up. Let me direct you. Swim as hard as you can in the direction I lead you. Do you understand?

LISA

Yes.

KAIKONA

Dive.

They head underwater just as the wave bears down on them.

UNDERWATER

Having swum into the wave at its break, Kaikona now reverses direction and swims hard for shore, Lisa in tow.

Continuing to change direction in deference to the pounding surf, Kaikona leads Lisa safely to the beach.

EXT. KALALAU BEACH -- CONTINUOUS

The kayak has been washed aground. Most of the provisions are still lashed on top.

Kaikona helps an exhausted Lisa to dry ground. Todd swims up carrying one paddle. He throws it on the beach and turns to Lisa immediately, piqued.

TODD

What were you thinking out there?

Hearing the confrontation, Kaikona dives back in the surf.

LISA

I, I...They were too big. I told you. I couldn't...

TODD

So you're gonna swim out to sea? Then what?

LISA

(crying)

I told you I couldn't do it. What  
do you want me to say?

Kaikona walks back up on shore carrying the missing second paddle. Watching the couple argue, he drops the paddle nearby and makes a wide berth around them.

Kaikona is agitated watching Todd berate Lisa. He stops himself from intervening. He moves up the beach, picking up his surfboard along the way.

Back at the water line, Todd restrains his temper. After taking a moment to collect himself, he embraces Lisa. She stiffens a little in his arms.

TODD

Goddamn it sweetheart, I'm sorry.

Lisa relaxes.

TODD

But you did it. Hmmm? Right?

Lisa is mollified. The couple gathers their gear and starts to make their way up the beach.

Lisa catches a glimpse of Kaikona leaving, carrying his surfboard through the brush at the top of the beach.

**REMAINDER OF SCRIPT AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**