

THE SECRET CLUB AND THE MANAFULS



FOREWORD BY EASA MOHAMED

FROM THE AUTHOR OF THE BE MANAFUL™ SERIES

DORIMALIA WAI AU

THE
SECRET CLUB
AND THE
MANAFULS



D O R I M A L I A W A I A U

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For the Māhōe

FOREWORD



Growing up in a family of thirteen gave me plenty of companionship as a child. But my heart would only fill up after I was allowed my own time to think, read, and doodle. After braving through the hormonal natural disaster that is puberty, the conclusion arrived that without creativity - especially literature - my mind stagnates and drowns in needless self-flagellation and confusion about the world. Books, especially fiction, helped me ground my own perspective yet keep it dynamic enough for people who knew me to call me open minded.

However, there weren't many other people around me who were into art and literature as far as I knew. I myself suppressed artistic talents and chose to dive into a more lucrative career, media and communications. The consequent exposure to film and tv led me to discovering HitRecord, run by Joseph Gordon-Levitt, where for the first time in my life I was able to write freely in my own voice, experimenting, learning from others. I released my creative juices like a flood. Meeting other creative minds and sharing our love for literature, photography, illustration, graphics design, and vocal expression set me free.

The first thing that hooked me into TSCM was the setting. Having been born in the island nation of Maldives, the book's Hawaiian setting appealed to me. Secondly, the story puts family values, acceptance, expression and love front and center, while still granting

our preteen characters the independence and freedom to explore and grow into their potential. While the world of Manaful they stumble into is a breathtaking escape from mundane reality, it also teaches and reminds our heroes of real world consequences of cognitive vices, especially fear of the unknown and greed for power. I also developed easy rapport with the characters, especially our three human protagonists Nicole, Pierre and Malie. Their journey of finding themselves begins when they meet each other, underscoring the importance of relationships outside of the home. It is an opportunity for them to encourage expression, discussion and appreciation for each other on equal footing.

My first reading of TSCM transported me back to the realm where children most often find joy: our imagination. As an adult I've faced constant pressure to "snap out" of my day dreaming, to get my head out of the clouds. Yet it has saved my well-being more than once and proved beneficial to my career, as well as serving as a precious hobby that uplifts my spirits. Artistic expression is a crucial part of growing up; since we are always evolving among countless distractions, we must nurture our creative prowess to root our own identities and individuality. This conviction gives me hope that a work like TSCM is valuable to the world. Stories have the power to heal. It has been a pressing desire of mine to reach the confines of the human mind through art to alleviate hate and invite unconditional love by refining our perspectives. This is why I will be co-authoring this series with Malia in the future, to explore new ideas about the mind that will help readers in real life as well as giving the joy of sparking the imagination.

It's always nice to get a creative idea or thought out there into the world. What's better is being recognized, acknowledged, and appreciated. What I put out on HitRecord relieved my mind of the burden of internalized, unexpressed ideas and the support of other creatives kept me afloat through some of the most challenging emotional moments in life. I never thought it would grow into anything else... but Malia arrived like a gust of fresh wind to envelop

me in an embrace of love and support. She introduced me to the Hawaiian concept of 'Ohana - a spiritual connection of family that is highly inclusive, allowing sibling adoptions known as hānai, as detailed in Poli'ahu Dulay's "Hawai'i Family Practice: A Form of Resistance to Settler Colonialism" (2022). The idea appealed to me, and now my heart accepts Malia as a non-biological sister in spirit.

-Easa Mohamed,
-Artist/Author

PROLOGUE

STORYTELLER IN PAPA KŌLEA, HAWAII



January 12, 2022

“You enjoy reading about magical beings. You feel your imagination flow when you read about them, yes?” Aunty Elle said to her eleven-year-old niece, Ari.

“Oh, yes, I love it. Tell me about the Manafuls you mentioned yesterday,” Ari eagerly replied.

The middle-aged Hawaiian woman and her preteen niece sat together in their mountain home on a warm, breezy morning. The cool Honolulu air wafted the scent of breadfruit and gardenia trees towards them as they reclined together on their front lanai couch.

“They live in a world unlike ours,” Aunty Elle continued.

“Manafuls are brown dwarves, some with magical powers and some who refuse their powers, the Hopohopo. Guess how they communicate?”

Ari hummed with her head tilted to the side. “Telepathically? Like space aliens?”

“Yes, but they’re not aliens. They’re from a parallel dimension.”

Ari stared at her aunt. “What’s that?”

Aunty Elle squeezed Ari’s knee and nodded, “It’s happening at the same time as Earth, except beyond a time portal.”

Ari bounced up and down. “Like a fantasy novel?” Aunty nodded.

“Yes, exactly. Though once the humans enter Manaful, Earth time stops for them,” Aunty explained.

“The clock stops for those humans popping through the portal?” Ari scratched her chin, working through this puzzle aloud. “When they come back home, the clock starts again? It’s as if they hadn’t left?”

Aunty nodded, high-fiving her. She continued her description of the Manafuls. “The dwarves communicate mentally through telepathy. You were right.” They fist-bumped.

“Do the Hopohopo, the ones who reject magic, communicate telepathically too?”

Aunty sighed, “They can, but only few do. They do purchase the use of magic to run things, as we purchase electricity and gas for our homes and cars.”

“Why would they need to purchase magic, if they could make things run themselves with their own magic?” Ari frowned. That confused her.

“Their rejection of Mana prevents them from learning how to utilize its force and power.” Aunty answered.

“That’s just sad, Aunty, I don’t understand the Hopohopo. Like an angel cutting off its wings and powers, refusing to fly and heal humans. Let’s get back to telepathy. I want to read minds too, Aunty. What about you?”

Aunty Elle frowned, “I wouldn’t want to read people’s minds, Ari. Some people have ugly thoughts.”

“Oh, yeah, I can imagine those bullies at my school. I know what’s in their head,” Ari nodded knowingly about mind-reading.

“Bullies?” Aunt Elle’s voice raised slightly. “Has something happened to you at school?”

Ari sighed, “Not to me, but I see it happening.”

“What do you do?” Aunt Elle kept calm, hiding her worry.

Ari wiggled in her seat. “If the bullies knew that I snitched, they’d hurt me too. So, it’s our secret, okay?”

Aunty Elle nodded grimly.

“If that happens to me, I’d tell my counselor and give them the

bullies' names," Ari turned away from her aunt and whispered as if ashamed.

Aunty Elle grabbed Ari by the shoulders and bent to look Ari in the eyes. "You'd be doing the right thing, Ari. The counselors know what to do. There are rules to protect people who help. I'm glad you don't physically or verbally intervene. I wouldn't want you to get hurt."

Ari nodded, and they hugged. Aunty Elle shook out her hands to ease the tension, making Ari laugh.

"Let's get back to that story, Aunty!"

"Telepathy would be a fun gift, Ari. Would you want it?"

Ari smooched her lips in thought. "Yes, and no. I like the sharing of thoughts, Aunty Elle, but I wouldn't want people creeping into my head to read them without my permission."

Aunty gave her a one-armed hug. "Oh, my dear, all Manafuls project their thoughts and receive others' thoughts," Aunty Elle explained.

"Are there good and bad Manafuls?" Ari frowned.

"They aren't inherently good nor bad," Aunty sighed. "Some make negative or catastrophic choices."

Ari understood. "Oh, that's just like us. We may have grown up learning bad things and making bad choices, right?"

"The Manafuls do that too," Aunty Elle pointed out.

"Let's get back to the Manafuls' telepathy, Aunty."

"They communicate in many languages verbally and telepathically."

"What languages are those?" Ari asked.

"Any language in the universe," Aunty said, "It's called magic. All things are possible."

"What! Wow, I want those powers, Aunty! That and telepathy too."

Aunty Elle smiled, "Wouldn't we all, dear. Hey, Ari, maybe we could get to the story now, hmmm?"

Ari laughed and bobbed her head on her neck sassily. "Hey. Don't let me hold you back!" Ari checked the other side of her aunty for a bag. "I don't see any book with you, Aunty. Who wrote this Manaful story?"

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“I did, Ari. It’s mine. I’m making it up as we go. Are you going to give me a chance?”

Ari smiled and clapped, “Of course. I was just pulling your leg. I love your stories. Let me have it!”

Aunty raised her brows. “You promise not to interrupt?”

Ari sighed. “Don’t you like my questions? You said to always ask questions. ‘Don’t be afraid to ask!’”

“True. You’re right.” Ari preened.

“Let’s begin.” Aunty Elle folded her hands before her.

“Okay.” The little girl mimed zipping her mouth, but a giggle came out. “Hee hee.”

Aunty Elle smiled, hugging Ari. They lay back together on the sofa. The story began.

ONE

MANAFUL WORLD



January 12, 2022

Koa Forest

“Some humans don’t understand how to love,” Elder Puna, a Manaful elder, telepathically projected to his grandson, Ikaika. The brown-skinned duo wore only clothing of their family color—red. The pair stood out amid hundred-foot tall koa trees, leaves caressed the pair as they fell to the forest floor. The branches brushed Ikaika’s shoulder and his grandfather’s glowing robe like “Hellos” to a beloved. Soft feathery touches of plumeria reached out to the grandfather and grandson soft voices in the wind, *“Hey, we’re here too, we understand love!”* Elder Puna turned from Ikaika, lifting his hands at the columns of bark of various textures and fibers telepathically answering his verdant family, *“Aloha, dear ones, I know you do.”*

Koa, the tree leader of the forest, stepped forward, bowed, and answered, *“We will help you welcome this new group of young humans to our home.”* Koa’s towering presence emanated wisdom and peace, he swayed his body from tree top to roots. The reverberating sounds echoed around the dwarves as all the other trees matched Koa’s rhythmic dance.

Bump...bump...bump... A heartbeat flowing energetic power through each limb, each vein of the hollow trees.

Koa invited the elder to dance, *“Join me.”*

Elder Puna wrapped his arms around Koa in a dwarf/tree ballroom partnership. They seemingly floated in the air. Koa's steps formed a pattern on the forest floor. The other koa trees formed pairs, intertwining their branchy limbs in dancing duos. Ikaika laughed as his grandfather's robe formed hands in its luminous textile to swing the youngster around behind his grandfather. Koa, Elder Puna, and Ikaika now formed a whimsical conga-line, swerving around other koa trunks. Ikaika was swept away by the emanating glow of his grandpa's robe and Koa's forestry energy.

After a while, Koa and the forest fell back into place, bowing to Elder Puna who bowed back. *"Your musical gifts captivate my soul, Koa. Mahalo as always for that dance. Yes, please join us in our welcoming chant to the human children."*

Koa and his trees answered together, *"We would be honored, Elder Puna, we are forever in your service."*

Elder Puna shook his head immediately, *"Wrong, my tree 'ohana, we are as one in service to the Source. Align with Mana."*

Koa and his trees bowed again and echoed him, *"Align with Mana."*

Elder Puna smiled at Koa and the other tree barks who blushed beneath his attention. For a flicker of a second they adopted a lighter beige hue. Ikaika skipped between them tapping their lower branches like high-fives, absorbing their joy. Elder Puna's and Koa's laughter at Ikaika's behavior resounded around them creating a sweet melody once again.

Koa stretched himself wider offering his trunk as a Shimmering Wall, *"Here, create your screen against me, so you may observe your preteens."*

Elder Puna acknowledged Koa's offer, *"Mahalo,"* before lifting his hand and conjuring the magical 20 x 20 foot Shimmery Wall against the grand tree's body. The Wall served as a viewing and time-traveling portal between Earth and their world, Manaful.

They observed the Wright Middle schoolers. The grandfather and grandson telepathically projected their thoughts, or projections,

as the elder just had with Koa. It was the type of communication that came most naturally for their people.

Ikaika lost his grandfather's original train of thought. He wondered instead how he'd explain to the preteen guests Manafu's various types of communication. There were so many layers and depths. A pink butterfly landed on Ikaika's shoulder, hearing his thoughts. When he was with his grandfather, he sometimes let his mind screen fall. That wasn't wise for many reasons. The butterfly twittered its delicate wings to get Ikaika's attention.

He laughed, turning his head sideways to see her. *"I feel you! I was lost in thought."* He stuck his finger to his shoulder. She hopped on so he could bring her before him. He liked speaking eye to eye with the glorious being.

Pinky, the butterfly, projected into Ikaika's mind, *"That's exactly right. You were lost in thought and I could see right into your head, my friend. You must protect yourself. If I can hear you, imagine who else could?"* Its gentle black legs squeezed Ikaika's pointer finger encouragingly.

Ikaika blew a gentle breath on his friend, *"I know. When Grandpa's around, I take for granted that he'll screen us both. Perhaps he got distracted when we danced with Koa."*

Pink giggled as the tickling breath lifted her left wing, *"Perhaps, Elder Puna wants you to learn how to protect yourself, as I do for my mind and emotions."*

Ikaika bowed to Pinky, forming a bowl with his two hands. She instinctively jumped between his fingers to wave her wings up and down. The delicate fluttering tickled Ikaika's palms, giving him warm fuzzies. Her tinkling laughter filled his heart. She winked at him before lifting up with the breeze.

"Watch your mind and emotions, Ikaika, put up your mind screen at all times. Don't rely on others to do it for you," she projected over her shoulder.

"Yes, Pinky, mahalo always. Be safe!" Ikaika projected to his lovely friend as she became a speck in the sun rays glistening through the koa canopy.

"Pinky's right, Ikaika," Elder Puna tapped Ikaika's elbow, guiding

his attention back to the Wall. *“Keep building and strengthening your invisible screen around your mind and heart.”*

Ikaika ran his hands through his hair, *“It’s confusing, Grandpa. Who do I let in? Who do I allow to hear my thoughts and feelings?”*

Elder Puna raised his hand towards Ikaika’s head. The tension within his grandson’s body disappeared. Ikaika’s shoulders relaxed as he let out a sigh of relief.

“I love when you do that!” He appreciated the peace his grandfather gave him. He nudged his grandpa’s foot with his own in thanks. The impish Cloth of his grandfather’s robe reached out again to Ikaika, tickling his toes. Ikaika fell to the ground attempting to halt the robe’s glowy spry fingers, *“Ha, ha, stop that, Cloth!”*

Ikaika skittered backwards like a crab to escape Puna’s living robe. His grandfather’s red floor-length elder’s robe represented the Manaful ‘Ohana leader status. The waist tie and floor-length garment was made of shinny, magical bioluminescent fibers within the textile. The red, orange, and pink shades moved with his motions as if the colors were afire. It also had a living personality. Sometimes, like now, Cloth reached out to others for fun. Ikaika’s earliest memories were being held by his grandpa and Cloth, the latter would become warm or cool whenever it was necessary. It massaged as well as tickled forming fingers with the luminescent threads.

Ikaika stood up, keeping a fair distance now from his grandfather and the tickling Cloth. Elder Puna chuckled at Ikaika’s distrusting expression towards his robe.

“You will know who to trust with your thoughts and heart,” Elder Puna brought them back to their conversation on mind-screening.

“Yet, I must always stay on guard and keep the screens up, just in case? Even around you?” Ikaika’s face was serious again.

“There are great forces out there who prey upon the open minds and hearts of Manafuls,” Elder Puna gravely looked at his grandson.

Ikaika pursed his lips to focus on the impromptu review lesson at hand. *“As far back as I can remember, Grandpa, you’d say, ‘Put up your screen! Talk to your mind, heart, and spirit – don’t let your attention stray*

from them! When you are not aware of them at all times, your screen is down. Anyone or anything can manipulate you, control you.”

Elder Puna nodded, lifting his hand to his heart. *“Good work, Grandson, that’s the key. Remember that.”*

Ikaika beamed with pride at his grandfather’s praise. He did a little happy dance, the rainbow pebbles on the forest floor celebrated with him. They rose up on their pointest edges to wiggle by his feet. The rounder pebbles jumped on their pokier pals’ shoulders to join in on the happy moment. The clicking of their bumpy surfaces rattled the floor beneath Ikaika and Elder Puna. Creating a wave effect, the flowers stood up taller, opening and closing their petals in time. The bees bounced too though a little off-beat. They were semi-laden with pollen and awaiting their landing flower pad to regain stability.

Elder Puna shook his head at his grandson’s ability to rouse everything around him. He couldn’t hold back a chuckle, since the child’s energetic glee had always been contagious. The elder raised his hand and a calm came over the forest again. The pebbles did one last clicking together, the flowers sighed contentedly, and the bees felt relief for the opportunity to get back to work. Even the ants, who’d stopped in their march to watch the party, bowed to Elder Puna and proceeded with their duties.

Elder Puna raised his brows pointedly at Ikaika, redirecting to the Wall.

Ikaika winked at his grandfather. *“What did you mean when you said some humans don’t understand love? I see parental love and romance. It’s a middle school. Love is in the air everywhere!”* He was back on track.

“Many humans do not understand each other! Aye, how’s an old fellow supposed to explain love?” Elder Puna lifted his arms akimbo frustratedly. For a dwarf of three and half millennia in age, he had impressive biceps. Ikaika squeezed his grandfather’s muscles. The elder didn’t flinch; he merely raised a brow at his playful grandson.

“Wow, you’ve been lifting weights?” Ikaika poked.

Elder Puna’s hairy armpits made Ikaika giggle.

“They look like us, Elder Puna, and they seem about my age,” Ikaika observed.

“Time is not the same in their world, Ikaika. The Manaful to human age ratio is different,” Elder Puna projected.

“Do they use telepathy like us, Grandpa?” Ikaika projected.

“Some humans on Earth do. I sense some powerful people there. With the preteens, we’ll be able to project into their minds,” Elder Puna answered.

“Won’t that scare them?” Ikaika projected worriedly.

“They’ll adjust. They have heard of those who possess telepathic gifts,” Elder Puna projected.

Ikaika frowned at his grandfather. *“Are they dangerous? Why are we inviting preteens into our world if they are loveless?”*

Tired of peering through the Shimmery Wall portal, Ikaika began to play on Koa’s roots. Ikaika balanced his agile dwarf limbs on the gigantic foot holdings. Koa loved to play with the young dwarf, moving his roots left and right. Ikaika struggled to land steadily on the moving roots. It was a dialed-up form of hopscotch since the floor pattern here was a living being. Ikaika tried to stretch his arms and legs in a surfer’s stance for balance. Koa lifted Ikaika and tipped him over as an ocean wave would. Ikaika almost fell over the roots as a surfer would over the falls. He caught himself at the last moment. His out of breath laughter warmed Koa and his tree brothers and sisters. They clapped their branches together for Ikaika’s surfing performance. The pounding of wood created a secondary wave pattern catching Ikaika by surprise this time. He fell on his saronged butt on the wet mossy ground. This lifted the trees’ cheerful vibe even further. The koa trees shook together, leaves falling softly around the dwarf like snowflakes in a winter wonderland. Thousands of birds burst from their branches in a symphony of surprised squawking. The child entertained the forest endlessly.

Ikaika learned his lesson not to mess with Koa’s wily roots. He brushed the damp earth from his bottom, moving to stand behind his grandpa. Koa never messed with grandpa. Before returning to his portal lesson, Ikaika stuck his tongue out at Koa, *“Ha! Can’t trip me from here!”* The Shimmery Wall mounted on Koa’s trunk shook a little. Elder Puna raised his brow at both of them. Koa immediately

stood up straighter as did Ikaika. His grandpa, used to his grandson teasing everything and everyone around him, winked at Koa.

Focused again on his portal class, Ikaika projected, *“What are they wearing? Why are their clothes so complicated?”* He looked down at his simple yet dirty attire. He conjured a new sarong. A cleaner version immediately replaced the soiled one, wrapping itself lovingly around him. His clothes were alive too albeit not as glittery as his grandpa’s.

“Ikaika, we have been watching them your entire life. You tell me why they wear varied clothing,” Elder Puna projected, testing his grandson.

“Well, Gramps, human societies have changed over time. Some humans are still nude, depending on their culture. Others have thinner or thicker clothing due to their geography,” Ikaika projected. Elder Puna nodded and waved Ikaika to share more of his observations.

“Errrr. Clothing types depend on their time period and subculture, too,” Ikaika puffed with pride as he projected what he remembered.

“You know a lot, Ikaika. You need to trust what’s up here and in here,” Elder Puna projected, pointing to his head and heart.

Ikaika preened again, sharing a smile with a passing Jackson chameleon who projected a quick, *“You, go Buddy!”* before crawling into a koa tree crevasse.

“Is this Manaful’s first encounter with humans? Why are we inviting those particular three preteens?” Ikaika projected.

“No, these are not the first humans. As for why, it’s about being aligned with Mana.”

“Don’t you mean being in Manaful? How can they align with Mana if they’re humans?” Ikaika projected, squishing his brows to understand.

“You’ll see,” Elder Puna projected as he raised his arms to the Shimmery Wall portal to Earth. Ikaika suddenly straightened up. He closed his eyes to absorb his grandfather’s Mana, or power. The elder turned to Koa, silently asking for the forests’ accompaniment. Suddenly the trees around the pair lifted their roots from the ground in a stomping motion. Rhythmic beats echoed through the towering trunks. The koas marched in place, nodding their treetops in time with the

beat. The wind added its part too, providing a whistling harmony sparking a windfall of change. First the birds grumbled as their footholds kept swaying too and fro. Then the frogs chirped and croaked in varied high and low patterns. Wolves howled to the sky. Snakes rattled and hissed with pleasure. Chicken from a neighboring meadow, wanting to participate too, clucked and crowed. Every Being wanted to support the dwarves, providing a spiritual symphony.

Elder Puna began to chant their welcoming song to the special trio of youths. Ikaika sang with him.

Elder Puna and Ikaika's Welcoming Chant:

“We welcome you, dear children.
There is a place for you here outside of time.
A place to rise above the words outside and within that hurt you.
A place of presence power in the now.
A place to heal somehow.
A place of presence power in the now
A place to heal somehow.
A place to heal.
A place to be.
A place to be.
A place to truly see.
A place to truly see.
The purpose of being is to be in harmony.
The purpose of being is to be in harmony.
To simply be.
To simply be.”

Elder Puna's and Ikaika's song vibrated through the Shimmery Wall between Earth and Manaful. Voices carry.

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