- FROM JONAH WITH LOVE BY A.C.R. -

To my beloved Abby,

Sorry for the big delay, darling! I know it's been a month without news, one cannot just have enough of going adventuring and tell that to Lara Croft! Let me tell you something special that happened to me last week hoping you'll forgive me for my lateness:

It was one of those warm and soothing days in the splendid Spanish meadows. The lady went into some tomb raidering mood in a nearby cave, claiming that it belonged to a fabled Spanish traveler and a terrible curse that doomed his fleet.

When I hear the word "curse", I'm always concerned, my eyes have seen too much to confirm that there are things to fear or to be amazed out there and that escape any logic. But that doesn't stop Lara from pursuing her goals and that's no more than knowing the truth, if any... (and of course, retrieving some ancient trinkets too, mind you!).



I decided that it'd be best for both of us to stay outside and lay my back on an old olive tree. And it's that I love chilling out, plain simple. I hate any sort of stress. For that, I have my job.

So I took a small book out of my pocket - I always take it with me in our endeavors, it's like a kind of a personal amulet - and under the shadow of the old olive tree, I sat and started reading it at ease.
The sun wasn't very hot and hardly one could hear any sounds with the exception of birds singing and the gentle moving grass because of the subtle breeze. Not a problem of course, they're like music to my ears and I just love them!

The book I was reading was called "La Felicidad de Katy". I bought it in a Spanish street bazaar full of collectibles that'd make your jaw drop. It's the one I visit the most in Spain. The cover was exquisite. It clicked on me immediately and since I'm still learning Spanish, I thought it was a nice opportunity to keep expanding my knowledge.
At first, I was sure the story was about a girl (the one in the cover), but as I was making my way through it, I realized that Katy was the girl's kitty!

It's a well-written one, the read is beautiful: part poetry and part prose, just the kind of stuff I fancy! Well, one hour passed since the first word I perused and in the middle of such a placid atmosphere, I fell asleep. Duh! That's being me! You'll get used to it, hehehe!



And where was Lara? I just didn't know it... Yeah, not so nice, I admit it... But she's a survivor and a survivor is someone who has gone through hell yet keeps on living and I knew for sure she'd be back with me at any time.

All I wanted was some sleep and to dream. Who could blame me for that?
It was because of the story of the book that I began remembering my beloved dog, my little child, my precious.

I was little, playing and running freely along the streets of my humble neighborhood in Hawaii. I remember my grandma saying that she had a big surprise for me and once at home, there was Palila waiting. She was run over by a truck and was left abandoned near the small market, close to a pile of rubbish, in a very bad condition...

My grandma took her to our home, healed her wounds with those skinny and calloused hands and gave her some food and water, slowly but steadily. The days that followed were hard as Palila was suffering from pain, but eventually she overcame it and gained lots of strength and liveliness...

She was my best friend during all those tough times my brother and I had to face. And no doubt I'll always be indebted to my greatly cherished grandma for bringing us such a graceful and irreplaceable creature, as she was a much needed blow of fresh air.

She was cared for, pampered, treated as one of us... She was part of my family. And we saw her growing up, walking, jumping, playing, enjoying her funny cakes full of treats on her birthdays every year...

Heh, I even remember one Halloween in Hawaii. Have you ever been there? Well, trust me, you've never seen something that impressive. There was this Keiki Costume Contest and my brother and I made our own scary costumes for it and Palila got one as well! We were the sensation at the festival and we won our first-ever prize! I must have a photo of it somewhere in my flat, you'll see this fond memory of mine once we're back.

13 years of life passed like the blink of an eye and I was close to traveling to New Zealand to prepare myself for military service.
I clearly remember that morning... As usual, we went for a walk, came home and suddenly, Palila got ill shortly after turning 14. I was desperate, I didn't know what to do, there was no one at home...

But I finally gathered some determination and took Palila to the clinic. I had to leave her there... It was the first time in 14 years that she was left alone in an unknown place. We were both terribly scared. I had a deep pain in my heart.

I was allowed to visit her some days in the week, but I never got a diagnosis or what was going on with my dog, only that she had to stay there and that it was the right thing to do.
For someone of my age, to be told this is the right thing to do is to take the bitter with the sweet. And at some point, during my visits, a doctor finally dared to pronounce those fateful words no one ever asked for.



However, I wasn't giving up on Palila in that grayish and cold place to begin with. Maybe me being selfish, I took her back home and grandma was already there asking me what had happened. The news wasn't the best obviously, so she prepared a comfy bed of cushions for Palila and I sat by her side, petting all the time, making my girl feel the best. She could hardly move, but we just covered all her necessities, every hour, every day...

Heh, maybe what happened in the following weeks was just a mere coincidence, or maybe not, who knows. It was Christmas and through the windows, we could see lots of amazing fireworks and you could hear everyone in the street greeting each other with a "Mele Kalikimaka" (Merry Christmas in Hawaiian).

I was eating my delicious spam musubi: a grilled slice of spam (processed ham) with rice wrapped in nori, when suddenly, the doorbell rang. We weren't expecting visitors, so that was strange. But I opened the door and there was nobody there! When I came back to the living-room I couldn't believe - neither my brother nor our grandma - what we were all witnessing right there: Palila was standing on her fours, waving her tail happily... She was so low-spirited in the past days and then, she was incredibly lively as she used to be! I mean, her legs were a little wobbly and she was still a tad weak, but she had changed completely!



That was even stranger than the doorbell incident hehehe, I've always liked to think that an angel was there, only that I couldn't see it, got inside the house and somehow revived my beloved dog.

As I said way before, my eyes have seen enough to believe there are things that escape any logic. Whether it was something heavenly or not at the end, what really mattered was that Palila was miraculously recovered.
We were so happy! You should have seen us, Abby! It was the same feeling of happiness that you inspired me when we first met in Kuwaq Yaku.

At some point after this though, during my military service, I got a call from grandma. Palila had left us in peace in the middle of her sleep. She got over so many obstacles, she brought us so much joy and life... She was a living fire.
But ultimately, I had to understand that it was finally the time to leave and reach paradise. She was a prodigy, a true survivor...

Oh and by the way, just in case you ask my love, Palila is Hawaiian for "Little Bird", just like my dear Lara. I always call her that... Somehow, she reminds me of Palila: I guess it's because of her bravery, her smile, her pure heart even if she has doubts, the way she looks at something or at you... She brightens a day even if covered in dark clouds.



When I woke up from this touching slumber, I put my book-amulet back into my pocket, I shed some tears and sighed, looking everywhere, longing for those times that passed. I stared at the horizon for a moment and I must add it was really beautiful: the orange sun of the sunset was surrounded by reddish clouds, all layered on a precious pinkish sky. They say Spanish sunsets are among the best in the world and I can rightly confirm that!
And just there, in the middle of such a stunning view, my little bird was waiting for me. She had a gold horn in her right hand, probably it was the hidden artifact in the cave that caused the curse and doomed the Spanish traveler's fleet. And in a flash, I swear to you babe, I believe I saw Palila next to Lara. It was magical!

We ended up visiting José's tavern in Zaragoza, his tapas are just pure perfection: Lara loves fritters and I always go with some spanish omelet first. It's a classic! I promise I'll take you to José's some day!

Now, we're heading to the north of Europe, there's a mystery involving spectral lights and tremors. The kind of stuff I'm not prepared for at all, but oh well...
I really want to see you, ko'u aloha (my love). It'll be Christmas soon and I hope to be back with you at home once we finish this job. Wait for me, please!

Always yours,

Jonah.