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Historical

A Queen's Journey: An unfinished novel about Hawaii's last monarch
James D. Houston
Heyday
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A beloved queen overthrown by outside forces and a novel unfinished at the time of the author's death—both evoke our sympathy and sense of injustice.

The story opens at a party in Honolulu Harbor in 1868, when the narrator, Julius, is introduced to the vivacious Lydia Dominis. Thirty years later they are reunited in Boston. In between she has become Queen Liliuokalani and, after a short reign, been forced to abdicate.

Even a former queen is news and Julius, a freelance journalist, begins serving as her press secretary, first in Boston and then on a visit to Washington DC. In Washington, the Queen meets with President Grover Cleveland and hosts a reception for wives of politicians. Julius intercepts a message threatening the Queen's life; she dismisses the danger, claiming to be protected by an old Hawaiian curse.

Like all good fiction, the book leaves many questions unanswered. Who is making the death threat? How is Liliuokalani involved in the plots to restore the monarchy? What is the curse Julius will hear her utter? These threads are introduced, but not yet woven together.

A Queen's Journey was planned by James Houston as the third book in a trilogy about California and the Pacific Rim. The first novel, *Snow Mountain Passage*, described the story of the Donner Party as they tried to cross the Sierra Nevada mountain range into California. The second, *Bird of Another Heaven*, narrated the eastward journey from Hawaii to San Francisco by David Kalakaua, Hawaii's last king. This third book was to have a larger scope, addressing questions of national sovereignty that resonate today. Houston's other books include *Farewell to Manzanar*, cowritten with his wife, Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, and *Where Light Takes Its Color from the Sea: A California Notebook*.

Although unfinished, this book paints a vibrant portrait of Queen Liliuokalani and Hawaii during the second half of the nineteenth century, a time when forces in the United States sought the annexation of the islands in order to gain a permanent base in the Pacific. It should

appeal to readers familiar with Houston's other writing, lovers of historical fiction, and those interested in American and Hawaiian history.

This attractive, pocket-size volume, with a foreword by Alan Cheuse and afterword by Maxine Hong Kingston, is a memorial to both the late author and his subject, Hawaii's last queen.

Karen Ackland