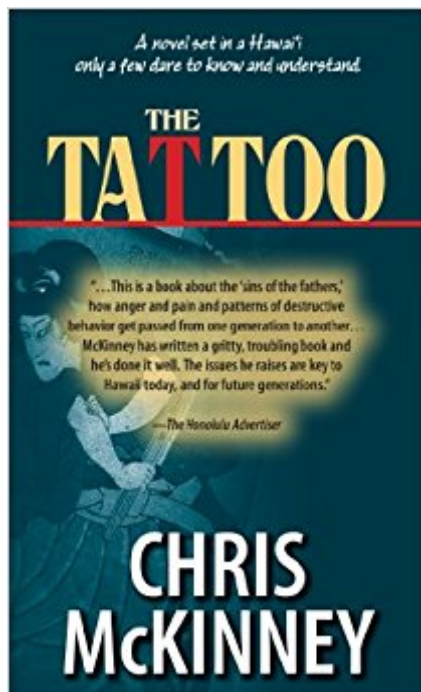


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The Tattoo



Synopsis

Set in contemporary Hawaii, *The Tattoo* reveals a side of paradise not usually seen as it traces the life of Ken Hideyoshi, a young man with a troubled past. Orphaned by his mother at an impressionably young age, Ken grows up with an abusive, distant father unable to communicate anything but anger. His teen years are spent on a roller coaster as he tries to deal with a growing inner rage.

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Customer Reviews

Adult/High School
• This is the story of one prisoner's life told to another. The listener is Cal, a white, onetime racist tattoo artist who lost his voice when his throat was cut in a prison fight. He is serving a long sentence on one of the Hawaiian Islands. Over the years, he has become the kind of man other prisoners feel safe talking to—partly because he can't repeat what they say, but also because they trust the sense of peace he has found in his own silence and the time he has served. Cal's new cellmate is Ken, a Japanese man raised in Hawaii—and an outsider like Cal. He has Cal give him a large, symbolic tattoo on his back as he tells his rich though troubled tale. Ken recounts his childhood friendship with a doomed, modern-day Hawaiian prince and the decaying world he ruled. He found himself the muscle man for a bar-owning, prostitution-ring-running, loan-sharking Korean woman. Falling in love with her daughter was just one of the reasons that he ended up behind bars. Teens will appreciate the many deep, complicated relationships. The language and realities are rough, but there is much compassion and wisdom to balance them.
• Will Marston, Berkeley Public Library, CA Copyright © Reed Business

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Set in contemporary Hawaii, *The Tattoo* reveals a side of paradise not usually seen as it traces the life of Ken Hideyoshi, a young man with a troubled past. Orphaned by his mother at an impressionably young age, Ken grows up with an abusive, distant father unable to communicate anything but anger. His teen years are spent on a roller coaster as he tries to deal with a growing inner rage. Far from the sunny beaches and crystal blue ocean, Ken's world is one of mud shores and polluted waters. Drawn into Hawaii's underworld, with its hostess bars, strip bars, and massage parlors, Ken falls in love with Claudia Choy, the daughter of the rich and powerful Korean woman who presides over an empire built on the peddling of flesh. This sets in motion a chain of events that has unexpected consequences as Ken continues his struggle to control the samurai spirit that haunts and teases him into action. Told by Ken from inside the walls of Halawa Prison, this is the story of a man searching for truth. And, ultimately, for the answer to the most human of all questions: do we have the power to shape who we ultimately become?

I'm a Haole transplant in Hawaii, from NY. I read this book so I could tutor an at-risk student here. This was a fascinating read for so many reasons. Firstly, it is a look into the poor, adolescent culture that teaches boys that survival means being able to fight, and an illustration of how much easier it is to be involved in the drug culture, and how difficult it is to escape the caste system. Secondly, the book illustrated some reasons why anger and resentment at the dominant white culture erupted. Ken was Japanese and had to defend his racial identity against Haoles, Hawaiians, and other ethnic groups. Claudia was part Korean, and suffered constant racial jibes from Ken's father. The Hawaiian young people were resentful of how their home was overtaken by foreigners. Koa, Ken's Hawaiian friend, "hated all of them...They'd taken his land. They killed his culture and therefore they'd taken his humanity." Cal, the white tattoo artist in prison, who had a Nazi tattoo, thought "I'd been a student of hate, too." Thirdly, one must wonder about Ken's father's influence and how Ken might have turned out differently if his mother, an educated Japanese woman, had lived. Her influence was always at the back of his mind, which is probably why he strove to be a better person. Environment won, and he ended up a murderer in prison. The prison system! A very realistic indictment. Lastly, McKinney illustrated how young people here are brought up to love and respect the ocean and its creatures. Surfing, spearfishing, and diving were all part of those young people's lives. I know I will be looking for more of Chris McKinney's books. I think this should be made into a

film. It's quite a story, one that I loved reading and was sorry when it ended. I taught language arts to adolescents for 32 years. If it were not for the gritty language and brutality, I would recommend it as classroom reading. Parental permission would be required. I promise, students will love it.

Just starting to read this book and enjoying it! I've become a Chris McKinney fan and have bought several titles for future reads. Started with my friend lending me "Bolohead Row"! I can relate to the characters as well, as have either experienced similar situations or know people that are almost like the characters that he depicts! A fast and easy read!

I've read this book over 20 times. We use it in a classroom to teach students how choices you make can have a serious impact on your life. Recommended only for high school and up, some graphic details, and lots of swearing. Captures the everyday language used by locals, so may be hard for those not familiar with local slang to catch on.

Extremely gripping read. Painted a painfully honest and disturbing picture of the other side of paradise. Incredibly authentic and "local," its themes as to the importance of friendship, loyalty and love resonate far beyond its island setting. Juxtaposing the natural beauty of Oahu with the harsh reality of life on the fringe, it is a Hawaiian "Once Were Warriors" and begs to be turned into a movie.

Chris McKinney shows you the side of Hawaii that is never really talked about. Yes there is palms trees, blue water, and sand. But, that's jut on the surface. This book delves into many unknowns and the journey will surprise many.

I've been wanting to know why people murder in paradise. This story offers a critical and analytical look into local Hawaiian society and culture. The writing is good and the storytelling par excellence. I hope I get to meet the author someday and thank him in person.

Loved the characters, the seediness, the rawness of this book, especially narrated in Hawaiian pidgin English. Locals should read this book in no time!

This was recommended to me by someone who lives in Hawaii. I was looking for another point of view as to what it meant to be from "paradise". This tense and gripping book did not disappoint

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