

Excerpt from “Ellie’s Blanket”
by Desi Poteet

When Mrs. Kalama opened her door to my tentative knock and I saw her face break into a smile, my bravado slipped away. I sipped hot green tea and sniffed into a crumpled tissue while she *tisk*ed *tisk*ed and *cluck*ed *cluck*ed about the unexpected challenges life brings.

“Have you ever paddled?”

“In a canoe?” I asked.

“Good therapy,” Mrs. Kalama said, pouring more hot water into my cup.

“I was thinking more along the lines of starting a practice here.”

She shook her head firmly. “Therapy first. You can’t help others until you’re—“
“I’m fine. Really.”

Mrs. Kalama nodded slowly, a smile forming on her lips. “Wait here,” she said, as she disappeared down the hallway. I glanced around the room. Framed photographs of her family hung on walls and sat on bookshelves. Four kids. A full life. I could hear drawers and cupboards being opened and closed. She returned carrying a box, which she set down in front of me.

“After my husband passed, my aunty taught me this. It takes practice. Patience. But it helps. You’ll see.”

I peered into the box, its contents a jumbled mix of unfamiliar wooden objects and plastic bags filled with wool. I picked up two wooden square paddles with sharp metal teeth.

“Those are carders. To clean and prepare the wool.”

“And this?” I asked, holding up a wooden dowel, less than a foot long. One end of the dowel connected to the center of a small, flat wooden disk, measuring three to four inches in diameter.

“That’s the secret to spinning your way into balance.”

During my first week at my new home, I made daily trips to Kona, Hilo, Waimea and towns in between, hunting for the perfect lamp, quilt, table, vase and other furnishings to create the ideal space at my new haven in Kūla‘iloa. Every morning I passed Mrs. Kalama’s box of therapy sitting in a corner of the living room and promised myself I’d spin in the waning glow of the afternoon sun when I returned from my latest expedition. But every afternoon would find me sitting cross-legged on the wrap-around deck watching the sheep earning their keep as lawnmowers, near a breadfruit tree in the meadow.

Ben called late one afternoon the second week. “Just checking in,” he said.

“How’s Ellen?” I asked.

“Feeling great. I mean she’s over morning sickness. She seems to be craving blueberries and chocolate this week.”

I looked over at Mrs. Kalama’s box in the corner. “I’m making a baby blanket.”

“A baby blanket?”

“With wool. Remember all those sheep we saw when we were looking at the property?”

“You’re settling in then?”

I looked around the living room. Barren. I had nothing to show for the countless hours of browsing through store after store.

“I feel right at home,” I said, reaching for the box I’d ignored.