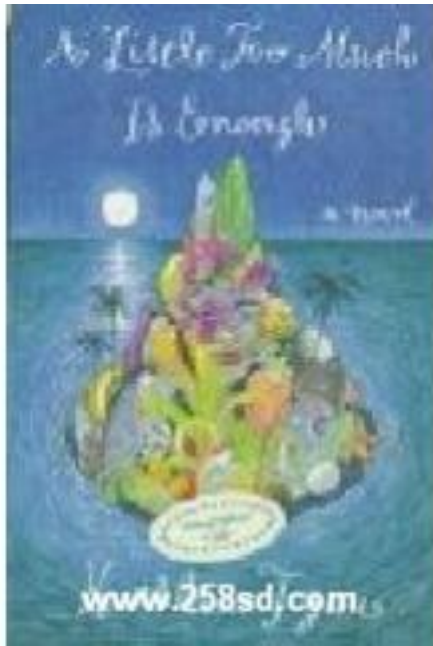


A Little Too Much Is Enough



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著者:

出版者:

出版时间:

装帧:

isbn:9780374189501

From Publishers Weekly Tyau's first novel, set in Honolulu during the years following WWII, is an evocative story of a Hawaiian girl whose extended family blends Chinese and Japanese traditions with the changing values of Hawaiian and American culture. In short chapters, we are guided through family meals, gatherings and outings by hip, young Suzanne Mahealani? "Mahi" for short? who, unlike the older generation of women in her clan, eventually goes to college, in Oregon. Mahi's voice is strong, but it can't carry the whole story line, which suffers from loose and sometimes confusing chronology and plotting. Still, Mahi conveys the rhythm of life on the island for a restless teenager and makes sharp observations about numerous, often hilarious family eating scenes: "At every nine-course dinner, as far back as I can remember, Auntie Nona waited until the food came out and we were ready to dive in.

Then she'd make us wait while she took a picture. In all her photos, our heads are chopped off, but the food looks great." This light novel with serious moments conjures well the mood of the islands, which seem no longer exotic but still rich in folk wisdom. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Mahi is the young protagonist in Tyau's warmly rendered novel featuring a delightful (and vast) Chinese-Hawaiian clan living on the island of Oahu. Tyau tells her tale in a series of vignettes that occur after World War II, developing a vivid, enveloping portrait of the girl's formative years surrounded by a loving group of uncles and aunts, grandparents, siblings, and devoted parents. Each family member contributes a valuable link to precious traditions that will shape the adult Mahi is destined to become. Tyau's sparkling dialogue reveals the cadences of a spoken English influenced by both the Hawaiian and Chinese languages, especially when depicting rituals revolving around the preparation of food. Even though the experience is vicarious, it is still satisfying to share the lively meals in Tyau's often poignant narrative. Alice Joyce

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