



# Mai Tai One On

*Jill Marie Landis*

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## **Mai Tai One On** Jill Marie Landis

Six months ago, if anyone would have told Em Johnson she'd end up divorced, broke, and running the dilapidated Tiki Goddess Bar on the magical North Shore of Kauai she would have told them to shove a swizzle stick up their okole.

As if all that isn't bad enough, when an obnoxious neighbor with a grudge is found dead in the Goddess luau pit, suspicion falls on Em and the rest of the Goddess staff. With the help of a quirky dance troupe of over-the-hill Hula Maidens, Em and the cast of characters must ban together to find the killer and solve the mystery before the next pupu party.

## **Mai Tai One On Details**

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Author : Jill Marie Landis

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## From Reader Review Mai Tai One On for online ebook

### **bella says**

I picked up Mai Tai One On as a readalong read over my summer holidays. It is the perfect holiday read with hula dancers, cocktails and of course murder!!

Em is helping her Uncle Louie at his tiki bar, while she recovers from a recent divorce. What starts into a nice time on a island turns into a hunt for a killer when an employee at the tiki bar is found dead and the local police officer is intent on pinning the crime on one of Em's new friends, Sophie.

This was the first time I read a book by Jill Marie Landis and I loved it! I loved all the Hawaiian terms, the cocktails (oh yes I loved the cocktails) and the suspense. The murder wasn't easy to solve and I had a fun time watching Em and the Hula Maidens (hula dancers trying to solve it).

The secondary characters were all so fun. There is even a parrot called David Letterman that taste tests all the cocktails

This is a absolute perfect read for the summer and I can't wait to read the second book in the series.

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### **Xyra says**

Four & a half stars. There is just one thing keeping this from being a five star read and it was a sudden jump that jolted my smooth reading pace. It made me say, "What the heck?" before I could continue with the story. Sorry, I won't tell you more than that because I really try to avoid spoilers in my reviews.

This was a great cozy mystery! Think Nancy Drew and Murder, She Wrote meets Magnum PI & Hawaii Five-0. Add in the North Avenue Irregulars or the Golden Girls, a crazy parrot, aging mix-ologist, a girl with a sketchy past, Mango and his life partner, Kauai, and flaming swords and how could you not have fun.

Seriously, I love the Hawaiian islands so the setting for the series is perfect for me. Not to mention the tropical drinks made by Uncle Louie a the Tiki Goddess. So glad the author added in recipes for some of the drinks mentioned.

The main character (Em) is not a native, but she is strong and confident and compassionate. She is redirecting her life after a messy divorce and helping her Uncle Louie put the Tiki Goddess back in the black. Things are going well until disaster strikes and she and her friends go about trying to solve the case since the local detective seems to be focusing his investigation on the wrong person.

The local detective...remember those flaming swords I mentioned? Yep, he moonlights as a fire dancer. I kept seeing Chin Ho Kelly (Daniel Dae Kim) as Roland. \*swoons\* It was difficult sometimes because his narrow-minded search was making me as crazy as it was Em and the Hula Maidens. [Chin is rarely that narrow minded on Hawaii Five-0.]

The rag-tag gang really comes through.

If you like mysteries that are not gory then this series is for you. I'm adding the next two to my "to be read" list and have signed up for the newsletter.

Aside note: I do hope that the author continues to do in-depth research on Hawaii, its people, culture, traditions, and language.

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### **Susan Mallery says**

Get ready to go on vacation to beautiful Kauai--in Hawaii. Makes sure to stop by the Tiki Goddess Bar, where the scenery is beautiful and the drinks are strong. California transplant Em is dealing with a recent divorce and running her uncle's bar. Uncle Louie may or may not be losing his marbles, there's a constant flow of tourists and locals and plenty of colorful characters. But the real complication comes in the form of a murder. Any one of them could be a suspect. A second murder has Em and her friends searching for clues, while a yummy detective is keeping a very close eye on Em. If only *\*that\** would get more personal.

Fun, charming and full of atmosphere, Mai Tai One On is a delightful beginning to what promises to be a terrific mystery series.

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### **Katja says**

Firstly, the one thing that puts me off a book, and takes stars away in the speed of light: grammar errors. One is fine, two is okay-ish, after that it's just annoying.

Ok, a nice storyline idea, but the characters and the happenings felt chaotic and somewhat rushed, rather than being a smoothly flowing story. Some humour in there, which is almost making me want to read the next book in the series. Can't say I'd recommend this book, unfortunately.

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### **Sarah says**

Mai Tai One On is the first book of a new series, and it is a quirky, fun, delightful escape. Part mystery, part chick lit, and 100% enjoyable, Mai Tai One On takes place in beautiful Kauai at a run-down old landmark bar called the Tiki Goddess. Owned by Em's Uncle Louie, who may or may not be suffering from senility, it is a tourist hot spot and local watering hole. Em's arrival is a second chance for both her and the financially floundering bar. After a humiliating and painful divorce back in Southern California, Em has started to come into her own managing the bar. She has earned the respect and affections of her uncle, the new bartender running from a shady past, and a troupe of wacky "seasoned" ladies who are members of the Hula Maidens. After a universally disliked neighbor is murdered and dumped into the Tiki Goddess' luau pit, Em and the Maidens decide to conduct their own investigation after the local police focus on Sophie, the new bartender with secrets.

Adding to the cast of characters is Roland, the hunky police detective who moonlights as a fire dancer. Although the sexual attraction between Roland and Em is present, it is barely touched upon, and is secondary to the mystery and Em's adventures. Readers who enjoy books without overt sexual scenes will love this enjoyable mystery lightly tinged with the beginnings of a romance. I am looking forward to the next book in the series.

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## **LORI CASWELL says**

### **Dollycas's Thoughts**

Doesn't that cover just scream fun! and murder!

Em Johnson's uncle owns Tiki Goddess Bar on the North Shore of Kauai. The Hula Maidens, a group of seniors who dance at the joint have written to Em and asked her to come because they are worried about her uncle's memory, plus the place is losing money fast. With nothing to hold her on the mainland she hops a plane. She has been there 6 months and some of her ideas have started to turn the place around. The jury is still out on her uncle. But when one of the bar's neighbors is found dead, in the Imu, (the pit where they cook the pigs for the luaus) Uncle Louie is the police's prime suspect.

What really makes this book sing or I should say dance is its cast of quirky characters. Their antics had me in stitches from the first page until the last. The Hula Maidens are a hoot and Detective Roland is a fire dancer when he isn't trying to put Uncle Louis or their new bartender behind bars. A new neighbor is quite flamboyant and the dead neighbor took obnoxious to a whole new level. There is also parrot named David Letterman, who is the taste tester for Uncle Louie's new creations and he is a big fan on the television show Survivor. The ringmaster trying to hold this whole circus together is Em Johnson and while trying to protect the people she cares for she doesn't always make the best decisions.

This series gets off to a nice start with not only a murder or two but also a kidnapping and a human femur bone found on a shelf. Everyone seems to be holding something back and those secrets lead in many different directions. Detective Roland seems to be around often but in addition to asking questions the Hula Maidens think he has romantic ideas about Em. She feels a little spark too, but until the case is solved she has no interest in the fire dancer, no matter how good he looks in that loin cloth.

I have never been to Hawaii and probably will never get there so I really enjoyed this little virtual escape. I will be back when I read book #2, Two to Mango.

If you like your cozy mysteries to include a nice slice of humor, fix yourself a mai tai and enjoy!

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## **Tracy says**

### **Murder in Paradise**

Emily Johnson, broke and newly divorced, came to Maui to help her uncle, after the geriatric and pitifully bad dance troupe who performed at her uncle's Tiki Goddess Bar, the Hula Maidens, had contacted Em to inform her of his declining mental health and sent her a one-way plane ticket. In the six months since she started helping him out, business has improved and the historic hangout is slowly getting back into the black. And that's despite the bar's nearest neighbor, an odious man named Harold. He had a habit of burning trash in his yard, despite being asked not to, and the trades carry the noxious fumes right over into the bar.

That was, of course, before his dead body was discovered roasting in the bar's luau pit.

The police investigating his murder are focusing on both Em's uncle and the bar's bartender Chloe. Business has never been better but the stress has never been higher. Em, along with the wacky women of the Hula Maidens, have decided they have to solve the crime and save their family and friends. Delicious homicide detective Roland Sharpe would rather Em not pull a Nancy Drew impression, but stopping her would take more muscle than even he has.

Em's determination to clear her friend and keep her uncle's name clear puts her in danger when her poking around starts to uncover potential motives for murder. If the killer takes note of Em's secret sleuthing, it'll take more than the quirky Hula Maidens to save her butt. It'll take a miracle.

Maybe it was bad timing, as the past few books I've read really rocked my book-loving heart. Maybe it was my too-high expectations, as I've read books by Landis before and like her writing style. Maybe it was the setting, or the plot, or the characters. Maybe it's a little of all of that. Whatever it was, I couldn't seem to connect to either the story or the characters in this mystery, and that made it difficult to enjoy *Mai Tai One On* like I thought I would.

I was expecting a lighter-toned murder mystery laced with humor that highlighted quirky and raucous secondary characters. I went into the book thinking I'd fall for the Maidens and chuckle along with Em as she amateur-sleuthed her way into solving the case. Instead I ended up annoyed with Em's character, frustrated and disappointed by her morally and legally questionable actions and obtuse behavior which bordered on stupid more than once. The Maidens didn't appeal to me, either. There was too much back biting and snarky nastiness between them and too many waspish digs directed at others to consider them sympathetic or entertaining or make them evenly likable throughout the book.

Roland's character was forbidding and standoffish, and though I was interested in him as one of my favorite characters, he was too often relegated to the sidelines of the storyline for my tastes. The small sparks of simpatico and attraction between him and Em were some of my favorite parts of the book, but they were too few and far apart to truly impact my entertainment level with the book as a whole.

The plotline of the mystery was fairly straightforward and it evolved at a steady pace with a narrative that was smooth and easily readable. Unfortunately the elements of the whodunit weren't all that mysterious, and I had the *who* and *why* figured relatively early. That's not necessarily a detractor for me, and wouldn't have been in this case had I been able to enjoy the characters more, but without that, the fact that there were few potential killers or motives became more glaring. Later suspense elements of the story were equally disappointing and a little odd in their development. I didn't quite buy the perpetrator's actions or motivations during the last part of the book.

For me, the book was disappointing. The cover and the story description gives an impression about the tone of the book that I don't think the story supported, and I don't think Landis did quite enough to make her characters as flamboyantly entertaining as she could have. I can forgive one or two of the things that didn't work for me in this book, but put together, there just wasn't enough left for me to like. I don't think I'll be revisiting the Tiki Goddess Bar and its patrons.

*Disclosure: An ARC of this book was provided to me by Bell Bridge Books via NetGalley. This rating, review, and all included thoughts and comments are my own.*

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Reviewed for One Good Book Deserves Another.

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## Rhonda says

Mai Tai One On by Jill Marie Landis

4 stars

I had read the third book in the series Three to Get Lei'd. Which was good and I was looking on my kindle and realized I had the first book

Mai Tai One on it. So I read it too. It did not disappoint. I laughed I was kept guessing on who to trust. I did know who was innocent because they were still characters in the third book. After I had read it I went and bought the second book and am excited to read that soon.

Mai Tai One On is full of over the top fun characters. The Hula Maidens are a group of senior citizens who are dancing the hula dances at the Tiki Goddess

Bar for free. They don't dance very well but have fun doing it. They get into a lot of trouble and mischief.

Em Johnson has been divorced and broke when the Hula Maidens had a fund raiser and paid for her airline ticket over to help her run the Tiki Goddess for her

Uncle louie Marshall who was having problems with his finances. She is bringing new ideas to the bar that is bringing more business in.

While everyone is in the bar someone put a dead body in the luau pit. It was their neighbor who has argued with Louis for 40 years. He is not a likeable character

He burns a lot of trash and the smoke really bothers the bar. Especially when it is the Luau night.

Sophie Chin one of the bartenders went over that morning and had a fight with him. She was late for work that day and became a suspect. She was living in her

car when Em had hired her. Em did not ask about her background or call referrals at all.

Em is asking questions in the wrong area and is kidnapped by someone.

Detective Roland is the one in charge of the murder investigation. He is good looking and on the side he dances with fire knives on the side. He flirts with

Em. (I want to see more of them together in future) He is always trying to get the Maidens to stop crazy stunts and asking Questions.

There is also a parrot called David Letterman that predicts if a drink Louie makes up will be a success or failure. He brings more laughter to the story but I don't think serving drinks to critters is smart idea.

I do enjoy this series of books. They are pretty clean. Lot of the story takes place in the bar. Has good suspense and mystery. fun characters. Has murder, kidnapping, even a car chase in it with the hula Maidens doing the chasing. Just needs a little more romance. I have now read two of the books and look forward to reading

Two to Mango next in the series.

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## **Gigi Ann says**

After reading two books that were not favorites of mine, I decided to read this cozy mystery, and what a refreshing surprise this story was. It drew me right into the story from the very first line: "They would have found the body sooner if it hadn't been two-for-one Mai Tai Night...."

It was fun and sometimes silly, but delightfully charming, especially the 'quirky dance troupe of over-the-hill Hula Maidens' I can just picture them in my mind, as I read about their out of step dancing...The book was a fast read for a sunny afternoon of fun reading on your favorite beach. Oh! if only I could have been reading this on the beaches of Kauai, Hawaii, with a Mai Tai or two or three, by my side, the tradewinds sweeping along the beach keeping me cozy and cool, my favorite kind of memory.

Even though this book is the first book in a series it is also a stand alone book as well. This book is part of my Kindle library, I liked it and therefore awarded it 4\*\*\*\*\* Now I'm off to read the second book in the series "Two to Mango."

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## **SOS Aloha says**

Best selling and award winning author Jill Marie Landis delivers a story that resembles a Mai Tai - fruity, tasty, and perfect for a summer escape. And let's not forget the umbrella! Known for her historical and contemporary books, Landis truly put her pu'uwai (heart) and `uhane (soul) into MAI TAIN ONE ON as she lives on Kauai's North Shore. Only a kama'aina (resident) could translate the island's culture into the colorful characters that brings Tiki tackiness into the reader's home.

The product description accurately sets the stage - Uncle Louie and the TIKI GODDESS BAR have become a favorite watering hole along Kauai's North Shore. Louie's customers-turned- friends, aka the Hula Maidens, grew concerned with his health. So they sent his niece, Emily Johnson, a one way ticket to visit her uncle. Little did they know that Em was at the end of her rope - divorced, broke, and out of options.

Upon her arrival on the Garden Isle, Em integrates herself in the TIKI GODDESS BAR and the local community. Soon, the GODDESS is operating in the black. The Hula Maidens gain a permanent home to perform. And Em hires Sophie - a twenty something local girl seeking to start anew (something that Em can appreciate). Just as the GODDESS denizens have control of their lives, Uncle Louie's feuding neighbor is discovered dead in the GODDESS's imu pit.

As the GODDESS gang finds themselves suspects, they morph into junior detectives to solve the mystery and end the mayhem that threaten their wacky, yet comfortable, way of life. Landis herself morphs into a Hai' mo'elelo (storyteller) as she reveals how the GODDESS gang balances the Hawaiian culture in a modern world. I commend Landis for including a wide spectrum of kama'aina - the Hawaiians and the transplants, the "aunties" (older women) and the wahine (younger women), the kahuna (priest) and the Hula Maidens, the lunch trucks and the tourist traps. Landis demonstrates that Kauai is truly the American melting pot.

Landis also treats readers to two poignant scenes that remind us of her heartwarming romances. Shortly after the smoking body is discovered, Louie closes the GODDESS for the night by singing a love song to his deceased Hawaiian wife for whom the bar is named. Indeed, love transcends time. And as the story ends, Landis surprises us with a hint of romance. To say any more would spoil the reader's pleasure.



In the Tahitian language, Maita'i translates as "good". But MAI TAI ONE ON is No Ka Oi - none is better.

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### **Stacie says**

I purchased this for my Kindle when there was a .99 cent special. It sounded fun and came highly recommended by authors I love like Kristin Hannah and Carly Phillips. This isn't my typical genre but with the low price, I was willing to take a chance.

I was expecting a little more "romance", but it was mostly mystery with a comedic twist. Since I have never been to Hawaii, some of the terms and way of life described in Hawaii was new to me. I could see those who are familiar with the Hawaiian life-style would appreciate that part of the book more. I did appreciate the author making one of the characters from Iowa and not making her too "hickish".

Since there were a couple murders and an attempted murder in the story, you were easily drawn into finding out who was the next to fall and who the murderer was. Even though the story leads you in several directions, I did guess the murderer early on, but it didn't change my interest in finding out if and/or how that person would be caught.

This was an enjoyable light read. It is perfect for a weekend getaway or for taking a break from heavier reading. It will make you laugh and make you wish you were relaxing at the Tiki Goddess bar yourself! The fun part is, the author includes some signature Tiki Goddess drink recipes at the back of the book. I may have to try out some of those! I will be watching for Book 2 of the series to come out!

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### **Paula says**

Recently divorced Em Johnson leaves the mainland for the North Shore of Kauai to help out her uncle when she finds out that he and the bar he owns, the Tiki Goddess Bar, aren't doing so well. She figures the change will do her good. She helps get the bar back on its feet again, only to have a dead body turn up in the luau pit, the underground oven where the pigs are cooked. The Goddess staff are being looked upon as suspects, so Em and the Hula Maidens (the mostly senior dance troupe who perform at the Goddess even though they don't dance all that well) decide to investigate to find the real killer. This was a really fun and cute mystery. It has a very lively and colorful cast of characters including handsome police detective, Roland Sharpe, who moonlights as a fire dancer. The story is humorous with a small hint of romance and a wonderful setting on the beautiful Hawaiian island of Kauai.

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### **Ian says**

*Mai Tai One On* is every single cozy mystery you've ever read. It's not bad for what it is, but I've read the same book a dozen times before. Different authors, different characters but essentially the same book.

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## **Jan says**

This was an enjoyable and fun cozy mystery - I especially loved that it takes place on my beloved Kauai. I love being able to picture where everything is happening. It pushed it up to the 4\* rating from 3.5\*. I will definitely check out the next in series.

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## **Christa says**

Mai Tai One On was a fun book that combined mystery, humor, and some light romance. I received this book as an ARC from Netgalley, and am glad that I had the opportunity to read it. I enjoyed the quirky characters, and the storyline was interesting enough to keep my attention throughout the book.

Em Johnson's marriage and life in California has crumbled, and when she is asked by some of his friends, she goes to Kauai to help her Uncle Louie, who owns and runs a Tiki Bar. Louie seems to be having some confusion and memory problems, so Em begins taking care of the Tiki Bar and making improvements. She is supported by the Hula Maidens, the live performers who dance at the bar. When bodies began turning up, Em tries to figure out who is behind the murders. She is intrigued by Detective Roland Sharpe, but she decides that she must carry out the investigation herself when it appears that some of the people she cares about may be implicated by the police.

Em was a great lead character, and I enjoyed the developing relationship between her and Roland. The Hula Maidens were a bit on the silly side, but I still enjoyed them. I liked the way the mystery played out, and I look forward to the next book in this series.

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