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ISLAND OF BETRAYAL

By Alan L. Moss

NEW THRILLER SHOWS PROMISE OF STEM CELLS -- DANGERS OF CORRUPTION/ANTIQUATED CULTURE

In his debut novel, Alan L. Moss creates an international conspiracy that looms over the South Pacific U.S. territory of American Samoa, location of the recent tsunami. A labor department economist travels to the territory to administer wage hearings. His efforts to raise the wages of an impoverished people threaten to deny a payoff required to finance the black market sale of an experimental stem cell cure for diabetes. The economist becomes involved in an illicit affair, returns to the mainland, is struck down by a mysterious illness, charged with murder, escapes, and again travels to the South Pacific to unravel the conspiracy and get revenge.

As chief economist of the U.S. Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division, Moss administered wage hearings in American Samoa in 2001. He continues to be impressed by the beauty of the Samoan Islands and the friendly people who live there. However, he remains sensitive to the territory's unbending poverty, corruption, and communal culture that block economic development and a sufficient standard of living. One of the novel's most dramatic scenes occurs at a fictional wage hearing. The speaker, a young mother who has lost a son to suicide, appeals to the committee that will set Samoa's minimum wage:

"I always thought I was OK, that my life and the life of my family were proper. We followed the teachings of our church, contributed to our aiga, and followed the *Samoan Way*. But now I'm not so sure. Now I think we are a lost people, a people crushed between the customs of the past and the requirements of a future we are not prepared to meet."

Also accurately portrayed is the race to convert stem cell breakthroughs into cures for some of mankind's most dreaded diseases. Moss places Health-Cell Corporation, the instigator of the conspiracy, in Ashburton, New Zealand. This brings into play some of the world's most incredible locations, including the Canterbury Plains, Southern Alps at Arthur's Pass, the TransAlpine Railroad, and the Tasman Sea.

When the tsunami hit the Samoas in September 2009, Moss got to work on an Op Ed to point out that while aid was needed to repair the damage caused by the wave, there are more fundamental requirements, such as improved educational facilities and recruitment of higher wage employers that could be merged into a comprehensive plan. The column was published by the Honolulu Advertiser, Hawaii's highest circulated daily.

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