

# Murder at the Luau

Chapter Eleven: Miss Matched



Did Kitty think Marcus could have killed Angela?

On the surface, the obvious answer was of course not, no way, impossible.

But Kitty had seen a lot of impossible things over the years.

From the outside, every marriage appears perfect, and even the ones where there is public bickering can be satisfying to the people living in them. It's only when one gets close that the cracks begin to show.

Cracks in any relationship are natural, maybe even beneficial, Kitty told herself. How can two people live so close to one another for so long without ever testing the edges of their trust and resourcefulness? Isn't that part of what makes marriage something to which nearly every human aspires, the in-born desire of all people to be fully known and deeply connected to another human by choice rather than by birth?

At the same time, Kitty was all too aware of

the dismal statistics regarding infidelity.

"Lacy, do you think Marcus loves Angela?"

Kitty asked.

"Loved her, I mean," she corrected herself.

"Why would you even ask that?" Lacy retorted, her eyes suddenly filled with tears. She appeared shocked and maybe even a little hurt by the question.

Even Kitty was surprised by how strongly Lacy responded. For herself, Kitty had really been seeking to work out an idea, to explore the possibility that maybe, just maybe, Marcus wasn't the man he appeared to be.

It was a common scientific approach: "make me a liar," Kitty had often said in the lab. When she had a hypothesis that she wanted to prove, first she worked against herself, looking for avenues by which she could prove her own idea wrong. This was how she had stumbled on some of her best solutions--and how she had rooted out some of her most invisible faulty assumptions.

Faulty assumptions. Every human ever, anywhere, is endowed with certain ideas or concepts that are based on falsehood. It's the product of living in a world surrounded by other humans: they all have ideas they hold dear, and they all have fears they hold more dear. Those fears fuel protective behaviors, patterns meant to prevent the fears from ever coming to life. And fear doesn't lead humans

to see facts clearly. At all.

Kitty knew that her own fears would be invisible to her, just as most everyone else's were invisible to them. If they were clearly fallacious paranoia, no one would buy into them, so by definition, all humans are walking around believing lies that seemed as true as the sun in the sky--and acting on those lies.

What if, Kitty wondered, Marcus had done the same thing? What if his fallacious assumptions had led him to do the unthinkable?

"Lacy, the numbers for marriage..."

Lacy blinked tears away and sniffed loudly. "You mean, like half of them end up in divorce? That's not really accurate, you know."

Her tone was petulant, and Kitty was reminded just how very young Lacy really was.

Kitty nodded sagely, with more patience than she felt, and said, "Actually, I was thinking that they're saying nearly forty percent of marriages experience infidelity in some way. And that's just the people who admit to it."

Lacy froze, her eyes locked on Kitty's face, and her expression furious. Like a shifting ocean tide, her mood seemed to morph from grief to rage.

"Is that what you think?" she exclaimed loudly. "You think Marcus cheated on Angela? He would never, he would never, ever do that."

She was shaking now.

"Marcus is a good man, the best kind of man,

he would never do that...

"And Angela..." Lacy's voice trailed away.

Kitty waited. She wasn't sure she understood Lacy's hesitation, but she could feel a tension beneath it, a sense that there was a rope between them and the tide was pulling them closer, then further apart, then closer again.

"What about Angela?" Kitty asked, in as bland a tone as she could manage.

Lacy fiddled with the hem of her shirt, covered in pink flowers and thoroughly Hawaiian in design. She was like a small child who had lost her toy, floating around looking for the edge of the pool so she could grab hold.

"She was so good...just, she was so good," the girl nearly whispered.

Her face was flushed again.

"Marcus and I are close, did you know that?" Lacy asked suddenly.

Kitty felt almost dizzy with how quickly the subject was changed. She nodded, trying to see where Lacy was headed.

"We're really close," Lacy repeated, "he really depends on me. I thought he should take the think tank position, I can't believe he didn't, but Angela didn't want him to.

"I think she was scared."

"Scared of what?" Kitty asked, genuinely confused. Why would Angela have been afraid for

Marcus to take the position back on the mainland?

Lacy shrugged and looked at the shelves of books, her eyes roaming over the spines as if searching for a particular title. Her fingers still fiddled with the hem of her shirt, a toddler with a blankie after her nap.

“She was a hero around here, you know?” Lacy’s eyes continued to move around the room as she spoke. “She helped people, she listened to them. She listened to me.”

Kitty tilted her head to one side. Sometimes Lacy’s conversation was difficult to follow. Here was a young woman who was very accomplished, who had distinguished herself as a doctoral candidate and was assistant to one of the foremost academics in the field, and yet when Kitty talked to her...it was as if she wasn’t able to hold on to any one idea long enough to make a coherent argument, as if there was an ebb and flow to her thoughts that followed some unknown logic and Kitty was having trouble grabbing hold.

“I’m just so sad for him, his wife is gone and now he can take that position after all, but I know he feels like he’d be betraying her. He doesn’t want to betray her, he wants to honor her...”

Kitty studied Lacy’s face. The word “betray” was an odd choice.

“How would it betray Angela if he took the think tank position now? Now that she isn’t here?”

Kitty asked.

Lacy stared at Kitty, dragging her eyes back from the books on the shelf and focusing with visible effort.

“Because she didn’t want to go,” Lacy said forcefully.

Kitty nodded, taken aback.

“Don’t you get it?” Lacy asked her. “Angela would never have gone with him, she would never have let him go without her. Her life was here, and she demanded that he stay.”

“Demanded?” Kitty asked. “That seems a little harsh.”

Lacy shook her head. “She was adored around here, that part is true.”

She stopped for a moment.

“Listen,” Lacy continued. “I worked with Angela a lot, too. I spent time with her, did charity work, went on site visits with her when she had an event to plan.”

“I thought you were Marcus’ assistant. Were you also Angela’s?” Kitty asked her.

Lacy shook her head. “No, not like that. No, I only work for Marcus.”

Kitty raised her eyebrows at the defiant tone in Lacy’s voice.

Apologetically, and a little too quickly, she said, “My position is paid for through the university, of course, so I’m Dr. Kelekolio’s assistant only.”

Kitty wondered at the switch from first name to professional address, but Lacy looked like she had something burning a hole in her tongue, so she let it slide in hopes that the girl knew something that would help.

“When I worked with Angela, that was on my time. But I had to, you know?”

Lacy’s eyes were pleading again, but her fingers had finally stilled on the hem of her shirt.

“Why did you have to?” Kitty asked.

“For Marcus!” Lacy said, her eyes opening wide in her innocent face.

“Why for Marcus?”

Lacy shook her head as if clearing something away.

“Listen, everyone loves Angela. But she’s not some happy little wife who stays in the background. She....was very hard on Marcus, she didn’t ever want to leave the island, she wouldn’t help him be the man he could be if only she would give him more room...”

This was an entirely new description of Angela than Kitty had heard before.

“She smiled at all the parties, she loved to take Marcus with her places, but she wasn’t here to support his research. She wanted his research to support her, to make it possible for her to stay on the island longer. She wanted to make leis for parties and have everyone love her for her hard work, she wanted

to walk on the beach even when she knew it was dangerous, she wanted to be part of Maui no matter what the risks.”

“Risks? Why is it dangerous to walk on the beach?” Kitty was struggling again to keep up with the twists and turns of talking to Lacy.

Lacy waved her hand as if shooping an irritating fly, as if the question wasn’t very important and answering it was getting in the way of saying what she really wanted to say.

“Ugh, she was always collecting palm branches that had fallen, especially after a storm, even though she knew the storms that knocked the branches down also make the coconuts loose.”

Kitty blinked.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“The coconuts, the coconuts. They kill people.”

Was this girl fully engaged with reality? Kitty was worried now, and her face surely revealed that.

“Lacy...”

Here Lacy laughed, the laugh of a girl in the prime of young womanhood, who has suddenly been reminded that not everything is serious and scary.

“I’m sorry, Dr. Campbell, I forgot. You’re not from the island.”

Kitty shook her head and mouthed the word “no.”

“The coconuts grow at the top of the palm tree,” Lacy began pedantically.

Kitty nodded. This part she knew. Her annoyance at the rapid confusion of this conversation was intensified with being told botanical facts by a twenty-something, so she took a deep breath through her nose and attempted to relieve the knot in her gut that indicated a rising temper.

“When the coconuts fall, they can get going to almost 100 miles per hour, they’re really dangerous,” Lacy told her. “Didn’t anyone mention that to you when you got here?”

“They may have said something like that,” Kitty replied, through a tight smile.

“Angela never cared, Marcus was always reminding her, warning her, but she said the island loved her and would never hurt her. I guess that’s part of why she refused to live somewhere else. Even when her husband was offered the chance of a lifetime, she would rather risk her safety on the island making flower necklaces than help him achieve his dream.”

“But why, Lacy?” Kitty asked. “Why did she want to stay here so badly?”

Lacy shook her head again. “I never knew.”

“Did you ask?”

“More than once, I wanted to understand.

How could she keep him from getting what he’d always dreamed? How could she do that if she loved him?”

Lacy’s eyes welled up with tears again. “I don’t know if she loved him, Dr. Campbell.”

Kitty’s brain was churning.

She thought again of how marriage was complicated, how what appeared to be a calm surface from the outside could be roiling rapids beneath. Was that the marriage Marcus and Angela had shared?

“Lacy, do you think Marcus could have hurt Angela?” Kitty asked again.

“I don’t know, Dr. Campbell,” Lacy told her. “But if he did, I’m not sure I would blame him.”