

Eddie Naku Maui Mysteries Bundle: Dead in Pukalani\Dead in Kihei

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EDDIE NAKU MAUI MYSTERIES BUNDLE

Dead in Pukalani

Dead in Kihei

By R. Barri Flowers

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[DEAD IN PUKALANI](#)

An Eddie Naku Maui Mystery

By R. Barri Flowers

DEAD IN PUKALANI: An Eddie Naku Maui Mystery is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, business establishments, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Dead in Pukalani: An Eddie Naku Maui Mystery

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PROLOGUE

Hawaiian music filtered through the speakers on this humid August evening as Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau sat in the Great Room of her contemporary home on Hololani Street in Pukalani, a census-designated region in Maui County, Hawaii. Located on the slopes of the East Maui Volcano, Haleakalā, in an area that natives of the island refer to as Upcountry, the upscale residence was bordered by swaying palm trees and close to the Pukalani Golf Course and Country Club.

Suzette sipped a Mai Tai beneath the swirling ceiling fan as a cool breeze brought forth the aroma of eucalyptus. She brushed away a strand of curly brunette hair from her face, barely listening to the conversation in progress. In truth, her mind was elsewhere. There were many things going on in her life at once, some of which she had never meant to happen, others that were beyond her control. Nonetheless, she had resigned herself to make the best of both worlds, just as her husband Patrick had.

"Can I get you another drink, Suzette?" asked one of the three men she had allowed into their home. He was white, bald, and stocky, with a deep tan, having helped himself to the wet bar, as had the other two men.

"No, I don't think so," she told him. She'd never been able to handle her alcohol very well, and now was not the time to test it, as she'd already had one drink before the men arrived. "But feel free to help yourself to another," she offered. "Patrick should be home any time now."

Her husband, Patrick Bordeau, the successful lawyer. *Right. What a joke*, Suzette thought. He'd called earlier and said he was at the office and would be a bit late, even though he was expecting the visit from his associates. She had no doubt he was busy, but it was not with work. She'd learned long ago to accept his infidelity, along with everything else that was wrong with their marriage. It was all part of the total package she'd become caught up in, mostly due to circumstances. Suzette wasn't sure if she still loved Patrick, or even if she ever truly had, but she was no longer committed to staying with him and pretending to be the dutiful wife who would always look the other way. Not when she now finally had another choice that gave her hope for something that had eluded her for a long time: happiness in a relationship. Or was that even possible? Maybe she was only deluding herself that there really could be a happy ending for two people who loved each other, no matter the obstacles standing in their way.

The ringing of her cell phone jarred Suzette from her thoughts. She pulled out the phone, looked at it for a moment, then glanced toward her visitors. The bald, stocky one had just come back with two drinks in hand, passing one to a white, tall, thinner man with sandy hair. The other man was Asian and small with a short black ponytail, still holding a drink. All three were in their thirties and chattering amongst themselves as though she were invisible. They barely seemed to notice her phone ringing.

"I need to get this," she said anyway, as if she needed an excuse to step away from the men. She moved toward the gourmet kitchen, out of their line of vision. She could hear her Rottweiler named Cherry whimpering behind the door of a spare room, anxious to get out. As soon as her guests were gone, she would let the dog out to roam freely throughout the house.

She engaged in a short conversation with the caller, while peeking out at the men, who were still huddled together, before disconnecting and rejoining them.

The Asian man gazed at her. "Everything all right?"

"I have to go out," she said tersely.

"Where?" asked the tall, thin one.

"To see someone," she responded.

"Tucker Matsumoto?" the bald one asked perceptively.

Suzette cocked a thin brow. How could he have known that? But then she quickly realized they

were probably familiar with some of their other business associates through Patrick.

"Yes," she responded, knowing that their interests were indirectly represented here.

"I think we should follow you," he said, "just in case you need back up."

She swallowed thickly. "That really won't be necessary."

"We insist." The bald man's dark eyes narrowed. "Matsumoto's not to be trusted. We wouldn't want anything bad to happen to you."

Reluctantly, Suzette relented, feeling she didn't have much choice. Nor was there time to wait for Patrick to return home from his latest tryst.

Of course, their presence would change the nature of the meeting a bit. But if she was able to accomplish her primary goal, other things could wait till later.

* * *

Suzette drove her gray Lexus through the streets of Pukalani, glancing in the rear view mirror at the three men following her in a red F-150 pickup. She was a bit tense, under the circumstances, but tried to remain calm.

Soon she pulled into a shopping center parking lot on Old Haleakala Highway, well away from the stores, and parked near a light. It was seven fifty-five p.m. She had been told the meeting would take place at eight.

She watched as the pickup truck pulled into a spot a few feet away from her. The men remained inside.

Suzette hoped their presence didn't scare off Matsumoto. Or was that their plan?

She took out her cell phone and called Patrick. It went straight to voicemail. Frustrated, she didn't bother to leave a message.

"Damn you, Patrick," she muttered irritably, jealous that he was likely bedding another woman at that exact moment. She couldn't help herself, in spite of the fact that her own romantic feelings and sexual yearnings lay elsewhere. She took comfort in knowing that soon her life would change for the better and she would no longer need to tolerate the pain Patrick had caused her.

The knock on the partially open driver's side window caused Suzette's heart to skip a beat. She turned and saw Tucker Matsumoto's face. He was Hawaiian and had a thin mustache.

"What the hell are you doing here?" he snapped.

She caught her breath. "I think you know."

Matsumoto cocked a brow. "He sent *you* to bring the money?"

She almost hated to disappoint him. "No, I'm here to *collect* money—from you."

He frowned. "I owe you nothing."

"The merchandise you have says otherwise, Matsumoto," she said boldly. "If you think you can screw us out of payment—"

"You'll do what?" he said, cutting her off. "Go to the cops?" He laughed derisively. "I don't think so."

Suzette was furious at his arrogance and clear intention to stiff them. Just as she contemplated her next move, a shot rang out, striking Matsumoto, who doubled over. Another shot hit him and he went down.

Fearful that she might be next, Suzette reached in her purse for her gun, which she kept for protection. But it was too late. The crackling sound of gunfire, seemingly louder than ever, rang through her ears. The sudden realization that she'd been shot left her numb, then she felt her head spinning, and suddenly everything was pitch black.

CHAPTER ONE

The vibrancy of laughter echoed throughout the bedroom as Eddie Naku playfully nibbled on the neck of his current romantic interest, Gayle Luciano, a flight attendant. They were naked in bed making love on a steamy night. It was one of those on again, off again relationships, where neither was ready to make a real commitment and both were the better for it. Instead, they got together when their conflicting schedules allowed and their bodies lusted for one another.

Now was one of those times as Naku pushed aside his life as a private investigator in favor of a good romp in the sack.

The ringing of his cell phone put a crimp in that. He tried to ignore it, as did his lover.

"Don't answer it," Gayle pleaded. "Remember, this is your day off—and mine."

For a moment, Naku found her incredible powers of persuasion too much to ignore as she claimed his lips with her own.

But the damned phone ringing persisted. Against his better judgment, he decided he better answer it. He pried their mouths apart and hoisted his muscular six-foot-three-inch body from the bed. Seeing the disappointment in Gayle's face, he said, "Don't worry. Whoever it is, I'll get rid of them."

"You better," she said, pouting.

He dug the cell phone out of his jeans that had ended up on the floor. The caller was his secretary, Vanna.

"I hope I didn't catch you at a bad time," she said.

Naku gazed at his lover, ready and waiting. "As a matter of fact, you did."

"Sorry, but there's a lady here, a Ms. Higuchi, who—"

He cut her off. "It's my day off. She can come back tomorrow."

"Well, the thing is, she insisted on seeing you *today*," Vanna told him. "She said it can't wait."

Higuchi. The name had a ring of familiarity to it, and not because it was common on the Hawaiian Islands. He remembered now. A week ago, a Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau was shot to death in Pukalani. The shooter was still at large. Coincidence?

"She says she was referred to you," Vanna said. "She seems really desperate."

He glanced at Gayle, who seemed a bit desperate herself to finish where they left off. But since he was in the business of private detective work and prided himself on never turning down a paying customer, he felt he should at least see what this potential one wanted of him.

"I'll be there as soon as I can," he told Vanna.

"I'll pass that along," she said happily.

Naku disconnected and turned to his bed mate. "I have to go," he said regrettably.

She frowned. "Why am I not surprised?"

"It's work." He ran a hand through his long dark hair. "I'll make it up to you. I promise."

She sprang out of bed, her large breasts bouncing, and her tight ass barely moving. "Don't bother!"

He watched as she started to get dressed. "Where are you going?"

"To work!"

"But I thought you had the day off..."

Gayle sneered. "Yeah, and I thought you did too."

Naku was speechless, but understood that their little tit for tat was pretty much par for the course in their relationship. She was pissed at him now, but by the time she got back in town, that would likely pass and they could resume whatever it was they had going on.

For now, he had to take things for what they were between them and get to his office.

* * *

He beat Gayle out the door of her small plantation house in Napilihau, located in West Maui, and got into his Subaru Forester for the short drive to Lahaina, the most populated area of Maui County during the peak tourist season. As a third generation Native Hawaiian, Eddie Naku was happy to carry the torch of his ancestors in being a free spirit and respecting the land. At thirty-six, he had given up a career as a homicide detective for the Maui Police Department two years ago in favor of being his own boss and solving cases that sometimes required working the edges of the law.

Though Maui wasn't exactly New York City or Honolulu for that matter, when it came to criminal activity, there were still enough lawbreakers and other types of investigative work to keep him

busy. When that failed, he was more than happy to indulge in his other passions, which included drinking, working out, riding horses, reading thriller fiction, and women. Gayle flew the international routes, mostly to and from Japan, Singapore, New Zealand, and Australia. He had no idea when she'd be back and she was probably in no hurry to see him, but neither of them made any promises to one another, so they could go whichever way the wind guided them.

His thoughts turned to the woman who had taken him away from Gayle at the worst possible time. What was her story? Who referred her to him and why was she so damned intent on seeing him this afternoon?

He'd find out soon enough. He pulled onto Keawe Street and parked in his customary spot in front of his office. Painted on the window were the words: Eddie Naku Investigations.

Naku stepped inside the dusty, beige-carpeted, white walled place that was divided into three sections: a small waiting area; the office of his dependable secretary, Vanna Dandridge; and his own office. He observed the attractive, slim, long blonde-haired Hawaiian woman in her mid-thirties sitting in the waiting area. She was nicely dressed in a blue dress with high-heeled sandals.

As he met her bold, brown eyes, she stood up.

"I'm Eddie Naku," he introduced himself.

Before she could speak, Vanna bounded out of her office. "You're finally here," she said. "Good."

He grinned while giving her the once over. Vanna was forty, twice divorced, and not bad on the eyes. She was petite and wore her crimson hair in a bob. She had just moved to Maui from Honolulu at the same time he opened up his private investigation business. The timing had worked out well for both of them.

He looked back at the other woman.

"This is—" Vanna started to say.

"Kathryn Higuchi," the woman finished.

Naku extended his arm to shake her hand. "Nice to meet you, Ms. Higuchi."

She proffered a small hand with perfectly manicured nails and they shook. He tried to read her, as he'd done so many other potential clients, but failed miserably.

"Why don't we step into my office so you can tell me why you're here?"

She nodded and he waved Vanna off with eye contact, as if to say he'd take it from there.

His office was pretty nondescript: wooden desk, leather chair, laptop, printer, flat panel television, two stacking guest chairs, and a window with a view of the street.

He invited her to have a seat and he did the same, opting to sit beside her rather than at his desk.

"So how can I help you?" he asked evenly.

"I'd like to hire you."

"To do what?"

"Find out who murdered my sister—" She paused. "Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau. She was shot to death last Friday."

He nodded. "I heard about that and I'm sorry for your loss. But it's an ongoing police investigation."

She frowned. "I don't want to wait until the police get around to solving the crime, if they ever do."

"I can appreciate that you want answers quickly," he told her, "but it doesn't always work that way."

Kathryn frowned. "My sister and I were very close. She didn't deserve to die that way. I need answers. And I think you can give them to me. Money is no object. Please..."

Naku had always had a hard time turning down a pretty face where money was not an issue in paying his fees. It was even more difficult when she was as striking as this one. However, he usually refrained from working on active police cases, so as not to bump heads with his former colleagues.

Of course, there were always exceptions to the rule. Maybe this would be one.

"Tell me about your sister and what you know, if anything, about her death."

He listened as she described Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau as the unhappy wife of a prominent Maui attorney, Patrick Bordeau, and the shooting that took her life and seriously wounded a man named Tucker Matsumoto. Three men were taken into custody briefly in connection with the crime, but were released for lack of evidence.

"There's not much else I can tell you, other than I believe my sister was set up the night she was murdered," Kathryn finished.

Naku regarded her with curiosity. "I take it you have someone in mind who set your sister up?"

She met his eyes sharply. "Yes, her husband, Patrick—"

Naku recalled reading that the husband lawyer had previously represented two of the men who were taken into custody, and he was also the current attorney for Tucker Matsumoto. Though it was strange for sure, it hardly meant that Bordeau was behind his wife's murder. At the same time, the spouse was often the first suspect in such cases, which surely the police were looking into.

"What makes you think Bordeau had anything to do with this?" Naku asked.

Kathryn sighed. "He may not have been the one to pull the trigger, and even that's suspect, but he certainly had a very good motive for wanting her dead. Suzette often confided in me about what was going on in her life. Patrick's been involved in a gunrunning scheme, which brought in a good deal of money and just as much debt. He had a life insurance policy on Suzette for half a million dollars—an amount that would probably cover his obligations, and then some, if she were out of

the picture. I also know that Patrick was having an affair with another woman and Suzette wanted out of the marriage. She was prepared to blow his whole arms trafficking operation wide open, ruining his career and likely sending him to prison."

"Those are certainly some compelling reasons for killing one's spouse," Naku acknowledged, having seen intimates murdered for far less. "Have you told the police any of this?"

"Yes, of course I did. They basically dismissed it as insufficient or hearsay."

He agreed, but also understood that such things would not likely be made public, even to family, until the case could be made one way or the other. Still, something told him that there was more to the story.

"So I take it there's no love lost between you and Bordeaux."

She wrinkled her nose. "Why would you say that?"

"Call it instincts."

She paused. "I never thought he was good enough for my sister," she admitted. "Patrick is a control freak and never treated Suzette right. I think he's more than capable of killing her, if he thought he could get away with it."

"We'll see about that," Naku said, keeping an open mind.

"Does that mean you'll take the case?" Kathryn pressed. "I don't want my sister's death to end up as another unsolved homicide while her killer runs free."

Naku didn't have to give it much thought at this point. Since the police hadn't made any arrests yet, and the case was still open, why not look into it. Also, there was something about Kathryn Higuchi that piqued his interest and made him want to keep the connection alive.

"My fee is five hundred dollars an hour, plus any unusual expenses I incur in the course of the investigation," he told her, in the event she had any second thoughts. "I typically require a five thousand dollar retainer to take on a case that looks like it could take a while."

"As I said, I have no problem with your fees, if it means getting to the bottom of why my sister lost her life."

Naku knew he couldn't guarantee results, but he told her sincerely, "I'll do my best to find the answers you're looking for."

Kathryn pulled out her checkbook and wrote a check, handing it to him. "That should cover a week and any added expenses."

"Indeed," Naku told her after gazing at the check. "Mahalo."

"Thank you for taking the case," she told him, then dug in her handbag and pulled out a card containing her address and cell phone number. "Please keep me informed as to what you learn."

"I will," he promised, meeting her lovely eyes.

She stood. "I better go."

Naku rose and walked her to the outer door, when curiosity got the better of him. "By the way, who referred you to me anyway?" He would be sure to thank the person.

Kathryn looked him straight in the eye. "Why it was Lieutenant Ortega of the Maui Police Department."

Naku nodded with a smile. He and Ortega had worked together during his days on the force and were on good terms. Still, it wasn't every day that the man sent business his way. Why?

He showed Kathryn out just as Vanna stepped out of her office. "Looks like we've got ourselves a client," she said.

"Yeah, I'd say so," Naku responded.

"And she's a hot lady too," Vanna said with a wink. "I hope you'll be able to concentrate on the investigation."

He grinned, conceding that Kathryn was definitely his type. But then, so was Gayle. He wasn't too picky about women, as long as they were energetic and fun loving.

However, Kathryn Higuchi had hired him to do a job and that had to come first.

"I think I can manage," he said, "with your help of course."

"That's what you pay me for," she said dryly.

"You can earn your keep by getting me everything you can find regarding Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau's murder as well as the lady herself."

"Will do." She looked at him. "What are you going to do now?"

"I think I'll pay Lieutenant Ortega a visit to see if he can fill in some blanks for me," Naku told her thoughtfully.

CHAPTER TWO

The Maui Police Department was located in Wailuku, the county seat of Maui County. Eddie Naku felt at home and a little weird at the same time as he made his way through the corridors, speaking briefly with ex-colleagues, en route to the office of Lieutenant Paul Ortega.

He came to a halt as homicide detective Leila Kahana blocked his path.

"What brings you back here, Naku?" she asked.

He grinned, recalling their brief fling back in the day, before both wisely realized they weren't right for each other. "I came to see Lieutenant Ortega," he told her.

"Oh?" Her lashes fluttered. "Anything I might be interested in?"

He imagined she was interested in any ongoing homicide cases for the department. "Yeah. The Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau case."

"What's your interest in it?"

"Her sister hired me to look into it," he said.

"And you're seeking Ortega's permission to run with it?" Leila asked.

He smiled. "Not exactly. But I do need to talk to him, so..."

"So I'm slowing you down. I get it." She smiled. "I would say don't be a stranger, but something tells me you won't be."

Naku wondered if she was coming on to him, then decided she was only being polite. "I promise I won't step on any toes," he told her, though he wasn't sure it was a promise he could keep.

"I'll believe it when I see it," she responded, before stepping aside.

When he reached Ortega's office, Naku found him sitting at his desk. The fifty-something lieutenant was medium build with receding gray hair and blue eyes. He was talking on the phone, clearly preoccupied. A few raps on the door got his attention. He waved him in.

Ortega cut his conversation short. "Guess Ms. Higuchi took my advice," he said.

"Yeah, she showed up at my office," Naku told him.

"Did you take the case?"

"I did." He paused. "I have to admit, though, I was a bit surprised that you sent her my way, considering it's still an active police investigation."

Ortega smiled. "Maybe I figured that since Ms. Higuchi is beautiful, well-to-do, and divorced, she'd be right up your alley, Naku."

"She is," he conceded. "But, then again, we are talking about her as a business client and not someone to take to bed."

"Who says the two can't go hand in hand?" Ortega said, and grinned lasciviously. "Have a seat." He waited for Naku to sit in one of two tattered chairs in front of the desk, then got up and closed the door.

Ortega sat back down. "You're right. The Higuchi-Bordeau case is currently being investigated by the department."

Naku met his eyes. "So why have me run a parallel investigation?" He assumed there was a valid reason other than trying to enhance his love life.

Ortega leaned forward. "Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau is a friend of a friend's. I want this case solved one way or the other. My detectives will do their best to bring the killer to justice but, frankly, we're spread a bit thin and I don't want to see this one dragged out. Since you're pretty good at

what you do, I figured that tackling it from a different angle might get results a bit quicker."

"I see," Naku said. It made sense to him, all things considered. And he wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth. "What have you got on the case so far?"

"Not much, I'm afraid," Ortega said glumly. "The slugs pulled out of the victim came from a .45 caliber semi-automatic pistol. I'm guessing the firearm wasn't registered, but we're trying to locate it. As far as identifying the killer, surveillance cameras at the shopping center where the murder occurred just show a grainy image of someone who appeared to be running away from the scene of the crime, apparently wearing a hoodie. We can't determine if it's a male or female. We're still reviewing security cameras from nearby businesses to see if they show anything useful."

Naku leaned back in the chair. "What can you tell me about the three men who were questioned about the crime?"

"They were acquaintances of Higuchi-Bordeau and her criminal defense attorney husband, Patrick Bordeau. They witnessed the shooting and have been cooperating with us. Apparently, they followed Higuchi-Bordeau from her home to the shopping center parking lot on Old Haleakala Highway. According to them, she received a phone call from someone prior to going to meet with the other victim, Tucker Matsumoto. The shooting took place shortly after the men arrived and parked nearby."

"Did the call come from Matsumoto?" Naku asked.

"Not according to Matsumoto. He claimed he was just there picking up a few items from the shopping center when he spotted her car."

"Do you believe him?"

"Not really," Ortega said. "But if he was there for something illegal, he sure as hell isn't going to admit to it. In any event, we traced the number to a burner phone."

Figures, Naku thought. "So it's possible both she and Matsumoto could have been set up."

"Maybe," Ortega said. "Or maybe one or both were simply at the wrong place at the wrong time."

Naku rolled his eyes. "Yeah, right. Just like the men who followed her there, but somehow managed to come out of it unscathed."

Ortega frowned. "I've thought about that, especially since none of the men have a clean rap sheet. Bordeau represented two of them—Shawn Wilkerson and Rex Lee—on illegal gun possession charges." He passed Naku a sheet of their records, which included mug shots, and then handed him a third criminal record and mug shot. "Clark Oldham has a record for dealing drugs. And Bordeau's also the attorney for Matsumoto, a smalltime illegal gun dealer, who faces similar yet unrelated charges. So far, there's no indication that any of the men at the scene of the crime, including Matsumoto, were the shooter. With nothing to hold them, we had to let them walk."

Naku studied the rap sheets and then looked up. "How's Matsumoto doing?"

"He'll live," Ortega said as though that was a bad thing.

"You think he was the intended victim?"

"Not necessarily. Maybe the shooter was gunning for both of them. If Matsumoto was the intended target, given his criminal activities, Mrs. Bordeau could've been killed to eliminate any witnesses—assuming the shooter was unaware that the three men were watching the whole thing unfold from another vehicle. Right now, we have to assume that Higuchi-Bordeau was also targeted, if not the primary target. By the way," Ortega added, "she had a loaded .32 caliber pistol in her purse, but it hadn't been fired."

Naku silently mulled that over. *Why would she need to carry a gun? Did she have reason to fear for her life? If so, what or who was she afraid of?*

"Have you questioned Patrick Bordeau?" he asked, assuming this had been the case.

Ortega nodded. "We asked him to come in and he did. He answered all our questions without the presence of an attorney, other than himself."

"I'm sure you know that my client thinks he was responsible for his wife's murder," Naku said.

"Yeah, she mentioned that more than once," Ortega acknowledged. "Unfortunately, Bordeau has an alibi for the time of the shooting."

"Which was...?"

"He was working at his office. It checked out. His secretary vouched for him."

Naku couldn't argue with the alibi, unless he was to assume that the secretary was in on the murder as well. He saw no reason to go down that road at the moment. However, murderers weren't always at the scene of the crime. It was just the opposite in many instances, with the ringleader clever enough to stay far away, but close enough to smell blood.

"What about the substantial insurance policy he supposedly had on his wife?" Naku asked. "And the fact that he's allegedly heavily in debt. That gives him two possible reasons to want her out of the picture."

"We're looking into both of them," Ortega said. "But, as you know, these things take time to sort out. Right now, there's no evidence that Bordeau was involved in his wife's murder for profit. The man is a well-respected attorney, and it seems like there's no shortage of low-life's with high earnings seeking his services."

"All the more reason why he may have orchestrated his wife's murder," Naku said. "He could easily hide behind his career and let others do the dirty work for him."

"So prove it and make my job a helluva lot easier," Ortega said bluntly.

Naku accepted the challenge, for better or worse. He stood up. "If you get anything from the security cameras or anything else relevant to the case, let me know."

"Will do," Ortega promised. "And if you run into any problems that don't involve breaking the law, I'm here to help."

Naku made a note of that, wondering if he could truly count on him, even if it meant stepping on the toes of police detectives working the case. "Mahalo," he told him, before leaving.

* * *

Naku got in his car and called his office. "Hey, Vanna. So what do you have for me on Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau?"

"Hang on, let me pull up the info... Mrs. Higuchi-Bordeau was thirty-seven when she died. She and Patrick Bordeaux had been married for ten years. Before that, she taught grade school, but retired to become a stay-at-home-wife to an up and coming attorney. I couldn't find anything to indicate their marriage was in trouble."

"That's not the type of thing that would necessarily be plastered all over the internet," Naku said wryly.

"Probably not," Vanna concurred.

"But her sister believes the marriage had problems," Naku said. "And since she's paying us, we'll have to assume all was not right behind closed doors till proven otherwise."

"I can't argue with that," Vanna said. "After all, I've been down that road twice, with no one the wiser that my marriages were a total disaster until I was practically signing the divorce papers."

"Well, Higuchi-Bordeau never got that chance," Naku said. "Someone took her out before she could walk away from Bordeaux—if, in fact, that was her plan."

"And I'm confident you'll get to the bottom of it," she said.

Naku chuckled. "I'll certainly try. Did you come up with a connection between Higuchi-Bordeau and anyone else, other than her husband and the men who were at the scene of the crime?"

"Not yet, but I'll keep looking."

"So will I," Naku said, and then caught up on some prior business issues with her before hanging up.

He headed home as he pondered his latest investigation. At this point, he could only wonder why Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau was killed and who might have done it or been responsible for it. He fully expected to get to the gist of it one way or the other. After all, this was how he made his living and he never liked to come up short, if only to earn his pay.

He turned into the driveway of his Craftsman bungalow on Ipukula Way in Lahaina. It had come on the market just when he was looking to get out of his last house right after he left the police force. This one had appealed to him for its charm and the location—not too far from the hustle bustle of Front Street, yet still peaceful, laidback, and close to his office. He also liked that the backyard contained a number of fruit producing trees, including mango and papaya.

After entering the front door, Naku headed across the hardwood floor of his Great Room and went straight to the kitchen. There, he opened the refrigerator and took out a beer. After guzzling down a generous amount, he changed into a tee shirt and shorts before heading to his exercise room for a workout.

Later, he called Gayle and got her voicemail after several rings. He figured that meant she was still pissed and didn't want to talk to him. It was something he would have to live with, while hoping they could at least stay friends at the end of the day.

In the meantime, he had a case to keep him occupied and a dead woman whose sister wanted to

keep her alive, in a manner of speaking.

* * *

The following morning, Naku decided to pay Patrick Bordeau a visit at his office in Kahului, where the island's main airport and the Kahului Harbor were located. Bordeau's office was in a complex on East Wakea Avenue.

Naku took the stairs to the second floor and spotted the print on a door, which read: The Law Office of Patrick L. Bordeau. He opened it and went inside.

A young woman with short blonde hair sat at a desk in the lobby. "Can I help you?" she asked.

"I'm here to see Mr. Bordeau," Naku told her, noting from the name plate on her desk that she was Tanya Johansson.

"Do you have an appointment?"

"No, but it is important that I speak to him," he stressed.

Just then, a salt and pepper haired, tall, trim, well-dressed man came out of an office. He seemed preoccupied, but stopped in his tracks as his deep blue eyes locked with Naku's eyes.

"He would like to talk to you, Mr. Bordeau, but doesn't have an appointment," the secretary said apologetically.

While her boss considered this, Naku seized the moment and stuck out his hand. "My name's Eddie Naku."

Bordeau gave him a wary look, but shook his hand. "How can I help you, Mr. Naku?"

"I'm a private investigator looking into your wife's murder..." Naku watched as surprise—or perhaps it was ill at ease—registered on his face.

Bordeau sucked in a breath and turned to his secretary. "Hold my calls." He regarded Naku. "Why don't we go into my office and talk?"

Naku followed him into the large office with a big window that overlooked palm trees and a pond. Bordeau closed the door and rounded on him.

"My wife's death is a police matter!"

"It's also an unsolved case, and sometimes private detectives can achieve better results," Naku pointed out.

Bordeau's thick brows drew together. "Who hired you?"

"Your sister-in-law, Kathryn Higuchi."

"I should have guessed as much." He bristled. "So Kathryn decided to hire an investigator to look into Suzette's death? Well, I'm afraid you're just wasting your time and her money."

"Maybe," Naku allowed. "Or maybe not. The point is, your wife is dead, and her killer is still at

large. I would think you'd want to move heaven and earth to bring such person to justice."

"Of course I would." Bordeau's face softened. "I've already told the police everything I know."

Naku couldn't help but think that he was holding back. For what reason? "Why would your wife meet with a known illegal gun dealer? And why were those other men—two of whom are clients of yours with criminal records—there?"

Bordeau sighed. "Suzette went to meet with Tucker Matsumoto to try to collect money he owed us for the sale of some weapons I owned. It was a perfectly legitimate transaction, I assure you. As for Matsumoto being a known illegal gun dealer, as you put it, that hasn't been proven. The other men are indeed my clients and had come to my house for legal advice. They offered to follow Suzette to the meeting place in order to protect her from any harm that might come from street hoodlums who are known to prowl that area."

"Right. And how did that work out for her?" Naku asked sarcastically.

"Not very well," he acknowledged. "But that doesn't mean the attack had anything to do with Suzette's purpose for being there—or the men who were present, no matter their background or present circumstances."

Naku gave him a direct look. "From what I understand, your clients never bothered to call 911. Instead, they drove around with your wife and a seriously wounded Matsumoto for a while before going to the hospital. That probably cost your wife her life," he added, if only to make a point.

Bordeau frowned. "They told me Suzette was dead before they put her in the vehicle, and the autopsy seems to back it up. My clients admitted they panicked out of fear that they would be charged with the crime. Fortunately for them, the authorities didn't pursue that angle and are looking for the real killer now."

"Who do you think murdered your wife?" Naku asked pointblank, while wondering if this could possibly have anything to do with his alleged love life outside the marriage.

"I have no idea," Bordeau said as he ran a hand across his mouth. "If I had to guess, I'd say it was someone who had it in for Tucker Matsumoto, and Suzette was caught in the crossfire."

"So you're saying that Matsumoto has enemies?" Naku asked.

"I'm saying that in his line of work as a licensed gun dealer, he could have come across some people who didn't want to play by the rules."

"Maybe it was Matsumoto who didn't play by the rules," Naku tossed at him, while thinking: *Or your wife.*

Bordeau wrinkled his nose. "I'll leave it up to the police to figure out." He paused. "Or perhaps you..."

"I guess I won't take up any more of your time," Naku said amusingly. When he got to the door, he turned around and asked, "By the way, do you know who your wife might have been talking to on the phone the night of her death? Apparently, that's what sent her out to meet with Matsumoto."

Bordeau flashed him a pensive stare. "I wish I did know. My wife had many friends—some of

whom she didn't share with me. Could be the call had nothing to do with her death."

"Or it could have had everything to do with it," Naku said, "since this person made sure to use a virtually untraceable burner phone. What do you make of that?"

Bordeau shrugged. "Not much. Many people use that kind of phone for different reasons." He paused. "If the caller turns out to be involved in my wife's murder, I hope the authorities can prove it."

"You and me both," Naku muttered, "whoever it happens to be..."

Bordeau's brows bridged. "If you're suggesting it was me, you're way off base. I have an iPhone that I use regularly and have no reason to hide that fact."

Naku didn't believe for one second that meant he was above using a disposable phone on the side for any conversations he wanted to keep off the grid. Including one in which he could have been setting up his own wife to be killed.

"Thanks for talking with me," he said kindly.

"You didn't exactly give me much choice," Bordeau said. "Next time, you should make an appointment."

"Yeah, I'll try to remember that."

He walked out of the office, but Bordeau didn't follow him.

Naku turned toward the attorney's secretary as he heard her saying on the phone, "You have a delivery, Mr. Bordeau." She listened to his response as Naku took note of the large envelope. "I'll bring it right in." She listened again and replied in a low tone, "He's still here—"

Naku realized she was talking about him. He gave a little grin while caught eavesdropping, and said, "I was just leaving..."

She smiled and said, "Aloha."

Naku wondered if Bordeau had played any role in his wife's death.

* * *

In his car, Naku checked in with Vanna, took a few messages, and gave her the rest of the day off. He headed for the hospital to pay Matsumoto a visit. He had been shot twice, once in the chest and once in the shoulder. Neither wound had been life threatening, leaving Naku to believe he likely wasn't the primary target. Either that or he was damned lucky, which was something that couldn't be said for Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau.

Matsumoto was a patient at Maui General Medical Center in Wailuku. Naku stepped into his room and saw him sitting up in bed, eating, and watching television, clearly not the worse for wear, in spite of being shot twice.

"Do I know you?" he asked, putting his sandwich down.

"Not yet. Name's Eddie Naku. I'm a private investigator looking into the death of Suzette

Higuchi-Bordeau."

He furrowed his brow. "Sorry. Can't help you."

"Can't or won't?" Naku asked sharply.

"Same thing. We were both shot by an unknown assailant. End of story."

"Actually, it's only the beginning of the story," Naku said. "Why were you there?"

"I already told the police—I was shopping and came upon her by chance."

"We both know that's a boatload of crap," Naku said, "considering you didn't have anything on your person that was purchased from the shopping center. You were there to see Higuchi-Bordeau or someone else and got shot, but lived to talk about it. Same thing can't be said for her."

Matsumoto looked at him suspiciously. "Who hired you? Or were you banging Suzette and doing this because you miss her so much?"

Naku wondered if Patrick Bordeaux would take kindly to his client speaking ill of the dead. Or was he too busy with his own alleged adultery to give a damn?

"Never mind who hired me," he told him. "I can assure you that I wasn't involved with Suzette. However, I am determined to honor her memory by seeing to it that her killer is brought to justice."

Matsumoto sipped his drink. "Good luck with that."

Naku narrowed his eyes. "So what was it—an illegal gun deal gone bad?"

"I'm a *legal* gun dealer," he said with a straight face.

"And that's why you've retained Bordeaux as your lawyer?" Naku asked skeptically.

"I'm just trying to protect myself."

"Or maybe you're trying to protect yourself *and* Bordeaux," Naku suggested.

"I don't know what you're talking about, man."

"Whatever you say." Naku furrowed his brow. "Whoever killed Suzette is still out there," he warned. "Just because you're still alive, doesn't mean you don't have an X on your back."

"Yeah, well, I think I'll take my chances," Matsumoto said defiantly. "Now if you don't mind, I'd like to get back to my meal, even if it is terrible."

Naku took out one of his business cards and set it on his tray. "If you change your mind and want to talk, let me know."

He left on that note, and was pretty sure that Matsumoto knew a hell of a lot more than he was letting on. But did he see the shooter? And was the person gunning for him too?

* * *

Naku went to see Brett Kawachi, the deputy prosecuting attorney of Maui County. He had done some work for Kawachi when he first started his private investigation business so he was hoping to get some insight into Patrick Bordeau from him.

The Department of the Prosecuting Attorney was located in Wailuku. Naku took the elevator to Kawachi's third floor office, sure to find him there. After all, the man he'd worked with hardly ever took a day off, as if trying to prove something to someone, if not himself.

Kawachi greeted Naku at the door to his office as if they were old friends, after the deputy PA's secretary had sent him in.

"Eddie Naku," Kawachi said in a husky voice, "Aloha 'auinalā."

Naku smiled, repeating the words back to him, which meant good afternoon. He looked up at the shorter, wider deputy prosecuting attorney with receding gray hair.

"Does this mean you're ready to work full-time for the Prosecuting Attorney's office?" Kawachi asked, gazing at him.

"Afraid not," Naku told him. He preferred being his own boss as an investigator.

Kawachi frowned. "That's too bad. So what brings you to my office?"

"I've been hired to look into the death of Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau. I'm sure you're familiar with the case..."

Kawachi nodded thoughtfully. "Yeah, I'm familiar with it. Terrible thing that happened to her. The police are working the case."

"Yes, but not fast enough for Ms. Higuchi-Bordeau's sister," Naku told him. "She's my client and we're looking for answers."

"Well, you have to make a living somehow," Kawachi said. "Not sure I can be much help to you, as this case hasn't reached us yet."

"What can you tell me about Patrick Bordeau?" Naku asked. "I take it you've crossed paths from time to time?"

Kawachi nodded. "We have, both in and out of the courtroom." He glanced over at some chairs around a small table and pointed in that direction. "Let's sit."

"Okay." Naku sat down, while wondering if Kawachi could provide anything useful in his quest to get more information on the man his client held responsible for her sister's death.

Kawachi leaned back in the chair. "So what do you want to know about him?"

"What type of guy is he?"

"Well, he's a damn good lawyer, a gun enthusiast, charming, and someone who can look you in the eye without blinking."

Naku sneered. "Why would he defend a crook that might have had something to do with his wife's murder?"

"The pat answer to that is everyone deserves a defense, no matter their position in life," Kawachi responded. "Having previously been a defense attorney, I've taken on clients who were less than ideal in their particular circumstances, but asked for my help. I assume the same is true for Patrick Bordeaux, especially with no charges being filed yet implicating anyone in his wife's death."

"My client believes Bordeaux is involved in an arms trafficking operation," Naku told him.

Kawachi cocked a brow. "That's a serious charge."

"Yeah, it is," Naku said. "Problem is she only has her sister's word on that and, of course, her sister is no longer around to corroborate it."

"So she thinks Bordeaux was involved in his wife's murder?"

"That's right," Naku said. "My client believes her sister was about to blow this operation out of the water, but was killed before she could do so. It wouldn't be the first time a man offed his wife to keep her quiet."

"And why would the wife try to ruin Bordeaux?" Kawachi asked. "Is there something I'm missing here?"

"He was cheating on her," Naku said, though it hadn't been proven yet. "Maybe this was her payback, big time."

"Infidelity is a good motive," Kawachi said as he smoothed his jaw line. "Bordeaux has a reputation for being a womanizer, marriage aside. But that doesn't make him a killer, much less an arms trafficker. Besides, I understand that he had an alibi."

"As a lawyer, Bordeaux's smart enough to get someone else to do his dirty work for him, if needed," Naku suggested.

"True enough. But I need a lot more than innuendoes and possibilities to go after Patrick Bordeaux."

"I understand." In fact, Naku felt the same way. He wasn't about to pin a murder and an attempted murder on Bordeaux without solid evidence to back it up. That was something the police clearly did not have at the moment, and neither did he.

"Looks like you've got your work cut out for you," Kawachi said, eyeing him.

Naku agreed. "That's how I earn my pay."

"You could probably earn more as one of my investigators," the deputy prosecuting attorney reminded him.

"Probably, but then I wouldn't get to call all the shots."

Kawachi lifted a brow. "Is it that important to you?"

"Damned right, it is!" Naku met his eyes. "Something I'm sure you can relate to," he added, knowing that his role with the prosecuting attorney's office pretty much gave him such leverage.

When he left Kawachi's office, Naku found he still had more questions than answers in this case. In the meantime, whoever shot to death Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau was still out there and likely in no hurry to confess to the crime without pressure to do so.

CHAPTER THREE

That evening, Naku went to his favorite watering hole in Lahaina, called Little Palms. It was located on Front Street and served some of the best Coconut Groves and Mai Tais on the island. He sat at the bar, decided to pass on a cocktail this time, and ordered a beer.

The owner and head bartender, Owen Sasaki, slid the beer to him. "So what have you been up to lately, Eddie?" he asked.

Naku looked at the black-haired, thirty-something, Pacific Islander father of three who was on his second marriage. "Same old, same old."

"Yeah, I know what you mean. Between this place, home life, and fishing, there's not much time for anything else."

"Keeps you out of trouble," Naku told him.

"Ditto." Owen laughed. "You working a case?"

"More like the case is working me," Naku said, and tasted his beer.

"That bad?"

"Not bad or good at this point—just a head scratcher as I try to figure things out."

"You usually do," Owen told him. "You're not losing your touch, are you?"

Naku chuckled. "Not that I know of."

"Didn't think so." Owen studied him for a moment. "So I take it things are still good between you and Gayle?"

Naku recalled that it was Owen who had introduced them. "As good as they can be, considering we live such different lives."

Owen frowned. "But you're still together, right?"

"We're in a cooling off period right now," Naku admitted.

"Sorry to hear that."

"Don't be." It pained him to say this, but he did anyway, "It's probably for the best."

Owen seemed to disagree. "I thought you two were right for each other. But what the hell do I know about such things?"

"We'll probably work our way back to each other," Naku said, keeping the possibility open. For some reason, Kathryn Higuchi suddenly entered his mind and he liked what he saw, even if he wished that weren't the case. "Or maybe not," he muttered.

"Oh well," Owen said with a shrug, "keep me in the loop either way."

"Count on it." Naku watched him walk away to help another patron. He finished off his drink, resisted the temptation for another, and headed home.

* * *

The next day, Naku went to visit Kathryn Higuchi. She lived in a condominium in the upscale community of Kaanapali Beach, the world-famous beachfront resort in West Maui. He recalled that Ortega had referred to her as a rich divorcee. Obviously, she had gotten more than chump change from the marriage if she was living here.

He knocked on the door of her sixth floor unit, wondering if it might have been better had they met in his office. But she had invited him here, presumably for an update on the case.

The door opened and Kathryn stood there. Her hair was in a ponytail; she was wearing a fuchsia midi dress and was bare foot. "Thank you for coming."

"No problem," Naku said. "You are my client, so..."

"So here you are." She flashed her teeth. "Come in."

He followed her inside, getting a whiff of her perfume, and looked around. It was spacious and open with white furnishings and travertine flooring. A ceiling fan was in motion. The curtains were open on a large window with a spectacular ocean view.

"Nice," he said.

"Should be. It cost me enough. Or should I say it cost my ex-husband."

"Ouch." Naku grinned. He imagined the ex was hurting quite a bit financially.

"Don't feel sorry for him. He was swimming in money and bimbos even after the settlement, thanks to a generous inheritance. I only got what he owed me."

"I see." Naku was still impressed nonetheless, but wondered if she could have squeezed even more from her wealthy ex.

"Would you like something to drink?" Kathryn asked. "I have wine, juice, coffee, and water, of course."

"Water would be fine," he said.

"Water, it is. Ice?"

"Just water."

He watched as she stepped into the gourmet kitchen with granite countertops and removed two glasses from the cabinet. She took a bottle of water from the refrigerator and filled one glass, then half-filled the other with red wine.

"Here you are," she said, handing him the water.

"Thanks." He took a sip.

She sat down on a plush sectional and waited for him to do the same.

He did, leaving enough room between them for another, while ignoring his attraction to her.

"So what have you learned so far about Suzette's death?" Kathryn asked.

"Only that it's still a mystery," Naku told her. He gave her a quick update on his visit with Lieutenant Ortega and some of the principal characters in the case, including Patrick Bordeau.

"A mystery, yes," she said, "but there's a clear suspect as to who was behind it."

"You mean Bordeau?"

"Yes. He's an avid marksman and could have easily shot Suzette and been out of there without anyone seeing him. And he had the most to gain with her out of the way."

"He also has an alibi," Naku reminded her.

"And many people who will lie for him in a heartbeat," she countered. "Even if he was somewhere else when the murder occurred, Patrick has enough minions to do his bloody work for him."

Naku contemplated her words. Clearly, she believed that Bordeau was more than capable of orchestrating his wife's murder, if not pulling the trigger himself. But that still left the difficult task of proving or disproving it. "If Bordeau is behind the shooting, I'll find a way to prove it and he'll have to answer for the crime."

Kathryn tasted her wine and nodded. "I'm counting on that, for Suzette's sake."

Naku couldn't help but feel her resentment of Bordeau went far beyond the hard cold facts of her sister's death. What was he missing?

"Maybe you can help me out here," he told her.

She met his gaze. "I'll try..."

"Tell me more about your sister and Patrick Bordeau's relationship."

"Such as—?"

"What were they like together?"

"They were very good at keeping up appearances," she responded tartly. "At one time they may have even loved each other. But, in recent years, it was a relationship of mutual convenience until Patrick destroyed even that."

Naku looked at her. "That's the thing that puzzles me," he began. "If they had a rocky relationship such as you've described, I don't understand why your sister went to meet Bordeau's client, Tucker Matsumoto, though Matsumoto denies they had a meeting. It doesn't make sense—unless she was there on behalf of Bordeau or for their common interests."

Kathryn appeared stumped for a moment. She glared at him. "What are you getting at?"

"I'm just wondering if your sister and Bordeau were closer than you may think or want to admit. Maybe Suzette went to that location on his behalf, perhaps for an illegal gun deal that went sour."

"I have no idea why Suzette was at that Pukalani shopping center," she insisted. "Maybe it was for something Patrick made her do. Or maybe she went on her own accord for whatever reason—perhaps to bolster her case against him. All I know is what she told me, and I believe she was running scared for her life."

Naku was somewhat skeptical about Kathryn's story, as Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau didn't strike him as someone who was truly frightened by her husband and his associates. A woman in fear of her life did not go to meet a shady man at night in a dark parking lot accompanied by three other shady men.

But what reason would Kathryn have to lie about her sister's relationship with Bordeau? After all, it was she who hired him, even if she pointed the finger at Patrick Bordeau.

Naku couldn't deny that he had his own suspicions about Bordeau, based on what he knew thus far. Whether that meant he had arranged for his wife's execution remained to be seen.

Leaning toward his client, Naku said flatly, "I do feel there's a strong possibility that your sister may have been set up by whoever it was she talked to on the phone that night, prior to going to meet with Tucker Matsumoto—according to the men who were at her house and followed her to the shopping center parking lot. Do you have any idea who that might have been?"

Kathryn batted her lashes. "I wish I did, but Suzette didn't confide in me about everything going on in her life. Maybe it was Patrick she was talking to. Couldn't the police trace the call?"

"They did, but it was from a disposable phone," Naku told her. "Whoever she spoke to obviously went to great lengths to keep his or her identity a secret."

"Even if it was the man she was married to," Kathryn suggested.

"Or someone else in her life that you weren't privy to," he countered.

Her eyes widened. "Are you suggesting my sister was having an affair with someone who set her up to be killed?"

Naku shrugged. "At this point, I can't rule out anything."

"I would have known if she had been seeing someone," Kathryn insisted.

"Not necessarily." Naku locked eyes with her. "You just said a moment ago that your sister didn't confide in you about everything in her life. Maybe she had her reasons for not telling you."

Kathryn finished off her drink. "Maybe," she concurred pensively, "but I don't think so. Suzette

wasn't that kind of woman."

"What about the woman you said Bordeau was having an affair with?" Naku asked. "Do you know who she is?"

Kathryn sighed. "Suzette never mentioned her name, if she knew at all. But then, this wasn't the first time he strayed from the marriage. They were all nameless, other than home wreckers."

Naku tasted the water. "I guess I need to locate this home wrecker if she's to be a motive for Suzette wanting to expose her husband's alleged illegal activities."

Kathryn sneered. "That shouldn't be too difficult. Patrick has never been very discreet with the women he takes to bed."

"I gathered that much," Naku said, thinking of the womanizing label that Brett Kawachi had tagged him with. "But I still need to hear what she has to say, including where she was on the night in question."

Kathryn cocked a brow. "You think she could have been involved in Suzette's death?"

"Wouldn't be the first time a love triangle has resulted in murder."

She sneered. "Well, I'm sure Patrick will try to twist his sordid affair around to suit his purposes. That's the way he operates."

"I'll check into it and see if it goes anywhere," Naku said as he stood up. "I'll keep you abreast of anything I learn that may be pertinent to your sister's death."

Kathryn got to her feet. "Please do."

At the door, he faced her. "Thanks for the water."

She moved closer and touched his hand. "Any time."

Naku wasn't sure if that was a come on gesture or what, but he resisted the attraction, figuring she was more interested in finding out who murdered her sister than any romantic vibes that may have existed between them.

There might be time for that later.

* * *

When Naku got back to his office, Vanna introduced him to a new potential client named Larry Ikeda.

"Mr. Ikeda has an issue he would like to discuss with you," she said eagerly.

Naku shook hands with the short, well-dressed Asian man, who was in his mid thirties. "Why don't we go into my office?" he suggested, leading the way.

After the man was seated, Naku sat too, and asked, "How can I help you?"

Larry flinched. "My fiancée, Natalie Wong, ran off just before we were to be married."

"Wow," Naku said. "Sorry to hear that."

"Yes, it was a total surprise," Larry said.

"Maybe she just got cold feet," Naku suggested.

"She won't speak to me," he said.

Naku imagined that the bride-to-be was speechless in trying to explain herself, whatever the reasons. "I'm sure once she collects her thoughts—"

"If you could talk to her for me, I'm sure we can work this out," Larry said desperately.

"I'm not a marriage counselor," Naku told him. "I suggest you give it some time and maybe she'll come around."

"I'd rather not take that chance." He furrowed his brow. "Even her parents want this to work out."

Naku wondered if it was an arranged marriage, which was still popular among some Asians. Or were there other reasons why her parents wanted what she clearly did not?

"Sometimes we just choose the wrong person to be with..."

"Not this time," insisted Larry. "Please help me. I'll pay whatever your fee is."

Naku could tell that Larry was not going to walk away from this. As such, he gave him his hourly rate, figuring it wouldn't take very long to talk to the fiancée and let the chips fall where they may.

"I'll need her address," he told his new client, "and a picture."

"Sure, I have some pictures on my cell phone," Larry said. "I can send one to your phone."

Naku looked at his cell phone as he received the photograph of an attractive Asian woman in her early twenties who reminded him of his young cousin who lived on the Big Island. Larry sent him her address shortly thereafter. "Okay, that's all I need for now," he told his client.

Larry winced. "We belong together."

"I'll express your feelings to her, but I can't guarantee she'll feel the same way."

"I understand," Larry said lowly.

After he had shown him out the door, Naku turned to Vanna, who had just come out of her office.

"That poor man," she said sadly, shaking her head.

"These things happen," Naku said.

"I know, but it doesn't make it any less painful for the person who's left at the altar."

"Maybe she had good reasons for running off."

Vanna batted her eyes. "Perhaps. Either way, I'm sure you'll figure it out in no time."

Naku wasn't as confident. "Only if she's willing to talk about it with a stranger."

* * *

Natalie Wong lived in an apartment on Kai Makani Loop in Kihei, on the island's southwest shore. Naku knocked on her door, not quite sure what he would say, but hoping she would at least be willing to speak with him about her decision to break off the marriage to her fiancé.

The door was opened by a petite young woman with long, black hair.

"Are you Natalie?" Naku asked, though he was pretty sure she was, based on the photograph.

"Yes," she responded warily. "Who are you?"

"Eddie Naku." He showed her his identification. "I'm a private investigator."

"What do you want with me?"

"I was hired by your fiancé, Larry Ikeda, to speak with you."

"I'd rather not talk about this private matter," Natalie said stiffly.

"I understand," Naku said sympathetically. "But don't you think you at least owe Larry an explanation for why you backed out of the marriage? Since you haven't responded to his phone calls or texts, he figured it would be easier for you if you could give me some answers that I can relay to him."

He could see her stance softening a bit. She nodded and said, "Come in."

Naku followed her inside a small but neat living room, where she offered him a seat on a sofa. She sat in a chair.

After hesitating, Natalie said with a sigh, "I'm sorry that I hurt Larry, but I didn't know what else to do."

"Do you love him?" Naku asked, though he had already come to his conclusion on that front.

"Not the way he should be loved. The marriage was arranged by our parents. It was to create stronger ties between our families and family businesses. I tried to be the good little girl and do as expected." She paused. "But when it came time to walk down the aisle, I knew I couldn't. It wouldn't have been fair to either of us—"

Naku met her eyes thoughtfully. "Is there someone else?"

She looked away and back. "Yes. We've known each other since grade school. He's my best friend...and I'm in love with him."

"Does he know how you feel?" Naku asked curiously.

"No, I've never told him," Natalie admitted. "I'm not sure he feels the same way I do. All I know is that I couldn't marry Larry and be left wondering if I'd made the biggest mistake of my life."

"I agree. Marrying Larry for all the wrong reasons would have been a mistake, but leaving him hanging while you're pining for another man is not the way to go."

"Why don't you tell him," she suggested. "Isn't that why he hired you?"

"Yes," Naku conceded, "but it was mainly just to get some communication started. I think it would be best if you told him face to face. Then maybe you should tell the other guy how you feel and see how this all plays out."

"You're right, of course." She sighed. "I guess I've been too afraid to face my worst fears."

"We've all been there," Naku said. "If you want, I can be on hand when you talk to Larry."

"I think I need to do this on my own."

"Very well." Naku stood and took out one of his cards, handing it to her. "If you run into any problems or just need someone to bounce things off of, feel free to give me a call."

"Thanks, I will," she said, offering him a weak smile.

Back in his car, Naku phoned Larry Ikeda and relayed the message. "I talked to Natalie."

"What did she say?" he asked anxiously.

"I'll let her tell you," Naku responded, not wanting to get ahead of his ex-fiancée and spill the beans.

"That sounds ominous," Larry muttered.

"Not necessarily. She just wants to have an honest conversation. I hope you can respect that."

"Do I have a choice?"

Naku sighed, while thinking about the choice someone made to gun down Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau. "We all have choices," he said. "It just depends on how we choose to deal with them."

CHAPTER FOUR

In the morning, Naku spent a couple of hours riding a horse at the ranch of his friend, Gabriel Plummer, in Lahaina. The mare was named Callie and Naku loved to ride her. He took in the beautiful scenery as the horse trotted along a trail. He believed riding was a good way to connect with the spirits of his ancestors, many of whom were avid equestrians. It also gave him time to think about his latest case, as well as his love interest. Though his love life was currently at a

standstill, his primary case was still ongoing and moving perhaps a bit too slowly for his comfort.

He needed to find out what Suzette Higuchi-Bordeau was up to in the time preceding her death. Was she set up by the mysterious caller, prompting her to leave the protection of her house? Were her houseguests involved in the crime? Was Patrick Bordeau calling the shots? Was Tucker Matsumoto merely collateral damage? Or was he a wanted man, living on borrowed time? *

From award winning crime writer R. Barri Flowers and the bestselling author of the Murder in Hawaii Mysteries and Leila Kahana Maui Mysteries, comes the Eddie Naku Maui Mysteries Bundle.

Dead in Pukalani (An Eddie Naku Maui Mystery)

Private investigator Eddie Naku is hired by attractive divorcee Kathryn Higuchi on Maui to investigate the murder of her sister, Suzette Higuchi Bordeau, wife of a well-known criminal defense attorney. She was gunned down in a shopping center in the Upcountry region of Pukalani.

What seems like a routine case for the ex-police detective turns into a complex murder mystery as Naku uncovers a web of lies, deceit, arms trafficking, infidelity, seduction, betrayal, and more murders as he tries to solve a deadly crime. In the process, he becomes a target and must identify the killer or killers before he winds up breathing his last breath and leaving life in paradise behind.

Dead in Kihei (An Eddie Naku Maui Mystery)

Private investigator Eddie Naku's latest case involves the apparent suicide of a friend and fellow private eye, Frank Iwamoto, who fell from the lanai of his 8th story condo to his death.

Naku refuses to believe Iwamoto was suicidal, in spite of evidence to the contrary. Proving he was murdered won't be easy, but Naku is not about to give up. In the process, he comes up with a number of suspects, twists, and turns, as well as Frank Iwamoto's risk-taking lifestyle that likely put him in harm's way.

As Naku begins to get to the bottom of Iwamoto's death, while juggling multiple cases and complicated romances, he finds his own life in peril.

Bonus material includes excerpts from the next book in the Eddie Naku Maui Mysteries, Dead in Wailuku; along with excerpts from the author's popular Leila Kahana series novel, Murder on Kaanapali Beach, and his upcoming new Hawaii FBI series, Murder on the Big Island. Also included is the short story suspense thriller, Target of a Killer.

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