



Lady's Name

C.W. Myers

# LADY'S GAME

## *A PRICE DENOTTA MYSTERY*

### *INSTALLMENT 18*

Denotta slept late the next morning, having drunk coffee well into the wee hours the night before. The police had spent a little over two hours fingerprinting Denotta's apartment, leaving Daniels optimistic that the identity of the mystery woman would soon be revealed. Price wasn't as hopeful. With all the careful planning she had exhibited so far, it was unlikely that she would have tripped up with something as simple as a fingerprint.

By the time lunch rolled around, Price had listed every fact he could recall from the Stedman case, including his impressions and observations concerning Mrs. Stedman. Because of the hours he had spent on stakeout, he could easily visualize the hotels and motels frequented by Mr. Stedman during the weeks preceding the murder of his wife. Was he really having an affair, as the mystery woman had insisted? With whom? The woman pretending to be his wife? Then, why pass herself off as his wife?

The afternoon lagged by with no word from Daniels. For lack of a better option, Price gathered his notes and set out for the place of his first stakeout, a small hotel on the East side of town.

"I'm investigating the Stedman murder," he said to the young lady behind the counter, flashing his badge in an official-looking manner.

"I read about that case."

Her smile was open and friendly, displaying an eagerness to help that Price found encouraging. “Mr. Stedman stayed in your hotel a few weeks ago. I need to verify his room number and the name of his companion.”

She looked momentarily confused. “Well, I don’t know...”

Price took out his notebook, making a couple of quick notes. I would really appreciate your assistance with this information,” he told her. “I could wait for a warrant, but we want to catch this murderer as soon as possible. You understand.”

“Yes,” she agreed, opening the registry book.

Price waited as she scanned down a couple of pages. “Yes, here it is. He checked into Room 109 on the 25<sup>th</sup>.”

“Did he check in with anyone?”

“They didn’t sign if he did.”

“Did you know Mr. Stedman?”

“No. I’m not very good with names.”

Price thanked her and left. Through the remainder of the afternoon, he followed basically the same scenario with the other hotels and motels on his list and got the same information. Mr. Stedman had stayed, but no listing of a companion was ever found. It wasn’t until he reached the last place that he discovered a discrepancy. The final hotel on the list was located on the far side of town, well away from the others. Once inside, he introduced himself and posed the usual questions.

The clerk was cooperative, but to Price’s surprise, Stedman’s name couldn’t be found in any of the hotel records. Had it been removed? Had he not been asked to sign? Maybe he had met here for another reason entirely—one not requiring a room. There was even the possibility that the hotel was a cover for a meeting somewhere else—perhaps somewhere within walking distance.

Before he had the chance to speculate further, his cell phone rang.

“Price, we’ve matched some of the fingerprints in your apartment,” Daniels said on the other end of the connection.

“You think you’ve identified the woman?”

Daniel paused to fully relish his moment of revelation. “Yes. We found a partial on a cabinet door and another on the lock to your safe. The prints were enough for a match.”

“Well, don’t leave me hanging, Daniels. Tell me who she is.”

Daniels chuckled, obviously enjoying Price’s suspense. “Her name is Rachael Elizabeth Stedman. Can you believe it, Denotta? She’s Stedman’s wife. The mystery lady is married to Tony Stedman. I’ve seen the license.”

“Then, who is the lady in the morgue?”

“That’s the big question now, isn’t it? Who is the lady lying in the morgue?”

## End of Installment Eighteen

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