



Lady's Name

C.W. Myers

# LADY'S GAME

*A PRICE DENOTTA MYSTERY*

## *INSTALLMENT 4*

Price became conscious of the cloying odor of antiseptic, and for the space of about five seconds, wondered where he was and what he was doing there. He opened his eyes the merest slit—enough to see that he was lying in a room partitioned off by coarse white curtains. Intermittent moans and groans, interspersed with calm tones of professional detachment, alerted him that he was in a medical facility.

“When can we speak to him?” asked a man standing close to his bed.

As he turned toward the sound of the voice, a stabbing pain shot through his head, closely followed by a wave of dizziness. His last memory returned in colorful flashes, parading through his mind like the previews of an upcoming movie.

“As soon as he regains consciousness,” a voice replied, the tone dismissing the question and the speaker.

Price listened to the retreating footsteps and the quietly uttered expletive of the man wanting to see him. The voice was beginning to

sound familiar, and he was not surprised when Frank Daniels parted the curtains and stepped into the makeshift room.

“Hello, Denotta,” Daniels said, as if they had just run into each other on a busy street.

“Daniels.”

The acknowledgment had been noncommittal, but the truth was that Price was pleased to see Frank Daniels handling the case. He and Frank had worked together several times in the past when he had run footwork for the McCoddel Agency—before he had received his own license.

“Looks like you have a nasty bump on the head.” The words were flung out in a friendly tone, but the expression on his face was grave.

Price reached up to feel several layers of thick bandages. “Feels like it too,” he quipped, with a small attempt to lighten the tension in the room.

Frank Daniels was a huge bulk of a man, methodically rounded though a combination of too many days spent indoors in studious inactivity and too many nights in the local bar, chasing away demons discovered during the day. A twenty-year detective career on the police force had gained him the reputation for being honest, fair, and thorough. Little escaped his keen observation or eluded his analytical dissection.

“Tell me what happened,” he said, removing a small notepad from his coat pocket. “Were you working on a case?”

Price started at the beginning and ended with the shoot-out at the Stedman home. By the time he had finished, the policeman had stopped taking notes and was looking at him in open disbelief.

“I never figured you for a liar, Denotta, and I certainly didn’t make you out to be a murderer.”

Price flinched at the harsh words and derisive tone, the ache in his head throbbing a rhythmic accompaniment to the racing beat of his heart. What was going on? Daniels was treating him more like a suspect than a witness.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about? I’ve been completely honest with you. I shot Stedman in self-defense right after he shot his wife.”

Daniel’s face resembled granite—his eyes, black holes. “You’re going to have to do better than that. Stedman wasn’t shot. He wasn’t even there. The only person injured last night was Mrs. Stedman—her face blown clean off from a bullet we’ve matched to your gun. Now, start from the beginning, Denotta, and this time, I want the truth.”

End of Installment Four

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