



Lady's Name

C.W. Myers

LADY'S GAME

A PRICE DENOTTA MYSTERY

INSTALLMENT 10

Price stared long at the photograph, trying hard to merge the image woman in the picture with his memories of the woman who had hired him six weeks earlier. His previous work with Detective Daniels had taught him that pictures can lie—that a person's photograph could bare little resemblance to a person's look in their everyday life.

“Did Mr. Stedman ID the body?”

The woman looked annoyed. “Yes,” she answered, clipping the word sharply.

“And did he also supply the photograph for the file?”

“Yes. Is there a problem?”

The inquiry was polite enough, but he knew that what she really wanted to know was “*What is your problem?*” “No. No problem. I'm just trying to put everything together in my mind. Was her identity verified by any other means such as fingerprints or dental records?”

The secretary turned from her computer to give him her full attention, her face pinched in disgust as if he were an unwelcome insect crawling around in her personal space. “When a husband positively identifies his wife's body we have no reason to pursue the matter further. Do you have a reason?”

He ignored her question. “But with her face....” There was no delicate way to say it. “I understand from the report that her face was blown off. How could he make a positive identification without her face?”

“Her clothing, her jewelry, the body itself. She was his wife. Of course, there were other ways he could recognize her.” The woman’s patience was at an end. “Now, if you’re finished with the file, I’ve got a lot of work to do.”

Price nodded and closed the folder. He would not be able to make any further headway here. Thanking the woman for the imposition on her time, he made his way rapidly through the building and headed toward the city library, located only a few blocks away.

The two-story brick building had been built as a WPA project by local townspeople and had never been renovated. Kept afloat by a private grant, the library served as not only a source of reading for the community, but also as the main archive for the city’s history. As he entered the somber hall, the librarian at the front desk, Mrs. Woodall, greeted him with a smile of recognition. During the months he had spent working with Frank, the library had been one of his mainstays for background research.

He smiled in return, pointing to the room containing the microfiche machines where old editions of the local paper resided in immortality. Somewhere, in the months or years preceding the tragedy, there had to be a picture of Mrs. Stedman with her husband. Not that he doubted the information he had obtained from the Coroner’s office, not really that is, but he had to see for himself that the woman in the picture was the real Mrs. Stedman.

Once he had accomplished that, his next step was clear. He would establish to his own satisfaction that the woman lying in the morgue and the woman pictured in the file were the same. He glanced at his watch. Three hours had passed since his flight from the hospital. How much longer would he have before finding his

own picture plastered across the front page of the newspapers? The gnawing fear in his gut spurred him with a sense of urgency. His time of freedom was limited, and all he had gained so far from his efforts were more questions.

End of Installment Ten

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