



Lady's Name

C.W. Myers

# LADY'S GAME

## A PRICE DENOTTA MYSTERY

### INSTALLMENT 13

“I need to see some identification,” the beat cop said to Price, effectively ending any hope he might have had of catching up to the woman he had recognized to be Mrs. Stedman.

“Is there a problem, officer?”

The uniformed policeman recognized the high level of distress portrayed in the man's eloquent body language, even though the tone of his words was one of calm—bordering on unconcern. He waited until Price had produced his Driver's License before giving him an answer. “You jumped out of a moving cab, disrupting traffic and endangering lives. Officially, the law refers to it as *jay walking*. If there had been a resulting accident, you would have been cited for precipitating negligence.” He paused for a moment to catch his breath. “What was the rush?”

The officer had been edging Price back to a parked patrol car as he talked, and Price knew that it would only be a matter of minutes before his license information would be verified and the details of his impending arrest be brought to the officer's attention. He glanced down the busy sidewalk, the idea of escape looming tantalizingly around the fringes of his mind. Why couldn't he just blend in and disappear as easily as the woman in red?

As if having read his thoughts the policeman waved him into the back seat of the car and closed the door. “You’re Price Denotta, the PI who worked with Frank Daniels a few months back—right?”

“That’s right,” Price agreed, thinking that maybe his luck had changed.

“Yeah, I thought I recognized you. Was real surprised when the warrant was issued for your arrest.”

Price’s hope slithered off like a kicked dog as the fervent fist of fate reared back eagerly to punch him solidly in the gut. “I didn’t do it,” he said without any expectation of being believed.

“Un huh,” the officer replied without interest. His mind was already poised on the praise and possible bonus he would receive from the apprehension of this dangerous felon. Never mind that he had picked him up on a minor traffic violation—the result was the same.

Denotta sat quietly for the remainder of the ride to the station, his mind seduced into complacency by the ever-tightening noose of futility winding around him. If the chance to clear his name had been small before, it would grow anorexic following his incarceration. Trying to revive some small nugget of optimism, he reminded himself that Frank believed him and would be working on his behalf. The thought was small comfort, but he hugged it like a drowning man would clutch a lifeline.

Two reporters dogged his walk from the car to the door of the police station, shouting questions laced with innuendo and accusation. What happened next was routine, beginning with the reading of his rights. Up until then, he had not been formally charged. After being photographed and fingerprinted, he was led past a row of desks toward a locked metal door. Focused on placing one foot in front of the other, he turned in surprise at the sound of his name.

“Tough break, Denotta,” Daniels said in a low voice, after motioning to the duty officer that he wanted to talk. “Did you find out anything to help your case?”

Price gave his head a negative shake, and Daniels nodded that he understood. Price had a lot of things he wanted to say, but now was not the time or the place. “We need to talk,” he mumbled and was turning to go when a photograph on the edge of the desk nearest him caught his attention.

“That girl,” he said, raising his cuffed hands to point.

Daniels picked up the picture. “We found the body this morning,” he said. She had been shot and dumped in the Neches River about ten miles below town. Why? Is she someone you know?”

“Yes,” Denotta admitted, as he stared at the pallid face of the dead woman, the maid he had been searching for the day before. “Her name was Mary.” So saying, he turned his back on the pitiful image and walked compliantly to his awaiting cell, his mind numb from the revelation that his only witness was gone.

### End of Installment Thirteen

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