



Lady's Name

C.W. Myers

# LADY'S GAME

*A PRICE DENOTTA MYSTERY*

## *INSTALLMENT 12*

Tired and discouraged after a long day of searching for answers, Price Denotta called a cab and headed for his apartment. With a cautious eye over his shoulder as well as a vigilant awareness of his surroundings, he scanned the traffic uneasily, expecting at any moment to hear the roar of sirens heralding his arrest. Progress was slow, giving him ample time to feed his growing unease with imaginative ventures into paranoia. Every businessman had the look of an undercover cop and every woman under the age of sixty resembled Mrs. Stedman—his Mrs. Stedman, not the one lying in the morgue.

He remembered the day she had first stepped inside his office—her smart, sophisticated look—the sweet scent of her perfume. They had met many times during the next few weeks, but the first meeting was the one he recalled most vividly. He could still hear the rich tones of her voice and the lilt of her laugh when something amused her. If she wasn't dead, then where was she? As if on cue, a woman appeared at the front door of Macy's Department Store wearing a beige skirt and jacket similar to the one *she* had worn at their last meeting, and for a moment he was taken aback, wanting to yell out her name, but as the cab moved slowly past, he could tell that he was mistaken. The face was too narrow—the eyes too close set—and the mouth with the thin lips was far removed from the warm, full smile of the woman he had known.

His gaze swept the crowded street, lighting here, lingering there, but failing to match any of the faces he saw with the one implanted so firmly in his mind's eye. Shoulders slumping in resignation, he chided himself for even attempting such a foolish mission, not to mention feeling disheartened at its predictable failure. He turned resolutely away, determined to squelch the compulsion to continue trying when a spot of red brought his attention instantly back to the busy street. A woman in a red hat was leaving a tiny boutique, packages in tow.

"Stop the car," he yelled, letting the drama of the moment raise his voice much higher than he had intended. "I want to get out," he added unnecessarily, considering the fact that he was halfway out of the door already. Without waiting for the cab to come to a complete halt, he threw a large bill toward the front seat and bolted into the traffic, causing an scattered flurry of squealing tires, honking horns, and angry shouts to ripple across the four-lane thoroughfare in a wave. In the confusion, she looked up, and for an instant their eyes met and locked, assuring him of her identity and her of his. By the time he reached the sidewalk, she had vanished, disappearing into the sea of curious faces as if she'd never been, but he refused to be discouraged.

Pushing his way through the throng, he focused on the color red and the image of a wide-brimmed hat, perched haughtily atop a bed of dark curls. So intent was he on his venture that he failed to notice that he, too, had become the object of someone's search. He was beginning to close in on a red flash, bobbing about a block and a half in front of him, when his quest came to a sudden and abrupt end.

"Stop! "

The single-worded command struck him like a bullet, leaving him no doubt as to the speaker's confidence in his ability to enforce the command. He turned reluctantly, a slow motion tearing away from the real center of his attention, to

stare blankly into the face of the policeman bearing down on him, nightstick in hand. His heart sank even as his head turned involuntarily, hoping for one last glance at the woman in the red hat.

## End of Installment Twelve

*C. R. Myers is an award-winning author of more than fifty published novels, including the BobbiCat children's books, and a long-time Bullard resident. [www.crm Myers.com](http://www.crm Myers.com)*

