

Chapter One

At the taxi pulled away from the curb, Honoria Little Wentworth let out a huge sigh, as if she were letting go of her entire evening. And, in many ways, she was. The party had been less than interesting. Honoria had only gone to keep up appearances even as she wondered why said appearances were so important.

She was a tall, slender woman with brown hair and hazel eyes. To all appearances, she was happy, carefree and a bit naughty, with the added allure and worldliness of being a young widow. She wore rouge and lipstick and even mascara, and her wardrobe was always elegant and up to the minute.

She'd done her duty by getting married. It had lasted all of four days before he'd shipped off to France to fight in the Great War. That he'd been killed almost as soon as he'd gotten off the boat was, to her way of thinking, only fortunate. She looked out the window at the city at night as the car slipped past, lights dancing in the autumn air. She fidgeted with her purse clasp.

She'd only recently given up smoking, at the behest of Dr. Rothmayer. She'd seen him a couple weeks before for a particularly bad case of the croup. Going without the cigarettes had definitely helped, as had his tonic. She looked back out of the taxi's window.

Maybe this time, she'd do it, chuck it all and go where she really wanted to be. She could. She had her own money, thanks to her late and unlamented husband. But she also had ties here in her home in New York City. Her brother and his new wife, for starters. It was odd that she felt safer talking to her

new sister-in-law than she did when talking to anyone else. Honoria was tired of hiding. Tired of being all the different things that others expected of her. Tired of saying what everyone else wanted to hear from her.

Yet even as she yearned to do all that she really wanted, she had to admit, she had little idea of what it was that she longed to do.

The taxi pulled up in front of her building. She paid the driver, then waited for him to open her door. She graced him with her usual flirtatious smile, which she only marginally felt, then smiled again (this time with genuine pleasure) as she approached the doorman.

"Good evening, Mrs. Wentworth," said the man. He was a spindly fellow, almost swallowed up by his uniform. Yet Honoria always got the feeling that he was a lot tougher than he looked.

"Good evening, Mr. Carruthers," Honoria replied. She paused as he coughed. "It's a cool night. Are your lungs okay?"

Carruthers had gotten a good dose of mustard gas in the War a few years ago.

"Good enough, Mrs. Wentworth." He smiled. "I'm able to work. That's better than a lot of the boys can say."

"True enough. I'll send Virginia down with some tonic in a bit."

"Not necessary, Ma'am."

As he put his hand on the building's bronzed door to open it for her, Honoria stopped him.

"Mr. Carruthers, I do know a very good lung doctor," Honoria said, thinking of Dr. Rothmayer. "I'm sure he wouldn't mind seeing you as a favor to me."

Carruthers coughed and shook his head. "It wouldn't do any good, Mrs. Wentworth. When you've been gassed, it's permanent. And I'm not in bad shape compared to a lot of the boys."

"No, I suppose not," Honoria said as he opened the door. "Thank you and have a good evening."

"You, too, Mrs. Wentworth."

Honorio barely noticed the ornate beauty of the colonnaded entry hall as she walked past the concierge desk, smiling and waving her fingers at the two men behind the desk who had quickly sprung to their feet.

Mr. Ellroy, an older Negro with that ageless look apart from his gray hair, already had the elevator door open.

"Good evening, Miz Wentworth," he said as she got in.

"Good evening, Mr. Ellroy. How are you tonight?"

"Bout the same as usual, Miz Wentworth." He snapped the door to the elevator shut, then pushed the lever to get it going. "Going to your apartment or stopping at your brother's?"

"My place, thank you."

"You seem a might sad tonight, Miz Wentworth."

"I suppose it's nothing," Honorio said.

"Feelin' like you ain't fittin' in again?"

"You know, Mr. Ellroy, you're absolutely right." Honorio sighed. "But what do I do about it?"

"You learn how to make a way out of no way. You'll get it, Miz Wentworth."

"Thank you, Mr. Ellroy. How is Mrs. Ellroy?"

"Doing well. Doing well."

Few people who lived in her building knew the names of the staff members and rarely spoke to them beyond ordering what they wanted. Honorio didn't understand that and made a point of learning everyone's name. It made it easier to spy on her brother, who lived in the apartment below hers. Not that he was up to anything interesting these days. In fact, when Freddie wasn't working on his next book, he was busy with his new wife, Kathy. Fortunately, the two really were in love with each other, so Honorio didn't begrudge them the time spent with each other. She just wished she could talk to Kathy a bit more often.

The elevator ground to a slow stop and Mr. Ellroy opened the door.

"Thank you, Mr. Ellroy," Honorio said, stepping

off.

She waited in the tiny elevator lobby just long enough for Mr. Ellroy to close the doors to the elevator and head back downstairs. She turned and opened the door into her apartment. Virginia, her lady's maid, was not there to get her hat and coat, which wasn't unusual at all. She was probably downstairs with Freddie's cook again.

Honorias took the cloche off and shrugged off the coat with the white fox collar, laying them on one of the small tables flanking the door. She sniffed. Thanks to the croup, her sense of smell was still off. Yet something did not smell right. She turned toward her bedroom.

The young woman lay sprawled at the entrance to the back hall, her eyes open and staring. Honorias gasped and screamed. She ran in the other direction, toward the empty servants' quarters and down the stairs to her brother's apartment on the floor below. In seconds, she was pounding on the door to his bedroom.

"Just a second!" Freddie called to Honorias's hysterical sobs. "Calm down, for heaven's sakes."

He unlocked the door, and Honorias fell into his arms, gasping for air.

"What happened?" he asked. Tall and spare, like her, he had strawberry blond hair and green eyes. He was also bare-chested and wearing only a pair of pants. "Are you all right?"

Honorias gasped and slowly got control. "It's in my foyer. A body."

"A body?" asked Kathy, coming up behind him. She was shorter, with brown hair cut to her chin and alert brown eyes. She, too, was mostly undressed and wearing only a silk Chinese print robe that was obviously Freddie's. "Are you sure?"

Honorias nodded. Freddie glanced at Kathy.

"All right, darling," he said soothingly to his sister. "We'll go look. Do you want to stay here, or would you rather stay with us?"

"Don't leave me alone!" Honorias grabbed him,

then sniffed.

Freddie paused just long enough to get a handkerchief out of his bureau.

"Did you take the elevator?" he asked handing the handkerchief to her.

Honorina shook her head. "The stairs. It's faster."

They were also in the servants' quarters. Kathy went straight there. It was her usual route in and out of the building. Only Honorina, her servants, and Freddie's servants knew that Kathy's presence in Freddie's apartment was blameless. As far as the building staff was concerned, Kathy lived in Honorina's apartment, and Freddie was still a bachelor.

The wide, staring eyes greeted them in Honorina's foyer. The body belonged to a woman with dark hair that was straight and longer than fashion decreed. Bruises marked her face, and her clothes were torn. Honorina watched as Kathy touched her wrists.

"It's still pretty warm," Kathy said, shutting the eyes.

Freddie sighed. "Honorina, do you have any idea who she is?"

Honorina's eyes flitted away. "I can't say."

Freddie glanced at the body. "She doesn't look like she was too well off. Could one of your friends have done this as some sick sort of joke? One of those Bohemian maniacs you insist on going about with?"

"I'd expect something like this from one of our set sooner," snorted Honorina.

"We'd better call the police," said Kathy.

"I'll do it," grumbled Freddie suiting action to word.

"Who would do a thing like this?" said Honorina.

Kathy glanced at the body. "It wasn't just a prank. That body's too warm. If my guess is right, she was killed around eleven-thirty right here in this apartment."

"How do you know?" gasped Honorina.

"Long story." Kathy eased back into the inner

vestibule and disappeared into the bedrooms.

Honorias shivered and wondered why Freddie wasn't freezing. He didn't even have a union suit on. Honorias tried not to think about whatever activity had been going on right before she'd arrived. A second later, there was a knock on the door. Freddie opened it to a tall, portly man in a new black bowler hat and a dark gray tweed suit that had seen better days.

"I'm Detective Jim Corcoran," said the man, flashing a badge. "You have a body here?"

"This way," said Freddie, taking over. "This is my sister, Mrs. Honorias Wentworth. This is her apartment. She came home a few minutes ago and found the body over there, then came downstairs to get me."

"And you are?" Corcoran asked as he looked over the body.

"I'm Freddie Little," he said.

"It looks like there's been a struggle in the bedroom," Kathy announced, coming out of Honorias's bedroom.

Corcoran, notepad in hand, turned to look at her. Freddie glared at her, clearly annoyed at his wife's badly-timed entrance. Honorias bit her lip. She felt a giggle coming on and this was clearly not the time for it.

Kathy smiled weakly. "You got here quickly."

"Connections," said Freddie. "This is Detective Corcoran, Kathy. Officer, Kathleen Briscow."

"She lives with me," Honorias added.

"Well, Miss Briscow, how did you manage to sleep through the struggle in the bedroom, I'd like to know," asked Corcoran.

Kathy glanced over at Freddie and turned pink. Corcoran looked at Kathy, who was wearing only a very masculine dressing gown with the sleeves rolled up, and at Freddie, who was only wearing a pair of dark tweed pants, and came to a very accurate conclusion about which apartment Kathy had been in, and what she'd been doing there.

Corcoran shook his head. "Mr. Little, I appreciate the effort to save Miss Briscow's reputation, but it isn't going to help solve the crime."

Freddie sighed. "Detective, with all due respect, it is not Miss Briscow's reputation that concerns either of us, as we have been married for some months now. We are merely trying to keep it a secret for a number of reasons that are really quite irrelevant to the matter at hand."

"I see." What Corcoran saw was the nude left ring finger on Kathy's hand.

Honorias noticed it, too, and held in another giggle. As Kathy was not supposed to be married, she only wore her wedding and engagement rings at home, and frequently forgot to put them on there. Honorias seriously doubted that the wedding band Freddie wore would make any difference to Corcoran. Not that many men wore wedding bands, and Freddie's, which he never took off, had yet to be noticed, let alone questioned.

"Detective, if you insist, I can go downstairs and fetch the marriage license," said Freddie, clearly trying not to get irritated. "In any case, we will tell you everything we know about what has happened here if you will only see to it that Miss Briscow's name stays out of the report and that her presence here tonight is kept confidential."

"Well, it depends," said Corcoran.

"I can and will make it worth your while," said Freddie with an insinuating nod. "However, I would bear in mind, that the consequences of revealing our marriage are relatively small compared to a complaint that an officer of the law not only accepted a bribe, but asked for it, and I am not without connections on the police force."

Corcoran glared at Freddie, then turned to Honorias.

"All right, Mrs. Wentworth, you say you found the body this evening when you came home. What time was that?"

"Somewhere between eleven and twelve, I guess." Honoria sniffed. "I'm sorry, I don't know. I don't run my life by the clock."

"It would have been roughly quarter of twelve when we heard Mrs. Wentworth scream," said Kathy. "It was twenty of when I'd asked my husband what time it was, and that was between five and ten minutes before."

"I decided to come home early tonight," said Honoria. "One of the Vanderbilts had a small party. It was deathly dull, so I left, and came home to find this...." She gestured at the body.

"We think she may have been killed here," said Kathy. "I can't be sure, but I thought I'd heard some screaming, it must have been around eleven thirty, perhaps a little earlier."

Corcoran glared. "So how did you hear Mrs. Wentworth, but not a girl fighting for her life?"

Kathy colored up, as Freddie rolled his eyes.

"We... eh..." he began, then paused. "Well, my wife did hear her but we had other business we were tending to."

Honoria bit her lip even harder. She couldn't understand why she felt the need to giggle at such moments, but it was devilishly hard to stop, especially once she started.

Corcoran looked Freddie and Kathy both over again and nodded. It wasn't his job to say how other people should be living, as long as it wasn't breaking a law, but he obviously wanted to. He didn't for a minute believe the married tale.

"And what about the servants?" he asked. "Where are they, and why haven't they heard?"

"I only have the maid living here," said Honoria. "There's a daytime cleaning staff and Freddie's cook also cooks for me. Between the two of us, she barely has enough to do as it is. The maid is probably downstairs, sound asleep. She does that fairly often, visits downstairs and falls asleep, I mean."

"And who knew it?"

Honoriam shrugged. "Anyone who knows our servants, I'd imagine. I have no idea. I don't discuss my domestic arrangements with people, but I don't doubt I've called for something and had to call downstairs to get it. Anybody could have overheard and gossiped over it."

"And who is the victim?" Corcoran watched her carefully.

"She was a friend of one of my friends," Honoriam said, glancing over at Freddie and hoping he wouldn't question her further. "I was offering her shelter. We didn't get much of a chance to talk, but her name was Flossie Walsh. She said she was from Caledonia, Ohio."

"Caledonia, Ohio." Corcoran finished writing then snapped the notepad shut. "Well, the boys from the morgue should be here any minute. Miss Briscow, if you don't want to be in the report, I'd recommend taking your leave."

Kathy obediently headed for the servants' quarters. The morgue crew showed up a couple minutes later and as they got the body onto their stretcher, Honoriam slipped into her bedroom. The bed linens were all askew. Several perfume bottles had been knocked over on her bureau and the top drawer hung open. Honoriam looked closer at the bed and then drew back gagging. The blankets and coverlet had been pulled back and on the white top sheet, a red bloodstain was slowly getting darker. Next to the bed, a vase from the foyer had been shattered.

Honoriam went back into the foyer, breathing heavily.

"Are you all right?" Freddie asked, his voice thick with worry.

"As right as one can be," Honoriam said. "Detective Corcoran, you may want to look in my bedroom. My sister-in-law was absolutely correct. There was a struggle in there, and there's a nasty bloodstain on the bed."

Corcoran's eyebrows rose straight into the hat he had yet to take off. "Indeed."

He stalked off into the bedroom. The morgue crew had already left, and Honoria noticed that there wasn't any blood where the body had lain. She looked at Freddie, who had apparently noticed the same thing and looked at her. She shivered again but waited until Corcoran finally emerged from the back of the apartment.

"Well, it looks like yours was the only room that was disturbed," the police detective said, sounding vaguely annoyed. "It would be a safe bet that your friend caught a burglar in the act and paid for it with her life."

"Detective, must you be so callous?" Freddie said with a glare.

"It's all right, Freddie," Honoria said with a sigh. "I'm sure the detective means well."

Corcoran managed to look a little abashed. "My apologies, Ma'am. I'm afraid I do see this too d—, uh, too often. If you don't mind, I'd like to take that stained sheet to be tested."

"Yes, please do," said Honoria. She smiled courteously, the sort of thing she thought she was expected to do.

Corcoran returned to the bedroom, got the sheet and left promptly.

Freddie looked at Honoria. "Do you want me to rouse Virginia and have her get your room back in order?"

Honoria shook her head. "No. I— I think I'd rather not stay here tonight. Would it be terribly inconvenient...?"

"Not in the least," Freddie replied. "Go fetch what you need for the night. My rooms are always ready."

Freddie brought her downstairs and only paused at the door to the room that had been his bedroom alone until Kathy had moved in. He peeked in and smiled softly.

"She's sound asleep," he whispered proudly.

"She does have to work tomorrow," said Honoria.

"She does." Freddie sighed.

"Would you rather she didn't?" Honoria asked.

"Oh heavens, no," said Freddie, closing the door.

The reason Kathy and Freddie were hiding the fact that they were married was so that Kathy could keep her job as a junior editor at Healcroft House, Publishers. Freddie was happy to support Kathy's working, but he also worried about her. "It's... One of the senior editors was fired today. Sanders, I believe. She's hoping to get his job. I just don't see how that will take place. Her boss is open to reason, but he's still terribly Victorian in his outlook. It's woefully unjust. She does more work than most of the senior editors there."

"I know," said Honoria, knowing that she understood Kathy's situation even better than Freddie did. "But women are making great strides all over the place. Maybe Kathy's boss will change his mind."

Freddie smiled to imply that he thought so, too, but both knew the odds were very much against Kathy getting the desired promotion. There being nothing more to say on the matter, Freddie saw to making sure Honoria was comfortable in one of the three guest rooms in his apartment.

The next morning, Kathy poked her sleeping husband awake.

"Mm?" Freddie grumbled.

"I've got to leave now," she whispered. "I'll be late for work."

"Oh." Freddie yawned and sat up. "Have you talked to Honoria?"

"She's still asleep. I've got to leave now, darling. I'll call you at lunch."

Freddie kissed her warmly. "You'll need to come straight home from work tonight, and no working late."

"Oh." Kathy grimaced. "That party at your mother's."

"It is my birthday."

"I know, dearest, but we're not supposed to be on the sort of terms where I'd care about that. If Honoria hadn't made such a fuss about inviting me, I doubt I'd be attending. I absolutely must leave this instant."

She kissed him again and hurried out of the room. Roberts, Freddie's valet, waited in the foyer. He was an average-sized man in his middle years with dark hair and an impassive face. Kathy was afraid he didn't like her much.

"Breakfast is waiting, ma'am," he said.

"Oh. I don't have time, Roberts." Kathy paused. "Maybe I'll just take some toast with me."

Roberts' face remained impassive, but Kathy could see the internal groan. Eating in taxis and on the subway just wasn't done by people of Freddie's privileged background. But almost three months of marriage hadn't made a socialite out of Kathy. She remained a working girl at heart and doubted that she'd ever be anything else. She grabbed her coat, hat, and the toast, and ran through the servants' quarters, and up the stairs to Honoria's apartment, so the daytime elevator operator could see her leaving from there instead of Freddie's place.

She walked into the junior editors' office at Healcroft House, Publishers, just on time. Two of her fellow junior editors, Fisk and Norbert, were in the various stages of removing their outer-wear. Burton hadn't arrived, but then, he rarely made it into the office on time.

"I thought today was going to be a red-letter day," Fisk teased as Kathy took off her hat and coat. "The day Briscow would be late."

"Sorry to disappoint you," replied Kathy with a good-natured smile.

Norbert sauntered over. "Still, we got here ahead of you. Something must be up. Did your rich boyfriend finally give you a ring?"

"Do you see me wearing one?" Kathy asked,

holding up her left hand.

"When is he going to propose?" groaned Fisk, pushing his glasses up on his nose and leaning back in his chair. He was a medium-sized man with an exceedingly normal profile.

"Why do you gentlemen insist on assuming that I want him to?" said Kathy, remaining genial in spite of the annoying nature of the questions.

Norbert ran his fingers through his dark hair with the flecks of gray. He was medium-sized, as well and rather gaunt.

"Briscow," he said with a sigh. "Must I remind you that the Frederick G. Littles of the world are very few and far between."

Kathy laughed. "I don't know why you say that. There are three of them, you know."

Norbert sat on the edge of her desk. "This is not a joking matter, Briscow. You are not a young woman."

"Oh, dear." Kathy pressed her hand to her chest in mock amazement. "I had no idea."

"Quit fooling, Briscow," said Fisk. With a worried frown, he got up from his desk and joined Norbert. "Norbert's right. At your age, you won't get too many more opportunities, let alone a fat one like that."

"That Mr. Little is married," replied Kathy. She folded her arms and smiled severely at her office mates. "Honestly, gentlemen, I don't wonder you'd like to see me married off. I know you genuinely care, but something tells me you'd like it better if you didn't have to worry about me getting Mr. Sanders' job."

Sanders had been fired the day before having returned from his luncheon drunk. Fisk and Norbert burst into laughter.

"You?" gasped Norbert. "Mr. Healcroft would sooner disband the company than make a woman senior editor."

"Even if he did, who would he get to work under you?" sniggered Fisk.

Kathy remained unfazed. "Why not you? You both

know what I can do.”

Fisk giggled and shook his head. “It’ll never happen. You’re good, Briscow, but Healcroft would never do it. He’d never get the authors.”

“You’d better see if you can get your boyfriend to propose,” said Norbert. “A woman senior editor?”

Still laughing, the two went to their desks. Kathy turned to her work. It didn’t matter what the other two thought; she alone knew how determined she was. Still, Fisk had made a point. As a senior editor, she’d have three to five junior editors under her, and they’d all be men. It had been four months after her promotion before Fisk or Norbert would even talk to her. Burton still wouldn’t unless he had to.

The battle for acceptance had been hard fought. Kathy had found herself subjected to all sorts of harassment at first, not all of it from the other juniors. Mr. Dillbeck, her immediate boss, had been less than kind also. The only reason she had more authors to edit than anyone else was actually the result of still more harassment.

None of the editors had liked the fact that Freddie, who was one of the house’s best-selling authors, wouldn’t let anyone but Kathy touch his work. Worse yet, everyone knew Kathy had done a superlative piece of editing on Freddie’s first book, and, as predicted, the book’s sales had been fabulous. Part of this was due to Freddie’s name and social standing. That the book was still selling after several months was due to the fact that it was a very good book, and Kathy’s efforts to make sure it reached its potential.

Freddie would have remained her only author if it hadn’t been for Pierce Jennings. Jennings had established himself as an angry young voice in literature some years before. In reality, Jennings was officious and whined, and generally made himself so unpopular that more than one publishing house had decided even his phenomenal popularity wasn’t worth dealing with him. He had driven the other two senior

editors into abandoning him when Mr. Dillbeck decided in a fit of pique to give him to Kathy.

Kathy chose to correspond with Jennings at first, signing with her first initial and last name. Jennings was so impressed after two letters that he came into the office demanding to see Mr. Briscow. With several smirks, Fisk, Norbert, and Burton directed Jennings to Kathy's desk. Jennings didn't believe Kathy was the editor he wanted, so she let him believe she was the secretary. Pretty soon, Jennings' search for Mr. Briscow became the office joke.

Then another best-selling author, Harold T. Mennerly, began to ask for Mr. Briscow, and some of the other authors, all of whom Kathy had worked with when she was still a secretary doing her boss's work for him. Frustrated by all the noise, Mr. Healcroft had given them to Kathy, to the irritation of Mr. Dillbeck and to the amusement of the rest of the staff.

It was getting on for noon when Freddie wandered into the office. Kathy was engrossed in a manuscript and didn't notice him until he sat down next to her desk.

"Why are you here?" she asked, brightening.

"I was hoping you'd be free for luncheon," he replied, then leaned over to look at what she was working on, and spoke softly. "I want to talk to you about the disturbing incident."

"I wanted to talk to you about that, too." Kathy smiled and got up. "Well, Mr. Little, I think I can oblige you."

"Shall we, then?" Freddie was already on his feet and held her coat for her.

Freddie hailed a taxi outside the building and gave an address near Fifth and 34th. They chatted about small matters until they were at the tea room and had ordered.

"Have you talked to Honoria?" Kathy asked.

"Yes," said Freddie. "She confirmed what you said about the struggle in the bedroom. Corcoran seems to

believe that her friend surprised a burglar."

"That makes sense," said Kathy. "Was there anything missing?"

"Honorina says no."

Kathy's eyebrows rose. "As in you do not believe her."

Freddie sighed. "I do, about anything being missing, at any rate. But there is something about Miss Walsh being there that is bothering me. Honorina is not being entirely honest about her. But I cannot for the life of me say why."

"She's probably afraid you wouldn't approve of her friend." Kathy frowned. "Or maybe there's something else. I sometimes get the feeling that Honorina has secrets simply because she needs them for some reason."

Freddie shrugged. "I don't doubt."

Kathy pulled a cufflink from her purse. "I found this in Honorina's bedroom."

It was a gold square, rimmed with tiny diamonds. The face was a bas-relief design of vines intertwined around what appeared to be a letter of the alphabet.

Freddie looked at it. "It's a nice piece. Looks like a monogram of some sort."

"But which letter? Looks like it could be an A or a P or maybe an R."

He shook his head. "Why didn't you give this to the police?"

"I was going to. But Detective Corcoran wasn't exactly receptive. And I didn't want him asking any questions about Honorina and any male friends that might have dropped this."

"Kind of you to spare her," Freddie said then frowned thoughtfully. "And as disturbing it is to think about Honorina behaving so badly, this was not left by a lover. The daytime cleaning staff was in yesterday and they would have found it and given it to Roberts or Virginia."

Kathy smiled at Freddie. "We've done it before,

Freddie. And there's something about that cufflink that makes me wonder if this hasn't come from your set."

Freddie mentally debated whether the attack on Miss Walsh had come from his "set" of fellow socialites while the waiter brought tea.

"It's possible," he sighed. "I did talk to the police this morning."

"And..?"

"She was beaten, and her neck broken." Casually, but without drawing attention to it, Freddie filled his teacup from a hip flask, and replaced the flask inside his jacket. "One of the servants in another apartment did see a man in the service stairwell that night, collar up and hat down, so it wasn't clearly enough to recognize."

Kathy took a sip of her tea. "What about the blood in Honoria's bedroom?"

Freddie shrugged. "Who knows? It wasn't the girl's. The police are very certain about that."

"How?"

"The blood type doesn't match hers, and she didn't have any wounds."

"Then it probably belongs to the man who killed her. Whose else's could it be?"

Freddie shrugged. "It would seem the logical conclusion."

"She must have marked the man." Kathy's face screwed up as she thought. "There was a vase shattered in the bedroom. She must have hit the killer with it, which would account for the blood. I can't imagine a wound like that would be easy to hide, especially if it was on the face somewhere. Head wounds bleed a lot"

They waited while the waiter delivered their lunches. Kathy tucked in gracefully. Freddie refilled his cup.

"Drinking so much this early?" Kathy asked.

"I'm anticipating the need for considerable reinforcements tonight," sighed Freddie.

"I would imagine you're anticipating worse than shall actually be."

"Hm. I've heard rumors they've made some more discoveries about that Teapot Dome mess, which means Father will be up in arms. And Mr. and Mrs. Wright are supposedly going to attend, which means Mr. Wright is going to rub it in, and there shall probably be a nasty confrontation over the billiards table. All in all, I'd rather withdraw with you ladies and discuss charity drives."

"I'd much prefer the confrontation over the billiards table."

"Not if you'd heard it as many times as I have." Freddie glared at his teacup. "That's only part of the unpleasantness, though. The papers have found out about the body, and there are reporters in every nook and cranny they can get into in that building. It was no small thing trying to leave this morning. Detective Corcoran has kept his word, however, and your name does not appear in any report, and the press seems unaware of your presence. I recommend consistent use of the service door. That's what I'm using until this whole mess blows over."

"Oh, drat. We probably shouldn't look into it, either, in that case. The papers will never leave you alone, if and when we solve it."

Freddie frowned. "We're going to solve it. We've done it before. Honoria's terribly upset, and I don't blame her. There's something else behind it, and I want to know what it is."