

County Club

By
Holloway Horn

"I'm not cross-examining you I want to ascertain certain facts in connexion with the lady who was murdered in your club an hour or so ago. If you refuse to help me I shall make a note of the fact. Since you have nothing to hide why not answer my questions simply?"

"You can see my pass-book if you wish. It isn't pleasant reading I'm afraid."

As he spoke he opened a drawer in his desk and took out a small leather wallet: "There you are," he said, and passed it to Ducros.

"Um—overdrawn."

"Yes. Is that a criminal offence?"

"No. Not that I'm aware of. What is Rolliter's address by the way?"

"7, Goweril Street, W."

"How long has Mrs. Lewin been here?"

"Three weeks."

"Where did she come from?"

"I'm not sure—wait a minute."

He took out a file and went through the letters it contained. "The Shelton Hotel, Hyde Park. She's been travelling about for some time, I understand. Miss Stenning, her companion, could tell you."

"May I see the letter she sent you?"

"Yes."

"This Means Ruin!"

Ducros glanced at the letter open in the file: "Miss Stenning wrote, I notice," he said.

"Yes. She was her secretary."

"And she was recommended here by your solicitor, Mr. Rolliter?"

"I believe she was."

"Who was she?"

"Mrs. Lewin?—a widow. I really know very little about her. Miss Stenning could tell you."

"That's all you know—that she was a widow?"

"Yes. Excepting that she was apparently a wealthy woman."

"What was her husband?"

"I don't know. Something in South Africa, I believe—but I'm not sure."

"When did he die?"

"I don't know."

Ducros glanced at Dollimore.

"What made you think she was wealthy?" the Station Inspector asked.

"Just observation. Her bills here were not small—she had two of our best rooms—and they were paid on the nail. She had a good car and a secretary."

"Has her nephew been here?"

"No. I've heard that she has a nephew in the locality—a farmer or something—but I don't think they were on the best of terms. Anyway, he never came here so far as I know."

"He wasn't here tonight?" Dollimore pursued.

"I heard that he was a friend of the secretary—Miss Stenning—and that he sometimes called for her. I don't think he saw his aunt much. He may have been here to see the young lady—I don't know."

"You appreciate that Mrs. Lewin must have been murdered by one of these people, if the list is inclusive?" Dollimore asked.

"I suppose so. I don't know. It would be easy for anyone to get on to the balcony in front of her window."

"In the front of the house? With the lights on? And people strolling about on the lawns?" Dollimore questioned.

"I suppose not," Fernandez admitted.

"So it must have been one of this list?" Dollimore asked again.

"It might have been you," Fernandez pointed out. "Unless you were in the dance room the whole time."

"Or me," Ducros put in, "or even you, Fernandez. But we want to make it definite if we can. You mentioned her car. Had she a chauffeur?"

"Not here. Miss Stenning drove the car. Is there any objection to the people going now?" Fernandez went on. "It may be extremely inconvenient to them to be kept here. This business will just about finish us. It means ruin! Again he wiped his forehead with the yellow handkerchief."

"See to it, Dolly," Ducros said. "Let the casual visitors go if they wish to—and if you're satisfied that they are casual visitors. There'll hardly be any more dancing, I imagine, this evening."

"Right."

"And now I should like a chat with Miss Stenning, Fernandez."

"I'll send for her."

Dollimore hesitated, but Ducros was his superior officer, and he had no choice. A minute or so after he had left the room. Mary Stenning came in. Her face was very white, but in other respects she appeared to be perfectly calm.

"Sit down, Miss Stenning," Ducros said. "There are a few questions I should like to ask you: How long have you been with Mrs. Lewin?"

"Six months—nearly seven."

"Where did you meet her in the first place?"

"On the boat coming back from South Africa, early this year."

"In what circumstances? I mean, what were you doing on the boat?"

"I was returning to England. My father was a scientist in charge of a big laboratory in Capetown. He—he died about 18 months ago my mother died when I was a child."

"And you were returning to England when you met Mrs. Lewin?"

"Yes. She was very kind to me. I had a little money and was coming home to get a job—or to try and get one."

"And she offered you this one?"

"Yes. We became very friendly on the boat."

"It was Mr. Rolliter who suggested her coming here?"

(To be continued)



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