



Patricia M. Muhammad
presents

THE SPEAKEASY MURDERS

Places

The 1920s is known for its era of scandalous dress, wild dance crazes and their clubs. However, there was more to life than these new cultural phenomena for several people at the time. Some were housewives, fathers, on the precipice of becoming a co-ed. Some were even detectives. Several of whom began their day just as others, waking up, eating breakfast and getting dress to begin anew. These places where they rose and returned after their day's fill were their homes. Detective Helen Williams had such a place and she too looked forward to when she could rest from investigating yet another murder. Her flat was filled with what was necessary for her home to function. She enjoyed her baths and the comfort of her bed. Before she could consider an alternative, Detective Williams would find herself in a new home, one that she would only share with the man of her future. Before this she had undergone a new set of experiences, all of which originated on the job, the place where she spends most of her time, though she had already considered it would not be for long. Right now, the station house was her other home. Her primary comfort was what she wielded in her hand, an heirloom magnifier and what she hot beverage she verily enjoyed consuming, coffee.

The station house had order. It had hierarchy. Its layout was that of a simple office. Its employees were capable in the small "coloured" precinct and they found what comfort they could during their grizzly work. Some found minor pleasure in teasing Helen, this was the unwelcomed gesture of a detective named Donnelly. Her other colleagues wholeheartedly respected her. Where the underground world provided chaos, tumult and strife through its inhabitants committing the most heinous crimes above ground, Williams and the others used rationale and procedure in order to resolve their cases. The station house was the cleaning filter to capture and rid society of the debris that waited to taint another innocent if it were to remain free. Within the station house are three additional places that Detective Helen Williams would find herself acquainted with. Foremost was the office of Lieutenant Davidson. Here the detectives were called upon to provide updates about their case assignments, to speak candidly about the sensitive nature of some matters to their stern, but understanding supervisor. This is where Helen and a few of her colleagues display moments of awkwardness and anxiety. Yet, Lieutenant Davidson's office could also be a refuge. Detectives need not explicitly iterate what or who bothered them about their cases or their colleagues. That same detective, Donnelly, would find himself angrily called into that office by Davidson not too long after teasing Williams and disrupting her work. The lieutenant's voice could ensnare his subordinates who rightfully deserved it, and in this instance it provided Helen a temporal reprieve, allowing for her to concentrate on these murders.

The reader will move beyond the sea of workstations and the lieutenant's office to another space within the precinct—the gymnasium. It was nothing fancy as it was the 1920s, but it could

be a refuge for those who needed it. This was not only the place where some of the detectives could relieve their stress by playing a game or two, it may be considered a forgotten refuge since those games did not happen often. Detective Williams remembered this as such when her co-detective was in desperate need. Detective Stephen Patterson sat amongst the rest of the detectives. Stress slowly encroached. Helen noticed it. Stephen attempted to hide it. Patterson wished to cope with whatever had taken its toll on his own. Williams knew better. She thought of the gym. No one was there. It was quiet. There were times when she needed to steal away from the buzz and excitement of detective work which surrounded her. What she noticed was that Patterson's ailment was likely much deeper than this. Still her instincts to remove him from the fray proved accurate. This place was quiet. Its window surrounded the upper perimeter of the walls though they were not wide. There may not be any escape from this place, but it was just this for Patterson from the main office. She encouraged her station house brother. He walked slowly around gathering himself. It seemed to be an expanse of newly swept wooden floors. It was open. If one listened carefully they may even hear the echo of their thoughts. Helen waited at the entry point. She understood that this trek was Stephen's alone to undertake. She silently encouraged him. He made progress. Patterson no longer felt constricted. Stephen had finally returned whole. Williams was waiting with a glass a water in hand. Stephen felt comfortable in this place to have a brief discussion with Helen about his condition. The gym had served its purpose. It was now time to return to their workstations—but not for long. These detectives were about to go undercover—to the speakeasy.

The speakeasy is where Helen and Stephen have assumed their new identities. It is an unfamiliar place. Helen finds the environment wild though she appears as a flapper and seem to be one of them. This place houses the curious, maybe even the notorious. Its doors opened welcoming those who seek amusement and an alternative to the world above. A form of other decadence is the norm here. It is where Detective Williams seek to find the murderer, however this place had its own form of destiny embedded within it. She would soon find it with a British gentleman named Thaddeus. He noticed her straightaway. She soon acknowledged the handsome stranger who engaged her in conversation. The club had too many distractions, but as soon as she met Thaddeus, none of it could hold her attention away from him. He was tall. A handsome fellow with a deep voice and an enticing accent. Detective Williams wondered what was happening to her. She tried to present herself properly, but Thaddeus stirred something within her. This place was the gateway for Thaddeus and Helen's relationship. On one occasion they danced. He knew the dances she knew and cared not what others thought of their proper sway. The detective's bashfulness revealed to Thaddeus at least one thing immediately—she would forever be his. Yet Williams would experience incidents she had never before. The speakeasy was seedy. It invited all sorts of characters, a couple of which attempted to rape her. This place knew a different form of justice, immediate, swift and brutal. Patterson was the first to intervene. Thaddeus, however, was able to defend her as well. This place was dangerous. Helen's suitor had to take additional measures. It was no longer welcoming on this night. He took her away to his flat for her safety. Detective Williams not entered a new place. She would soon find herself in his arms, only after nearly falling asleep. They were both tired from the events of this night. Helen now felt comfortable in his house despite her initial reluctance. Thaddeus watched over her until he return to the sofa in the living room. He could only think of her. The speakeasy and his home became the two places that Detective Williams would become the most familiar. One necessary for a time for her to resolve her cases, the other necessary because of what Thaddeus and Helen were becoming to one another.

The speakeasy still had more to share with the detective. It would be the place where the final confrontation between her and Thaddeus against the perpetrators of the crimes. This place

would present the moment in which Helen discovers a new crime was planning to happen—and she was to be their next victim. However, circumstances and destiny dictated for the conspirators to have their due. The speakeasy became the place where resolution laid to rest.

The station house would see Detective Williams one last time. She worked diligently to finalize her reports—and to bid her farewell. Helen would return to Thaddeus home after they are wed. They packed up their belongings and faced one another. They were each other's future. Thaddeus and Helen said goodbye to their home in Chicago and set sail for Europe, where they both would have their destined future and live the rest of their days in their permanent and rightful place—their home in England.

