



INCANDESCENT

ANALYSIS Y. NEW THINGS

# **INCANDESCENT**

**Anais Yumi Weiss**

*For my family*

## Preface

This novel is a work of fiction, although it was inspired by certain actual events. Any similarities between the characters in this story and real people are either coincidental, or based partially on historical figures. There is no intent to defame any person, or to imply that anything said or done by such person in the story actually was said or occurred.

This story was written in North American English using language (vocabulary, grammar, accents, slang and dialect) that was in fashion in New York during the 1920s. An alphabetical glossary of terms is printed at the end of the novel. Words included in the glossary are indicated with asterisks (\*) within the text. Endnotes and a simplified Bibliography are attached to give credit for writing and speech quoted in the story and for special knowledge included in the plot.

Please note that attitudes towards women, minorities and others were different during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century than they are now. In order to tell a story that is set in an earlier era, it is often necessary to include terms and narration that would be offensive if used today. The reader may notice hints of misogyny and other prejudices in the dialogue. Negative references included in this story should be taken in the context of history and its, sometimes, outdated public attitudes. There are also generalizations made in the descriptions of people or through their dialogue, which could be viewed as demeaning had they been real people. But, they are merely fictional characters. The author personally rejects such prejudices and viewpoints. In spite of the seriousness of the disclaimers and warnings included here, I hope the reader enjoys this story of New York in the Roaring '20s.

## Chapter 1

### The Brownstone\*

“Would you listen to this!” Lucien exclaimed, rustling his newspaper:

***‘Trial of the Century: Star-Crossed Starchitect Shot Right in the Façade!’***

Harry Kendall Thaw pumped three bullets at point-blank range into the head of Stanford White in Madison Square Garden’s rooftop theater. Thaw claims that White had seduced Thaw’s wife, Evelyn Nesbit, five years ago, when she was 16.’<sup>1</sup>

“What a villain! I dare say White had it coming\* to him but a public execution seems a bit excessive, doesn’t it? Can you believe such barbarism still happens in our modern age?! Some men aren’t fit to be out in public.”

Lucien, his mouth twisted in disgust, eyebrows raised in disbelief, tossed the daily rag\* onto the breakfast table with a flourish, and stared at the young woman sitting across from him. Geneviève looked up from her own newspaper, unable to hide her smile at his dramatic expression.

“*Oui chéri*, it is quite the scandal,” she answered “but our modern age is not far from the darker times that came before, *n'est-ce pas?*”

As she reached for her teacup, its swirling vapors rising from the Earl Grey, she breathed in the scent of bergamot, blew gently across the surface and took a sip, leaving a red lipstick stain on the rim. She rubbed at the mark, smearing it but failing to remove all of it from the white porcelain. Her thumb was now tinted red as well, and she quickly wiped it into the black fabric of her trousers.

“Geni! How many times do I have to tell you that you should moisten the rim of your cup with the tip of your tongue before you sip. Then you wouldn’t

smudge your lipstick all over it.”

“Lu... you know I have no patience for that. With a champagne glass, I might try, but I'd burn my tongue on my teacup.”

“Well, every morning, you leave the breakfast table looking like a child who has stuck her thumb in a cherry pie, and someone needs to keep you civilized now that you live in the big City,” said Lucien. He squinted and winked across the table. Geneviève glanced down at her rouged thumb and grinned.

“I'm afraid you will have quite a battle on your hands Lu. This city can bring out the savage in anyone.”

The door to the kitchen opened and Betty, the maid, hurried through with freshly baked bread rolls and toast. Geneviève and Lucien each reached for a slice of toast; she spreading butter and honey on hers, and he orange marmalade on his.

Down the stairs came rushed footsteps and from around the corner appeared a breathless young lady with a marcelled bob.\* “I'm going out for a quick breakfast. Lucien, how do I look?” she asked, twirling around to show the back of her navy-blue drop-waisted dress. He studied her attire and gave her a reassuring smile.

“*Très belle, chère Imogene.*” She grinned and grabbed her wrap coat from the front closet before dashing out the door.

“Why does she never ask me for my opinion?” queried Geneviève.

“Would you recommend someone like yourself to give fashion advice?” quipped Lucien.

“I KNOW what's in fashion! That

new designer, Coco Chanel, for instance.  
I just prefer to wear more practical...”

“you mean affordable...,”

“Yes, that too... practical and affordable clothes. I'd much rather wear your striped suit than a flimsy dress to work any day. Dark clothes don't stain as easily.”

“Well, don't for a moment think it's cheaper to dress like a man - at least not a well-dressed man. I am spending an arm and a leg on my wardrobe.”

“Lucky for you that you have a clothing allowance as part of your salary then.”

“Well, not everyone works for the Vanderbilts, do they?”

Geneviève habitually dressed in suits and one of her uncle's Homburg\* hats, whereas Lucien enjoyed wearing satin robes – naturally only in the house – and was a dapper\* dresser in public. He always carried a rose-colored handkerchief square tucked into the pocket of his coat.

A shrill ring of the telephone in the foyer broke the silence.

“I've got it!” shouted a young boy, who came darting down the stairs.

“Tony Walsh, I told you not to run!” scolded his mother, Brigitte, chasing after him.

He hopped onto a step stool, reaching for the telephone mounted on the wall, picked up the earpiece from its hook and leaned his chin towards the mouthpiece. “The Brownstone Foundation. Tony Walsh speaking. Who is this? Morning Mr. Golde.” He nodded, “Yes sir, they’re here. Sure thing sir. I’ll tell them.” He hung up the receiver, jumped from the stool and turned towards Lucien. “Mister Sam and Mister Dave have invited you to their salon tonight. Miss Geni, Mister Dave asked you to join them too.”

“Thank you, Tony,” she responded. Brigitte pulled him into the dining area and onto a chair, then planted a kiss on his forehead. He quickly wiped its traces away with his sleeve, grimacing in disgust and blushing with embarrassment.

Two women descended from upstairs and joined the others at the breakfast table. They were so engrossed in their conversation that they didn't take notice of the others. Their words tumbled over each other:

“Now is our chance to strike in the garment district against the conditions of those awful sweatshops\*...”

“...but the goon squads\* won't hesitate to use force to intimidate us and you know who they are...”

“... not with the other ladies by our side...”

“...they’re mob\* enforcers, that's who, and...”

“...the police will protect us...”

“The police, hah! Most of them have mob money lining their pockets so don't expect them to lift



a finger to save us.”

“...we'd better ask Mrs. Perkins from the New York Consumer League to stand with us as well...”

“...we'll have her for sure but the more women from the 400\* set we can get interested, the more money we have for the union and our cause....”

“We are not doing this for the money....”

“Come on! Don't be naïve. Money means power in this city.”

“Enough of this squabbling, Viola... Adira - you have time to discuss this matter later. Could we please, for once, enjoy our breakfast in relative peace?” Brigitte reproached them. Raising Tony alone meant that she had to earn for both of them. She often came back from work late at night and could not stand to hear bickering so early in the morning. The two women broke off their discussion and, after greeting the others, pounced on the hot rolls.

A few moments later, Brigitte left for her job at Madame Maxime's Tea House. Viola and Adira scurried off to work soon thereafter and Tony rushed out to his school. A momentary calm settled over the Brownstone.

“Hallelujah! Quiet at last!” declared Lucien.

A few minutes later, the front doors opened with a whoosh of cold air and Charlotte appeared, bursting with energy. She was back from her early morning market visit where she had gathered her favorite treats and the first gossip of the day from servants who were out doing errands for their masters and mistresses. Charlotte wrote a society column for one of the local papers,

as well as for an evening scandal sheet and she knew that the best places to gather information were where household staff, waiters, bartenders and hotel employees, could be found. There was no better source than a well-informed maid or doorman, except for, maybe, a telephone exchange operator or hotel porter. Charlotte, having come from the same poor neighborhood as many of these workers, knew how to talk to people and make them feel at ease. They often volunteered details to her that their employers would rather keep under wraps.

After tossing her coat over the back of a sofa in the front parlor, Charlotte made her way to the breakfast table while pulling off her hat and gloves, and sat down with a loud sigh.

“What a treat! I've found fresh oranges and plenty of tidbits for the *thousands* of readers of my paper.”

Geneviève and Lucien continued their breakfast accompanied by Charlotte's prattling. Geneviève and Charlotte had been close friends, spending summers together as young children at Grindelwald, the New Jersey home of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The famous suffragette's estate had been a meeting place for activists, long before women got the vote. Geni's mother worked for the Stanton family as a private secretary and Charlotte was one of many children brought out of the City during the summers by the local charitable foundation. Mrs. Stanton's daughter, Mrs. Stanton Blatch, established the Brownstone Foundation in New York City years later, and it had become a home and center for a new generation of strong-minded women. Although their lives had gone in different directions as they grew up, Charlotte and Geneviève found themselves thrown together again as young adults through that same network of activists and their sponsors in New York City.

Geneviève finished her tea and put her newspaper down on the table. After she and Lucien had readied themselves to leave the building and called out their goodbyes to Charlotte in the dining room, they stepped out onto the sidewalk and walked towards the subway station at Broadway and 79th

Street.

“Geni, try not to be late for the meeting tonight.” Lucien gave her a peck on the cheek and continued on foot to the Ansonia to pick up Dave. Geneviève walked down the stairs into the gaping mouth of the subway to take the downtown train towards Bellevue Hospital and her day job.

## Chapter 2

### CHC13\*

Geneviève climbed out from underground at 28th Street and walked east through the crowds of people towards the waterfront in Kips Bay. The Belle Vue Mansion, which housed the City's largest public hospital, was a beautiful and imposing structure on the East River, made of brick with fluted, stone columns topped by Corinthian capitals\* and black, wrought-iron railings and gates. Since its opening in 1811, the hospital had expanded to several buildings over four city blocks. What went on inside was at times either miraculous or horrifying. Masses of patients entered the hospital every day and all through the nights. Most recently, the renamed Bellevue and Allied Hospitals had been at the center of treatment for the Spanish Flu epidemic, which had taken the lives of over 20,000 New Yorkers. The hospital served the poor and working classes, as well as all of New York's dead.

Pulling on a clean, white coat, she entered the forensic chemistry laboratory on the third floor of the newly built pathology building, and tucked a strand of curly hair back into her messy chignon as she greeted her coworkers. At the back of the room stood a short, thin man conversing quietly with a tall, elegant one who sported a silver mustache, goatee and bushy, arched eyebrows. When the latter turned around, he strode towards Geneviève. "Poirot! Come with me." he ordered. "Yes, Dr. Norris," she replied and followed him to the morgue.

Dr. Charles Norris was New York's first official Medical Examiner. He was passionate about forensics, and had gathered a team of chemists and toxicologists around him to help solve the many mysterious and violent deaths that took place on a daily basis in the City. His laboratory functioned on a bare minimum budget, with both Norris and his employees using their personal money for many of their supplies and equipment. The salaries of his assistants, including Geneviève, were pitiful, but his team was filled with hard-working, committed scientists. Norris allowed some of his employees,

including Geneviève, to earn extra wages moonlighting\* in legal enterprises.

Geneviève, the daughter of a former chemist and niece of a world-famous Belgian detective, was herself a researcher. She had studied chemistry and human biology at both Radcliffe and Barnard colleges, sister schools to Harvard and Columbia universities. The male-only institutions allowed women to attend their classes, but refused to grant them official degrees, which were granted by their sister schools.

Despite her own accomplishments, Geneviève was used to having doors opened to her only due to her famous name and her father's connections. She often had to prove her abilities to skeptical men. Doctor Norris and his chief toxicologist, Alexander Gettler, had both quickly become convinced of Poirot's competence as one of their assistants. She was young, though, and still had much to learn about toxicology. Norris and Gettler challenged her on a daily basis.

Entering the sterile, white room behind Norris, Geneviève observed a body lying half-covered on one of the six autopsy tables. The hanging lamps above cold slabs put a spotlight on each work area. Instruments were lined up on side benches and each table had a copper sink at one end to wash blood and other fluids off from hands and dissection equipment.

Removing the white sheet from the corpse, Dr. Norris pointed Geneviève towards the table. "So, Poirot, here is our first customer of the day."

"Was he a patient at the hospital?"

"No. He was found down near Five Points\* this morning, in an alley behind a shop. According to the police, he didn't have a wallet on him and his pockets were empty except for a roll of bread and some cloves."

Geneviève glanced over at the folded pile of clothes on the bench which were worn down and patched up many times. Standing next to the pale body of

the middle-aged man, she began to examine him for signs of trauma and visible disease. His appearance was normal for a poor worker. She guessed that he was probably a manual laborer from his build, rough hands and bruising. His face was lined, and his skin slightly yellowed. There was some raw, red blistering around his mouth and nose. He was missing a few teeth, and those that remained were discolored and somewhat decayed. She wrote down her findings in her notebook.

Norris began the autopsy using blades, saws, picks, forceps and scissors to cut tissue, bones and organs. Geneviève assisted with inspecting, measuring and weighing all of the organs and collecting samples in bottles and on plates for analysis. She also took detailed notes of all of Norris' observations as well as her own, which she shared as the autopsy continued.

“Well, Poirot, what do you see so far?”

“The liver shows signs of cirrhosis.\* The scarring could be caused by alcohol abuse and there are plenty of places to get bad moonshine\* in Five Points. However, his blood is unusually dark and the vessels of the major organs are all engorged. They are bulging with blood. That is not typical of wood alcohol poisoning.”

“Agreed. What else?”

“The burning around the mouth and nose seems out of place.”

“Yes, it does.... what more do you see?”

“The cloves in his pocket. My mother used to give us cloves to put between our gums and cheek when we had a toothache. He had rotten teeth, but not much money to care for them. Maybe he went to a dentist.... a cheap, back room dentist. Chloroform.... chloroform is an irritant. It burns skin on contact, which could easily explain the red striations on the skin around his mouth. Chloroform intoxication?”

“Interesting forensic findings, Poirot. How would you confirm your hypothesis?”

“I'd have to take a sample of liver and perhaps brain, mince it, use steam distillation, then mix in lye\* and benzene and bring it to a boil. If it turns yellowish-red, it's chloroform. To be sure, I'd expose the sample to ultraviolet light and see if it fluoresces yellow-green.”

“Then go to it, Poirot. Get those samples over to Gettler and work with him on the analysis.”

Several hours later, the syrupy liquid in the glass beaker glowed a beautiful greenish-yellow. To Geneviève's frustration, the matter would most likely be left unsolved by the police. There were bigger problems to deal with in the violent city than the accidental poisoning of a poor man in a dentist's chair.

## Chapter 3

### The Meeting

Holding on to her hat, Geneviève rushed back to the subway station for a ride uptown. It was already past six and she couldn't allow herself to be late to the meeting yet again. A sound, like a flock of birds, welcomed her to the building as she arrived home. Tea and sandwiches had already been set up, and groups of women chattered all at once. Lucien was surrounded by several of his clientele, charming them as always. Geneviève quickly slipped upstairs, removed her coat and hat, splashed water on her face, and returned to the hot, animated scene below.

The meeting of the Brownstone Foundation was a monthly event, full of energy, ideas and radical plans. It had grown out the suffrage movement,\* and now included working groups focused on women's equal rights, protection of children from abuse, labor and neglect, consumer and worker safety and union support. The active members came from all levels of society. The upper classes, having the money and connections to work towards changes in legislation, acted as the bank and the lobbyists for the cause. The others organized activities, the ladies' unions, and protests.

On this evening, Mrs. Stanton-Blatch, the founder, had gathered a number of women from New York's wealthiest families to hear Commissioner Frances Perkins.<sup>2</sup> Geneviève entered just as Mrs. Perkins was beginning to speak to a hushed room.

“... On Saturday afternoon, March 25th nineteen hundred and eleven, I was downtown at Washington Square, visiting a friend. We heard the alarm bells of fire engines and people screaming outside. We rushed out onto the street to see what the commotion was about. A fire had broken out on the eighth floor of the Asch Building on Washington Place.

“There was a factory located on the eighth, ninth and tenth floors of that



building, a garment factory you all know as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. The flames prevented workers from using one stairway and the owners had locked the doors to the other staircase to prevent workers from stealing blouses. The foreman escaped with the only set of keys and left the women trapped.

“Women had just begun to jump when we got there. They had been holding out hope until that time, standing in the windowsills, being crowded by others behind them, with the fire pressing closer and closer. Finally, the firemen opened a net to catch people, but the weight of the bodies broke through the net. Every one of them was killed, everybody who jumped was killed. It was a horrifying spectacle.

“Other girls were crowded onto a single flimsy fire escape which became a metal death trap. It collapsed from the heat and the weight, hurling twenty girls a hundred feet down to their deaths on the sidewalk in front of us. The firemen could do nothing more to help. Their ladders only reached the seventh floor.”

People in the room were quietly crying into handkerchiefs. Mrs. Perkins paused briefly and then continued.

“By the time the fire was out, 147 people were dead. The oldest was forty-seven, the youngest, a girl of only fourteen. The owners were never held criminally responsible even though it was the fourth suspicious fire at one of their factories. In fact, they received an insurance payout of \$400 per victim but paid only \$75 to the families of each employee who was killed. They made a \$60,000 profit off of death and walked away free men.”

The crowd of ladies muttered angrily. A woman in a maid's uniform called out: “An eye for an eye.... The families need justice!” Others nodded in agreement. Mrs. Perkins raised her hands in a gesture to quiet the group.

“I know that many of you are old enough to remember this catastrophe and

were as disturbed as I was. It called us to action. We organized and pushed for a legislative commission to work on improving fire safety in factories. We didn't stop there. We kept fighting to improve worker safety and deal with issues such as long hours, low wages, child labor and abuse of women. Much of what the commission recommended became law.” Mrs. Perkins stepped aside and Viola, Geneviève’s housemate, came forward.

“Thank you, Commissioner Perkins, for your words tonight and for your many contributions to the people of New York and to women throughout the country. Ladies, our work is not done. We have not achieved equality in position, conditions, wages, respect or opportunity. We have the vote, yes, and we have the beginning of a union movement. However, without your help, and your contributions, we will have a hard time moving forward. Use your influence in politics and business. Remind them that our votes count and that our buying power can be used to help or hurt business. Ladies, we have a lot more work to do.”

The audience nodded and murmured in agreement. The speech now finished, the working groups began to form and move to various corners of the room to discuss their agendas for the next month. Mrs. Stanton-Blatch and Mrs. Perkins spoke with the visitors who had come for the first time as well as the society ladies whose purses kept the Foundation running. Geneviève headed straight for the sandwiches. Working all day with the dead made her terribly hungry by evening.

“Excuse me Miss Poirot,” a quiet voice came from behind her, “I understand that you do some private detective work and might be able to help me with a delicate matter.” Geneviève turned to face an expensively dressed woman looking anxiously at her. “You see, Lucien Claire decorated my home and, has become a confidante of mine. He recommended that I speak with you.”

“You were not here for the meeting

then?”

“Well yes, of course. The Foundation will get my financial contribution and the free assistance of my family’s law firm when needed, but frankly, it was a perfect excuse for me to get out of the house and meet you without others taking notice.”

“Ah, you are hiding in plain sight, as it is.”

“Yes Miss Poirot. Discretion is necessary in my position.”

“What seems to be the trouble?”

“Money, of course, a good deal of money... and I suspect, poison, although no one has died... yet.”

“Then you'd best tell me the details upstairs in the library. We won't be overheard there.”

## Chapter 4

### The Ansonia

“Lucien, it's nine o'clock. Will you be ready before dawn? I already called for the car. It'll be waiting outside by now,” prodded Geneviève. She stood in the doorway of Lucien's bedroom, tapping her foot with impatience.

“Well, is it my fault that I put effort into how I look? Don't blame me if I charm every man in the room before you've even removed your coat,” he snickered and took one last, satisfied look in the mirror. She scoffed at his preening,\* tugged at her dress hem and walked down the staircase to the front door.

Geneviève stepped outside and down the steps, tightly wrapping her fur coat around herself. It was a cold night and the sky had already darkened hours earlier. The only sources of light were from the windows on the block, the street lanterns and the headlights of their crimson and black Studebaker.\* Geneviève exhaled, and her warm breath created swirls of steam that wafted into the night. Dark clouds hid the moon as raindrops began falling, sliding down her rosy cheeks and into her collar. After what felt like hours, Lucien strutted to the car to join her.

The Ansonia, the eighteen-story luxury hotel at 73rd Street and Broadway stood out, not only because of its enormity but also for its beauty. Its Beaux Arts architecture, luxurious interiors, and modern conveniences made it the wonder of New York when it opened. High society, the nouveau riche, opera divas, composers, Broadway stars, baseball players, gangsters and their mistresses all called the Ansonia home and lavish parties were held there seven days a week. Its 3,000 rooms held countless secrets and drama was always in the air.

The car pulled up in front of the main courtyard gates, next to the brightly lit façade. Two tall, uniformed young men quickly approached the back of the

automobile, one opening the door and holding an umbrella above its passengers, and the other extending his hand to Geneviève as she stepped out of the car. She glanced briefly up at him and noticed his remarkable blue eyes, angular face and auburn hair before he turned aside to escort Geneviève to the heavy glass doors that stood before her. Lucien walked just behind, and as they approached the brass portal, two more uniformed men opened the double doors to allow them to make a grand entrance, side by side, into the lobby.

Stopping just inside the doors, the pair were met by heat and a frenzy of activity. Geneviève and Lucien made their way through the lobby on thick carpeting beneath large, hanging chandeliers. Familiar faces, both famous and not so famous, appeared everywhere. They caught sight of Charlotte, standing to the side of the reception desk, one gloved hand resting on the forearm of a porter and whispering into his ear. Bellhops hurried by, weaving between visitors and carrying suitcases, bottles of champagne, pets and shopping bags for the guests and residents following behind. A large central fountain gurgled and splashed, while live music played from one of the many reception rooms.

There was a loud gasp behind them and a high-pitched voice squealed: “Oh! Geni, is that you?” She turned around to see a short, plump woman bustling in their direction.

“Dotty!” Genevieve smiled warmly.

“It has been ages Geni! I just got into town and it is as exciting as ever. Oh! There is so much going on. Have you seen who’s here? Everyone who is anyone is right here!”, she looked around the lobby breathing rapidly as if she had run up and down four flights of stairs.

“There!” she pointed to a man surrounded by young, glittering ladies, “Florenz Ziegfeld and the Ziegfeld Follies girls.\* Do you see him? Oh, how glamorous they are.”

Lucien leaned down towards her ear and purred, “Yes, he lives here with his wife on one floor and keeps his mistress on another.”

“What?! Really! Oooh, how scandalous... so much more interesting than Boston. I am flabbergasted!” she giggled and, turning to Lucien, shook his hand vigorously. “I do not believe we’ve met, I’m Dorothy Saltonstall and you are? Mister...?”

“Lucien Claire, Miss Saltonstall,” he introduced himself to the bubbling and animated character in front of him.

“Lu, Dorothy is an old friend from Boston. Tell me Dotty, what brings you to the big City?”

“My goodness Geni, New York is the ONLY place to be at this time of year. Boston is so cold, so wet, so boring and New York is the TOP, isn't it? Of course it is.... Besides, I must get a glimpse of Valentino this winter or I shall just DIE.... Did you see him in *The Sheik*? I did... FIVE times.... I am in raptures... he is just the bee's knees\*... the BEE’S KNEES! Geoffrey thinks I've lost my mind but, really, I've just lost my heart for a moment. Valentino is supposed to be in New York, promoting his film through the new year. I am determined to track him down. They say that Douglas Fairbanks is staying at the Algonquin, but I'm not wasting my time running after him... it's the Sheik I want and NOTHING will keep me from finding him!” Trembling with excitement, Dotty stopped speaking long enough to catch her breath.

Geneviève smiled at her giddy friend. “And what do you plan to do with him once you've cornered him?”

“Tango with him of course Geni! Haven't you seen him dance? I have goose bumps just thinking about it.”

“Don't you dance with Geoffrey?”

“PFFF... Geoffrey is far too busy with his accounting business to bother even learning the Charleston.\* He's a good egg,\* but he prefers Mozart to Jazz. He's happy for me to be in New York so that he can get the accounts in order before the year's end. I'll be staying here of course. I could sit in the lobby and watch people all day and night.”

Lucien excused himself and headed towards the elevator for Sam and Dave's apartment. The two ladies took seats on nearby lounges and caught up some more with each other. Geneviève let Dorothy lead the conversation, which was interrupted every few moments as she surveyed the parade of celebrities.

“... and after I married Geoffrey and we moved to Beacon Hill.... OH MY... isn't that Cole Porter?!... he is positively the CAT'S MEOW\*.... where was I... oh Beacon Hill. Such a quiet neighborhood..... my goodness, that's Babe Ruth the baseball player, isn't it? Why is he in a dressing robe?!”

Charlotte had left the side of the porter, one of her many informers, sat down next to Geneviève and leaned over towards Dorothy. “Babe Ruth lives upstairs, but he treats this entire place as if it were his home. You should hear the racket he makes when he plays his saxophone. He drives his neighbors absolutely up the wall. But he couldn't care less. His parties are even louder. Hello... I'm Charlotte, Geni's housemate.”

Dotty, shaking Charlotte's hand but keeping her eyes on the lobby crowd, suddenly gasped again, startling Geneviève. “Oh, do you see that? That blond-haired Ziegfeld girl is sneaking off with that stiff looking man!”

“Oh, him,” said Charlotte, “That's Dr. Frederick Flinn. Married twenty years and tells everyone he's a big deal at Columbia University.”

“Married you say? 20 years? But that girl... she can't be his wife, she's got to be half his age?!” Dotty exclaimed.

“No dearie, she is not Mrs. Flinn. Trust me when I say Ruby Rey isn't the first showgirl I've spotted him with. I come here often you see.” Charlotte's eyes lit up and she whispered: “It is an excellent place for a journalist to catch a story.”

“Disgraceful man! How can he be so publicly disloyal?!” Dorothy cried out.

Geneviève leaned towards her “Shhh, Dotty, try to keep your voice down a bit. Here in the City, it's sometimes best to mind one's own business. You need to be careful... you never know who might overhear you. Am I not right, Charlotte?” Geneviève arched her eyebrows, sharing a warning look with her friend.

“That's right, Geni... do be careful, Dorothy. Arnold Rothstein is sometimes here with his associates when he's not down at Lindy's. And he doesn't like to be pointed at or gossiped about in public.”

“You mean the gangster, Arnold Rothstein.... the one who fixed\* the World Series?”\*

“Shhhh Dotty!” hissed Charlotte. “Yes, that Rothstein.... and they say he fixed the game here at the Ansonia, but you didn't hear that from me.”

After leaving Dorothy in the lobby, Geneviève and Charlotte took the elevators up to the sixth-floor suite that was home to Sam and Dave and where they hosted their regular evening *salon*. Charlotte often crashed parties, but was considered a part of Lucien's social circle, so she was welcome wherever he went. The doors to the apartment were opened by Margaret, Sam's and Dave's private housekeeper. She was a petite, older woman with deep wrinkles at the corners of her mouth, silver hair pulled back in a low bun at the base of her neck. She wore a dark uniform, sensible shoes, and no makeup or jewelry except a simple gold chain with a locket and a cross around her neck. She instructed a young maid to take the ladies'



coats, hats and gloves and walked them in the direction of the corner parlor. On the way, she picked up a crystal vase full of flowers from a hallway table, which looked in danger of being knocked over, and headed off towards the kitchen.

Their entrance was met with a flood of greetings, showering them from throughout the round, turreted room. Geneviève gave *la bise*\* to her acquaintances and introduced them to Charlotte, who was known to some but not all. They exchanged a few words with each person, though the noisy crowd prevented any clear understanding of what was being said. At last, they made their way through the mass and found their hosts in a second chamber.

“Ah Geneviève, you made it. Delightful to see you again,” said Dave in a posh accent, kissing her on each cheek. He wore a velvet evening coat and a silk ascot, the picture of old-world elegance. Sam, dressed in tweed, took her hand warmly in both of his and welcomed her with his adopted British inflection. Lucien was by their side, a flute of champagne in his hand.

“Now Lucien, I must know, did the Winthrops find their suite agreeable? Were they satisfied with the new furniture?” asked Dave.

“Indeed, they were. I suspected that Mrs. W would fancy the tropical touch of the mother-of-pearl dresser in the master bedroom,” he remarked, quite pleased with himself. Dave chuckled at the young man’s confidence.

“It was a nice addition to the Aphrodite-themed décor she wanted, but I hope you were able to convince her to forego that monstrous mirror with the mermaid frame. It was *ghastly*. The nouveau riche *do* seem to enjoy gilding\* absolutely everything.”

“Gentlemen, if we could please restrain ourselves from discussing work tonight...” Sam commented with sunken eyes as he sipped his whiskey.

Dave placed his outstretched hand beside his cheek, shielding his lips from Sam and mouthed: “Samuel’s had a long day. He’s quite shattered.”

Lucien and Geneviève nodded understandingly. Charlotte slipped off to find any of the serving staff who had a moment to gossip and Lucien put his arm around Sam, guiding him to a pair of arm chairs in the quieter library where he asked him to share his tales of his earlier adventures in Egypt. The older gentleman perked up considerably within minutes and was soon regaling Lucien and Geni with stories of Bedouins and camel races. Margaret entered the room with a bottle of her special Irish whiskey for Sam, a direct import from her cousins, the Ryans, who ran a distillery back in County Clare. Sam asked her to get his photographs of Egypt and she scampered up the bookshelf ladder to retrieve his album.

The clock struck eleven but the gathering was as lively as ever. Geneviève sat at a table in a corner of the second living room with a long black cigarette holder between her index and middle fingers, chatting with a group of young ladies in extravagant clothing. She ran her eye over the *salon*. In the middle of the room was a group of people playing cards. One man was clearly bluffing, she could see his cards from her seat. His leg was bouncing up and down under the table, presumably out of nervousness, and his face showed a forced confidence.

Her eyes continued to sweep over the room. She spotted Sam in the far corner at the entrance to a darkened side hallway. His back was turned to her but Geneviève could see the blond hair of a woman partially concealed behind him. Observing them a little longer, she realized that it was the Ziegfeld girl that Dorothy had pointed out in the lobby. She had her fists balled up tightly and was crying. Sam handed her a handkerchief, which she used to dab at her kohl-stained tears, and a small flask, which she stuffed down the front of her dress. She smiled at him, then turned and disappeared down the dark hallway.

As the ladies around her jabbered away, Geneviève sat back and let her cigarette smoke surround her, inhaling its exotic scent of cloves and mulling

over the curious sight of the dignified doctor in serious conversation with the distraught young woman. When she grew tired of sitting, she stood up and headed to the buffet in the dining room.

“Geneviève, I have been searching for you!” Lucien said, while downing the last of his drink.

“*Évidemment*. Did you think to find me among the glasses of champagne?” she retorted. He smirked at her comment and turned to the tall, red-faced man next to him. Lucien put his hand on his shoulder and gestured at Geneviève.

“May I introduce you to Miss Geneviève Poirot. Geneviève, this is Earl Fulton of Oxford, England. He seems to have lost his attendants and found his way in here from another party,” he announced with a twinkle in his eye.

“*Pwa-roh?* What a funny name... but I have heard of it somewhere...” said the man resting his chin on his hand, tilting his head slightly to the right and squinting through his monocle.

“You might have seen it here in the papers a few weeks ago. There was a story about Mrs. Astor, whose poodles had been dognapped from her niece's hotel suite along with their diamond-encrusted collars. Geni was the one to solve that case. Although the police initially suspected the hotel's staff, it was actually the niece's fiancé who was hoping to collect both the reward money for the return of the pets as well as the value of the diamonds on the dogs' collars. The poodles were returned unharmed, but the engagement did not survive.”

Genevieve lowered her eyes to hide her pride and embarrassment. But Earl Fulton was not impressed. He shook his head and waved his right hand before his face as if shooing away a fly.

“No, no, no - that was not it at all. I'm thinking of a man, not a girl. Hah! Herculeeez Poirot, that funny little French investigator,” said the man, “Do

you know the fellow? I hear he is quite famous back home in London.”

“His name is *Hercule Poirot* and he is not French. He is Belgian,” she countered, slightly annoyed at Fulton’s insults. “He happens to be my uncle and yes, he is deservedly famous.”

“So that's where the name hails from. He's supposed to be an odd sort of man, but quite brilliant, isn't he?” The red-faced man reached for a glass of champagne and gulped some down.

Lucien stepped forward, interjecting: “He is a genius and his brilliance was passed on to Geneviève. She too has an eye for the smallest details. That is why she is a very successful private detective on top of her work at her hospital. *N'est-ce pas?*” he gave her a smile.

“A female detective? Bah! I've never heard of such rubbish in my life. Some women believe they can do the same as men nowadays. Can you imagine our women becoming such radicals? But you, little miss, I am sure you will be able to help plenty of older ladies find their missing cats and whatnot. Leave the serious work to the smarter sex. Now, where can a fellow find the firewater, this champagne doesn't have the kick I need. I'd rather have some hooch,”\* added the Earl before letting out a large belch.

There was a long pause. Geneviève drew in a slow breath before speaking. Her voice was deceptively calm: “Earl... Fulton, that is what you call yourself? And you're from Oxford, so you say? I wonder, how is that you seem to be having trouble holding onto your King's English? You've been dropping ‘r’s and forming diphthongs\* where they don't belong. For example, you pronounce ‘heard’ as ‘hoid,’ ‘water’ as ‘woadah’ and ‘smarter’ as ‘smahdah.’ You like to drink hooch, not port or sherry. That tells me that you've come straight off the boat, not from the King's country but from King's County....”

“Brooklyn!” interjected Sam, who had walked over their way.

“It takes one to know one...” answered the deflated Earl of Fulton Street.

“Lucien, we seem to have a party crasher. Would you kindly escort His Majesty to the elevators and have him directed to the nearest exit, please. I believe he's lost his way.”

Lucien motioned for the man to walk towards the foyer. “Like I told you... Geneviève doesn't miss a thing,” he winked back at her.

“Would you look at the time! It's near midnight! Let's get the rest of these people out the door and leave Sam and Dave in peace.” Geneviève helped Lucien collect the stragglers which included Charlotte, who was in the kitchen, whispering with the housekeeper, and herded them towards the front door of the apartment and their waiting coats. They found Dave and thanked him for the invitation before leaving. Sam had already retired to his bedroom.

Geneviève and Charlotte entered the cabin first, the elevator operator holding the door open with his white-gloved hand for Lucien. They descended from the sixth floor, stopping on the way for two more passengers in party clothes. With a ding of the bell, the elevator door opened and they reentered the frenzy of the lobby. The parties were still in full swing despite the absolute prohibition of alcohol, and at that hour, they had spilled out of the private rooms and into the open. Charlotte chose to stay behind and pay a visit to the mailroom staff. There were always fascinating messages being delivered by pneumatic tube\* from room to room, through the mail room, at night as well as during the daytime.

When they escaped through the front entrance, Geneviève noticed that the young doorman had been replaced by an older, shorter man. The next work shift had begun. The streets were crowded with cars and they were headed for an even more lively location. The Studebaker was waiting at the corner of Broadway and 72nd Street, and once inside, Lucien and Geneviève headed to midtown and Madame Maxime's Tea House on 48th Street east of Times Square. From the glass panels set in the ivy-green front door hung a sign with

the word “Closed” written on it. But that was not the entrance they were looking for. The one they sought was off the main road in the dimly lit alley. Painted a plain, forest green, the door was unremarkable by day, but when darkness came upon it, a fairy set in the middle glowed like a pale ghost. There was no other sign or number to identify it and a sliding slot above the fairy was its only other feature. Lucien rapped twice with his walking stick and the slot slid open.

“We have a date with La Fée Verte. She's been expecting us.” Blue eyes met Lucien's green ones, the slot closed and the door opened to a different world.

## Chapter 5

### The Green Fairy

They entered a cavernous, dimly-lit room. Jazz filled their ears. Geneviève turned to see a familiar face up on stage. Imogene stood in front of the band. She was a singer at La Fée Verte and performed almost every night. Below, the dance floor was swarming with young men in fashionable suits with their hair slicked back, and women with bobbed hair, wrapped in dazzling modern dresses. Lucien and Geneviève made their way through the throng and sat at one of the many small, round tables, each lit by a delicate green glass lamp held up by a seductive bronze fairy. Larger, half-moon shaped banquettes were located along two walls of the room.

Lucien motioned to a refined looking young man standing behind the bar, who was wearing a white jacket and a black bowtie. He came over to take their order.

“A French 75\* for me sir. Geni, what would you like?” asked Lucien.

“I’ll have a Sazerac,\* Jimmy.” She looked up at the server who gave her a nod. He returned moments later with a tall, lemony, translucent drink in a champagne flute for Lucien, and a cherry-colored liquid in a whiskey glass which he placed in front of Geneviève.

“You know, this must be the only place that I trust enough to drink in, besides Sam and Dave’s of course. They get their supplies through the British and Swiss ambassadors or directly off the boat. It’s too risky to go downtown to those cheap gin joints\* and I’m not completely sure about the Cotton Club anymore. There seems to be an epidemic of alcohol poisoning nowadays,” said Lucien, while they clinked their glasses.

“We’ve had many more cases at the morgue ever since they began enforcing the law. Dr. Norris often protests Prohibition, but his arguments fall on deaf

ears. No one truly believes that banning alcohol will restore civility in this country, and closing the bars has only led to the opening of thousands of speakeasies.\* Bottom line, many more will end up blind or dead from drinking wood alcohol\* or something worse, and they'll wind up in one of our freezers at Bellevue. But yes, I don't believe the owner of La Fée Verte would tolerate any toxic slip-ups in his establishment. He wouldn't want to tarnish his reputation with his high-class clientele. Still, I'll stick to absinthe or whiskey here. We know his suppliers.” She raised her eyebrows but said no more. They knew better than to continue that conversation. It was wise not to get involved with the owner of the Green Fairy, a man known as the Brain: Arnold Rothstein. People who failed to appreciate how dangerous he could be, were often never heard from again.

Lucien ordered another round for himself and Geneviève, who in the meantime took out her silver-plated cigarette case and ebony holder. She picked one out for herself and offered the opened tin to Lucien, who declined as usual. She slid the cigarette into the metal end of her holder and turned it gently to secure it. Tilting the tip upwards, Lucien lit a flame for her while she placed the cool end between her red lips. She drew in the scented smoke and exhaled slowly, watching the vapor rise like a serpent towards the dark ceiling.

The green door was opened and a couple crossed the threshold between the outside world and the secret bar. They stood under the red light that hung over the exit. Lucien turned to see who had joined the party. His eyes lit up with recognition as he inhaled sharply and leaned towards Geneviève.

“He came with his mistress,” he whispered into her ear.

“Who do you mean Lucien?” she inquired with little enthusiasm. Since Lucien seemed to find almost anything scandalous, she was quite unmoved by his theatrical behavior.

“Frederick Flinn of course. We saw him in the lobby of the Ansonia. He came



with that gold-haired Ziegfeld Follies girl.”

“Well *chéri*, I hardly believe that he would take his wife to a place like this.”

Geneviève looked over as the two walked in past the guard at the door. Geni found the doorman’s tall, slim figure and chiseled face familiar, but the haze of smoke and alcohol had clouded both the air and her brain and she couldn’t quite put a name with the face.

The girl held on to Flinn’s arm, sequins and fringe adorning her onyx black, impossibly short, slip of a dress. She wore a long, scarlet, feather boa draped about her neck and down her back, emphasizing the exposed skin of her knife-edged shoulder blades, feathers bouncing giddily as she click-clacked across the floor.

They approached the bar where Flappers\* and Sheiks\* gathered. The women, also wearing skimpy glittering dresses, the men, dapper in silks and slicked back hair. A Valentino copycat leaned against the bar, his left hand in his jacket pocket, and his right dangling a cigarillo between his slender fingers. His eyes were lined with smoky kohl and he had an air of studied casualness about him.

“If only Dotty were here to see him. She'd faint dead away,” Geneviève thought to herself.

The band struck up a hot new piece and couples rushed to the dance floor. Arms and legs were flung about as they danced the Charleston. Looking to her right, Geneviève spotted Flinn and his mistress, still at the bar. The girl admired the crowd and tugged at her partner's shirt, presumably wanting to join in. He took a sip of his cocktail and shook his head. She rolled her eyes at him and slid her bar stool farther away from his. He took no notice of her and waved a bartender over. Cleaning glasses with a white cloth, the bartender and Flinn exchanged a few words. Both glanced quickly towards a door at the far end of the room which was guarded by a large, shadowy

figure. Geneviève couldn't help but observe them, intrigued. Flinn downed the rest of his drink in one gulp and pushed away from the bar. He gave his mistress a hard pinch on the cheek, walked past Geni and disappeared through the back door. She caught a glimpse of stairs descending towards the basement gambling hall. The Ziegfeld girl watched him leave, resentfully rubbing the red spot on her cheek. Jimmy moved down the bar and offered her a cigarette and a light. She waved him off and went off to the dance floor.

“Geni, see the man sitting in the corner across from the young lady – the one wearing the cap with black ostrich feathers? That's one of my clients, Mr. Dempsey. I need to stop over there to say hello. I'll be back shortly.” He stood up and glided across the dance floor. Alone at the table, Geneviève finished her Sazerac. She got up from her seat and weaved between the tables towards the bar.

“Ah, Miss Poirot. Got a dead soldier?”\*

“Sadly, yes Jimmy, my glass is quite empty.”

“How about a DIA?”\* suggested the bartender.

“Death in the Afternoon?”\* You've read my mind,” she grinned and placed her cigarette back in her mouth.

She watched him fill a coupe glass with green absinthe, slowly topping it with champagne. Pantone-colored\* swirls and bubbles glistened in the dimmed lights hanging from above. Lifting the drink to her mouth, Geneviève looked around to see if anyone was watching. Once she confirmed that nobody was, she discretely licked the rim of the glass before taking a sip. She looked at the Coupe and found no red smudge from her lipstick. A small smile crept across her face.

The band played a slower song, accompanied by Imogene's soft voice which floated above the crowd. Geneviève returned to her table and watched the

couples sway and twirl while holding her glass in one hand and her cigarette in the other. She spotted Lucien with a bejeweled young lady in the center of the dance floor next to Mr. Dempsey and Miss Ostrich Feathers. This was the place to be if one wished to mix with elegant people and Broadway starlets. “It”\* girls and heartthrobs gathered here to see and be seen and, among the City's wealthiest Four Hundred,\* it was in fashion to visit risqué night clubs.

It seemed Geneviève was not the only one observing the crowd. In the far corner were two bulky men dressed in plain black suits, speaking to each other out of the corners of their mouths while scanning the room. Geneviève marked them as goons\* hired to act as enforcers. The taller man walked towards the back of the room and through the far door to the staircase.

The band broke into the hot jazz hit: “Runnin’ Wild.” The crowd hooted and whooped in delight. Sheiks ran with their partners back to the center of the floor. Geneviève swung her right leg over her left and bounced her foot to the lively music while taking a drag on her cigarette.

Despite the frenetic music filling the hall, loud sounds of stomping and thumping drew Geneviève's attention towards the far wall as the back door was thrown open. Rothstein’s black-suited muscle\* came out, dragging someone behind him. It was Frederick Flinn. They stood in the dark near Geneviève, the bigger man towering over Flinn. She could hear Flinn's protesting whine and the enforcer's deep, menacing answers.

“Let go of me you gorilla. Don't you know who I am?! I won't be treated this way!”

“I know who you are “Dr.” Flinn 'cause I got the book on you which says you're in neck-deep to the boss. You ain't got no credit downstairs no more until you pay up what you owe.”

“He'll have it, I swear. Just give me more time. Please, I have a wife and

child. I am a respected...”

“You're a deadbeat\* and your time's run out Flinn. If you don' wanna end up in a Chicago overcoat\* you better get that dough.\* And get it quick or you'll be sleepin' widda fishes.”\*

“I am... I will. I've got money coming in from consulting work as well as from Columbia. You've heard of them: U.S. Radium Corporation in Orange, New Jersey. They're big government contractors. They've got me on their payroll. I'll get his money back,” he pleaded. Flinn kept his head down and his eyes fixated on the hickory flooring.

“The boss don' care how you get the money. Just get it, alright. ‘Til then you ain't going back down there no more. Understand?! Take a powdah!”\* He grabbed Flinn by his lapels and shoved him away. Flinn stumbled towards the bar. He stayed there for a while, muttering something under his breath and rubbed the sweat off his forehead with the back of his trembling hand.

“There you are, Big Daddy!\* I've been dancing with some other girls. Hey, you're not looking too good.” Ruby had run over to him from the dance floor, her cheeks flushed bright pink. She hadn't seemed to notice what had just passed between Flinn and Rothstein's man. She gave him a passionate, theatrical kiss, leaving a bright red lipstick stain on his lips.

“Ruby, doll,\* I think it's time for us to leave,” he responded, turning towards the exit.

“But it's still so early. We can't leave yet. Let's get ourselves a drink!” She pulled him by the arm and tried to lead him back to the counter.

“No... it's time to go. This night has cost me enough already.”

Lucien dropped into the chair next to Geneviève, his cheeks rosy from all the dancing.

“*Un Bleu\* s’il-vous-plaît, monsieur,*” he gestured to Jimmy at the bar. Moments later he appeared with Lucien’s concoction and placed it swiftly in front of him.

“Bet you’re wondering what happened to that egg, eh Miss Poirot?” asked Jimmy. He grinned and looked over at her, almost as if he could guess her answer.

“From what I observed, Dr. Flinn thinks rather highly of himself and believes certain rules do not apply to him. He leads a dual life, like many others. He has a family, a position of prestige, and a lucrative situation. Yet, he seems to be a habitual gambler and a flagrant adulterer who is in over his head in more ways than one. Clearly, he didn’t take the proprietor of the Green Fairy seriously enough and is behind in repaying a significant debt. And the showgirl may prove to be an even bigger problem for him.”

“I don’t get it. What does Ruby see in Flinn?” wondered Jimmy out loud. “It couldn’t be his personality or his looks.”

“No, ... it’s likely a simple answer ... New York is an expensive place for a country mouse who wants to make it big on stage. Lots of people are willing to make compromises to get by. However, considering how much money he owes to at least one gambling house, he can hardly be the sugar daddy\* she’d wished for.”

“Why doesn’t she leave? What tempts her to stay with him when there are bigger fish in the sea?” mused Lucien.

Geneviève looked at the two men, who had been listening attentively. She shrugged her shoulders.

“Perhaps she doesn’t know! He takes her to dinners, musicals and ritzy speakeasies, buys her a few drinks and shows her a good time. Maybe he helps with her rent. She hasn’t found out that the party is almost over. I

suspect she'll wise up soon enough." She finished her drink and paused. "I'll leave the rest to your imaginations."

"Sharp as always Miss Poirot. As expected," Jimmy chuckled. "Still, it's a shame about the girl. She's real swell."\*

"Come on Geni...I know you take pleasure in observing people from afar, but I insist on you dancing with me at least this one time. Imogene is singing the next song and, who knows, you might enjoy yourself," Lucien teased.

"You always manage to make me feel like I'm a wet blanket\* Lucien," she sighed loudly but grinned as she stood up and pulled him onto the dance floor.

Later that night, their driver brought the pair home. One foot after the other, Geneviève stepped unsteadily out of the Studebaker. Lucien followed her into the Brownstone. Imogene and Brigette had stayed behind to finish up their worknight. The streets were deserted and all the windows were now pitch-black. Moonlight shone on the wet pavement and the light smell of rain filled the air.

They opened the front door. Their housemates must have gone to bed already since all the lights were shut off. Taking off their shoes and leaving them by the door, they tried not to make any noise. Geneviève had lost track of time at the speakeasy. She mutely entered the parlor and glanced at the clock placed over of the mantelpiece. Its hands, glowing pale-green, pointed at the radiant numbers. It was past three o'clock. Lucien was pulling himself upstairs by the railing. Geneviève followed, climbing the three flights of stairs to her room and fumbling to find the light switch.

After turning on the light, she mouthed good night to Lucien, whose room was across the hall from hers. She closed the door, changed into her nightgown and dropped herself into bed. Through her window she watched the moon, partly hidden by clouds, and took a deep breath. Her eyes shut and

she quickly fell asleep.

## Chapter 6

### Part I: The Scoop\*

“Charlotte’s Scoops: *Gangland’s Gatsby Victim of Frame job by Blue-Blooded Buchanans*<sup>3</sup>

Dear readers,

Many of you were shocked by the untimely and violent death this past summer of Mr. Jay Gatsby of East Egg, Long Island. Gatsby, whose lavish parties drew the City’s hedonists by the thousands, was linked to major underworld figures. His murder, committed by gas station owner, George Wilson, riveted Gotham. The distraught Mr. Wilson believed that his wife had been having an affair with the infamous bootlegger\* and that he had brutally run her over with his car. Plugged by gun shot while swimming in his marble pool, Gatsby bled to death moments before Wilson took his own life. It was a sordid tale of adultery which ended with bloody betrayal.... or so we all thought.

This journalist has since learned that Mrs. Wilson was having an affair, but not with the ill-fated Gatsby. Her lover was the blue-blooded,\* wealthy and very married Tom Buchanan. Mrs. Daisy Buchanan, the jilted wife, is rumored to have rekindled an old flame with Mr. Gatsby. That affair threatened Mr. Buchanan’s standing. It has been widely whispered that on the day of the infamous hit-and-run, Gatsby and Tom Buchanan fought publicly over Daisy at the Plaza Hotel. Plaza employees confirm that Mrs.



Buchanan was at the wheel of Mr. Gatsby's car and driving wildly as they fled the scene.

A source within the Buchanan household also reports having seen George Wilson speaking with Mr. Buchanan on the day of the Gatsby murder. After pointing Wilson in the direction of East Egg, Mr. Buchanan ordered the staff to immediately pack the family's baggage. The Buchanans have since left the country and their legal representative refused to comment on their whereabouts.

Based upon these witness statements, about which the police surely were aware, the Buchanans must answer for their part in the tragedy that took three lives. Wealth and privilege should not shield them from justice. Anything less than a full investigation of this matter will confirm in the public's mind that money continues to control and corrupt both politics and policing in this City."

"Good god Charlotte, what a scoop. This is a major story. What a lucky duck you are!" Lucien exclaimed utterly dumbfounded.

"Isn't it so exciting! I've never gotten such juicy news from this source before. I've already been pressured by my editor and the East Egg police, but I'll never reveal her identity. I always protect my sources, and I won't let this one be exposed."

"I bet you'll gain thousands of new readers for your *"Charlotte's Scoops"* with this story, and maybe even a chance at a regular news column," Lucien noted.

"Chances are slim to none on the column, Lu. The news desk is still a man's world, but who says I can't write newsworthy stories in the gossip pages?"

Charlotte said, sitting at the edge of her seat.

She plucked the paper from Lucien's hands and grinned at it. During the rest of their early breakfast, she didn't talk much, but instead reread her column and then dove into the pages of the other papers which were strewn about the table. This gave Lucien and Geneviève room to have their own conversation. "I've got another private client, thanks to you Lucien. She approached me after the meeting yesterday and agreed to meet me this morning at the Palm Court of the Plaza Hotel," announced Geneviève.

"Is that so? Congratulations. What's the case this time?" asked Lucien, feigning ignorance as he spread marmalade on his bread roll.

"She hasn't given me all the information yet, but even if she had, it would be *strictly* confidential. We wouldn't want rumors to circulate about every inch of the City, would we?" She glanced over at Charlotte and back again at Lucien.

"No, we would not," answered Lucien, raising his eyebrows and smirking at her provocative tone.

"Lu, are you free to come along with me? It would be a very good cover story if our client can say that she's meeting her decorator today. I am concerned that she's being watched."

"Intrigue at the Plaza? I wouldn't miss this for the world."

Other housemates joined the trio for breakfast. Still waking up, they greeted them but otherwise sat silently, pouring their drinks and reaching for toast. Imogene sat in her nightgown, not having bothered to dress before coming downstairs.

"We've arranged a meeting with Mrs. Perkins...."  
began Viola.

“Of the Consumers Union!” interrupted Adira.

“In three weeks, Sunday morning. We would like to discuss the need for national worker safety regulations. And since she saw the Shirtwaist Factory fire, she will take the lead in advancing our cause with the politicians. Please make sure you’re all available. Geni, will you tell Poppy? You know where to find her.”

She nodded and headed up to the rooftop.

## Part II: Spilled Coffee

Poppy shared the same floor as Geneviève and Lucien, but spent most of her free time in her private garden and greenhouse laboratory. There, she worked out her frustrations with her job. The scientific research departments at Columbia University were run exclusively by men, and female colleagues were not often taken seriously, despite their expertise. Poppy's research involved medicinal uses of ancient plants, and she regularly experimented on her own with botanicals grown either on the Brownstone's rooftop or in one of the many other hidden gardens of the City.

Geneviève opened the door and the cold air struck her face. She pulled her shawl tightly around herself before stepping out onto the flat roof. The outdoor planting beds were bare of greenery except for hardy varieties which had been wrapped in canvas to protect them from the frost. She rushed over to the large greenhouse and slipped inside. The warmth was a surprising contrast to the winter weather. Poppy was somewhere, hidden among the many leafy plants.

A sound of glass breaking made Geneviève jump. She turned and saw Poppy, standing near a shattered cup with her back to her. Poppy was breathing hard, staring down at the many pieces lying around her as if she were at the center of an explosion. Geneviève wondered if she had thrown the cup or if it had merely slipped out of her hand.

“Poppy, are you alright?”

Her words made her housemate jolt. She spun around to look at Geneviève. Her face was flushed and her hands balled up into fists.

“I'm fine. I dropped my coffee cup. That's all. I didn't mean to alarm you,” her smile did not reach her eyes. She quickly reached down with one hand to pick up a piece of the cup but drew back with a hissing intake of air. Her forefinger was cut, a bloody drop welled up and spilled to the ground. She

took out a handkerchief and twisted it around her finger, muttering a curse under her breath.

Geneviève bent down and began picking up larger pieces as Poppy took a brush and dustpan to collect the tiny splinters of porcelain. They didn't speak while cleaning up the mess. Geni knew that Poppy had an intense character but had never seen her this upset before. She was certain there was more to it than a broken cup. However, she decided not to pry. If Poppy wished to confide her troubles to Geneviève she would, in her own time.

“We’re holding a meeting in three weeks on Sunday morning. We’ve been *ordered* by Viola to keep that day free,” Geni joked trying to brighten the mood.

“Yes... yes, of course I’ll be there. Is there more coffee downstairs? I need a refill.” Poppy turned and grabbed a crumpled letter from the work counter next to her, shoving it down into a pocket. She stared down at the ground for a moment then seemed to shake herself out of her thoughts. As they stepped out of the greenhouse, steamy air wafted up towards the sky.

They walked back down to the kitchen together and disposed of the broken cup. All the residents had gone their separate ways to work or spend their free day out. Poppy stayed at the Brownstone claiming she had some business to discuss with Charlotte. Geneviève packed her notebook and pen and was off to her meeting at the Plaza with Lucien.

### Part III: The Palm Court

Geneviève and Lucien entered the brightly lit Palm Court and scanned the popular tea room. There were a number of ladies already having brunch who looked at the impeccably-dressed Lucien with appreciation. Genevieve had worn a plain frock in order to avoid attention. The society women barely glanced her way.

The client sat at a corner table and Lucien glided over, brushing her cheeks with airy kisses. Geni, greeted her quietly and the three took their seats. Lucien made a show of asking the lady about her taste in oriental carpets and their light conversation worked exactly as planned. Any observers returned their attention to their own tables.

As soon as their tea was served, the client placed a handkerchief on the table next to Geneviève. With a quick glance, Geni noticed sachets filled with dried green leaves and a shrunken black berry.

“I did what you asked, Miss Poirot. I checked on all of my father’s new foods and habits. He really is a man who likes routine. However, he did receive a present of tea last month in a lovely tin from England. He’s been drinking a cup every day for his health. I’m afraid that he has been getting worse, rather than better.”

“I’d hide that tea from your father until we can confirm exactly what is in it. Be careful not to let anyone else know about your concerns. I will get back to you as soon as I’ve had a chance to have this sample analyzed. I know a botany expert who can help us out.”

## Chapter 7

### The Verdi Club

Lucien and Geni left the Brownstone residence as the sky became dark. It was going to be another drizzly night. The Studebaker sat ready to take them to their evening activities beginning with the Verdi Club Concert at the Ansonia. Broadway was packed with countless people and cars as they approached the hotel. They got out a block away and walked towards the entrance. Geneviève, wearing high-heeled shoes that she borrowed from Imogene, held onto Lucien's arm to keep from falling. Approaching the lobby doors, Geni's ankles gave way on the steps, but a pair of strong hands grabbed her other arm. She looked up to see the blue-eyed doorman from the night before.

"You alright Miss?" he asked while helping her through the door.

"Yes, thank you. I don't usually wear these kinds of shoes." She laughed and gripped Lucien's arm more tightly. Suddenly, she made the connection: "You work at the Green Fairy, am I right?"

"You've got a keen eye."

"That's my job. Geneviève Poirot, private detective." She shook his hand.

"Colin Lynch, doorman."

"And moonlighting at the speak\* as well."

"It helps make ends meet."

"Well, thanks for the helping hand. It was nice to meet you, Mr. Lynch the doorman. Well, we've got to get going."

"To the Verdi Club Concert, of course."

"How did you know?"

"I'm a doorman. It's part of my job to know who's here and for what."

Lucien and Geneviève walked past the elevators and towards a grand hall, making way for other people moving in and out of the lobby. A man stood at

the entrance, checking names against a guest list. Lucien handed him their invitation.

“Mister Claire, Miss Poirot. Lovely to have you here again this year. Your seats will be the ones next to your hosts, Dr. Weiss and Mr. Golde, in the center.”

He handed them the program and they followed an usher to their places, finding Sam and Dave already at their seats. Lucien nudged Geneviève with his elbow as he watched the door. She followed his gaze and saw Frederick Flinn enter with his wife and several others. The fact that Flinn came to the Ansonia with his mistress one night and his wife the next, wasn't shocking to the pair compared to other things they had witnessed inside the walls of this hotel. Lucien and Geneviève mirrored one another's wide-eyed look: their eyebrows arched, lips pressed in mock-disapproval, then shrugged their shoulders and turned to talk to Sam and Dave.

The lights were dimmed, leaving only the raised platform in the front of the room lit. Florence Foster Jenkins, more commonly known as the world's worst, but most enthusiastic soprano, came on stage wearing a flamboyant costume. Thunderous applause built up as she smiled broadly, holding one hand to her heart and the other outstretched towards the heavens. She greeted the audience graciously, blowing kisses with her silk-gloved hand, before commencing with her performance. She was accompanied by the unknown Cosmé McMoon, a nervous-looking young man in black tie and tails, sitting stiffly at the piano.

The opera singer's notable tone-deafness caused immediate unease throughout the hall. Geneviève caught a few people passing around tissues to stuff in their ears while several others stifled laughs, pressing their clenched fists to their mouths. She herself dug her nails into her palms and smiled a polite, forced grin. Mrs. Jenkin's high-pitched screeches made Lucien wince. Geni could feel him flinch slightly next to her with every unexpected note. However, the Verdi Club audience members were a loyal



group. Many, including Sam and Dave, were old friends of Mrs. Jenkins. Despite being aware of her musical shortcomings, they and other well-off, slightly deaf patrons, were happy to help sponsor an event which collected donations for the musicians of the City.

When Florence belted out her last note, the audience stood up from their seats, clapping and calling out “brava”. Some were likely cheering for their release from the seemingly endless torture and others, happily anticipating the lavish buffet which always followed. They all moved to the dining hall next door for cocktails. Round tables were spread about the room, beautifully decorated with large red floral centerpieces. Waiters, carrying trays of wine glasses and champagne flutes, glided among groups of people who stood holding drinks or were taking seats around the dining tables. Lucien took Geneviève’s arm and brought her, Sam and Dave to the table nearest the entrance. Their table offered the group a view of everyone who entered the room, as well as the ability to make a discreet exit when needed. They were joined by a few of the elder couple’s acquaintances and Lucien’s colleagues.

Frederick Flinn entered the room with his wife and another man. A third man crossed the room with a drink to meet them. Flinn was talking to the two other men while his wife sat down silently at the table behind him. Geneviève heard them above the music of a band playing at the front of the room.

“Well, that was an excruciating experience,” sighed Flinn. “My wife thinks of herself as a patron of the arts and she’s become a fan of Mrs. Jenkins. I would have rather we paid for the sponsorship and been able to skip the concert. But this is an event she wouldn’t miss and gives me a chance to bring you two men together as well. Mr. Schmidt, this is Arthur Roeder, president of the U.S. Radium Corporation.” He presented the man standing next to him. “Arthur, this is George Schmidt, head of the Waterbury Clock Company.”

Schmidt and Roeder chuckled as they shook hands. “We know each other already Fred. U.S. Radium is our main paint supplier. Arthur, I hear there is

quite the turnover amongst the workers at your company. Girls are dropping like flies. Have you been making them work overtime?" inquired Schmidt.

"Oh, girls nowadays. They just don't have the work ethic of the older generation. You never know what they get up to once they leave the factory at night. A few of them have been complaining about feeling under the weather, but we have our Dr. Flinn here dealing with the problem." Mr. Roeder smiled and grabbed Flinn by the shoulder, shaking him lightly.

"Yes, the company is treating them with all the modern medical means possible, but, tragically, many are suffering from obvious signs of advanced syphilis; you know the lower classes with their low morals," added Flinn loudly, giving Roeder a look that Geneviève could not quite figure out.

"What a shame. We seem to have a similar situation at our factory in Waterbury, and I was beginning to wonder if it had to do with something in the workroom."

"Nonsense George. It's probably female hysterics or loose morals. Why don't you have Dr. Flinn go up to Waterbury and examine your girls as well. He's certainly helped us in New Jersey."

"Ah! Here she comes," declared Lucien, pointing at the door. Florence Foster Jenkins appeared in the entrance in a splendid new ensemble and a diamond tiara. She was immediately surrounded by a gaggle of older ladies and they floated past on a cloud of perfume and exotic feathers.

"Isn't she just remarkable! What a grand dame," exclaimed Dave.

"She is certainly unique." Geneviève grinned and turned her attention back to her own party. A server set champagne glasses on the table, her small hand reaching past Geni's shoulder. Geneviève glanced up as the flash of gold from a familiar necklace caught her eye.

“Margaret, what a surprise to see you here tonight!”

“Mr. Golde and Mr. Weiss gave me the evening to come and work for the club. They needed some more servers tonight, and I am always glad for extra work,” said Margaret, the corners of her eyes crinkling as she smiled. She looked up and her smile left her eyes. Her gaze was fixated on Flinn and the others now sitting at the next table, laughing loudly about young women and their wild ways. Feeling Geneviève’s eyes on her, she quickly met her look, shook her head with annoyance and declared: “Tsk, I can’t abide vulgarity. Excuse me Miss Poirot.” Poirot watched her hurry away to serve the other guests. She seemed to have regained her self-control.

The entrance door opened, letting in several young women. Geneviève caught a glimpse of them and quickly recognized them as Ziegfeld Follies girls. They headed straight to the bar, giggling, in their skimpy dresses. Some of the old dowagers scowled with disapproval as they passed by, but no one stopped them. Party crashing had been elevated to an art form in the City. It was quite common to find a few uninvited guests at cocktails or evening buffets. There were always people on the lookout for good music and especially free drinks. The Follies girls were fixtures at any large party.

“I see we have some unexpected visitors. Let’s hope they don’t cause any problems,” Geni remarked, taking a drag on her clove cigarette.

“That might be hard to avoid when Mrs. Flinn sees *her*,” Lucien responded, glancing at the table near them.

Mrs. Flinn sat silently swirling the wine in her glass while her husband remained engaged in conversation with his associates. He sat with his back to his wife, showing little interest in her while he continued to press George Schmidt for business. She looked around the hall, head tilted down, her gaze passing slowly over people. Loud, indiscreet laughter drew her eye to the bar. Ruby was standing there, batting her eyelashes as she looked over her shoulder directly towards Mrs. Flinn. Mrs. Flinn suddenly stood up, pushing

her chair back so quickly it fell over. Frederick jumped off of his seat and glowered at her.

“Alice, what are you doing? Sit down!” he hissed.

“You brought her here?” responded his red-faced wife. “Are you that desperate to humiliate me? You go out every night wasting our money on that Flapper and lord only knows what else. Do you know what I do?! I stay home and look after *our* child, wondering if we’ll have food on the table the next week! I’ve seen the bills, Frederick, piling up in your desk drawer. You have a child to take care of but instead you find yourself a showgirl to fool around with!” Her voice got louder with every word she said. Conversations at nearby tables became quiet and people began to stare. The band, which had been playing soft ragtime, picked up the volume and the beat to cover up the disturbance.

“Alice, you’re making a scene.”

“I’m making a scene, am I?! I can’t believe I tolerated this until now, you bastard!” She grabbed her wine glass and splashed its contents in his face.

“You are dead to me.” She stormed out of the room, leaving Flinn standing speechless. The crimson liquid dripped down his face and all over his clothes, staining the front of his dress shirt. People at nearby tables whispered to each other, shaking their heads.

The sound of quick footsteps resonated on the hard, wooden floor to Geneviève’s side. She turned towards the noise and saw Margaret, walking in Flinn’s direction and stopping at his elbow. He didn’t react when she appeared next to him. His eyes still stared at the door his wife had gone through. Margaret cleared her throat in order to gain his attention. Flinn finally looked at her and then glanced around the room, taking a few steps back.

“Sir, please follow me, I’ll fetch you a damp cloth to clean yourself up. And the concierge always has spare dress shirts. I can arrange to get one in your size,” she offered in a hushed voice, motioning to the exit with her hand.

“Excuse me gentlemen. We’ll continue with our evening plans as soon as I get back.” Flinn left his colleagues. He followed Margaret out of the room, stone-faced.

As soon as they left the room, the whispers subsided and the party guests went back to their revelries, quickly forgetting what looked like a minor domestic squabble. The band began playing Sweet Georgia Brown and the Follies girls did the Charleston in front of the ice sculpture display.

“Good gracious! That was painful to watch,” Dave declared. He looked like he had bitten into a tart lemon.

“Oh, don’t worry too much about it, David. Believe me, that man deserved being humiliated the way he was just now. And even though I’ve learned plenty about him, I’m certain we haven’t heard the worst of it. He does seem to attract his fair share of trouble,” Lucien replied. “But do tell, what did you think of the diva’s coloratura\* tonight?” He deftly turned the conversation to Mrs. Foster Jenkins’ unique yet fascinating performance.

A half-hour later, Sam pulled out his pocket watch and opened it. “It’s about time don’t you think? Come along children.”

Geneviève took one last puff of her cigarette and ground it out in a crystal ashtray before their group got up and moved onto the next stop on the evening’s entertainment program.

## Chapter 8

### Belladonna

The glowing fairy on the dark-green door greeted them again as Lucien knocked. Geneviève took a breath, ready to whisper the secret code. The slot opened, and familiar blue eyes surveyed the group. Without having to say a word, the aperture shut and Colin let them inside. He addressed Sam and Dave formally as they walked past him, gave a nod to Lucien, and a wink and a grin to Charlotte, who had joined them for the second act of the evening. Geneviève entered last and thanked Colin as he closed the door behind them. He gave her a warm smile and offered to hold her bag as she removed her overcoat.

The party checked their coats with the hat-check girl by the door and collected their coat checks. They sat down at the crescent-shaped booth closest to the bar, which Lucien had reserved. The luxuriously upholstered padded leather benches lined the wall two steps up from the main floor, giving the guests a perfect view of the room and easy access to the bar. The jazz band was in full swing and the dance floor was quickly filling up.

Their table was set with its own absinthe fountain, filled with water and chipped ice. Flared, stemmed glasses, topped with slotted silver spoons were placed under each spigot. Sugar cubes were arranged in a pyramid on a porcelain saucer and a Tiffany lamp\* illuminated neatly lined up bottles of green and clear liquor. There was no pretense of serving alcohol in teacups here, as was done in Madame Maxime's Tea House out front. Mr. Rothstein paid the police force well enough to avoid surprise raids by the Prohibition Agents.\*

Jimmy brought over a clean ashtray and placed it before Geneviève. "Hey Miss Poirot, would you all like to try a Sunshine Chaser to get you going? We've got our own radon water in the new Revigator\* we just got this week." Jimmy pointed out a large ceramic jar on the counter against the wall behind

the bar. "It's a surefire way to keep you full of energy and I heard it's great for preventing hangovers. I'll mix it up with a bottle of Radithor\* that I keep back there and add some sugar and lemon juice. It's perpetual sunshine in a bottle as they say, and it's on the house."

"No thanks Jimmy," replied Geneviève swiftly "and I'd stay away from that stuff if I were you. You know that Madame Curie said that radioactive material can burn holes through your skin, don't you? And who knows what's really in that Radithor..."

"Sure thing Miss P, but even the government says it's good for you and I've got a friend of a friend who's using a Radiendocrinator.\* He swears it's helping with the ladies." Jimmy winked at Lucien, then turned away to tend to the other guests.

"Lu... what am I missing... a Radiendocrinator?"

"I can't believe I haven't shown you the advertisements in my paper. It's a pouch full of radium salts that you strap to your privates at night... they say it increases male virility." Lucien leered wickedly.

"*Quels crétins!*"

"Geni... don't be such a killjoy\*... I'm sure it's just another way of separating gullible men from their money. It's probably filled with talcum powder. Another scam, like selling the Brooklyn Bridge."

"Well, people buy the Brooklyn Bridge a hundred times a day, so there must be plenty of *imbéciles* willing to throw away their money to be more like Valentino. I just worry about what they're really putting in all these 'magic' products people are buying. Do you have a light for my cigarette?"

Poppy showed up at their table, appearing out of nowhere. "Hi everyone. Is there room for me at the table?"

“Of course, *chérie*.... Where did you come from?” asked Lucien, moving closer to Dave and freeing up a place for their housemate.

“I came through the storeroom door. I was with Brigette in the Tea House. We’re working on a formula for an<sup>4</sup> herbal blend that helps with digestion.”

“How about a digestive for you,” said Sam, pouring the green absinthe into a glass and offering it to Poppy. She picked up a sugar cube, placed it on a slotted spoon and lay the spoon across the top of her glass. She set the glass under a spigot, turning the tap and letting the ice water drip over the sugar and into the liquor. The shimmering, swirling mixture turned milky and gleamed under the incandescent lamplight.

“Mmmm, I love good absinthe. Cheers everyone.”

More and more people were coming into the speakeasy; arriving after shows, concerts and dinner parties had ended around the City. Hollywood’s biggest celebrities, Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, made a brief appearance with a large group of followers. A Broadway starlet and her mob-connected sugar daddy had a drink before heading down to the gambling hall along with a deputy police commissioner and several politicians. Some wealthy young college men arrived with a flock of Flappers and packed the dancefloor. Charlotte, of course, had excused herself from the table and was flitting about, gathering gossip for her column.

Jimmy stopped by to replenish the table’s supply of ice and alcohol. He thanked Poppy for the tonic which she had left for him at the bar, and complimented her talents as a healer. Poppy blushed and wished his mother a speedy recovery. She swiveled to watch Jimmy walk towards the bar, but suddenly turned back with a scowl on her face. A group of familiar people had come into the club. Arthur Roeder and George Schmidt walked directly past Geneviève’s table to another booth along the back wall. They were followed by Frederick Flinn, who was shambling along behind them. Poppy reached for the absinthe.



Geneviève excused herself to go to the powder room. As she entered the burgundy-colored lounge area, she saw three women standing in front of the gilded mirrors lining a wall. They had unpacked their handbags onto the marble-topped vanity tables and were fixing their hair and touching up their makeup. Geneviève recognized Ruby and two other showgirls from the Verdi Club party. Passing through the room to the toilets, Geni heard their high-pitched giggling as they traded rumors, kohl pencils and blush.

When Geneviève came back to the lounge area, the women were in mid-conversation. She approached the vanity next to Ruby and opened up her handbag, trying her best not to appear as if she were eavesdropping, but their voices floated airily about the room and the conversation was too interesting to ignore.

“Ruby, I just don’t understand. What are we doing with these guys? They are such *stiffs!*”\*

“And they’re old! And not *that* rich.”

“As sugar daddies go, they’re not that bad,” replied Ruby.  
“Two of them don’t even live in the City, so you’d see them maybe once a month? All it would be is a little dinner, dancing, and some flirting. And they’ll pay some of your bills.”

“Well *yours* skipped out on paying your rent this month... and I can’t help you with next month’s again. You know that, right? I’ll need that money back soon.”

“Yeah... I know,” said Ruby. “He’s had a bad run with the cards.”

“Geez Ruby... you sure know how to pick them. Married, *and* a loser at the tables?! Plus, he’s really acting like a wet rag\* tonight.”

“Don’t worry. I’m teaching him a big lesson tonight. He’ll make it up to me soon enough.”

“Hey Rube, did you take care of that *other* problem?”

“It’s ok... turned out to be a false alarm. I got a little help from a friend and I feel fine again.”

“Thank God for that.”

“Let me concentrate... I’ve *got* to get this lipstick on right.”

Ruby carefully applied a waxy gloss onto her lips and then a blood-red layer of lipstick to make a cupid’s bow shape. Finally, she took a small bottle of liquid out of her purse and dabbed it onto her lips, washing her hands at the porcelain sink afterwards. The other two girls were chatting away about dress rehearsals for a new show starting next week. Ruby returned to the mirror and puckered her shiny lips in a mock kiss to herself.

One of the showgirls placed a drop of clear liquid from a tiny vial in each eye and then passed it to Ruby. She raised the vial over her right eye, letting one single droplet fall onto her iris and repeated the same operation with the left. Ruby’s pupils dilated to twice their normal size. Noticing Geneviève watching her in the mirror, Ruby turned her way, winked and flounced out of the powder room.

“So that’s Belladonna. Interesting,” thought Geni. She touched up her

lipstick and went back out to her table.

As Genevieve reached her seat, she nearly bumped into Ruby, who was rushing back towards the powder room; this time, she was alone. A handkerchief fell to the ground, with a deep red stain the shape of her arched lips. Geneviève apologized and bent over to pick up the serviette, but before she could, Ruby dropped down and grabbed it by a corner. There was a little smudge of lipstick at the left corner of her mouth. She didn't say a word, but instead gave a swift smile with her lips pressed together and another wink before she hurried away. The next time Geneviève saw her, Ruby was laughing with her friends at the center of the dance floor, her lipstick back in perfect shape. Roeder and Schmidt were with them, failing badly at keeping up with the hoofers.\*

Geneviève rejoined her party. They had continued pouring each other more absinthe, watching water streams dissolve the sweet crystal cubes placed on the silver spoons. Poppy, normally a light drinker, had barely finished one when she started serving herself another. The next time she opened the spigot, she missed the glass completely. Water dripped all over the table. Geneviève waited for Poppy to twist it closed again, but she did not. Poppy's attention was drawn to something else behind Geneviève.

“Poppy, I think you're creating a flood. Maybe you've had enough?” Geneviève reached over and stopped the miniature waterfall. Poppy's eyes slowly drew upwards, her chin rising slightly as she crossed her arms tightly in front of her chest.

“I've had quite enough,” she muttered.

“Miss Layton!” Geneviève turned her head back over her shoulder to find the source of voice. Frederick Flinn was leaning on the back of their booth; his lipstick-smeared face weaving above Geneviève. His breath was laced with alcohol, his body odor foul and he was smirking across the table at Poppy.

“Too bad about that promotion, eh? But hard science really *is* for men. You should consider sticking to your herbal witchcraft. You’re quite good with that.” He paused for a moment, waiting for a response but getting none.

Poppy’s posture became more rigid, her eyes burning up towards him. Flinn leaned farther over Geneviève’s shoulder towards Poppy. He was swaying unsteadily, and drooling from the right corner of his mouth.

“You know, Miss Layton, I hear you’ve been spreading rumors about me at the University. I’m filing a complaint with the Dean. You’ll be lucky to have a job serving tea in the professors’ lounge after this,” he sniggered, wiping away the saliva that was dripping from his mouth with the back of his hand.

“You!” Poppy jumped up from her seat and hissed into Flinn’s face. “How do you live with yourself? You IMMORAL, LYING FRAUD! You should be ashamed. You don’t deserve your title or your cozy position! It’s time the Dean and everyone else knew who you really are! What you’ve done! What you’re still doing! When I’m through with you, you won’t dare show your face again. I’ll make sure of it.”

“I’d like to see you try,” he said in a thick voice. “Don’t you know who I am?! Don’t you know who’s backing me?!”

“You are evil Flinn, and you deserve to *die*,” responded Poppy.

Lucien got up quickly and reached for her elbow in an attempt to lead Poppy away. She shook his hand off her arm, picked up her bag and slammed her purse with a wet thud on the water-covered table. Geneviève could hear the sound of Poppy’s glass vials, knocking against each other in her bag. Poppy reached inside her purse, grabbed a small blue bottle with her right hand and Flinn’s wrist with her left. She leaned in closer to him, pressing the bottle into his palm.

“Do everyone a favor, take this and just end things yourself.”

“Poppy!”

“Leave me alone, Lucien. I can handle myself.”

“Excuse me, Mr. Flinn...,” Colin appeared at the scene of the commotion, firmly placing a hand on Flinn’s shoulder.

“It’s Dr. Flinn to you... *boy*,” he spat out the last word, literally spraying saliva on Colin’s jacket, shirt and gold medallion. Colin used his sleeve to wipe off some spittle from his cheeks, then continued:

“Well Dr. Flinn, you’ve made quite a ruckus. You don’t want Mo to have to show you out of here, do ya? My Nan always said ‘a man’s mouth often breaks his nose,’ if ya know what I mean. Let me just take ya back to your table, I’ll get Jimmy to fix ya a drink on the house to cool ya off.” He took Flinn by the arm, looking back apologetically towards Poppy and Geneviève, and led him back to his booth. Poppy huffed, spun on her heels and stomped to the bar, quickly followed by Lucien.

“Good Lord! That was unexpected,” exclaimed Sam. “Is Poppy always so dramatic?”

“No Sam, not usually, at least not in public. Although... something has been bothering her lately,” Geneviève answered, somewhat troubled.

“Well, I certainly wouldn’t want to get on *her* bad side.”

Geneviève shrugged her shoulders in response. “Whatever it is, it sounds like he deserves it.”

Jimmy passed by quickly with a tray full of drinks. On his way back, he stopped to clean up the water puddling on the edge of Geni’s table. Colin hurried past holding up a coat check for a forgetful guest and then rushed to man the door. Lucien returned to the booth a half hour later, and sat back

down with Geneviève, Sam and Dave.

“What on earth happened between dear Poppy and that troublemaker?” Dave asked with concern. Lucien sighed and shook his head.

“She wouldn’t tell me. She seems to have her girdle tied too tight. I think it’s best if we wait for her to unwind. Until then you shouldn’t let this spoil your night. Geneviève and I will deal with the situation later. For now, she wants to be left alone.” They all turned to look at the young lady sitting alone on the barstool. Her expression unreadable, Poppy propped up her head with one hand and twisted the strap of her purse with the other.

A few feet from her was Ruby, who was standing at the bar and talking to Jimmy. She leaned her upper body forward, showing off her cleavage as much as possible. Jimmy, obviously enjoying the attention, served her a drink and whispered something in her ear. She giggled, tossing her hair and batting her eyelashes. “Oh Jimmy, you just *slay me*,”\* she exclaimed in a high-pitched voice that carried across the room. Jimmy puffed up visibly and adjusted his bow tie.

“Poor Jimmy, he’s really stuck on\* Ruby,” sighed Lucien. “He’ll never be more than a good friend and a free drink to her. There’s a broken heart waiting to happen.”

As if on cue, Ruby turned away from Jimmy and leaned with her back to the bar, facing towards the stage. Arthur Roeder and George Schmidt were on the dance floor with the other showgirls. Ruby caught a glimpse of them, blew a kiss over her shoulder to Jimmy, and pushed away from the bar. Her hips shimmied and her dress sparkled as she walked through the crowd and back to her booth. Jimmy’s eyes followed Ruby as she left, his smile fading from his face as he saw her head towards Flinn. He frowned and started aggressively drying the surface of the zinc bar with a towel. Charlotte, who had been watching the pair from the end of the bar, sidled over to Jimmy and said a few quiet words. He nodded silently, his assault on the bar calming

down.

Geneviève was about to take another sip of her absinthe, when a bloodcurdling scream split the air.

## Chapter 9

### Part I: Like a Fish Out of Water

All of Geneviève's table stood up at once and turned towards the sound of the hysterics. Flinn was writhing on his side on the floor next to his booth, gasping for breath. He clawed at his stomach and shirt collar. Pink, frothy liquid pooled on the wood surface below his head. Ruby was shrieking as she backed away from him. “Oh my God, somebody help him! Make it stop! Make it stop! What have I done!”

Sam pushed his way past the horrified onlookers and knelt beside the man. Lucien and Geneviève followed him, getting down on their knees on the other side of Flinn. Mr. Rothstein's enforcers, Mo and Tiny, both rushed over, shoving people out of their way.

“Ok folks, get back to your tables.... ain't nuttin goin' on here,” said Mo, “and keep that music playin' over there!”

“Ain't nuttin to see here at all. He musta just had a bad oyster at dinner!” added Tiny. Sam looked over at Geneviève and shook his head slightly, silently mouthing “No.” – definitely not a reaction to bad oysters.

“Mo... he's floppin' around like a fish outta woatah!” blurted Tiny. “We gotta get him outta here.”

Ruby was still yelling. Jimmy appeared at her side, took Ruby by the shoulders and walked her back to the bar where she buried her face in his jacket, sobbing. Poppy and Charlotte hurried over from the bar to join Dave, standing next to their booth. They looked over at the dramatic scene with alarm.

The music played on, but several people on the dance floor were beginning to notice that something was wrong. Colin motioned to the band leader to



pick up the pace and the volume. The sounds of hot jazz made the Flappers kick up their legs, showing off their rolled down stockings to the gawking men. The crisis at the back of the hall was drowned out by the drumbeat on stage.

Flinn stopped struggling and went still, saliva drooling out of his mouth. Sam checked for his pulse.

Tiny leaned down and quietly asked: “Are you a doc?” Sam nodded. “What’s wrong wid ‘im?”

“I’m afraid he is de...”

“Nah!” interrupted Mo, pointing his meaty finger an inch from Sam’s nose. “Nobody croaks\* in A.R.’s juice joints.”\*

“But he has no pulse. And he isn’t breathing. He is *quite* de...”

“Maybe ya didn’t hear me, *doc*,” Mo hissed through gritted teeth. He bent down until his face was just above Sam’s. “Nobody goes to *sleep*\* here and nobody gets *rubbed out*\* here. It’s never happened and it’s not gonna happen tonight,” he growled. Sam closed his mouth and nodded once.

“Well, what are we to do about this very ‘sleepy’ gentleman then?” interjected Lucien, patting his forehead with his pink pocket square.

“We can just dump him out by the river,” suggested Tiny.

“No Tiny, Flinn’s a regular and he ain’t here alone. Besides, this is a high-class joint. We can’t do that,” responded Mo. “But, we can send him to the hospital to... ahhhh... to get better, right?”

“He’s not going to get better. You can’t just cover this up,” Geneviève was incensed.

“Look. The boss can't have a scandal here. We got important people in the house tonight,” warned Mo.

“That is precisely why you're going to want this to be done the right way Mr...”

“Mo.”

“Mr. Mo? If your employer is interested in keeping this place open, he has to prove that his hands are clean of whatever happened here. Dr. Flinn may have had a heart attack, but maybe not. So, this needs to be handled by professionals. Everything around this area needs to be kept in place, including the body.”

“Dat ain't gonna happen lady. We can't just leave a stiff\* lying here all night. We'll have a car take him down to the morgue.” Mo looked at Tiny and jerked his head in the direction of the back exit. Tiny signaled a tall barman to come over. They picked up Flinn from either side and, holding him up between them, wrapped his arms over their shoulders. As they dragged him towards the back door, Tiny kept loudly repeating: “Don't worry Dr. Flinn. You're gonna feel better *real* soon. You just had a few bad oysters.”

“Now, Mr. Mo,” Geneviève turned her attention away from the retreating body and back to the gangster in front of her, “can we at least get the police in here to secure the scene?” she demanded. “Nobody should touch anything until then. – *Lucien*, pick up your handkerchief from the floor. You don't want it to end up in an evidence bag.”

“*Oh zut,*”\* he said as he retrieved it.

Geneviève continued, addressing Mo: “Wasn't that the deputy police commissioner I saw going to the card room earlier tonight? Maybe he can get someone from the Midtown Precinct to come over. Also, you really should tell Colin to stop more people from coming into the speak and keep

anyone from leaving who had contact with Dr. Flinn or saw anything unusual tonight. There are a lot of people here. This is going to be complicated if the police need to interview anyone.”

“Who the hell are ya lady? Some kind of Pinkerton\* dame?” Mo sounded irritated.

“No. I'm Poirot. I work at the Medical Examiner's office.”

“Oh yeah? Good. Then you can handle Flinn. I gotta let A.R. know what's goin' on. He ain't gonna like it.”

## Part II: The Brain

A.R., as he was known to his associates, was at Lindy's restaurant around the corner on Broadway. It was his unofficial office in the center of his midtown territory. Mr. Rothstein was there every night until after sunrise, eating cake with milk and running his empire. Everyone knew where to find him, and Mo had sent Brigitte from the Tea House to go fetch him. He walked in through the back door, exchanged a few quiet words with Mo and then disappeared down the staircase to the gambling hall. Mr. Rothstein returned with the deputy police commissioner and the political V.I.P.s. He quickly got their coats and showed them out the door; better for all if they weren't seen at his casino that night.

Mo brought his boss to Geneviève's table, where she, Lucien and the others had sat back down. Geneviève watched him approach in his well-cut suit and silk bow-tie, wishing they could all avoid meeting him. It was rarely a good thing to have a killer know your name. But it was far too late to slip out of the club unnoticed.

Mr. Rothstein addressed Sam:

“Good evening sir. I hear that you tried to help Dr. Flinn when he became ill. I wanted to thank you for your efforts.” The gangster offered his hand and Sam took it. “And, I understand that you are Miss Poirot, a housemate of Brigitte's. You work for the Medical Examiner's office?”

“That's correct Mr. Rothstein.”

“Excellent. Mo tells me you will be helpful in handling this matter. I hope you understand how sensitive this situation is.” Rothstein looked around the entire table and added: “I trust that I can count on *all* of you to keep this quiet until we figure out what happened.” He looked directly at Charlotte: “It would be – unfortunate – if anything leaked to the newspapers about this incident.” Charlotte's lips pressed together and she dipped her head.

“Mr. Rothstein, I am only an assistant at the M.E.'s office. Our department will deal with the autopsy and determine the cause of death. It's the police that will need to handle any investigation, and take down names and statements from witnesses if a crime was committed. We can be discreet, but I don't know how you'll be able to handle this crowd. Also, Dr. Flinn came in with a group of people. One is at the bar, and the others are on the dance floor.”

“I'll take care of that,” answered the Brain.

Rothstein had deep connections with the local police force and the Mayor's office. Detectives soon arrived on scene, but came in without uniformed officers. They were doing their best to blend in and there was no doubt that they would handle any investigation very quietly. Rothstein spoke again to Mo, who brought a detective over to Ruby.

A.R. walked onstage as Imogene finished her latest song. She quickly moved aside and he stepped up to the microphone.

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Sorry to interrupt the fun. I think you all know who I am. I hope you've all been enjoying our quality refreshments and the best entertainment in New York!” The guests applauded enthusiastically.

“Thank you, folks. Unfortunately, we're going to have to shut our doors early tonight, but your drinks are all on the house.” People around the room hooted and cheered.

“Before you go, you'll need to give your names and addresses to the men in the suits at the front door.” This provoked anxious whispers from the crowd.

“Don't worry, they're not Prohis\* and no one is getting arrested.” The audience laughed in relief.

Rothstein smirked: “As you all know, I'm a *big* fan of baseball. Two lucky people who give me their addresses tonight are going to win my personal box tickets to the season opener of the Yankees and a weekend at the Plaza Hotel!” The whole speakeasy erupted with excitement.

“So, make sure you ALL tell my guys *everything* they want to know before you walk out. Good night folks.” A.R. walked offstage, followed by thunderous applause.

“Well, that was ingenious,” said Lucien. “Do you think we can add our names to that list?”

“I'm afraid that we're already in this deep enough, Lucien. Best if we try not to 'owe' Mr. Rothstein any favors,” chided Dave.

Geneviève watched from her seat as Ruby, accompanied by the detective, went over to the rest of her party at the edge of the dance floor. She spoke to them in hushed tones. Arthur Roeder and George Schmidt looked shocked and the Ziegfeld girls seemed anxious to leave, but the officer led the group over to a table to sit and wait.

Rothstein motioned to Mo, who brought Colin and Jimmy with him to stand in a group near Geni's booth. They were joined by an investigator. Geneviève strained to overhear them speaking. “Mr. R, we're going to have to find out if Flinn died of natural causes or not. We need to get Flinn's effects and check what he was up to all night. We'll contact his next-of-kin too. I think we can let these folks all go home until we get the autopsy report. They can come back here in the morning if we need them. I figure we'll do any interviews here and not at the station. It'll keep things quiet for a while. Do you think we'll have a problem with getting them to show up if we want them?”

“No. My employees will all be here at nine o'clock. And I'll have Mo and Tiny talk to these two tables of customers. My boys are very persuasive.”

Mo and Tiny made it clear to Lucien's and Ruby's parties that they needed to make themselves available if they wanted to avoid trouble. They all promised to come back when they got a call. Tiny reminded Charlotte to keep the Flinn story out of her column. Her hands were trembling by the time he was done talking to her. The two enforcers started hustling the last customers out the front door. Colin got Flinn's coat and hat from the cloak room for the detectives and Jimmy went back to the bar to get the bottles he used for Flinn's drinks.

“Miss Poirot, a word before you leave, please.” Mr. Rothstein pulled Geneviève aside. “I assume that you are going directly to the morgue so let me tell you my thoughts. Dr. Flinn did not become sick on my liquor. So, if he has any wood alcohol in him, it came from somewhere else. He died of natural causes some time after he left the club. If the autopsy finds anything fishy,\* I'll have these midtown gumshoes\* deal with it.”

“Mr. Rothstein, as you undoubtedly know, I am a regular here and I only drink where I trust that the liquor is safe. I don't doubt that if Dr. Flinn died from alcohol poisoning, he likely drank it elsewhere. The toxicology lab will analyze the liquor served at Flinn's table to be sure. But I must tell you that the Medical Examiner's office will be truthful in its report.”

“Well, then you'd best be off to the morgue right away. City Hall already called your boss and he'll soon be on his way down there. Mo has a car outside and he'll get you over to Bellevue. I've had Lindy's pack up some food for you. You'll need something solid in your stomach to make it through the next day. Miss Poirot, whatever you find out, I want to be the first to know. Mo will be in the car waiting for your report.”

## Chapter 10

### Poudre des Succession

Flinn's body lay on a marble slab under the harsh lights of the autopsy room at Bellevue. He was mostly covered by a white sheet, but his pale, blue-tinted feet stuck out at the bottom, angled slightly outward. Geneviève squinted, the bright lighting hurting her head. The absinthe was still in her system.

Dr. Norris, woken in the early hours of Saturday by a call from the Mayor's office, burst into the room in his lab coat, looking fresh and energetic next to Poirot, who desperately wanted to lie down. It would be hours before she felt like herself again.

“So, what is so important that I've had to get up and come downtown at this time of night? Another run-in with a bad dentist?” inquired the Medical Examiner, looking seriously at his young assistant.

“Not this time, Chief. There are a dozen bodies that came in during the night, mostly from the smoke houses,\* and one was fished out of the pond at Central Park, an apparent suicide. But, no sir, this is a special case.”

“That, I perceived from the urgent call from City Hall. Who is he and where did he die?”

“His name is Dr. Frederick Flinn and he was brought in from the Green Fairy off of 48<sup>th</sup> Street. The deputy police commissioner and some higher ups in city politics were there in the gambling hall tonight.”

“I know the place. I believe Dr. Gettler plays cards there on occasion. I also know of the victim. He was at Columbia University, as I was, although we certainly didn't travel in the same social circles.”

“Really... well, you should know that I'm a regular customer of the Green



Fairy too. I was there tonight when the deceased was on his way out, not exactly on his own two feet. I am, therefore, a potential witness and may have a conflict, depending on what we find in the post mortem.”

“Do you suspect foul play, Poirot?”

“Well, we can't rule it out, can we Chief? There were certain circumstances surrounding this death that make an autopsy necessary, and there are other parties who made public threats against the deceased. One is a person I know. There is also the matter of the proprietor of the club - Mr. Rothstein – who has his own agenda and interests. Are you familiar with Mr. Rothstein?”

“Not personally - only by reputation. Well, I trust that you can be objective in your analysis, Poirot, even if you know some of the people involved.”

“Of course, Dr. Norris.”

“Fine – then get yourself a strong cup of coffee and wash up – you look a little bleary-eyed and you smell like cigarettes and alcohol. And, find Gettler. He should be in his lab.”

After splashing some water on her face, Geneviève made herself a cup of Earl Grey and grabbed a sandwich out of the Lindy's bag. She returned with Dr. Gettler. The police had delivered several boxes of items from the Green Fairy which Norris pointed out to Gettler: In one box were large bottles of alcohol. A second labelled 'FF' contained an empty whiskey glass with a piece of orange stuck to the inside, a stained table cloth, a man's hat, an overcoat with a bottle labelled Neosalvarsan\* still in the breast pocket and matches in the outside right pocket. A third box contained a lady's purse which Geneviève recognized as Ruby's. Inside was a handkerchief with a red stain, a lipstick case, a jar of waxy cream and a small glass bottle containing a clear, yellowish liquid. Geneviève noticed something missing from the evidence boxes and made a mental note to follow up on it later.

Norris had removed the sheet and was waiting to begin. “Dr. Gettler, would you please get to work on analyzing the contents of the evidence boxes while we start the autopsy? Poirot will bring you tissue samples later. So, Poirot – what can you tell me about the deceased? And what do you see here?”

Poirot and Norris proceeded at a brisk pace as the night died. Geneviève pointed out that the body looked severely dehydrated, unusually shrunken and that the skin of the face appeared reddened and blistered in several places. There was also a blackened sticky residue on the cheeks. The hands and feet both were tinged with blue, indicating a lack of oxygen in the blood.

The internal examination was messy. The inside of the victim’s stomach was covered in bloody lesions\*; its mucous membrane was yellowish, swollen, and spotted with bright red patches. They found similar damage in the intestines. The heart contained loose blood clots. However, the liver and kidneys were in healthy condition. Under the microscope, tissue samples of the stomach and intestines glittered with small, white crystals.

Dawn had not yet arrived when Norris and Poirot finished the post mortem. They left the autopsy room for the toxicology lab to consult with Dr. Gettler, turning out the lights as they walked out. Gettler’s laboratory was brightly lit and full of flasks of strong-smelling, bubbling solutions. Initial results from some of the lab work was ready, but the toxicology screenings would be continuing throughout the day. Geneviève delivered jars containing the organs that Gettler would later examine. The evidence from the speakeasy that Dr. Gettler had analyzed up to that point, revealed a confounding set of data but one test result was crystal-clear. It was a good place to start from and the doctors conferred about the next experiments to perform.

Poirot returned to the autopsy room to clean up and prepare Dr. Flinn's body for delivery to cold storage. As Geneviève walked through the door, reaching to turn on the lights, she noticed that the room was not completely dark. Dr. Flinn's face and neck glowed a pale green. Geneviève's breath caught in her throat. She approached the table and remarked that Flinn’s palms glimmered

as well. She had seen similar luminescence before. Poirot ran out the door at full speed towards the toxicology lab to find Drs. Norris and Gettler.

## Chapter 11

### Part I: Lindy's

Mo was waiting in the car out in front of the hospital. Geneviève stepped inside and asked him to drive her up to the Brownstone. She would return to the Green Fairy when she had a chance to close her eyes for an hour or two.

“Look lady, I gotta take you to the boss on Broadway first,” Mo said, already starting up the car.

“As long as you return me home so I can take a bath and a nap. I haven't slept a wink, Mr. Mo.”

“It's just Mo.”

“Sorry. Mo... how long have you been working at the Green Fairy?”

“I been there a while, but it's not where I started and it's not where I'm gonna end up. I grew up in Five Points, well, after comin' ova from the old country with my family. I met A.R. a few years ago through my partner. The Boss is showin' us the ropes\* of the liquor business, ya know, like a mentor. He's gonna back me and my friend, Meyer, when we start our own shop.”

“He seems to be quite a gentleman, for a bootlegging gambler.”

“Yeah, he's different from a lotta the others. He dresses good, he speaks fancy, he doesn't drink and he doesn't get his hands dirty. He's real particular about manners too. So, I learn a lot from him about bein' a gentleman. But I don't have no problem gettin' my hands dirty. That's why he likes havin' me around. I got *special* talents.”

Despite the fear that she should have felt in the presence of the gangster, Geneviève closed her eyes and nodded off. She was jolted out of her sleep

when Mo nudged her with his elbow. Geni looked out the window and found herself at the entrance to Lindy's. She got out of the car and entered the restaurant, feeling her body tense up.

Mr. Rothstein was sitting at his regular booth at the back of the restaurant, a large cup of milk and a plate of devil's food cake on the table in front of him. He had the early edition newspapers scattered about, and several of his goons sitting nearby. The restaurant was surprisingly crowded, considering that the sun was just beginning to brighten the sky. As Geneviève approached, Rothstein fixed her with a cold, measured look that sent a shiver down her spine. She noticed that his smile never seemed to reach his eyes. His bodyguards rose from their seats to block her path, but Rothstein gestured with a slight frown and a jerk of his head and they immediately sat down. He nodded towards a seat and Geni took it, leaving her coat and hat on.

"No news is good news," said Rothstein, glancing down at the papers on the table. "Your friend, Charlotte, knows when to keep her mouth closed and her stories out of the newspapers. How about you? What news do you have for me?"

"Mr. Rothstein, this is really a matter for the police and the preliminary autopsy report will be delivered directly to them in the next hour."

"Miss Poirot, the report will come to me just as quickly as it gets to the police department, so why don't you save me the time and let me know what I want."

"Very well. I can confirm to you that the cause of death was not alcohol poisoning. We found no methyl alcohol\* or any other substance commonly used in bootlegging in his stomach. Also, although Dr. Flinn's limbs showed signs of bruising, which I believe occurred one night prior to his death when Mo escorted him out of the casino, those injuries did not cause or contribute to his death."

“So, he had a heart attack or a stroke then, just as I said.”

“I’m afraid not. There is evidence of a crime. But, there is more that needs looking into by the detectives in order to solve it. And frankly, it is beyond my expertise to do anything more. I really should be heading home.”

“Miss Poirot. This unfortunate matter needs to be resolved soon. I cannot have the police department crawling all over my establishment. It is an inconvenience that will cost me a fortune and will draw unwanted attention from Federal authorities. My reputation is at stake here. People may think of me as a risk-taker, but I am not a gambling man when it comes to my businesses.”

“I don’t see what I can do to move this along, Mr. Rothstein. As I told you before, I am merely an assistant to the Medical Examiner.”

“I disagree. You are not *merely* anything, Miss Poirot. You are a very well-educated chemistry and toxicology expert, and a *Poirot*. Your pedigree opens doors and your contacts are connected like a web throughout the City. I *heard* that one of your very close friends threatened Dr. Flinn at my club. The police are going to lean on her pretty hard if they think he was murdered. Doesn’t that interest you enough to stay involved?”

“You mean Poppy? Yes, that would concern me.”

“Well, I’m not telling you what to do, but if you don’t want your friend to find herself alone in a difficult situation, you might wish to continue your involvement this case. I’ll do you a favor. I can have the deputy commissioner assign Isabella Goodwin\* to take over the interrogations, at least of the women. It will go easier on your friend.”

“Then I’d better speak with Detective Goodwin right away. The police need to follow up on a few leads before we start questioning witnesses. Can you put me on the telephone with her?”

## Part II: Poppy

It was after dawn when Mo finally brought Geneviève back to the Brownstone. The glow from the clock over the mantelpiece faded in the weak light coming into the parlor window. Geneviève held onto the bannister and lifted her feet, one at a time, slowly up the steps. When she reached her room, she dropped her purse on the floor and slumped onto her bed without bothering to change out of her evening clothes. She sighed and shut her heavy eyelids.

Geneviève woke up two hours later, still laying on top of her covers. She stared at the ceiling, her thoughts swirling through her mind. She took a deep breath and swung her legs over the edge of her bed. With a splash of cold water and a quick wash up, Geni put on a fresh suit, her cherry-colored lipstick and headed downstairs to the parlor. Lucien had already gone down and was reading his newspaper out loud to the few women sitting at the breakfast table.

**Brooklyn Townhouse Torched: Italian Woman quotes Exodus 21:24 before attacking the Home of Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Owner** -A mentally deranged woman was arrested for attempted arson after setting fire to the home of Mr. Max Blank of Brooklyn. Screaming "occhio per occhio", she stood in front of the building with a brick before smashing a ground floor window and trying to throw a burning torch inside. Mr. Blank, the owner of a number of garment factories, including the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, was not home at the time. Mr. Blank and his business partner were never held criminally responsible for the 1911 fire that claimed the lives of over a hundred and forty people. The Brooklyn Borough President condemned the act of vigilante justice. The woman has been

confined to the psychiatric ward at Bellevue Hospital prior to her trial. She is being represented by New York City's oldest law firm. The family-owned firm declined to identify the benefactor who hired them, however anonymous sources have pointed towards a women's league as the shadow client.

Lucien looked up from the article and observed Geneviève entering the room. "Geni, you look awfully tired. You'd better go back upstairs and sleep a few hours longer."

"There's no time Lucien. I'll wake up once I start my work." She poured fresh Earl Grey into a cup and picked a clove cigarette from her silver case. Lucien pushed a plate of buttered toast and a jar of honey towards her.

"You have to eat something Geni. You can't live on cigarettes alone."

"Lu, I don't think I can eat right now," responded Geneviève, rubbing the sides of her forehead with both hands.

"Geni, do you have a headache?" asked Poppy. "I could fetch a willow bark tonic from my supplies for you."

"Thanks Poppy. That would be nice," answered Geneviève. Poppy went upstairs and the other ladies went off on their errands.

Lucien leaned in towards Geneviève and whispered: "Isn't it remarkable! Not one newspaper mentions anything that happened at the Green Fairy last night, or even an obituary for Flinn. I'm sure there were guests who noticed that something was off yesterday. Can you believe that not one of them reported it?"

"Are you really surprised, now that we know how Arnold Rothstein handles



situations? Look at what his henchmen did to poor Charlotte. Rothstein must have intimidated the guests and the press into keeping everything under wraps for now.”

Geneviève inhaled her cigarette smoke and slowly blew it out towards Lucien, surveying him silently with narrowed eyes. She stared at him until he squirmed in his seat and looked down, intently studying his hands.

“Lucien – hand it over.”

“*Quoi?* I have no idea to what you are referring,” replied Lucien in an unusually high-pitched voice.

“You KNOW what. I know you have it.” Geneviève frowned at him.

“How did you know?” he asked with a lowered voice and looked up at her.

“Poppy's bottle wasn't in the evidence box. The police couldn't have known about it since they only arrived afterwards. You took it when I was speaking to Mo. Did you think I wouldn't notice you palming\* the bottle with that ridiculous handkerchief act?”

“I thought you liked my Houdini routines.”

“This is serious Lucien. Don't you realize that you've meddled with a crime scene?”

“I just wanted to protect Poppy. You know she wouldn't hurt a fly.” Lucien reached into his pocket, removed his pink handkerchief and handed it to Geneviève. She opened it, revealing a small blue bottle just as Poppy came back into the room.

“Geni, don't drink that! You have the wrong tonic,” exclaimed Poppy.

“What do you mean Poppy? What's in it?”

“Senna,\* cascara extract\* and milk of magnesia\*: it's a laxative, a strong one. It will give you the runs if you drink all of that. How did you get it?”

Lucien starting chuckling silently, pressing his palm across his mouth.

“Poppy... why did you give that bottle to Dr. Flinn last night? You threatened the man's life in front of EVERYONE and then gave him... a laxative?” Geneviève was incredulous.

Lucien doubled over in a fit of uncontrolled laughter.

“What did you think I would give him? Did you think I was trying to poison Flinn? I *wish* I had that kind of courage.” Poppy grabbed the bottle from Geneviève, opened it and drank some down. “See – it isn't poison. I told you I've been working on digestive products with Brigitte – teas and tonics. And Flinn just made me so angry, I thought a night in the outhouse was the least he deserved. I planned to ruin him professionally, but I guess it's too late for that now. However, I'm still working with Charlotte on a newspaper article to expose him and his criminal associates.”

Geneviève exhaled: “Well, I have to say that I'm relieved Poppy. I'll send this bottle down to the lab to have its contents confirmed, but you're still going to have to tell your story to the detectives and they'll want to know more about this exposé you're working on.” Poppy nodded and turned toward the staircase. “And Poppy, I have some questions I may need to ask you of a botanical nature. Can you come along with me later this morning and we can talk while I look into a few things?” Poppy nodded again and started climbing the steps up to her rooftop garden.

Alone again in the dining room, Geneviève turned to Lucien and spoke in a hushed voice: “Lu, last night at the hospital, just when I was about to prepare Flinn for the morgue, I entered the autopsy room and saw the strangest thing.

He was *glowing*.”

“Really? Are you sure you didn’t imagine that?” Lucien looked skeptical.

“*C’est vrai!* He had a greenish light coming from his hands and face. Drs. Norris and Gettler are analyzing tissue samples now. But I’ve seen that same kind of luminescence on the door of the speakeasy. What do you think it could be?”

“You haven’t only seen it on that door Geni, our clock above the mantelpiece shines with the same color as at the speak.” Lucien pointed at the timepiece hanging on the wall. “It might be some phosphorescent paint. Dave used something like it on the light switches in their apartment and I believe a few of the clubs mark their exits with it so people can find their way out in a raid.”

“What is it called?”

Lucien started snapping the fingers of his left hand in the air as he tried to find the name. “I’m not sure, there are several kinds, but the most popular one is called something like Nodark, Enddark... no, no it was Undark,”\* he exclaimed with a final snap and pointed at the wall-clock.

“Undark.... Will you ring up Sam and Dave? I need to stop over at the Ansonia before I go anywhere else today.”

“I’m coming with you.... And don’t forget Poppy!”

## Chapter 12

### Undark

The driver dropped Geneviève, Lucien and Poppy off at the entrance to the Ansonia. The lobby was quiet compared to the lively evenings they had experienced in the last few days. They were walking towards the elevator when they noticed Charlotte sitting on a sofa with Dotty. Geneviève headed over to them, followed by Poppy and Lucien and sat down across from them.

Charlotte exclaimed: “Geni! I couldn't sleep a wink last night, so I came here to find out the news from the house operators, and *guess* who I saw?” She paused and looked from Lucien to Poppy to Geneviève.

“Who did you see Charlotte?” Geni asked. Charlotte leaned forward and gestured to the others to lean in closer.

“Arthur Roeder and George Schmidt. I spotted them at breakfast, speaking quietly with each other. They looked like they were plotting something.”

“Who are they?” asked Dotty.

“Oh, nobody you need to know dearie. Anyways, Dorothy was just telling me that a couple of policemen were down here earlier, speaking with the hotel concierge. She heard them inquiring about an incident at the Verdi Club party last night, didn't you Dot?”

“That's right. They were asking whether the hotel had laundered a shirt for a guest and given him a loaner last night. And they wanted to speak with the doormen who were on duty after the Verdi Club concert. The police mentioned something about Dr. Flinn; that awful man. Can't imagine what he did. Anyway, the concierge directed them to the laundry room to see whether the shirt was already washed or not, but they didn't have any luck speaking with the doormen. It was too early for their shift to start.”

The four exchanged looks and Geneviève inquired: “By any chance Dotty, were you down here in the lobby yesterday evening?”

Dorothy’s eyes widened, she drew a deep breath and burst out: “Well *of course!* It was so very exciting here with all of the comings and goings... It seemed like there were a million people in the lobby... I had high tea in the restaurant with an old friend and then came back out here to people-watch for a while, that is.... until I had my little accident, and returned to my room to change my shoes.... it wasn’t exactly an accident, but a mishap really. I was hurrying across the floor to get a glimpse of Mrs. Foster Jenkins as she arrived with her *amazing* entourage of composers and opera divas, when the heel of my shoe caught on the edge of the carpet. Well, that tripped me right into a porter who was running towards the front doors. Lucky for me, he broke my fall, but I’m afraid I squashed him and sent that pneumatic tube flying, which broke open and spilled out the message he was delivering.” Dotty sighed. “I was oh so ever sorry, poor man, and ever so embarrassed, but there was no harm done really, except to my poor heel, which broke off and skittered across the floor. The porter retrieved it and I helped him pick up his message.” Dotty paused for just a moment. “Strange one though. I couldn’t *help* myself glancing at it as I handed it back to him. It was for a man named Amos, a guest in room 524, and it was some kind of threat!”

“Well, what did it say?” interjected Charlotte.

“It said: ‘He is mine. Stay out of this!’ Isn’t that *soooo* interesting, and so...so... modern... *he* is mine?! There must be something wild going on upstairs,” concluded Dorothy.

Lucien smiled wickedly. “You seem to be enjoying the drama of the Great White Way,\* Dorothy.”

“*And how!*\* The twenties sure are roaring here! I *have* to come back next year!”

Geni, Lucien and Poppy excused themselves and stepped into the elevator. It took them to the sixth-floor and stopped with a ding. The elevator operator pulled back the bronze gate and stood aside to let them out. A maid opened the door to the apartment, took their coats and hats and led them to the dining room where Sam and Dave sat in their dressing robes, drinking tea and eating their breakfast. More cups and plates were brought and set around the table. Sam looked up from his plate with dark circles under his eyes.

“Good morning, or is it still your night? Please sit down and have something to eat. I imagine today is going to be quite busy for all of you. Margaret just brought home these pastries. They’re freshly baked and quite delicious.” Sam waved them over to the table. Dave gave them a nod but then quickly closed his eyes and massaged his temples with his fingers.

“Mr. Golde are you alright?” Poppy asked.

“Oh dear, don’t worry. With age, alcohol tends not to agree with one’s body as well as it did before.” Dave chuckled weakly.

“I might just have a tonic for that. I’ve given Geni one this morning.” Poppy began rummaging in her purse but Dave stopped her.

“That’s alright. Margaret prepared one of her special potions for me today. She knows an incredible amount about herbal remedies although she doesn’t have the type of education you had. However, she goes by the old wives’ tales which were passed down through generations in her family. You should have a talk with her sometime. She might have a few recipes that would interest you Poppy. Or, she could show you the garden on the top of the Ansonia this morning, am I right Samuel?” Sam hummed in agreement and continued eating the fruit tart on his plate.

“David, Lucien tells me that you might have a bottle of Undark paint in the apartment. I would like to have a look at it if you don’t mind,” said Geneviève.

“I think we do, dear, but I’m not sure where. I tend to leave things lying about. Go find Margaret. She’s in charge of picking up after me and will know where it is. You’ll probably find her in the library.”

Geneviève walked past the foyer, then through the double doors to the library. She found Margaret, perched at the top of a wooden ladder, her left hand holding onto the brass rail attached to the book shelf and her left foot resting on a step. The housekeeper’s right leg was dangling in the air and she was cleaning the crystal chandelier in the center of the ceiling with a feather duster. Geni gasped and rushed over to grab the bottom of the wooden ladder to stop the wheels which were rolling back and forth with each sweep of the duster.

“Margaret, please be careful! Why don’t you come down and let me do that?”

“Miss Poirot. Lovely to see you again so soon.” She climbed quickly down the ladder and smoothed the front of her long skirt with her free hand. “What can I do for you?”

“Mr. Golde told me you would know where to find a bottle of luminescent paint.”

“Oh yes - follow me please.” Margaret pushed open the door and walked towards the back of the apartment where the housekeeper’s quarters were. She opened her bedroom door and let Geni in. She shivered as she walked into the chilly room.

Underneath an open narrow window was a single bed, the covers neatly folded and the pillow fluffed. Across the room stood a chest of drawers topped by a white vase of Queen Anne’s Lace and pink tea roses next to a small bowl of candy. A simple cross hung on the wall.

Margaret walked straight to a closet in the corner and opened it to reveal shelves full of bottles, tins of various sizes, sewing equipment and other

items. She bent down to look at the lowest shelf, shifting objects to see what lay behind them. In the meantime, Geni explored the room with her eyes. A picture in a wooden frame on the nightstand caught her attention. It stood next to a worn, leather-bound Bible, embossed with gold lettering and the initials M.C.R, a rosary and a datebook open to the month of December. On yesterday's date Margaret had written: work at the Verdi Club. A curled piece of note paper lay pinned to the datebook showing some letters 'EX' and the time 21:24.

"Margaret are these your children?" she asked as she picked up the picture frame. Three boys surrounded a young girl with voluminous curls. Margaret turned around. When she saw what Geni was holding she hurried over, smiling widely.

"No Miss Poirot – these are my grandchildren! Oh, this portrait was taken back when we lived out in New Jersey. I stayed with my son and his family in East Orange after my husband passed. Those cheeky boys loved to tease their sister but the littlest one there, my youngest lad, followed her around all day and never left her side. Ciara was always the princess of the family." said Margaret wistfully grazing her locket on her chain.

"What a coincidence! I am from New Jersey as well. Do you still go home to see them?"

"Oh, when they got older, things changed quite a bit. My son got into the drink and his wife is gone, but our little Ciara is still in East Orange. She went to work in the town's biggest factory when she was just fourteen and she'll never leave. The boys moved out to find work when they finished their schooling. They are scattered about the country now. But my youngest sends me notes whenever he can and he and I go back to visit my girl on her birthday and for Christmas." Margaret sighed and placed the photograph back down on the nightstand next to her Bible and table lamp. She smiled warmly at Geneviève. "Well, let's see about that bottle, shall we?"



Margaret turned back to the closet and continued her search; but after a few more minutes, it became clear that the Undark was not there.

“I’m so sorry Miss Poirot – I could have sworn that the bottle was in here. I must have been mistaken. It has to be somewhere in the apartment, although Dr. Weiss and Mr. Golde have so many guests here during their salon evenings, and with the hotel staff coming in and out at all hours it’s no wonder if things go missing.”

“Well thank you anyway Margaret. I’m certain I can find something similar at a hardware store.” Geneviève turned to leave the room, but stopped with a thought and asked: “Margaret, would you tell me what you observed last night at the Verdi Club party? You may have heard from Mr. Golde and Dr. Weiss that one of the guests later died. It was the man you helped out of the room when he and his wife had that scene.”

“Oh yes. That was dramatic. Of course... what would you like to know?”

“Anything you can tell me...”

“Well, I didn’t see much since I was serving, but I did hear the lady raising her voice and saw her throwing that glass of wine in the gentleman’s face. She stormed off past me, talking under her breath. It was really none of my business, but I couldn’t leave him standing there with red wine all over his shirt, so I escorted him out to the men’s lounge to clean up and got him a new shirt from the concierge.”

“Did you hear what his wife said when she passed you?”

“Miss Poirot, I’d rather not say. It wasn’t very nice, but she was upset.”

“Please Margaret. It could be important. To be honest with you, there is a criminal investigation starting and I am afraid that Poppy may have put herself in a difficult situation.”

“Oh... in that case. Mrs. Flinn said: ‘He’s worth more to me dead than alive.’”

“Thank you, Margaret. That is *very* helpful. May I please use the telephone? I need to make an urgent call.” Geni followed Margaret to the office where she rang the Midtown police precinct. She then returned to the dining room to collect Lucien. Poppy stayed behind for a tour of the rooftop gardens and greenhouses with Margaret. Sam and Dave asked if they should dress and head down to the Green Fairy right away but Geneviève told them to wait for a phone call from Detective Goodwin. The gentlemen invited everyone back for a late dinner or a night cap if they had time.

## Chapter 13

### Part I: Detective Goodwin

As soon as they were alone in the back of the car, Lucien turned to Geneviève and asked, “Are you going to tell me what is going on and can you *please* explain to me how you got stuck in the middle of this?”

“Dr. Flinn was killed, as you must have figured out by now. All of the evidence points to poisoning.”

“*Nom de Dieu!*”\*

“God doesn’t have anything to do with this, Lucien. I’m in the middle of this mess because Arnold Rothstein wants this case solved and he owns the police and City Hall. Dr. Norris isn’t one of Rothstein’s men, but we all work for the Mayor. So, here we are.”

The car stopped in front of Madame Maxime’s. Geneviève and Lucien walked through the front door directly into the Tea House, the bell above the entrance announcing their arrival.

“Hello you two.” Brigitte greeted them, as she came in from the storage room behind a solid door.

“Hello Brigitte. Where is our little Tony?” Lucien asked looking around the counter.

“I thought it’d be better if he wasn’t here to see you lot walking in and out from the club. And Tiny asked him to clean the alley. So, I sent him out with a broom. I’ll take you to the back. There are some people waiting for you.”

They followed her into the storage room. There was no need to say the usual password. Brigitte closed the door behind them and they looked around at

walls full of tins and sacks of tea. They could smell peppermint and cinnamon but mostly the strong scent of tea leaves. Brigitte made her way to the back wall and pulled open a secret door to the bar behind. Geneviève and Lucien walked through.

‘It feels strange to be here during the day. This place looks so different without a crowd,’ Geni thought to herself.

The chairs had been put on the tables and the lights were all switched on. Some of yesterday’s witnesses had already arrived and spread out in the big hall. Jimmy and Colin stood in front of the bar muttering things to each other. Mo and Tiny came up from the gambling halls, which were still open, and waited by the back exit.

“Miss Poirot, we spoke on the phone twice this morning. It’s nice to put a face to the name.” Geni turned to see Isabella Goodwin, New York’s first female detective, standing behind her with an outstretched hand. Geneviève greeted her and introduced Lucien who seemed surprised as he towered over the petite woman. “I get that reaction a lot, Mr. Claire. Most men don’t expect me to be small and in my fifties. It shocks people almost as much as finding out that a woman can be a detective.” Lucien removed his hat and gave her a small bow.

“Miss Poirot - I would like to discuss a matter with you in private if you could give me a moment.” She showed Geni through the back and down the stairs to the casino. They went around a corner and entered a room with a poker table in the center. Goodwin pulled out two chairs and gestured for Geneviève to sit.

“I don’t know what Mr. Rothstein told you about me, but I’m not one of his lackeys. I’m going to do my job the way I would in any case. HE told me you were the right person to work with to solve this crime, but I want you to level with me\* - are you working for Rothstein or are you not?” demanded Goodwin.

“I work for the Chief Medical Examiner of the City of New York, Detective Goodwin – not Mr. Rothstein or anyone else under his influence. I have no hidden agenda. You’ll get the truth from me just as I expect to have it from you.”

“Good. But you should know that Mr. Rothstein wants someone under his control on this case as well. That’s why Officer Cooper will be joining us for much of the day. If you have something to tell me that you don’t want to get back to Rothstein, you’ll need to tell me in private. I’ll try to keep Cooper busy while we talk to witnesses. I want you to watch my first interview. You take the lead in questioning some of the others, but I need to be informed about everything you find out. Keep as much information as you can away from Cooper and any of the other cops\* here. You can’t trust some of the men in the Department.” Goodwin gave a tight-lipped smile.

“I’ll keep that in mind. Thank you, Detective Goodwin.”

“I went over to Mrs. Flinn’s apartment this morning to break the news to her. She seemed genuinely upset, but I’m not quite sure how much grief as opposed to how much anger she felt. She asked where he got sick and I had to mention the club. But he officially died on the way to the hospital, didn’t he? It won’t be easy for her. She said they have a child and that money has been a problem lately, although I don’t know why,” she paused. “We are following up on that lead you gave us from the Verdi Club witness. I should have more information on it this afternoon.”

“I’ve received the preliminary examiner’s report on Dr. Flinn, but I’d like you to tell me again in person all about it. You saw what happened to Flinn firsthand, didn’t you?” The detective took out a notepad and a pen.

“Yes, I did, at least in part. I saw Dr. Flinn earlier in the evening at the Verdi Club concert at the Ansonia Hotel. He was with someone I believe to be his wife and two men who he seemed to know well. I had never seen his wife or the other men before. But I’ve seen Dr. Flinn before last night, both at the

Ansonia and here at the bar. On those other occasions, he was in the company of a young woman called Ruby Rey, a showgirl in the Ziegfeld Follies.”

“Go on.”

“Dr. Flinn had a conflict with his wife at the Ansonia, but I have also seen him have a disagreement or two with the showgirl as well as with Mo, a club employee. I’ll be happy to tell you more of my observations as the day goes on.”

“Any other people have a problem with Dr. Flinn that you know of?” Detective Goodwin looked up from her notes and directly into Geni’s eyes. “No hidden agenda, you said.”

“Yes,” answered a reluctant Geneviève. “Miss Poppy Layton, a scientist at Columbia University who also happens to be my housemate and friend, seems to have had a professional disagreement with Dr. Flinn. She had a run-in with him here in front of a number of people when he provoked her. She made some threats, but I believe you will be satisfied with her explanation, which can be confirmed by speaking with Miss Charlotte Blatherton. There is also some newly discovered evidence that is being analyzed at the toxicology lab.”

“O.K. Miss Poirot. I’d be inclined to give Miss Layton a chance to explain herself, but don’t let your friendship get in the way of my investigation because I *will* find out about it. And we’ll have to make sure there are no more *misplaced* pieces of evidence that suddenly turn up. Last night, what did you see happen here at the club with Flinn?”

“He came in with Mr. Roeder, Mr. Schmidt and three women from the Follies. He appeared to be drunk already at the time he walked in the door. He was stumbling, seemed off-balance and was sweating and drooling when he spoke to Miss Layton. I didn’t see what he was like afterwards, until he began convulsing on the floor. The M.E.’s report has the physical description

I included.”

“OK. Tell me about the toxicological findings.”

“As is standard in cases involving alcohol and as specially requested by Mr. Rothstein, Drs. Norris and Gettler first examined the victim’s blood to check if there were any traces of alcohol poisoning, which we did *not* find. There was also no trace of methyl alcohol or other impurities in the bottles served from the bar.”

“Well, Rothstein will be happy to hear about that,” said Goodwin. “Ah... He already knows, doesn’t he?” She gave another tight-lipped smile.

“We found ethyl alcohol, which is to be expected at a bar, and several other unusual substances, which I hope to find out more about when the final toxicology report is ready. But it looks like the real killer was white arsenic.”

“I heard that he had syphilis medication in his pocket. And I know they use arsenic to treat that condition. Could that be where it came from?”

“Perhaps, but I think we need to meet with a few people before there is a clear solution to this puzzle.”

“I agree with you. We’ll have some interesting information coming in from our field officers as well. You and I had best get started, Miss Poirot. We already have a few men here to interview. I’ll send Cooper to find the others. It will get him out of our way. Wait here, I’ll be back with our first witness.”

Geneviève waited in the empty room, mumbling words of encouragement to herself to reduce her nervousness. Goodwin returned, followed by Mo and Tiny.

“Hello Mo,” squeaked Geni, still obviously tense.

“Miss Poirot. Long time no see,” he joked.

“Would you tell us your full name?” began Goodwin.

“Mauro Salvatore Fortunato, Mo for short. And Tiny here... hey Tiny, what’s your name?”

“It’s Thomas Murphy, Mo. I can’t believe ya don’t know my name. You can call me Tiny, ma’am, sorry, Detective. Everyone does.”

“And your job titles?”

“Manager at Madame Maxime's Tea House, and Tiny here is in charge of garbage disposal and clean up.”

“Would you mind telling us about your personnel?”

“Jimmy’s been working for us the longest. He puts good drinks together and makes folks laugh. What else you gotta know?”

“Just tell us about the others who work upstairs.”

“Stella, hat check girl...well you know, who doesn’t wanna be greeted by a pretty face when they walk into our joint. She comes in every night; she does her job. Now and then we get some chump\* complaining that he’s missing a few quarters from his coat pockets, but it’s fine, nuttin’ to worry about. Most of the others are part-timers who serve



drinks and clean up, plus there's Imogene and the band, and Brigitte out front in the tea shop. Colin started here around half a year ago. He was *real* eager to get this job too. He especially wanted the Friday and Saturday late shifts so he could come in after his job at the hotel. I'm telling you, earning the boss' trust ain't easy, but *dat* guy got through to him real quick. Ever since then, he's been workin' the front door and sometimes helping us with *difficult* customers."

"...like Dr. Flinn?"

"Yeah. He was a regular for a while up at the club. Then we gave him a taste of the real fun down here in the gambling halls. Tiny and I know a bettin' man when we see one. Once they start playin' poker, we know we can count on them to come again. Flinn always had some broad\* wid him. They would change from time to time, but it didn't matta to us. They all had nice gams."\*

"... but Flinn wasn't welcome down here last I saw, was he?" interjected Geneviève.

"Nah. Flinn owed A.R. a lotta dough.\* He promised to give it back, but he wanted to keep playin'. We cut him off."

"You were pretty rough on him two nights ago. Didn't you tell him that he was a dead man?" countered Geni.

“Yeah, but we don’t mean it. We gotta scare em some to get em to pay us back. But we never bump anyone off.\* It ain’t good for business. Anyway, it’s too late to get Flinn to pay us back now.”

“What can you tell me about Dr. Flinn’s gambling debt? How much did he owe the house?” asked Goodwin.

“Must’a been around \$12,000, give or take a few bucks. Plus, there’s interest of course.”

Goodwin let out a low whistle “Wow... That’s worth seven years of my salary. Isn’t Mr. Rothstein upset that he won’t get his money back?”

“A.R. was pretty steamed, but you know: win some, lose some. Besides, the boss has lots of insurance to cover his risk.”

“Yeah, he even has some on us don’t he,”  
chuckled Tiny.

Mo frowned and gave Tiny a sideways glance. The big man suddenly shut his lips and turned his head to look up towards a far corner of the room.

“Mr. Fortuna, was there anything you or Mr. Murphy saw on the night of the murder that you want to share with us?” questioned Goodwin.

“I ain’t see nuttin and neither did Tiny. One moment he was fine, drunk but fine, and the next: he’s floppin’ around on the ground.

Nuttin' I could do about dat.”

“Alright, thank you Mr. Fortuna. How about you, Mr. Murphy?”

“I don't know from nothin',\* ma'am, sorry - Detective. it was like Mo said. He was fine and then he was feelin' bad. We helped him walk outta the club and put him in a car.”

“He didn't exactly walk though, did he?”

“Well yeah. He was kinda dragging his feet. I guess he was a little worse off than we thought. I heard he ate some bad oysters.” Tiny grinned.

“Come on gentlemen. Who do you think might have tried to kill Flinn at the club last night?”

“You know what, Detective, maybe you should let Cooper handle things. He'll figure this out exactly as it should be.”

After Mo and Tiny left the room, Detective Goodwin turned to Geneviève and said: “That didn't go so well at the end but we know for certain that we have to keep Cooper on the sidelines. I think it might be better if you go upstairs and talk to Jimmy and Colin on your own. They'll feel more comfortable with you than me, and they'll be more likely to talk if they aren't being questioned by the police. I'll handle Stella. She has sticky fingers\* and I know how to use that.”

## Part II: Colin

Geni found Colin in the alley, helping little Tony with his cleaning.

“Hi Colin Lynch, doorman.”

“Hello Miss Poirot, detective.”

“I don’t feel like I’m much of a detective.”

“Give it time. It took a while for me to learn about being a doorman.”

Colin put aside his broom and leaned against the brick wall of the alley. Geneviève took out a cigarette from her case and twisted it into her holder. Colin offered her a lit match, which she cupped in her hands as she bent over to light the end. He tossed the used matchstick on the ground and Tony ran over to sweep it out of the way. The little boy stuck his hand in Colin’s coat pocket and pulled out a candy. Colin ruffled his hair affectionately.

“What kind of candy is that?”

“Butterscotch! I’ve loved these ever since I was a kid. My Nan used give me a piece when I helped with the chores. Now, it’s Tony’s turn to get some from me.”

“Do you always keep a supply in your pocket?”

“Ever since I started working at the Ansonia. It comes in handy when I’m standing on my feet all evening.”

“How long have you been working at the Ansonia?”

“A couple of years. I started out at smaller buildings.”

“It must have been a big change for you to go from a regular place to the Ansonia. It’s like a city all on its own.”

“Yeah. It’s big alright. But, there are a lot of long-term residents, like your Mr. Weiss and Mr. Golde, so ya get to know them pretty well. The tourists and celebrities come and go. It keeps things exciting.”

“What about the Green Fairy. When did you start working for Rothstein?”

“Must have been about six months ago. You remember I told ya I started moonlighting here to pay the bills. I still have to share a room with a couple of other guys from the hotel, but at least I get my uniforms and shoes for free, and the hotel feeds us well too. I can’t complain.”

“You told me you doormen always knew who was there and for what, right? What do you know about Dr. Flinn?”

“Well, I saw him coming in and out of the hotel pretty often. We try to remember the names and faces of our guests. They tend to tip better if you know their names. It makes them feel important. I don’t mean *you* of course. Anyhow, when I began working here, I remembered Dr. Flinn. He came to

the Fairy almost every week. But he kinda gave himself a bad reputation with the management.”

“Do you mean because of his gambling?”

“Gambling is not a problem here. Not paying your bills, on the other hand, is a *big* problem. He was getting kicked out of the casino quite often when I started here. And I don’t think Jimmy or the other bartenders liked him very much. Flinn looked down on the help, if you know what I mean.”

“What did you think of him last night?”

Colin paused, looking down and shaking his head. “Boy was he a mess. That was out of line,\* when he went over to bother your friend. I brought him back to his booth after he caused that scene and asked Jimmy to make him a strong drink. I figured it would be better if he just fell asleep at the table. I didn’t see him after that. I was busy at the front door, checking passwords and letting in customers.”

“You stayed there for the rest of the night, didn’t you?”

“Yeah, I did; until I was told to give Flinn’s hat and coat to the detectives.”

“Did you check the pockets of his overcoat before you gave it to the police?”

“Why would I do that? No, no - I just asked Stella for his belongings and handed it over to the officers.”

“Sorry, I just wondered if something went missing before the police collected his things. Mo said Stella sometimes misplaces items belonging to customers.”

“Look, Stella is a *nice* girl. I wouldn’t want her to get into trouble for some small thing. Should I ask her if she found anything of Flinn’s in the coat room?”

“I think Detective Goodwin is speaking with her already. But maybe later, you could have a quiet word with her to make sure she hasn’t forgotten to give the police anything important.”

“Will do.”

“Colin, aren’t cha gonna help me finish cleaning up here? It’s cold and I wanna go back inside,” demanded little Tony.

“I’ve gotta go. My *boss* is calling,” laughed Colin as he walked away.

### Part III: Jimmy

Geneviève went back inside the speakeasy to find Jimmy. He was in his usual spot, cleaning glasses and talking with Lucien.

“Lu, could you do me a favor? Would you go buy a bottle of that Undark paint for me?” Geni asked.

Lucien agreed and excused himself. Geni sat down on the stool across from the bartender and sighed.

“Rough night, am I right, Jimmy?”

“You said it,” he answered while drying the rim of a champagne glass.

“You know, I just can’t believe how I could have missed how serious Dr. Flinn’s situation was. It all played out right under my nose.”

“Miss Poirot, I know our little game of ‘Guess What’s happening with Flinn and Ruby’ the other night might have encouraged you to think that way, but it is not your responsibility to spot everything that goes on in other people’s lives.” He swung his towel over his shoulder and leaned against the bar.

“I know - you’re right. It’s just terrible. Can you imagine the shock that young girl got when she found Dr. Flinn dying on the floor?”

“It was pretty bad for Ruby. She couldn’t



stop blaming herself for it.”

“Did she really think she did something to hurt him?”

“Yeah. She said she had planned to teach him a lesson so he wouldn’t keep taking her for granted. But whatever she did, I don’t think it had anything to do with what happened to Dr. Flinn. She wouldn’t really hurt anyone. She’s definitely not a killer.”

“You know her pretty well, don’t you?”

“Sure, I guess. She came here often with Dr. Flinn and you know I like getting to know our regulars. It’s a shame that she had to go through that. I’m sure she’ll never be able to forget that picture of him. Well, one less jerk in her life could be a good thing.”

“It must have made you pretty angry to see Flinn treating her like trash every week.”

“He didn’t deserve her. He made her feel cheap. She should be with someone who treats her right.”

“Jimmy, I think you’re carrying a torch\* for Ruby, aren’t you?”

“I’m not a maroon.\* All that romantic stuff about your average guy getting the golden girl is just a bunch of Hollywood baloney\* anyway. Ruby wouldn’t notice a guy like me

unless I became a boss. Only a Big Cheese\* could give her the life she wants.”

“Well, now that Flinn is out of the picture, maybe you have a chance.”

“Hey, Miss Poirot. I hope you’re not getting any ideas about me croaking\* Dr. Flinn to get Ruby. I didn’t do anything to him, even if I thought he deserved it. I just serve drinks and lend an ear to anyone who needs to talk. Ruby is a beautiful dame, but I know she’s out of my league\*.”

“I’m sorry Jimmy. I didn’t mean for you to take that the wrong way. I don’t want you to have any trouble either, but it looks like Flinn was poisoned, and we found arsenic residue in the glass that Dr. Flinn was drinking out of last night. I just want you to be sure that you’re not protecting someone else and risking your own freedom.”

“Flinn was poisoned by my booze\*? That’s impossible! I used the same bottle for Flinn as I did for loads of other people and nobody else got sick.”

“That’s the problem. This murder was personal. There was no poison in the bottles from the bar that we tested. If everyone had gotten sick, then we would start looking into Mr. Rothstein’s list of enemies, which I’m sure is very long. But this looks like someone wished to kill only Dr. Flinn

and it looks like he died from having that cocktail you prepared for him. Jimmy, what did you serve him, exactly?

“I know that Flinn likes... liked bourbon. So, I made an Old Fashioned... sugar muddled\* with bitters and water, two shots of bourbon and an orange slice served on the rocks... and... oh darn, I forgot,” Jimmy slapped his forehead with the palm of his hand.

“Forgot what, Jimmy?”

“I added a shot of Radithor to keep him from havin’ a hangover.”

Jimmy turned away from Geneviève towards the back wall of the bar and went over to a collection of small bottles standing next to the Revigator. He brought one back and showed her.

“There was no bottle of Radithor in the boxes you gave to the police. Do you know where it is?”

“Geez, I musta tossed it in the garbage can. I wasn’t thinkin’ straight last night. I should have given everything to the cops.”

“Yep. The lab is going to need everything you served Flinn last night: your bowl of sugar, and the bitters too. The police really should have asked you right away. Then maybe you’d have found that Radithor bottle.”

“I’ll do my best Miss Poirot, but if the bottle

went into the trash, we'll never find it. A.R. has the garbage collected every day to keep away the rodents and the stink."

"Hey, one more thing, Jimmy. Did you hand Dr. Flinn his drink, or did someone else?"

*"I did, Miss Poirot. I took a tray of drinks to a bunch of tables, including his. Colin offered to bring Flinn his drink if I made it fast, but I had customers at the booth next to his too. So, I made them all at once. Colin couldn't wait around for me to finish. He had to go back to work the door. Anyway, everyone else was busy serving other tables, so..."*

"And you didn't see anyone tamper with the drink when you were fixing it?"

"No. I was the only one who touched it. That's bad for me isn't it?"

"Don't worry, Jimmy. We'll figure this out."

The door swung open and a large man in an overcoat came into the club. He rubbed his hands together and sniffed a few times before he plodded towards Geni and Jimmy.

"I'm looking for Goodwin," he said flatly, his mustache twitching with every word.

"She's talking to Stella, downstairs," replied Jimmy, who began drying glasses again.

He followed Jimmy's directions and returned soon after with Goodwin.

"So, where's this Poirot?" he asked. Goodwin stopped directly in front of Geni and raised her eyebrows. The man looked Geneviève up and down skeptically and back at Jimmy, who just nodded his head.

"Geneviève Poirot - you must be Officer Cooper." She said in a cool voice.

He snorted: "You've got to be kidding me. Mr. Rothstein hired *you* to work on this case? What are you, fifteen?"

"My age shouldn't concern you, Officer Cooper. A man has died and Mr. Rothstein *didn't* hire me for the job. I work for the public." Cooper snorted again, but Geneviève continued as if she hadn't heard him. "I heard Detective Goodwin asked you to find Ruby and her friends?"

"I did find them. They're down in the New Amsterdam Theater, rehearsing for their next performance."

"That's only about six blocks away. What took you so long to get here?" Goodwin interjected.

"Tell you what, there were about 50 dancers on that stage. Do you really think I'm gonna miss out on that?" he chuckled. Goodwin rolled her eyes and turned to Geneviève.

"Get your coat. We'd better get there and talk to the girls."

## Chapter 14

### The Follies

Geneviève and Goodwin walked along Broadway towards the New Amsterdam Theater on West 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, followed by Officer Cooper. A big sign hung over the arched entrance: 'The Ziegfeld Follies.' They could hear music playing as they entered the lobby.

"Alright, Poirot you'll come with me to the dressing rooms and Cooper, well you can't come with us. Why don't you... go watch the dancers rehearse?" Goodwin suggested.

Officer Cooper smirked and strode through the door to the theater while Goodwin took Geni backstage. They asked a stage hand where they could find Ruby. He pointed them in the direction of the dressing rooms downstairs.

They stepped into a long room with individual vanity tables and chairs. Mirrors, framed by bright, light bulbs were fixed on the wall above each table. Feather boas hung on wooden chairs and cosmetics were spread all over the tables. The room was stuffy and smelled of a mixture of different perfumes. Goodwin nudged Geni and pointed to three girls, sitting in front of a mirror near a clothing rack. Ruby sat in the middle, hugging her knees while the others whispered to each other. One applied pink lotion from a calamine\* bottle on the counter to Ruby's cheeks, while the other touched up her stage makeup.

"Good morning, I'm Detective Goodwin." The three showgirls looked up at them. Ruby squinted her eyes at Geni and then they widened with recognition.

"I know you. I saw you yesterday, didn't I?" She got up from her chair and smiled weakly.

“Yes, we bumped into each other at the Green Fairy,” Geni replied.

“You were in the powder room with us too.”

“That’s true, I was there as well,” Geni paused. “My name is Geneviève Poirot. I know this must be a difficult time for you, but we have some questions about Dr. Flinn if you don’t mind.”

Ruby’s friendly expression faded and she lowered her head. She slowly backed away from Geni and sat down on her chair next to her friends. The two other showgirls gave each other knowing looks and put their arms around her protectively.

“I couldn’t help but overhear your conversation in the ladies’ room. You three were talking about the men you were with - Dr. Flinn, Mr. Roeder and Mr. Schmidt. You said you would teach Dr. Flinn a lesson. Could you tell me why you wanted to do that?”

Ruby didn’t answer. Instead, one of her friends spoke for her.

“Flinn was a lying bastard. Rube’s been suffering more than enough because of him, but it doesn’t mean that she’d chill him off\* for it!”

“No one is accusing her of doing so. I’ve heard of Flinn’s financial difficulties plenty of times now. He was paying your rent, wasn’t he?” Geni asked with a soft tone.

“You can’t judge me for trying to survive in this city. It’s hard enough to find a decent place to stay, let alone pay for it with our kind of job,” Ruby spoke up with a squeaky voice, “but I’m no gold digger,\* Miss Poirot.” She looked up at Geni with frightened eyes.

“I understand perfectly. But Flinn stopped paying your rent, didn’t he? How were you going to teach him a lesson Ruby?”

“I wasn’t going to do anything really. Just something to irritate him a bit. Make him jealous – maybe flirt with another man. I don’t really know - it was something I said on the spot. He wasn’t good to me and I just wanted to pay him back.”

“Do you remember what you said when you saw Dr. Flinn on the ground? You yelled: ‘What have I done?’ Why would you have said that if you hadn’t done anything to him?”

“I know what I said, but I swear I didn’t do anything. It was foolish of me to start screaming like that, but I was just in such shock. I went back to our booth to get Freddie to dance with me, but when I tried to pull him up from his seat, he just fell over and started having a fit. I thought I must have done something ‘cause I was the last person to touch him. But he couldn’t have died from just that, I know that! Did somebody kill him?” She burst into tears, making her makeup run down her face. Geneviève approached her and handed her a handkerchief.

“Ruby, we’re doing our best to find out what happened, but it looks like he didn’t die naturally. Until then don’t worry too much, alright? Oh dear, what’s that on your face?” Geni examined the corner of Ruby’s mouth, which began showing some redness from under the makeup.

“Oh, it’s nothing. I bought a new lipstick and tried it on for the first time yesterday. I must have had some allergic reaction to it. That’s why I ran back to the powder room to take it off so fast.” Ruby sniffed and dabbed her eyes with the cloth. She lifted the corners of her mouth into a soft smile. Geneviève nodded and stepped back again.

“George Schmidt and Arthur Roeder were the two other men with you. As I understand, they were connected to Flinn through their work. Is there anything else that you could tell me about them?”

“All we know is that they met at the Ansonia and brought us to the speak



after,” said one of Ruby’s friends.

“Hun, you’re missing something,” chimed in the other girl. “On our way to the Green Fairy, Flinn and Roeder were having a problem with each other. Don’t you remember?”

“No.... those things bore me. And I was busy trying to keep that other man’s hands off of me. What were they fighting about?”

“Dr. Flinn was asking Mr. Roeder for more money and wanted to get fixed up as company doctor for all of their outside customers, isn’t that true Rube?” volunteered Ruby’s friend.

Ruby nodded. “Roeder told Freddie that the company was already paying him enough for his work. I think he was planning to fire Fred, but Freddie said that if they let him go, all of his private records could come out in the papers, and he wanted to protect the company from bad publicity. Wasn’t that nice of him?”

“I’m not sure that Dr. Flinn meant that in a nice way,” responded Geneviève.

“Oh. Well anyway, Roeder agreed so I figured everything was copacetic.”\*

“So - no one saw anything hinky\* happen at the club?” asked Detective Goodwin. The showgirls all shook their heads from side to side, their eyes opened wide with exaggerated innocence.

“Thank you, ladies, for your time. We’ll probably want to speak with you again in the next day or two. Officer Cooper will let you know,” concluded Goodwin as she turned and walked out of the dressing room with Geneviève following. Just before she reached the door, Geni turned to the women and warned: “Ladies, I’d stop using those eyedrops if I were you. They could make you go blind if you keep that up. It’s called Deadly Nightshade for a reason.” She went out and shut the door behind her.

“Miss Poirot - why don't you join me for lunch. There are some things I need to discuss with you. Don't tell Cooper. We'll just leave him here. I don't think he'll mind,” Goodwin suggested.

They walked down the street and into a small delicatessen. They went to a table in the back where they could speak freely. Goodwin ordered pastrami on rye bread for the both of them.

“You want to tell me more about Flinn's wife and Stella, the hat check girl, right?” Geni asked before taking a bite of her huge sandwich.

“I'll start filling you in with the wife. I think you'll find this very interesting.” Goodwin smiled cheekily. “As I told you before, Alice Flinn seemed more angry than sad when she heard about the death of her husband. She talked about how they had no money and how she couldn't possibly find a job now that she has to take care of her child alone. What she did not volunteer to tell me, is that she took out an insurance policy on Flinn about six months ago. That, our office found out by calling all of the insurance companies after you rang us up this morning.”

“What's the policy exactly?”

“It's a life insurance policy, naming her as the beneficiary. What makes it very special is that there is a double indemnity clause. Her life insurance pays double the face value in cases of 'misadventure.' That means, she collects double if her husband dies from an accident or murder - except, of course, if she was the one who committed the murder. Mrs. Flinn would be best off if someone killed her husband, but it didn't come back to her. Maybe she did it and is framing someone else, or she paid someone else to kill Flinn for her.”

“It's strange,” mused Geni. “Why didn't Mrs. Flinn tell you about this insurance policy if it was pretty clear that you would find out about it another way? She's just making things worse for herself. Is there anything else?”

“Well, the policy pays out \$40,000 for a normal death. With double indemnity, that’s \$80,000 – a big payday for the widow and a pretty good motive, if you ask me. Mrs. Flinn kept talking about how Ruby was dangerous. I won’t use the same words she did, but she wanted me to believe that Ruby was the one who killed him,” explained Goodwin.

“Well I can see why she would want that. I just don’t know what would be in it for Ruby.”

“Did you get the impression that Ruby was telling the truth back there at the theater?” asked the detective.

“Definitely not the whole truth. She’s leaving out something. But I should find out more later at Bellevue. How did your talk with Stella go?”

“Stella told me nothing important to begin with. She was minding her own business, taking in coats and hats and selling cigarettes. I let slip what Mo said about her occasionally lifting\* things from customers’ pockets. That scared her a bit. She was reluctant to speak, but I kept pressing her to tell me until she caved. Stella admitted that she fishes some loose change and other trinkets out of pockets. She confessed that she took a silver cigarette tin out of Flinn’s jacket but figured he wouldn’t notice since he seemed already drunk and wobbly. So, I asked if she happened to notice a small bottle of Neosalvarsan in his pocket when she went through his coat. She didn’t know what the medicine was, but she said there wasn’t anything special in his coat when Flinn arrived and had no idea how it got there.”

“Does she usually check all the pockets in their clients’ coats?”

“She said she does, ‘People forget where they put their cash and I find it for them.’ That’s right about how she phrased it. When she saw me taking notes on what she said, she seemed to panic a bit and told me that she wasn’t the only one who went in and out of the coat room though.”

“Did she say who might have gone in?”

“She only mentioned that everyone goes in there once in a while to help with the coats or to grab a cigarette, but she doesn’t really pay attention to that. I asked her to hand over all of the items she kept from Flinn’s group that night, and this is what I got.” Goodwin emptied her coat pocket to reveal a silver cigarette case with four cigarettes in it and a dollar and a quarter in change.

“I asked the doorman, Colin Lynch, to speak with Stella. I thought an insider might be able to convince her to give us any other missing information.”

“That’s a good idea. I’ll catch up with him when we get back to the club.”

After they finished their sandwiches, the two women headed back to the speakeasy. They walked through the Tea House entrance, where Geni found Lucien drinking tea and eating scones with Tony. Detective Goodwin went through the storage room to the speakeasy to find Mo, Tiny and Colin.

“Lucien, when you finish I want to go to Bellevue Hospital. I need to check up on Drs. Norris and Gettler. Brigitte, could you ring up at home and ask the driver to pick us up?”

Brigitte nodded but Tony jumped up and ran behind the counter to make the call. Lucien dug in his pocket and handed Geneviève a small brown bottle of Undark. Geni put it in her bag and sat next to Lucien, waiting for him to finish his tea. Twenty minutes later, their car arrived at the front door of the shop. Geneviève got in with Lucien and drove towards the hospital.

## Chapter 15

### The M.E.'s Office

Geneviève and Lucien arrived at Bellevue as the sun was setting. The laboratories were lit and still busy. Drs. Norris and Gettler were at work, along with their assistant toxicologists and pathologists.

“There you are Poirot. I was wondering whether we'd see you again today or whether you had decided to join the bootlegger's gang.”

“I'm sorry Dr. Norris. I seem to have been deputized by the police for the moment, but I assure you that I have no intention of sticking with them.”

“Understood, Poirot. I've also received a number of calls from City Hall and the Midtown Police Precinct, urging our cooperation in making this matter a priority. There is a lot of interest in closing this case.”

“I imagine the owner of the speakeasy has been putting some pressure on his connections. He is *not* happy about having his bar closed.”

“Well, I've told the Mayor's office that in exchange for funds for some new equipment, I am willing to continue lending out your expertise to solve this matter. Who is this? He seems rather well-dressed to be a city detective,” queried Dr. Norris, indicating Lucien.

“Mr. Lucien Claire. He found the blue bottle I sent to the labs this morning and has brought along a sample of luminous paint for us to examine. I've also brought more things from the bar that need to be analyzed – sugar and bitters that were left over from the night's cocktail supplies. Since the police didn't collect these items immediately after the victim died, there is no way to guarantee that these are the original ingredients used in his drinks. Unfortunately, there was plenty of time for someone to tamper with evidence. Also, a bottle of Radithor, a radium tonic, was apparently added to the

victim's drink, but the empty bottle hasn't been located.”

“Dr. Gettler can get these samples analyzed for arsenic and other toxins. It isn't ideal to have evidence come in like this, but crime scenes are rarely handled in an organized manner. That's something that needs to change. For now, we have to do the best with what we've got.”

“Come along *Detective Poirot*, Mr. Claire. Let me catch you up on the post mortem and toxicology results.” The two followed Dr. Norris into his cluttered office and found places to sit down.

“We received one dress shirt, stained on the front with a red substance. Laboratory studies revealed that it was saturated with cabernet sauvignon. Actually, we really don't know the vintage, but it is red wine with nothing else.

“The blue bottle we received this morning, missing some of its contents, was filled with exactly what you listed: a solution of milk of magnesia, senna and cascara. It is an interesting combination and likely effective, but not dangerous unless large quantities are ingested over long periods of time. There were no toxins present in the solution and there was no evidence that Dr. Flinn ingested any of it.

“A lady's handbag contained one stick of bright red lip rouge.”

“Was it a new lipstick, Dr. Norris?”

“Not at all. There was very little left, but enough for Dr. Gettler to examine it. There was nothing exceptional about it, though. Neither was there anything out of the ordinary with the waxy cream that was in the bag. Both of those substances were found on the cheeks of the deceased. There was, however, one item of great interest in the handbag.

“You recall that the cheeks of the deceased were sticky with a blackened

lacquer and that the skin under the liquid was red and streaked with small blisters. The substance was clearly an irritant. Surprisingly, Dr. Gettler found urushiol, the sap of *Toxicodendron radicans*, in a scraping of the residue. The liquid is a clear, yellowish color that changes to a black, tacky substance in contact with oxygen. Most people attempt to wash it off as soon as they realize they have been exposed to it. The same ingredient was found in a glass vial found in the lady's handbag.

“Urushiol causes an itching, burning rash lasting up to a month. It rarely causes more serious symptoms, but they can include nausea, fever and shortness of breath. In this case, the urushiol doesn't appear to have materially injured the deceased while he was living.”

“Excuse me Dr. Norris, but how does a person come into contact with urushiol... whatever that is?”

“Normally, Mr. Claire, a person becomes exposed to urushiol by brushing up against the leaves of the *Toxicodendron radicans* while walking in the woods or along lanes with uncut greenery. Did you always live in the City, or did you come from somewhere else?”

“I grew up in the countryside of New Jersey.”

“Ah, then you learned as a young child to avoid this plant using the common phrase: “leaves of three, let it be.”\*”

“Poison ivy? Dr. Flinn was covered in poison ivy? How?”

“The victim's *face* was covered in poison ivy, shortly before his death. The blistering had just begun, but I suspect would have gotten much worse over the following days.”

“But, we are in the middle of Manhattan.  
There is no poison ivy here, is there?”

“Actually, there must be. Central Park is full of shrubs and there are plenty of other places where the plant can grow. It takes only a little urushiol to cause a lot of damage to the skin.”

“That is fascinating, Dr. Norris. It explains a lot about the behavior of one of the subjects, but raises doubts at the same time. If someone is willing to lie about minor things, wouldn't they be willing to lie about major ones?”

“Shall we continue? Yes? Since we were examining the dermis on the face of the deceased, we also conducted toxicological studies on samples of the face, torso and limbs. The results are unusual. Poirot – your notes to the autopsy report regarding the physical condition of Dr. Flinn prior to his collapse described him as stumbling and salivating. Did he also have an unpleasant odor about him?”

“Yes, he smelled rather foul when he leaned over my shoulder, but I thought it was a general hygiene issue.”

“Well, Dr. Gettler found a mixture of men's cologne and a toxic alkaloid on both the victim's hands and face in addition to the luminous substance. The alkaloid is coniine from the *conium maculatum* plant. There was none found in his gastrointestinal tract.

“The coniine seems to have been absorbed through the skin before entering the circulatory system. Coniine would have caused Dr. Flinn to experience gradual paralysis of his motor nerves which would explain the stumbling, excess salivation, uneven pulse and possible convulsions and coma, depending on the dosage. The toxin also has a characteristic musty smell. We believe that the amount and concentration of the toxin was less than would be needed to kill a man of Flinn's size, however, it would have made him seriously ill. Had he drunk the substance, our cause of death would have been



more difficult to determine.”

“Pardon me, but would someone  
tell me what coniine is?”

“It is an infamous toxin, Lucien, which you read about in history class when you covered the Greeks. Socrates most notably died when he was required to drink it.”

“Don't tell me Dr. Flinn was poisoned by hemlock too.  
Someone really didn't like that man.”

“Dr. Gettler has also been examining the glowing substance on the deceased. It requires occasional light stimulation, or the luminosity fades. So, let's see whether the sample Mr. Claire has brought, appears to be similar to what the deceased seems to have smeared on his face and hands.”

Dr. Norris led the pair down the hall, collecting Dr. Gettler and then proceeding to the autopsy room. Lucien suddenly began to turn pale at the sight of the partially covered body of Dr. Flinn. He excused himself and waited outside the room.

Geneviève handed over the bottle to Dr. Gettler, who opened it and applied it to a glass slide which he placed under a shining lamp. Norris pointed towards the light switch, and Geneviève turned off the overhead lights. The pale glow that illuminated the glass slide, and Flinn's face, glimmered like the northern lights.

“Yes, I'm afraid that's it. Poirot, turn on the lights. Dr. Gettler, show Poirot your photography experiment.”

Dr. Gettler opened a drawer under the counter at the side of the room. He removed a square photographic film plate and brought it to Geneviève. He held it overhead, under a ceiling lamp. On the plate was a white, cloudy form.

“What is this?” asked Geneviève.

“It's the deceased's hand.”

“Did you take a photograph of it?”

“No. That's the interesting thing. This image was made without taking a photograph. It developed completely in the dark.”

“How did you do it?”

“I did nothing. It was the radioactive particles on Flinn's hand that did this. I suspect the same or similar particles that are in this bottle of luminescent paint.”

“Do you think that Flinn was contaminated by radioactive material?”

“Remember the autopsy, Poirot. There is no evidence of long-term radiation damage in the body. There is no necrosis, no tumors, no decayed blood or other physical damage that corresponds with the little we know about radiation poisoning. It appears to be only on his skin.”

“The deceased consulted for the U.S. Radium Corporation. He might have gotten some radium contamination on the job. I think I can get some answers from the company president tomorrow morning.”

“In the meantime, Dr. Gettler and I will get some more photographic paper, an x-ray film and the Lind electroscope to determine whether we are dealing with something dangerous. We'll have answers for you tomorrow afternoon.”

## Chapter 16

### Dinner at Sam & Dave's

A maid opened the door to Sam and Dave's apartment. Geneviève and Lucien were greeted by the elder couple and Poppy, who had arrived an hour earlier. They were led to the dining room where the table had already been set. They all took their seats, leaving one empty.

"Charlotte will probably be here shortly. She must be running around collecting more tidbits for her column," said Dave. Right on cue, the door opened and Charlotte rushed in breathlessly.

"Excuse me. I was down in the mailroom again." Charlotte plopped down onto the vacant chair across from Geni and next to Poppy, who sat at the end of the table.

"What were you doing in the mailroom dear?" Sam asked.

"I cornered the porter that Dotty squashed this morning on her way to see Mrs. Foster Jenkins," Charlotte said, glancing over at Geni and Lucien who had been there. "I was curious about that note she mentioned. It sounded juicy. He said these secret messages have been going around for a few months now, but wouldn't tell me from whom. I can only imagine what's going on. 'He's mine. Stay out of it.' That's what the newest one said. It must be some little lovers' quarrel if you ask me. Now I've only got to find out who this Amos is who is staying in room 524 and whether the third person in this love triangle is anyone important. It could be a new scoop." Charlotte giggled.

"Messages? What messages," asked Dave.

"Messages are being sent by two people in the hotel by pneumatic tube."

Dave frowned in response.

“Don’t you know, David? The vacuum tubes that run to every apartment in the building. You can send a message or even packages in moments. It’s almost as fast as the telephone,” explained Charlotte.

“I don’t like where this is heading... telephones, pneumatic tubes. Back in the old days we used to simply write each other letters or call on each other. We have no need for this modern technology,” interjected Sam. “If I wish to communicate with you, I’d just invite you for dinner, as we have.”

“Right you are,” agreed Dave. “Besides, if we need to know about men with biblical names like Amos having affairs in our building, we can just ask Margaret. I’m sure she knows everything that is going on here.”

“I’ll be sure to catch her after dinner,” smiled Charlotte.

The maids brought in their meals, steaming hot and fresh out of the oven. Lucien, copying Sam, neatly placed his napkin on his lap and took a sip of red wine. They began their dinner, engrossed in separate conversations. Geneviève leaned towards Poppy.

“Poppy, can I ask you something?”

“Of course.”

“On Saturday morning, I noticed you were quite upset on the rooftop, and, later at the speak you had an unpleasant encounter with Flinn. You had a crumpled piece of paper you shoved in your pocket. Was that about the promotion?”

Poppy looked down at her hands. “It was. I was so sure I would get it this time. I worked hard for it. But in the end, it’s always the same... undeserving men get what they want.”

“I’m sure you’ll make it one day. Life as a woman is hard and we all go through it, but look at how much has changed in a short time. Soon enough you’ll get your promotion!” Geni took Poppy’s hand and gave her a warm smile. Poppy sighed, but smiled back. She sipped on her wine and gazed at the open door towards the foyer. Margaret was walking by, holding a vase of wilted flowers. Poppy inhaled sharply.

“Margaret, where did you get those flowers?!” Poppy exclaimed. Margaret’s head whipped around towards the dining room. She seemed shocked by the loud voice calling out to her. With her light, small steps, she walked into the dining area.

“I got these at the Verdi Club party yesterday. They always have too many centerpiece arrangements leftover at the end of the night, so I took a vase for the apartment. Dear, what’s wrong?”

“Please be careful with that Queen Anne’s Lace. It’s not what you think it is. Look at those purple spots on the stems. Gosh, I’ll have to have a chat with whoever supplied flowers for that party. It would be best if you threw them away quickly, but be sure to use gloves if you have them.”

“You must be right! I did think they smelled a bit funny. I’ll get rid of them right away.” Margaret left the room and headed in the direction of the kitchen.

After their main course was cleared, the maids set smaller plates in front of them. Each had a slice of cheesecake on it with a side of berry compote. Charlotte took a bite of each and gasped as her eyes widened with delight.

“Sam, David, where did you get this cake? I don’t think I’ve ever had anything as delicious as this in my life!” Charlotte stuffed a second big piece in her mouth, which made Sam chuckle.

“Margaret brought it home as a surprise for us today. It’s divine, isn’t it?”

There is no place that can make them better,” declared Sam. They all hummed in agreement, their mouths full.

After their dinner, they all left the couple. Charlotte stayed behind at the hotel. Poppy, Lucien and Geni returned home. Poppy went up to her room and left Lucien and Geni in the living room. They both sat without talking, drained from the busy day. The telephone rang. Geneviève got up and answered:

“The Brownstone Foundation, this is Geneviève Poirot speaking.”

“Poirot, it’s Goodwin. Sorry for calling this late. We’re going to speak with Mr. Roeder and Mr. Schmidt tomorrow at the Ansonia. Be there at ten o’clock.”

“Right. Good night Detective Goodwin.”

“Good night Poirot. See you tomorrow.”

Geni hung up the phone and gestured to Lucien to follow her up the stairs. They said good night to each other and went into their rooms. Geneviève changed into her nightgown and slipped into her bed. She closed her eyes, drifting into a deep sleep.

## Chapter 17

### Part I: Roeder and Schmidt

Early the next morning, Geneviève walked down the stairs to the parlor room in the Brownstone. It was still dark outside. The house was dead silent except for the sound of a tea cup being placed in a saucer. Brigitte was the only one up besides her.

“Brigitte, why are you awake already? It’s only six o’clock in the morning.” Geni looked at her yawning housemate.

“Mr. Rothstein wants me in early today before I open Madame Maxime’s. Apparently, he saw rats in the alley yesterday and wants me to get rid of them before our customers see them. You know he hates anything smelly or dirty and these little creatures seem to be both.”

“Will you have someone come to fumigate\* them? I know it’s illegal, but I’ve heard from many people that they still use that method. We’ve even had a case at the M.E.’s office where a couple was accidentally killed in a hotel room from the cyanide that traveled through the vents.”

“No, I wouldn’t dare. Mr. Rothstein wouldn’t want to do anything that might bring more unnecessary attention from the police to his joint. Also, the casino will be open today and we can’t have any toxic gases in there. No, I think I’ll use regular rat poison. We always keep some at the club.” She finished her tea and got up from her chair. “I should probably start getting ready to go.” Brigitte climbed up the stairs and quietly entered her room on the first floor.

Geni yawned and poured herself a cup of freshly made tea. She looked outside the window; it was going to be another cloudy day. Towards the end of her small breakfast, Geneviève was joined by Charlotte, who came rushing in from the street. Charlotte excitedly explained that she had spent most of the night and early morning at the Ansonia, learning as much as she could

about the mystery messages.

No one named Amos was a guest in room 524, which was a disappointment, but she believed it could be an alias for someone else. The concierge was unusually tight-lipped about whomever was picking up the messages from his desk, which probably meant an illicit love affair, or a rich and famous person was involved, so Charlotte enlisted Dotty to keep watch late at night. Dotty had parked herself on a sofa with a view of the concierge desk but she had only seen doormen, porters and a few tourists stop to speak with the concierge. Sunday late night was relatively quiet at the hotel. Charlotte found Dotty sleeping when she went to check on her and sent her back up to her room.

Charlotte had stationed herself in the mailroom, where she entertained the night staff with gossip from her column. At half past midnight, a message arrived from the hotel kitchen on the sixth floor addressed to the concierge desk. It was the same place the Amos message came from, according to the mailroom worker. Charlotte volunteered to carry it over. All that was written on it was Deuteronomy 316. The concierge was off duty until the next morning, but as she approached the desk, Colin walked in from the cold to warm up his hands. He was taking on an extra shift at the hotel to make up for lost wages since the speakeasy was closed. Charlotte asked Colin if he knew who Deuteronomy was in room 316 and he chuckled, shaking his head. He guessed that someone was sending secret love notes or that it was a code for bootleggers.

Just as Charlotte finished her story, Brigitte came back down with her purse and coat.

“Deuteronomy? Are you discussing the Bible?”

“No Brig, we're talking about secret lovers and their messages in the Ansonia.”



“Ah, a new story for your column?”

“If I get to the bottom of this it might very well be!”

“Well then, good luck to you! And to you too, Geni. I hope you can figure this out soon.”

“Thanks, Brigitte. I'll see you tonight.” Brigitte opened the door and walked down the steps into the cold. Charlotte went up to her room to get a few hours of sleep, leaving Geni alone in the parlor.

Geneviève checked the time. She still had a few more hours until she had to meet Goodwin and Cooper at the Ansonia. She climbed back up the stairs and went into the study.

Geni sat on the bolstered armchair next to the full bookshelves and rested her head on her hand. Her leg bounced as she mulled over everything that had happened in the past few days. She walked along the rows of books, examining the titles, and picked up one with a brown leather cover. She opened Poppy's botany book to the chapter on Nightshades. She flicked through the pages and paused once in a while to read a description. Geni then got up and took out a Bible. She turned to Deuteronomy and skimmed through its chapters, then curious, continued looking through the books of the Old Testament.

An hour later, Geneviève exhaled with a puff and got up from the chair. She placed the Bible back in its place on the shelf and went to her room. Her bag and hat lay in their usual spots behind the door. She took one in each hand and walked down to the entrance. Geni grabbed her coat and placed her hat firmly on her head since it looked quite windy outside. She then made her way to the Ansonia.

When she arrived at the grand hotel, Geneviève walked into the lobby and turned to see Goodwin sitting on one of the sofas.

“Detective Goodwin, good morning.” Geni sat down across from her.

“Poirot, right on time. I’ve called Mr. Roeder and Schmidt. They agreed to meet in Roeder’s suite, number 425. Cooper isn’t here yet but we’re not going to wait for him. I told the concierge to send him up when he gets here.”

Goodwin got up from her seat and strode to the elevator followed by Geni, who was surprised by the detective’s energy despite the long day yesterday. They got in and went up to the fourth floor. The door opened with a ding. Geni walked behind Goodwin who stopped in front of suite 425. She knocked on the door a few times. Schmidt let them into the living room. Roeder was sitting on a chair next to a smaller man.

“Good morning gentlemen,” began Goodwin. She looked over at the man sitting next to Roeder. “And who might you be sir?”

“He’s my lawyer, Mr. Howe. He’ll be here with me today. You won’t mind, I’m sure,” answered Roeder. Goodwin was about to speak when Cooper barged through the door.

“You’re late Officer Cooper.” Goodwin gave him a cold look. Cooper grunted and walked into the center of the room.

“What have I missed, huh?”

“Officer Cooper, could I have a word with you? Poirot come with us.” Goodwin led them to the next room. She turned and pointed at the officer. “You will not interfere with Miss Poirot and me in here, got it? This isn’t some game where you can choose to show up on time or not.”

“You think I don’t know that? I just got home late yesterday and might have overslept. What do you want from me?” he raised his voice.

“Why don’t you stop drinking when you’re working. You reek of whiskey.”

“Look, I’m not gonna let two *women* take over this case without my supervision. Mr. Rothstein personally put me on the job.”

“Officer Cooper, why don’t we let you speak to Mr. Schmidt while we talk to Roeder. Is that alright?” Geni suggested.

“Why don’t you *let me?!?*” Cooper snorted, but Goodwin looked him dead in the eyes. She was a detective and far outranked him. He cleared his throat and shifted his weight. “I’ll bring him in here. Oh, and Mr. Rothstein wants to meet you later.” He gave them an arrogant smile and walked out.

“I can’t stand him. Good thinking on your part; giving him an occupation. However, I will have to speak to Mr. Schmidt separately as well. We can’t trust Officer Cooper to tell us everything we need to know.”

“I agree. I figured we’d work more efficiently without his constant interruptions.”

They turned around and rejoined Mr. Roeder and his lawyer. Goodwin sat down on one of the chairs.

“Alright, Mr. Roeder, Miss Poirot has a few questions for you.”

“First, I would like to know why you called Mr. Howe to come here?”

“My employee died Miss Poirot. Isn’t it reasonable to have a lawyer in case I get accused of something I didn’t do?” Roeder seemed irritated.

“Mr. Roeder, we are not here to accuse you of doing anything. We just have some questions. Could you describe what happened last Saturday starting from when you met Dr. Flinn?”

“Well... Flinn invited me to the Verdi Club concert and an evening out, so I came to the Ansonia Saturday morning and checked in. Later that evening I met him and his wife in the lobby. We went up to the concert hall and got to our seats. After an excruciating hour of that so-called opera, he showed me to the reception hall. We got a drink and that’s when Mr. Schmidt joined us. Flinn’s wife, Alice, was sitting at the table and we men talked business as usual. And then... oh then Ruby came in with her friends. I guess his wife knew something about her. Alice became upset and splashed her wine all over Flinn, poor guy. Anyway, we waited for him to get cleaned up and then made our way to the Green Fairy with the three dolls. Flinn was being a bit of a wet blanket and wouldn’t dance with us. We spent a good hour out on the dance floor with Ruby's friends. Next thing we know, Ruby tells us that he died in some kind of fit, that we had to keep quiet about it and be available at any time for questioning. And so here we are.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes, it is.”

“Well, we were told that you and Dr. Flinn had a falling out on your way to the speakeasy. What was that about?”

“What’s business without some friendly disagreements, you know? He’s been in a difficult situation, I’m sure you’ve heard. He had trouble keeping his finances in order. Once in a while he would ask to borrow some money from the company or he’d want a raise, but I had to tell him I couldn’t keep doing that for him. He took it pretty well.”

“Really? I heard otherwise.”

“Then you heard wrong, Miss Poirot.”

“Was there anything else?”

“No.”

“Alright. Mr. Roeder. I assume that Dr. Flinn came out to your New Jersey offices from time to time, didn't he?” Roeder nodded.

“Is there a possibility that Dr. Flinn came into contact recently with radium at your company? Any way that he would leave radium on his skin perhaps?”

“Definitely not.” Roeder laughed “No, Flinn and all the others would know better than to get near that.”

“Because he knows it's making the workers sick?”

“Of course not. The government has studied radium and says it's great for your health. Our working conditions are safe and our employees are well looked after.”

Geni narrowed her eyes and looked over at Mr. Howe who was busy fumbling with the handle of his briefcase. She turned back to Roeder but decided to let him go for now.

“Alright, we'll get in touch with you when we find out more. Good day Mr. Roeder... Mr. Howe.” Geni bowed her head slightly and went through the door to find Officer Cooper and Mr. Schmidt. Goodwin stepped in right after Geneviève.

“Officer Cooper, would you go to the lobby and call Mo? He can take us to Mr. Rothstein now.” Cooper closed his notepad and left the hotel room.

“Mr. Schmidt, would you mind telling us what you've told Officer Cooper?” Geni sat down next to him.

“I couldn't tell him much. I was at the Verdi Club when I recognized Arthur and Frederick a few tables away. I walked over and we had a few drinks.”

“What happened after Flinn left to get cleaned up?”

“We waited at the table and that’s when the girls joined us. Then Flinn came back and we left for the speak.”

“On your way there, Flinn and Mr. Roeder had a discussion, isn’t that right?”

“Yes. It seemed like Fred was bugging Arthur about work. Something about borrowing money and deserving a raise for all that he had done. I guess Arthur was also a bit irritated because Frederick asked for a job consulting at my company too. I don’t know why, but he kept insisting.”

“And at the Green Fairy? Was there anything else that happened between the two?”

“No, after that it all seemed resolved, but Flinn seemed a bit boozed-up by then.”

“Alright, thank you Mr. Schmidt.” Geni and Goodwin left and went down in the elevator to the lobby. Cooper had already left but Mo waited outside in the car.

## Part II: Insurance

“Mo, where are we meeting Mr. Rothstein?”

“At Lindy’s, Miss Poirot.” He started driving down Broadway.

“Can I ask you something, Mo? You said that Mr. Rothstein has a lot of insurance to cover the risk of losing money from his customers. What did you mean by that?”

“If you really knew A.R., you’d know he wouldn’t risk losing all that dough on a guy with a gambling habit. He’s called the Brain for a reason, he’s smarter than the rest of us.”

“So, he took out an insurance policy on Flinn?”

“Maybe he did, maybe he didn't. But it don't mean he'd try to collect on it early.” Geni looked at Goodwin and raised her eyebrows. The car stopped in front of the restaurant. Goodwin stepped out of the car first, followed by Geni. Rothstein sat at his usual table with Cooper. Some of his goons were at a table next to him.

“Miss Poirot, Detective Goodwin, welcome. Have a seat.” Geneviève still felt uncomfortable around him and his bodyguards, but Goodwin seemed unaffected. “Is there anything new that I must know which I have not heard from Mr. Cooper yet?” He took a sip of milk.

“I’m sure Officer Cooper has told you everything we know Mr. Rothstein. I would, however, like to ask you something if that’s alright?” Geni watched his face intently to see if there was any sign of annoyance, which she did not find.

“Whatever you want to know Miss Poirot.” He gave her a nod.

“Is it true that you took out an insurance policy on Dr. Flinn?”

A smile crept up on A.R.’s face. Geneviève realized that his eyes never seemed to blink and that he could remain extremely still, like a snake ready to strike.

“As I’ve told you Miss Poirot, I’m no gambling man when it comes to my business. When I was a young boy living in a tough neighborhood downtown, I learned early on that if you couldn’t be the biggest, meanest kid on the block, you needed to have other skills in order to survive. I was a smaller child, but I had a born ability with numbers and a strategic mind. I can outmaneuver anyone, and I never place a bet if I can’t be certain of the result in advance.” He flashed his quick smile again, and took a bite of the cheesecake on his plate. “Have a slice. You too, Detective Goodwin.”

“That’s alright. Thank you Mr. Rothstein, I just had some.” Geni smiled slightly as she declined.

“No, I insist. Get us two plates of cheesecake!” he called over to the waitress. She came back moments later and placed the two plates in front of Goodwin and Poirot. Rothstein watched them until they picked up their forks and took a bite.

“It’s delicious. It is almost as good as the one I had yesterday.”

“Almost? This is the best in town.” He chortled and had another bite himself.

“Now, have you solved the crime yet?”

“I think we’re getting close, although some things remain unclear. The truth will reveal itself soon enough. I would like to gather all the witnesses this evening. Poirot still has a couple of stops to make beforehand. I’m sure that things will become clear by then.”



“Well, if it will help get this case closed, I gladly offer my establishment for this meeting. Mo, Tiny and Officer Cooper will ensure that all of your witnesses are present and Cooper will bring along a few other officers from the precinct to stand guard outside, in case they’re needed. I am certain it will be an illuminating experience.” Rothstein looked smug.

“Thank you, Mr. Rothstein.”

The two women got up from their seats and thanked him again for the dessert. Cooper stayed at the table, taking instructions from Rothstein. Goodwin suggested that she look into Flinn’s finances again to try to find A.R.’s insurance policy on Flinn and Geni headed to Bellevue to pick up something before a quick ride back to the Ansonia. They agreed to meet at the speakeasy at six o’clock.

## Chapter 18

### Part I: Double Indemnity

It was six o'clock in the evening and Geneviève stood alone on the dance floor of La Fée Vert. There was no music playing and the house lights were on. The speakeasy was empty but for a dozen people, and none of them were there for a night on the town.

Poppy, Charlotte, Lucien, Margaret, Sam and Dave sat at a table at the side of the dance floor. Poppy was twisting a handkerchief in her fists. Margaret sat on the edge of her chair, fingering the cross on her necklace. Lucien gave her a reassuring smile, and she relaxed visibly, letting her hand drop into her lap. Jimmy and Stella perched on stools at the bar. Mrs. Flinn, dressed in black, sat alone at a small table.

Ruby and her two friends were brought in by Cooper to a table next to Lucien's. The showgirls were dressed for the stage. Their sequined costumes contrasted with the somber mood of the room. Mrs. Flinn huffed: "Shameless floozies!"\* Ruby looked over at the widow and rolled her eyes.

Arthur Roeder and George Schmidt sat at another small table. Roeder had brought his attorney, who looked ready to bolt out of the room at every glance from Mo.

Mo lurked by the back door, where sounds of the gambling hall echoed up the staircase. Tiny stood guard, silently, at the main entrance. Arnold Rothstein came in through the Tea House with little Tony, his hand on the child's shoulder. Brigitte slipped in behind them, glancing with concern at the gangster with her boy.

The speakeasy door banged open and Colin came rushing in past Tiny. He had just been able to find someone to take over his shift at the Ansonia. He went over by Jimmy and Stella, quickly hanging his coat over the bar. Little

Tony ran over to him and took out a butterscotch from his coat pocket, then hurried back to his mom and Mr. Rothstein.

Detective Goodwin joined Geneviève and turned to face the group:

“Mr. Rothstein – thank you for making this club available for our meeting this evening.” Rothstein slowly nodded his head and gave an emotionless smile.

“Everyone here has already given statements regarding their recent contacts with Dr. Flinn.” Mrs. Flinn took out a handkerchief and dabbed the corners of her eyes, “but there are a number of gaps in what we know. Each of you was a witness to some or all of the events that occurred on Saturday night. We decided to bring you together so that we can solve this matter quickly and discreetly. Miss Poirot of the Medical Examiner's office is working with me on this case.” Goodwin looked over at Geneviève and nodded once. Geneviève cleared her throat and looked at Flinn’s widow.

“First, I would like to offer my sympathies to Mrs. Flinn. I know that this a difficult time for you and your child. I am sorry that some of what you hear now may bring you more pain.” Mrs. Flinn stopped crying and her expression became hardened.

“The events that took place two nights ago have connected everyone in this room. Our job is to understand who killed Dr. Flinn, why and how. We must start with what we know. Dr. Flinn died *here* at the Green Fairy after drinking the house liquor. Speakeasies are notorious for selling toxic alcohol.” Mo frowned and started to move towards Geni, but Rothstein raised his hand and the tall man froze in place.

“The toxicology department was given bottles of alcohol served on the premises Saturday night and found no toxic substances other than ordinary ethyl alcohol. The samples were 'clean'.” Rothstein smiled broadly.

“However, Dr. Flinn did not die naturally.”

Detective Goodwin turned to Mrs. Flinn: “When a married man dies under suspicious circumstances, our first instinct is that the wife killed him.” Mrs. Flinn gasped. “Ma’am, you made a public scene at the Ansonia Hotel the night of your husband’s death. Witnesses told us that you became enraged when you saw his mistress at a cocktail party. You threw wine in his face and said he was worth more to you dead than alive. You certainly seemed ready to murder him.”

“That’s not true at all. I loved my husband. He was the father of my child. I needed him. Without him, we have nothing.”

“Not quite nothing, Mrs. Flinn. Your husband left you with very little in the bank but I think you will manage to survive. We found out about the insurance, Mrs. Flinn – the policy you *forgot* to tell us about when I spoke with you yesterday. Six months ago, you took out a life insurance policy on your husband in the amount of \$40,000; a policy with a double indemnity clause in cases of ‘death by misadventure.’”

Mo let out a long, low whistle and Arnold Rothstein’s eyes widened slightly. “Yes, what you said at the Verdi Club is true. Financially, you are *far* better off without Dr. Flinn. That is, unless you are found to be the one responsible for killing him.” Mrs. Flinn shook her head from side to side.

Officer Cooper, eager to be a part of the discussion, exclaimed: “Aha! I *knew* it... Mrs. Flinn was jealous of the younger broad and knocked off\* her husband for the 80,000 bucks.”\* He reached into his back pocket to take out a set of handcuffs. Detective Goodwin motioned him to calm down.

Geneviève stepped forward. “When a clever person poisons a family member, they tend to use a toxin that causes symptoms similar to another illness. Arsenic is a popular option used to eliminate relatives who are in the

way. If given to someone in small doses, it gradually destroys their liver and kidneys. The disadvantage is that it can be detected for decades in the hair, nails and organs of victims. If consumed in one large dose, death occurs very painfully - within minutes.

“Dr. Flinn died by arsenic poisoning. A bottle of Neosalvarsan, an arsenic-based syphilis medication, was found in his coat pocket. Flinn did *not* have syphilis. We were meant to *believe* that he did, and that he gradually overdosed on the treatment. The autopsy showed no buildup of arsenic in his body. Instead, he died from one massive dose of poison.

“I told you all that the bottles of alcohol served at the club on Saturday night were clean, however, tests on Dr. Flinn's whiskey glass showed arsenic residue, as did the stain on the table cloth left when he knocked his glass over.”

“I've never been in this place before in my life. You can't possibly believe I put arsenic in my husband's drink. If you're looking for a criminal, why don't you arrest that home-wrecker over there?!”

“She's the one who said Freddie was dead to her. Maybe she poisoned him with the wine she splashed all over him.”

“No, Ruby,” answered Geneviève. “The arsenic was not in the wine on Dr. Flinn's shirt. He drank it. He did not wear it. Mrs. Flinn had a motive and the opportunity to kill her husband slowly and quietly. I don't believe that she would have chosen to murder him suddenly after a public argument and guarantee she'd be the main suspect in a police investigation. She's far more clever than that.”

“But if someone else killed Flinn, she'll get a double indemnity pay out,” complained Cooper.

“You're right, *unless* she hired someone to murder him,” answered Goodwin.  
Mrs. Flinn's face became as still as a mask.

## Part II: Payback

Geneviève turned to the glittering table of showgirls. “Ruby – how is that rash doing?”

“It's not a rash, it's an *allergy*.”

“That bubbling red break-out on your face that you are concealing under all of that makeup is no allergy. How does it feel?”

“It's getting worse, and Mr. Ziegfeld won't put me on stage if it doesn't clear up.”

“I know. It could last up to a month. You should have thought of that before you put poison ivy oil on your lips. But at least that calamine lotion you're using should help to reduce the itch.”

“Hold on... what the heck is this about? Why would a beautiful dame wipe poison ivy all over her face,” interjected Cooper.

“I didn't do that on purpose you big palooka.”\*

“So, what did you do it for?”

“I was mad at Fred and I just wanted to get back at him a little. He stopped paying my rent last month and instead was spending all his money at the poker tables.”

“Hmpf!” interjected Mrs. Flinn.

“I'm sorry I lied to you, Miss Poirot, but I just panicked. The truth makes me look like

I'm some kind of maniac.”

“Well, it sure does seem extreme.”

“I know it was a mean thing to do, but Freddie didn't care that I was going to get evicted. So, I gave him a poison ivy kiss. I figured it would either make him feel sorry and he'd make things up to me, or it would make him sore and he'd leave me. Either way, he'd never forget me.”

“So, when I bumped into you at the club, you had just kissed him?”

“Yes... I needed to get that gloss off my mouth fast. Even with the wax I put under the lipstick, that poison ivy is wicked stuff. Look at what it did when just a little got onto my cheek.”

“And what about the arsenic in Dr. Flinn's drink? Was that also payback, Ruby?”

“Don't look at me. I was on the dance floor and then at the bar with Jimmy before I found Freddie at the table. Besides, I didn't want to really hurt Freddie. He was worth a lot more to me alive than dead... *unlike his wife!*”

Ruby and the other showgirls all crossed their arms tightly in front of themselves and turned to stare at Mrs. Flinn.

Cooper chimed in: “What about the plant lady? Poppy Layton. Didn't she



have it in for Flinn?”

### Part III: The Grudge

Detective Goodwin looked over at Poppy: “*Doctor Layton* had a very public argument with Dr. Flinn on the night he was killed. She threatened his position at the University and planned to ruin him. Why?”

Officers of the department went up to Columbia to find out what could have set Dr. Layton off on Saturday night. They found out that Flinn and a number of his male colleagues blocked her from receiving a promotion, along with the recognition and the salary that would go with it. They objected to having a woman in a supervisory position. Dr. Layton must have been furious, but was her grudge against Flinn enough to make her kill him? Beyond her professional conflict, I suspect that Dr. Layton has additional reasons to dislike Dr. Flinn.”

“I do! Dr. Flinn, Mr. Roeder and others have lied for profit and ordinary people are paying the price for their greed. There are many of us working together to stop these men from exploiting workers. Killing one man wouldn't solve the problem, but exposing all of them might. We are trying to change the whole capitalist system.”

“She's an anarchist!” yelled Cooper and reached again for his handcuffs. Goodwin stared him down.

“The Chief Toxicologist examined the bottle Dr. Layton shoved at Dr. Flinn during their dispute and found that it contained nothing more than a strong laxative. If Dr. Layton was hoping to accomplish anything Saturday night, it was to cause Dr. Flinn some digestive discomfort and public embarrassment.”

“Poppy is telling the truth,” added Charlotte. “We are working with scientists

from the New York and New Jersey Consumer's Leagues on a series of articles about industrial toxins. Dr. Flinn was part of a conspiracy to cover up one of the greatest workplace atrocities of the century.”

Mr. Roeder's attorney stood up to object, but Detective Goodwin pointed at him. “Sir, this is not a trial and you have no right to speak here except to advise your client. Sit.”

## Part IV: Blackmail

“Mr. Roeder - You had a disagreement with Dr. Flinn in the car on the way from the Ansonia Hotel to the bar. The ladies heard Dr. Flinn pressuring you for more money. He threatened you with exposure of private company information if you didn't pay him. That sounds a lot like blackmail, and a motive.”

“Money wouldn't have been a problem,” retorted Roeder. “Dr. Flinn had my full confidence and the company would have been happy to continue our arrangement with him. That was no real argument, merely the start of a negotiation. Mr. Schmidt and I were nowhere near Dr. Flinn when he became ill. We were on the dance floor with those two lovely ladies for at least an hour.

I also want to say that whatever Dr. Layton and her cronies are implying about the company's safety conditions is completely false and slanderous. My attorneys will take action against anyone who writes negatively about me or the company in the press.”

“The truth will come out about your radioactive deathtrap! You'll see!” yelled Poppy, rising from her seat. Sam pulled her gently back down.

## Part V: The Investment

Turning towards Mr. Rothstein, Detective Goodwin raised her voice slightly and said: “Dr. Flinn owed a significant gambling debt to the owner of the casino - a debt of over \$12,000. He was cut off from having credit on more than one occasion. Most recently, last Friday night, Dr. Flinn was physically dragged out of the gambling hall and threatened by Mr. Fortuna, an employee of the casino. I believe the expression: 'sleeping with the fishes' was used.”

Arnold Rothstein glanced over at Mo with annoyance. “As I explained to Miss Poirot, my establishment would never prosper if we had a practice of punishing our clients over insignificant credit issues. Any business that would kill off its clientele would find itself without any customers very quickly. Where is the profit in that? I would much rather have a long and mutually beneficial relationship with my customers. When it comes to a habitual gambler like Dr. Flinn, I know I would make far more money over the years if he stayed healthy than if he were to have a *tragic accident*. Some of my employees perform their duties a little too enthusiastically. These are customer relations matters which I will resolve.

“As for my whereabouts during the unfortunate events over the weekend, it is well known that I spend every afternoon and evening until daybreak in Lindy's restaurant. There are fifty witnesses who will verify that I never left Lindy's while Dr. Flinn was at my nightclub. My employees, Mr. Fortuna and Mr. Murphy, assisted Dr. Flinn when he fell ill. We regret that some third-party criminal activity took place on this premises, but none of us had any interest in ruining this club's reputation with bloodshed.

“I have rivals who might wish to damage my good name. They could have arranged for this tragedy to occur in my club, but I doubt it. They prefer more explosive solutions for business disputes. I hope and *expect* that your department will conclude this matter rapidly as I am, indeed, suffering significant financial damage with every hour that passes.” Rothstein clasped his hands and made a very slight bow towards the detective.

“I'd imagine Mr. Rothstein, that if you wished to make an example out of someone, you would do so in the center of Times Square, not inside your club,” replied Goodwin, “but that doesn't mean that someone who works for you wasn't involved in killing Dr. Flinn.”

“While I have been known to keep an insurance policy or two on certain riskier investments, I certainly wouldn't have been foolish enough to allow anything to happen to that investment on my property. I trust my employees to look after my interests. None of them would disobey me.”

## Part VI: The Fall Guy

“Colin Lynch,” Colin jumped slightly at the sound of his name. “you put your hands on Dr. Flinn after he had a dispute with Dr. Layton. Flinn insulted you in front of witnesses. You had more contact with Dr. Flinn this weekend than any other employee at the club except Mr. Fortuna,” said Goodwin, focusing her attention on the trio at the bar.

“That's possible. Sometimes people are rude when ya try to calm them down, especially if they've been drinking. I didn't take it personally. Ya couldn't work at a bar or at a hotel if that kind of thing bothered ya.”

“Why get him another drink when you knew that he was already stumbling around?”

“Like I told Miss Poirot, that was the easiest way to get him back to his table. I thought it would be better for everybody if he had another drink and fell asleep at his booth. Otherwise, we would have had to kick him out of the club in front of his friends.”

“And you didn't see what happened afterwards?”

“No ma'am. We were all so busy doin' our jobs. I was at the door the whole time. Stella was in the coat room, and Jimmy was serving drinks.”

“Stella, how about you? I know you checked Dr. Flinn's coat carefully when he arrived, and did not find the bottle of arsenic medication in it at the start of the evening. But it *was* there by the end of the evening. It was a hectic

night though, wasn't it and you said it was possible someone got into the coat room, didn't you?"

"That's right, Miss Poirot. Saturday nights are always busy. I can't keep track of everything all of the time."

"I know that Colin helped you chase down customers who forgot to take their coat checks, so I suppose you were stuck there, but didn't you leave the cloak room at all?"

"Well of course I do leave once a night to run to the powder room... I mean, a girl's gotta go sometime? But I usually just put a little sign up 'Back in a minute' and Tiny or Colin watch the door for me, but I never let anybody forget a coat check, otherwise it would be impossible to figure out who brought in a fur and who didn't."

"And did you notice anything about Dr. Flinn when you left the cloak room?"

"No, of course not, his table isn't anywhere near the powder room. But I did see his friends out on the dance floor with the girls. Sorry fellas, but you really do stand out with your bad dancin'."

"Jimmy," Geneviève turned to the bartender, speaking as kindly as possible. "You prepared the drink that ended up killing Dr. Flinn. There's no doubt that there was arsenic in the glass. We checked the sugar, the bitters and the bourbon bottle and didn't find any poison in them, so it looks as if the arsenic was added directly to the drink. Have you managed to recall anything that could be important about that night, or about that last drink you made for



him?”

“I wish I did Miss Poirot. I couldn't find that empty Radithor bottle and I can't think of anything else. But I swear on my mother's life that I didn't put any poison in Dr. Flinn's drink.”

“When you decided to add the Radithor to the cocktail, you had to turn away from the bar to go get it, Jimmy. Did you see anyone go anywhere near that glass as you turned away or when you came back? Or did anyone go near Dr. Flinn after you put the drink down in front of him?”

“Not that I could see, Miss Poirot.”

“James,” remarked Cooper, “we're trying to help you out here. We know that you're sweet on Miss Rey and you haven't made it a secret that you didn't like Flinn. So maybe you slipped him a Mickey Finn\* with a little arsenic in it... not meaning to kill him, of course. Maybe it just went wrong.”

“No. I swear I didn't. I can't prove it but I didn't do it.”

“Leave him alone, why don't ya. Jimmy wouldn't hurt anyone,” protested Ruby.

“That's right,” added Colin. “Jimmy's no murderer.”

“Poppy and I were at the bar too, and we didn't see anything fishy at all either,” chimed in Charlotte.

“Officer Cooper,” observed Mr. Rothstein. “James has worked for me for a long time. He is a trusted employee. Mr. Fortuna, Mr. Murphy and I would be very *troubled* to see him accused of anything based upon your

suppositions. Do not make him the Fall Guy\* for this.” Cooper hesitated a moment, before nodding his head and sitting down heavily on a chair.

## Part VII: The Philosopher's Choice

Geneviève stepped forward: “There are a few more questions I'd like to ask before we can come to any conclusions based upon my toxicology report. Stella, you told Detective Goodwin that Dr. Flinn was wobbly when he arrived at the speak. And our whole table observed him staggering and dripping with saliva shortly thereafter. But did anyone see if he drank heavily at the Verdi Club before he came downtown?” Roeder, Schmidt and the showgirls all shook their heads from side to side. “Perhaps the explanation for why Dr. Flinn was lurching about lays in one of the last of the bizarre mix of substances we found on the body.

“Hemlock causes gradual paralysis when drunk or absorbed into the body. Dr. Flinn's blood had significant amounts of hemlock's active ingredient, coniine, in it. From the symptoms he had when he arrived at the club, the toxin had already begun its work.”

“Hemlock, the Philosopher's Choice,”  
breathed Sam.

“Poppy, how could Dr. Flinn have ended up with hemlock in his blood on Saturday night?”

“Oh *boy*. The flower arrangement from the Verdi Club - the one I had Margaret throw away last night. There was hemlock in the vase mixed in with those pink roses. It looks a lot like Queen Anne's Lace, and people can get them confused, but the purple spots on the stem give it away.”

“Hmmm... that's odd. Florence insists upon red or white roses at her receptions. She likes the drama of them. Pink is not passionate enough for her,” mused Dave.

Poppy continued over the interruption:

“Normally, people get poisoned by eating the root, mistaking it for wild carrot and some people get a rash when they touch the plant, but I don't think anyone would get poisoned just by having the flowers in the same room. No one else seemed to become ill at the cocktail party.”

“When the Chief Toxicologist studied the contents of Dr. Flinn's stomach, there was no hemlock, but we did find it on his face and hands.”

“Aha!” Cooper sprang up out of his seat again. “Mrs. Flinn! You threw your wine in your husband's face. You put hemlock in your wine, and you splashed him with it.”

“Sit down Officer Cooper. Miss Poirot is not finished.”

“Thank you, Detective. No, Officer Cooper. The hemlock was not in the wine. It was not on Dr. Flinn's shirt, which was stained with the wine. It was only on his face and hands, as was the last of our mystery substances.”

## Part VIII: Incandescent

“Dr. Flinn worked for Mr. Roeder's company, which produces luminescent paint made with radium dust. The company uses radium paint to make watch dials that glow in the dark. They have major contracts with the U.S. military and their products are everywhere.

“What I learned from Mr. Roeder earlier today, is that although Dr. Flinn worked with U.S. Radium, he and the company executives did their best never to get near the workshop itself. The paint was handled by women because they were considered to have steady hands and the delicate touch needed for painting fine lines on the watch faces. The men ran the business of the company and stayed away from the radium.

“Which is why it was so difficult to understand why Dr. Flinn's face and hands glowed with the pale light of radium. The evidence is undeniable though. Dr. Flinn's face and hands are radioactive although the rest of his body is not. Here is the proof,” Genevieve held up a sheet of photographic paper and an x-ray film. Ghostlike clouds in the shape of hands, shown in the middle of them. “The radioactive particles on his skin developed the photographic paper and x-ray film when they were placed in contact with them. It is the same effect caused by the luminescent paint we used as a control for the test.”

“*Sapristi!*\* What does that mean?”

“Lucien, do you remember what I said at the start of this evening? This was a very personal killing, not a random act of violence. It was a punishment for Dr. Flinn's sins. Dr. Flinn was made to suffer and he was to be humiliated after death as well. He was killed in public so that stories of his gambling debts, affairs and sexual diseases would come out in the press.

“The glow of radium tells us why he was killed. Dr. Flinn's job for U.S. Radium was looking after the well-being of the female dial painters who

were becoming ill from radiation poisoning. I overheard him at the Verdi Club, claiming that the health complaints of the girls were due to low morals leading to syphilis. I wasn't the only person who heard him.

“There was someone at the party who would take such comments very personally. That person had more than enough reason to wish Flinn dead. A person of faith who quoted the Bible... Amos 5:24. It was not the name and room number of a hotel guest, but a passage: ‘Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.’ They were announcing their intention to bring justice to someone who had committed a crime.

“I believe they took the opportunity to act, using a homemade solution of hemlock, mixed with luminescent paint which they brought to the Verdi Club cocktail. The poison was applied on a towel Flinn used to clean himself after his wife had splashed him with wine. The hemlock soaked into his skin and began its work, although it was probably not enough to actually kill him on its own. That would have been more certain had he drunk the poison.

“How did they know that Flinn would be there that night? They knew, because they had a connection at the hotel to someone else whose job was to know which guests were coming to the hotel every evening; someone who had reasons just as personal for wanting Dr. Flinn dead. They too relied on biblical text: Exodus 21:24, ‘an eye for an eye,’ before adding ordinary rat poison from the club to Flinn's Old Fashioned. They then slipped the syphilis drugs into Dr. Flinn’s coat and waited for the drama to unfold.

“Dr. Flinn was poisoned with hemlock at the Ansonia, and finished off with arsenic right here. You might say he was a victim twice in one night, but you might also sympathize with his murderers, for there is more than one. They would tell you that Flinn was the real killer of a sister, and granddaughter who will never leave her hometown because she died there. She is buried in her church cemetery along with her friends, who all worked for U.S. Radium. All that they have left of her is the radium she left behind.

“Tony, turn off the lights please.”

Darkness suddenly fell in the club, with the sound of confused voices and the scraping of chairs against the floor. “Look... there it is! A green glow.” A circle of luminescence hung in mid-air. It was moving quickly across the darkened room towards the red light above one exit.

“Wait... there's another one!” Two hands glimmered, heading away from the dance floor in the opposite direction towards the other red-lit exit.

“I'll get him,” yelled Cooper.

Gunshots suddenly rang out at close range and the front and back doors of the club were opened. Light from the streets streamed in through the exits, making bright rectangles against the black walls of the room. People screamed, chairs were knocked over and havoc broke out as gamblers from the casino came swarming up the stairs and running for the exits. The green radiance disappeared in the crowd of shadowy figures bursting out through the doors and into the night.

The incandescent lights came back on, with Mr. Rothstein at the switches, his eyes bright with amusement, the corners of his lips turned up in a smirk. The tables near the dance floor were in disorder. Sam and Dave had both ended up on the floor. Lucien and Charlotte bent over to help them. Brigitte had grabbed onto Tony and stood with her back against a wall. Jimmy was holding Stella protectively in his arms by the bar. Mr. Roeder had knocked over his attorney and was cursing at him. Mr. Schmidt was under their table. Ruby and the other Ziegfeld girls were crying hysterically, their makeup running down their cheeks. Poppy took one look at the chaos, pulled out a tonic from her bag and drank it down. Mrs. Flinn had not moved at all. Tiny was still standing by the main door, which he held wide open. The secret door to the Tea House was also ajar. Mo was at the back door, brushing pieces of ceiling plaster off of his suit jacket.

Geneviève and Detective Goodwin scanned the scene and noticed that Officer Cooper was nowhere to be seen; and neither was Colin or Margaret.



## Chapter 19

### Proverbs 28:13

“You were right, Poirot, there was more than one person involved in this plot, but I think we blew our chance to catch our killers.” Detective Goodwin was sitting at the bar of the Fairy, drinking a glass of Coca-Cola.

“It didn't help that Rothstein was one step ahead of us, did it?” Geneviève was having straight whiskey – the really good stuff from Ireland, according to Jimmy.

“He knew even before we did who killed Flinn. I think he let this play out just for his own entertainment. Did you see the grin on his face when he turned on those lights? He was enjoying himself. He had Mo shoot his gun off just to cause a stampede and help those two get away. I bet he had Cooper drive them off somewhere too.”

“We'll never get him to admit that. Besides, Cooper showed back up claiming they had escaped all of the officers in the Times Square traffic.”

“I wonder what's in it for Rothstein?” asked Lucien, who was sitting on Geneviève's other side, sipping on absinthe.

“There must be something big. He told me he never takes risks with his businesses and he never does a favor without expecting something in return. I realize now that Margaret met Rothstein at least once before tonight. That cheesecake she brought for dinner on Sunday should have tipped me off, but I wasn't focusing on it. If Margaret spoke with Rothstein and then he helped her and Colin get away, she must have something he wants.” Geneviève swirled her whiskey and drank down the last of it. “Are you going to start a manhunt for Colin?”

“I'd be happy to but so far, the precinct has told us to wait.”

“Well, if you can gather a few officers, I still believe we have a chance that Colin will come to us.”

“What makes you think that?”

“Because he is a good man at heart and he's been raised by a God-fearing woman. Proverbs 28:13: ‘Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.’ It was the message I delivered to Margaret by pneumatic tube at the Ansonia this afternoon and had little Tony put in Colin's pocket tonight when he snuck a candy out of his coat.”

“So, you already knew who it was this afternoon.”

“Not exactly. I left a copy of the proverb on the bar for Jimmy, just in case I was mistaken. Poor Jimmy, it must have been confusing for him.”

“How did you figure out the connection between Margaret and Colin, Geni?”

“I could tell you that I figured it out because his blue eyes matched hers, Lu, but honestly, it was butterscotch candy that opened my eyes to the connection. Colin has loved butterscotch since he was a child. His Nan used to keep some in her pocket and give it to him. He started carrying it around in his pocket too since he began working at the Ansonia. Margaret had a bowl of the same butterscotch in her bedroom. I suspect that she's been giving him his favorite candy again.

“I would never have made a connection based only on that. But Dotty told us about that message ‘He's mine Amos 524,’ when we saw her on Saturday morning. It made Charlotte start digging around and she found out that biblical messages were being sent by pneumatic tube within the hotel and to the concierge desk for months. The mailroom staff told Charlotte that on the evening of the Verdi Club concert, a message came down from the sixth floor for the concierge desk. That must have been the Amos 524 note that Dotty

intercepted. We know that Sam and Dave don't use that new-fangled invention. They absolutely hate it.

“Margaret is the only other person regularly in the apartment on the sixth floor. She is there day and night, so could send messages at any time. Margaret has a well-read bible on her nightstand. On top of that, Margaret had a curled up note on her datebook. When I saw it, I thought it had to do with an appointment at 21:24, nine twenty-four p.m., but it was EX 21:24 – Exodus Chapter 21, verse 24: ‘an eye for an eye’ – another message. This one, I suspected was from Colin.”

“I think I see it now. There is a family resemblance after all. But where are we going to find Colin, if he even wants to be found?”

“There was a second part to my message offering a chance to meet at midnight on the Brooklyn Bridge promenade. Colin's a very devoted young man. I think he'll want to protect his grandmother, will turn himself in and take the blame. He knows she can't run as easily as he can. He'll do the right thing.”

“Well then. We should get going. It will be midnight before you know it.”

## Chapter 20

### The Bridge

It was cold and foggy on the Brooklyn Bridge. The sky was starless. Darkness stretched out in every direction, broken only by circles of light cast by lamps standing at regular intervals on the walkway. There were distant lights from windows in buildings lining the river. It was midnight and the span was quiet. The trolley had already stopped service for the night and cars and trucks passed only occasionally on the roadway below. It was not a night for casual strolling, so the pedestrian way was practically deserted.

Detective Goodwin had stationed several police officers at the Brooklyn end of the walkway, and Officer Cooper and a half dozen other midtown cops waited at the Manhattan end of the bridge. Geneviève stood with Lucien and Detective Goodwin, midway across the span, shivering in the silence. Mist swirled in the air every time Geneviève exhaled. She peered down towards the river below, but the drop was too far to see anything on the water's surface. The height made Geni shudder even more than the frigid temperature.

A green glow approached from the Manhattan side of the bridge, bouncing slightly in rhythm with quick footsteps. Lucien drew himself up, gripping his walking stick with an air of expectation and fear. The circle of light came closer as a figure emerged from the darkness. A familiar medallion glimmered in the darkness, hanging from the neck of the silver-haired lady who walked towards them out of the fog. Margaret stopped in front of them, clasping her hands in front of herself around the handle of her handbag. She tilted her head slightly to one side and smiled sadly. The glow from the medallion faded under the lamplight.

“No – Margaret – this is wrong! Why are you here?” whined Lucien, his face distorted by shock.

“Margaret - didn't you give Colin my note? Are you alone?” asked Geneviève.

“I am as alone as you see me, Miss Poirot.”

“Ma'am – we were not expecting you,” said Detective Goodwin.

“I am sorry to disappoint you but I am the only one you will find tonight, Detective. I am here to make my confession to the killing of Frederick Flinn. I must tell you that I have no feelings of remorse. If anyone deserved to die, it was that faithless man.”

“Why Margaret?” Lucien's eyes filled with tears.

“Poor Mr. Claire – don't fret. I know that murder is a *great* sin. But, my Bible says there is a time for killing, just as there is a time for healing. Frederick Flinn and his bosses destroyed us and so many others. He called himself a doctor. He said the company sent him to tend to the health of my Ciara and the other girls who worked as dial painters. He told our girls that they were perfectly healthy and that their complaints were imaginary. And then he told the world that our girls were loose women with low morals and that they all had syphilis.

It is because of his lies that my princess suffered. It is because of him that dozens of other girls are sick or already dead. He

wasn't even a *real* doctor, just a man the company hired to cover up what they were doing.”

“I am so sorry Margaret.” Geni looked down at her feet.

“Did you know that she was only fourteen when she started working for the U.S. Radium Corporation? The company hired young girls and women because they'd work for cheap. They were taught to dip their brushes in the color, then lick them every time they used them to sharpen the brush tip – thousands of times each day. They painted ten hours a day in a workroom covered in radium dust. At night, when she came home, Ciara glowed from head to foot. She and the other girls loved to shine like stars and fireflies and the four dollars a day she made, helped put food on our table. But after a few years, Ciara starting feeling weak, started bleeding from her gums and her teeth began to fall out. The others were getting sick too. She kept working because of Flinn's lies, because the company said it was safe. She worked until she couldn't walk anymore and still, Flinn said she was fine. We buried her in the family plot alongside her mother two years ago. But you already knew that Miss Poirot.”

“Yes, I called the local newspaper in East Orange. They told me about the unfortunate death of your granddaughter.”

“Look, I’ve lost nearly everyone I loved because of radium. My daughter-in-law died from the Spanish flu just before my grandchild passed. My granddaughter and most of her cousins, all are dead or dying from this poison. My son became a drunk when his girl got sick and the boys all left after our family fell apart. There was nothing left for me to live for, except to stop that man from hurting anyone else. And I did.”

Poirot inhaled slowly and spoke:

“I wish this tragic story was the whole truth as you tell it, but that would seem impossible, Margaret. I know that it was you who managed to have Flinn poisoned by hemlock.”

“Yes, at the Verdi Club party. I had hoped to put the poison in his drink while I was serving. But his wife's outburst changed my plans. So, I offered to help get Flinn a towel to clean himself up.”

“And you got the glow from the Undark paint,” interjected Goodwin.

“Yes. I knew it would not have killed Flinn, but I thought it was fitting that he should die, covered in the same stuff that killed my granddaughter.”

“But Flinn didn't die of hemlock poisoning, Ma'am. He died of arsenic poisoning,” said Goodwin.

“Well, I added plenty of rat poison to my tonic as well.”

“Margaret, our autopsy found that the arsenic was not on his face and hands, and nor was it given to him by the unhappy Mrs. Flinn. It was in a drink; a drink that he had at the Green Fairy. I’m sorry, but no matter what you say, you will never be able to make sense of it. You were never at the speakeasy, but Colin was.”

There was a moment of silence.

“Margaret, you had a lovely photo of your grandchildren in your bedroom. Did they all have such beautiful blue eyes?”

“Yes, cornflower blue. We all do.”

“And red hair?”

“They were all gingers, but as they grew up their looks changed.”

“I know. Light hair tends to grow in darker with age.”

“All except Ciara. She stayed a strawberry blond.”

“Your youngest has certainly grown up a lot. I barely recognized him from the photograph at first, but he still has fire in his hair and remarkable eyes. That medallion you wear. It belongs to him.”

“You're a bright one, Miss Poirot. But the



medallion belonged to my granddaughter. Colin always wore it to keep her close. I wore her locket, along with my cross.

“You need to leave Colin out of it now. He's a good lad and I'll not have him pay for my mistakes. He never would have acted had he known I had already taken care of Flinn myself.”

“You mean the note 'Stay out of it. Amos 5:24'?”

“Yes. He had left for the bar before I could get him that message. But no matter, I am responsible for everything that happened.”

“Colin may think he's done right by your family, but *he* put that arsenic in Flinn's drink. If he is not brought to justice, Jimmy, his friend, might have to go to jail for him. There is no evidence that Jimmy didn't poison Flinn so there is no guarantee that Jimmy will be a free man at the end of all of this. I know that you didn't raise Colin to leave an innocent man in jail for something he didn't do.”

Margaret slowly opened her bag and removed a letter, written by hand. She handed it over to Detective Goodwin. She then removed her gloves and stepped back out of the light. Her hands glowed a pale green as she raised them for the others to see.

“You will see in my written confession that I, and I alone, killed Frederick Flinn by poisoning him with hemlock and arsenic. I

did it to avenge the death of my granddaughter and the other dial painters. Jimmy and Colin are both completely innocent. In my handbag is a tin of rat poison, a bottle that contained my hemlock tonic and the Undark paint. It is all the evidence you need to hold me responsible. I do not regret what I did. We never would have had justice under the law.

“Don’t look for Colin. He is gone from me and I am dead already. I have been for a long time.

“Please, allow me to walk the bridge one last time and I will surrender myself to the police waiting for me at the end.”

Margaret gave them a weak smile and slowly turned away. They let her go and she walked into the thick fog towards Manhattan.

Geneviève looked over at Lucien, who had tears trailing down his cheeks. She rested a hand on his shoulder. Detective Goodwin was reviewing the letter under the weak light of the nearest lamp. She walked off towards Cooper and the waiting officers.

A few minutes later, Geni and Lucien heard the sound of whistles. A young officer ran to them and rushed them back along the walkway. About 200 yards away they found Goodwin, standing over a bundle on the promenade next to the railing. It was Margaret's neatly folded overcoat, gloves and hat, and her bag, with her Bible and the medallion, a St. Jude,\* placed carefully on top.

“Do you think she jumped?” asked Lucien.

“Well, if we had arrested her, they would have sent her to electric chair for murder, unless they thought she was insane,” said Goodwin.

“That wouldn't have happened. She was perfectly sane,” retorted Geni.

Lucien sighed: “What a terrible end. To walk out on those metal bars and jump into that freezing water.”

“At least it was her choice and it would have been quick,” added Goodwin.

“Are you going to look for Colin?”

“Not tonight, Miss Poirot,” said the detective.

The police searched the entire length of the bridge. Officers on both ends denied that anyone had passed them. Cooper sent some cops down under the bridge to check the waterfront. They all returned without anyone in hand. Detective Goodwin cleared the scene and brought Cooper, Lucien and Geneviève to the Midtown Precinct to take down final statements and file a report.

Detective Goodwin called Flinn's widow to tell her about the resolution of the case and then made a series of additional calls to City Hall and the Police Commissioner's office. Geneviève called Dr. Norris from the police station, waking him from sleep to fill him in. He ordered her to take the next two days off from work to recover. Officer Cooper left to tell Jimmy, Ruby and Stella they could go home from the club and then went make his own report to Arnold Rothstein. The bootlegger would be celebrating the reopening of the speakeasy and making a profit off of his insurance policy.

When they had finished talking with the detective, Lucien and Geneviève were driven home in a police car. They entered the Brownstone, exhausted and despondent. The radium-painted dials on the mantelpiece clock glowed in the dark. Geneviève took off her scarf and draped it over the clock face.

## Chapter 21

### Radium Girls

Geneviève slept in and made her way down to the parlor in the late morning. She got herself some Earl Grey tea from the kitchen and sat down across from Lucien, lighting a clove cigarette. Lucien was reading the newspaper headlines to Charlotte:

#### **Radium Girl's Revenge Murder.... Killer Granny dives off the Brooklyn Bridge...**

“Well, there it is. Margaret martyrs herself. Flinn is given all of the blame by Roeder for lying to both the families and the radium company. The company is still fighting a law suit by the Radium Girls but the paper says they plan to settle the complaint and pay for the medical care of the girls who are still alive. They are also planning to change the way the girls paint the watch dials so that they'll be safe. Do you believe it?” asked Lucien, folding the paper.

“I believe that the company knows what the public wants to hear and they are willing to make a show of caring about those women.”

“I just don't understand why radium poisoning didn't get widely reported until now. Why didn't anyone stop them?” added Lucien.

“Lu, the government *wants* the radium companies to stay in business. The military needs their watches and other glowing dials during wartime so their soldiers can see their instruments in the dark,” answered Geneviève. “Don't count on *anyone* in the government to look after the welfare of the workers. Things will only change if the public puts pressure on them.”

“How did you know it was Colin who put the arsenic in Flinn's drink, Geneviève?”

“I didn't know for certain that it was Colin who poisoned Flinn until the very end. Even after eliminating Mrs. Flinn and Ruby as suspects, there were still a number of people who could have had motive and the opportunity to poison him.

“Jimmy was the obvious one since he made and brought the drink to Flinn's table. But how were we supposed to be sure? I started considering other suspects because I just didn't believe that Jimmy would have killed Flinn. The only name that came to mind was Colin. After Jimmy went by our table with the tray of drinks, Colin ran by, making a big show of going after a customer with a coat check. I don't even know if there really was a guest missing a coat check. Stella denied ever letting a customer leave the cloak room without their check. I think Colin just found an excuse to get near Flinn and put the arsenic in his drink.”

“I also found out something this morning,” interjected Charlotte. “The concierge at the Ansonia admitted that the messages which were delivered to his desk from the sixth floor all went to Colin. He never wanted to say anything before because he didn't want it to get out that Colin might have been in a love triangle with Sam and Dave. He said it wasn't his business so it wasn't anyone else's either. It didn't occur to him that the sender was Colin's grandmother.”

“Do you think the police will hunt Colin?”

“Of course, they'll make a show of it, Lucien. But I'm sure there is very little sympathy for Flinn in the public or the police department after everyone found out what he did to those girls. On the other hand, Colin killed a man and he really should be found.”

“Geni - don't you think he and his family have suffered enough? Besides, it's not as if he is a serial killer, after all. Now that Flinn is gone, I'm sure we will never hear from him again. I have been wondering, though, why Colin and Margaret had help from Rothstein.” Lucien frowned.

“I’ve been thinking about that too. Margaret’s cousins in Ireland have a distillery. Remember when Margaret brought Sam her special Irish whiskey? That could be worth something to a bootlegger - enough for him to help a murderer get away. Plus, a man like Colin could be useful to Rothstein in the future.”

“So, finish painting this picture for me, Geneviève.”

“Margaret offers Rothstein her family connections in high-quality Irish whiskey in exchange for Rothstein’s help in getting Colin out of New York City. Rothstein tells Mo to create a disturbance with a gunshot, which allows Colin and Margaret to disappear. Cooper and the police officers who were outside the club were paid to look the other way when the customers and the suspects ran out.”

“And the police will never go after Rothstein for helping a fugitive get away,” concluded Lucien.

“Exactly, Lu.”

“Geni, did you manage to deal with my client’s family problem? You know the East Side benefactress of our legal fund?”

“Charlotte. This is off the record so would you please stuff some cotton in your ears?”

“I hear nothing, you two. Just ignore me.”

“Yes, Lucien. It was the black sheep half-brother, dosing his father with *atropa belladonna* to gain control of the family finances. He was trying to frame\* his stepmother. I read about the plant’s qualities in Poppy’s botany book and those dried berries in the sample of tea she brought us are highly toxic. The Pinkertons have been called in to manage the situation. The family wants to keep it out of the hands of the police department and the press.”

“*Magnifique!* Will you be taking me out to dinner with your earnings then?”

“Sorry Lu. I asked the lady to keep supporting the Brownstone Foundation instead of paying my fee. You’ll have to take me out.”

## Chapter 22

### The Anchorages

Samuel and David pulled up in front of the Brownstone in their open-topped town car at half past six on an early July evening and Geneviève and Lucien climbed inside. The air was still hot and humid but the ride downtown in the motorcar produced a welcome breeze. Dave had promised a night of champagne in a secret vault and the two younger guests were intrigued.

The chauffeur took the Williamsburg Bridge, turned south and stopped the car near the Brooklyn waterfront. The passengers piled out and Dave led the way west towards the river. In front of them was the beautiful and imposing span of the Brooklyn Bridge, and beyond, the twinkling lights of lower Manhattan.

Samuel intoned in his best faux-British: “We thought a stroll over the Brooklyn Bridge would whet our appetites for the evening's festivities.”

“As long as it ends with a wet drink, I'm all for it,” countered Lucien, chuckling at his own cleverness. Geneviève rolled her eyes at him.

As the sun set before them, the group entered the pedestrian walkway of the bridge and began making their way across, back towards the City. Cars and trolleys passed below on either side of the central promenade; the wires and cables that supported the span rose gradually above them as they continued crossing the wooden planks.

They walked under the first stone tower of the bridge with its pointed, gothic arches. Dave was speaking with Lucien about the beauty of its design and architectural features. Geneviève looked up at the delicate spiderweb of stabilizing cables that rose up into the darkening sky and then down to the water far below. Her thoughts returned to last winter and that tragic night on the Promenade, and she shivered despite the heat of high summer.



As they approached the western anchorage, just passing under the second stone tower, Dave was remarking on the maintenance workers who inspected the cables: “I don't know how those gents walk up these cables every day without dying of fright. Even with the guard wires on either side, it takes a surefooted man to make it to the top of those towers, especially in the darker months. It has to be absolutely freezing, even once they climb inside.”

Geneviève's heart skipped a beat and her full attention turned to Dave and Lucien. “Did you say the workers go inside the towers?”

“Why yes, of course my dear. The towers are hollow at the top where the cables are attached, just as there are chambers at both ends of the bridge to anchor the wires' other ends. We're nearly at the Manhattan side now, and you'll get to see the anchorages and chambers up close.”

Lucien's eyes met Geneviève's. Both were frowning slightly. They slowly gazed upwards towards the central cables, following them to where they disappeared into the tower. It was twilight, and they soon would not be able to see much higher than the circles of lamplight along the walkway.

At the Manhattan end of the span, Sam and Dave guided the younger pair to the brick arches under the ramp. Two men in shiny suits flanked the middle archway. A pair of dark eyes stared out from an open slot set in a green door between them. The door opened and the four stepped into near darkness. After their eyes adjusted to the dim lighting, Dave led them down a large passage under the bridge towards the sounds of laughter and jazz. The corridor opened to a cavern filled with light, people and crates of champagne. The walls were painted with frescoes.

“Ah... here we are children,” announced Samuel. “This is the Blue Grotto, one of many cellars and passages concealed inside the bridge's foundations.”

“There are secret treasures in all of the vaults here. This one has housed our favorite supply of bubbly for decades, enough even for Lucien's appetite,”

added Dave.

“Just remember,” warned Sam, “if the Prohis show up and the main lights go out, exit through the far passageway under the red lamps and we'll meet you at the car. It will be waiting down the street.”

“But there won't be a raid,” said Dave. “This place is under protection by 'you know who' and his friends. No one gets in or out of here without their permission.”

## Chapter 23

### The RMS Olympic

Geneviève was feeling cranky the next morning at the dining table. They hadn't yet slept, and her head was pounding. Too much champagne was never a good idea. Luckily, it was a Sunday and the rest of the household was not yet awake, so at least it was quiet in the Brownstone. She was staring into the steam rising from her tea cup and pursing her smudged, rouged lips.

Lucien regarded her soberly: “Well, is it possible? Could she have made that climb on a freezing winter night?”

“Could have, perhaps, but would have.... after what she said that night?” replied Geneviève, slowly. “Granted, she was willing to poison a man.... and let him die in agony. But I truly thought she was a good-hearted person who sacrificed herself to pay for Flinn's murder.”

“Yes, exactly Geni. Margaret protected the only person left in the world that she loved, and she killed herself to make sure he could be free,” insisted Lucien.

“But, Lucien, there was more to Margaret than we knew, wasn't there? She met with Rothstein behind our backs. We will never know exactly what they agreed to, but we can guess. And she was clever enough to confess to the murder in a way that closed the books on the case as far as the police were concerned. They weren't going to chase Colin around the country after the newspapers made his grandmother a martyr.”

“Interesting. If Margaret and Colin believed in an eye for an eye, in the biblical sense,” mused Lucien, “they would see their act of vengeance as justified. Flinn helped kill the dial painters by lying to them and their families. The Lynches would have felt he deserved payback for destroying their families. Margaret might then believe that she needn't actually give up

her life for murdering Flinn.”

“Hmmm...It was certainly dark enough that night. With the fog, no one would have been able to see if Margaret walked up those cables, especially if she had help. She would have had to wait in the tower until we all left, and then she could make her way down to the caverns and the river.” Geni pictured Margaret balancing on the library ladder at the Ansonia, far more agile than most grandmothers. The thought irritated Geneviève. She rubbed her hand across her mouth while thinking. She did not notice that she was smearing her lipstick all over her fingers and left cheek.

“Geni, stop worrying. It's over. A bad man died. Not many people are crying over his grave and his killer is long gone. Here - take my handkerchief; you've made a mess of your face.”

“Honestly, Lu, I can't stop thinking about it,” said Geneviève as she tried rubbing the red off of her cheek. It helped a bit. “Distract me please.... tell me the latest in in your rag's social columns.”

Lucien moved to the parlor lounge chair, leaned back into the plush velvet of its cushions and made a show of opening up the *Evening Graphic* to the gossip pages.

“Aha!... one from our dear Charlotte:”

### **“Mrs. Fitz Flaunts her Charms at Grand Central<sup>5</sup>”**

Socialite and provocateur, Zelda Fitzgerald, has been painting the town red in her inimitable style. She was seen last night, stripped down to her birthday suit, in the great hall of Grand Central Terminal. Not even the police were bold enough to arrest her as she flashed a blinding smile along with the rest of her “natural” gifts. When asked whether she felt underdressed, Zelda replied that she was wearing her “choicest pair of earrings” and was otherwise well

clothed in “a great deal of audacity and rouge.”

Earlier in the evening, Mrs. Z was lounging in her champagne-filled bath, surrounded by guests. New York's iridescent flapper and her dashing husband are now searching for a new home, having been requested to vacate both the Biltmore and Commodore hotels for hosting excessive, debauched fêtes and following complaints from other residents about the couple's drunken domestic disputes. The glittering young couple are considering a trip to the French Riviera as their next adventure.”

Lucien suddenly sat up, “*Sacre bleu!*\* Geneviève.... Listen to this:

**'Death on the High Seas! Company Executive Missing on Trans-Atlantic Passage!**

The RMS Olympic left New York Harbor last Friday night, bound for England. Mr. Arthur Roeder, President of the U.S. Radium Corporation, who was traveling on business with several high-placed members of the U.S. Congress and Defense Department, went missing on Saturday evening.

He was last seen walking unsteadily on the aft deck of steerage class by Mr. Redstone and his valet, who observed him from the first-class promenade. An investigation by the ship's chief security officer concluded that there was no evidence of foul play. Mr. Roeder had imbibed a generous amount of whiskey Saturday evening after dinner and seemed disoriented, according to his traveling companions. A ship's representative told this reporter that Mr. Roeder most likely took a spill off the stern while out getting some fresh air. Mr. Roeder's

disappearance is being treated as a misadventure at sea...'"

Geneviève put down her tea and motioned for Lucien to come over to her. Lucien brought over the newspaper and placed it down in front of her. "There's more. Look at this other headline just below." He stabbed the paper with his index finger.

**'Dapper New York Mobster, travels to Europe Incognito in search of Whiskey Connections:**

Mr. Arnold Rothstein, Times Square's notorious racketeer and bootlegger (seen in this photo with several other notable passengers), is traveling under one of his numerous aliases on board the RMS Olympic, which set sail for England last Friday. Mrs. Carolyn Rothstein (née Green), who is known to be estranged from her husband, is voyaging elsewhere in Europe. When asked by this reporter whether he was traveling for business, Mr. Rothstein winked in response and said, cheerily, that he was merely interested in the fresh air of the Scottish Highlands and the green countryside of County Clare, Ireland.

Coincidentally, a Mr. Redstone, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Mr. Rothstein, was recently questioned in the disappearance of U.S. Radium Corporation President, Arthur Roeder, who is reported to have fallen from the ship's deck Saturday night. Mr. Redstone (or Rothstein if you prefer), has an unsinkable alibi according to his private valet and several other passengers. "It's a shame about Roeder," said Mr. Rothstein, "... although I hear he was positively radiating alcohol

from his breath.... Sadly, accidents happen at sea, especially when booze is involved. I, myself, never touch the stuff," added the teetotaling\* bootlegger. Mr. Rothstein's fiery-haired butler made it clear that no more questions would be entertained by his employer, so this reporter retired to the first-class bar to enjoy the very legal, top-shelf whiskey available outside of American waters.'

Fiery-haired butler? Lucien and Geneviève peered closely at the photograph accompanying the story. Arnold Rothstein, always the fancy dresser, stood on the top deck of the ship and smiled at the camera. Slightly behind him, holding up an umbrella to shield Rothstein from the sun, was a tall young man with angular cheekbones and familiar light eyes. He was wearing a morning coat with a stiff white collar and a shining locket hanging from a gold chain.

"Good grief," exclaimed Lucien. "Maybe I spoke too soon about never hearing from doorman Lynch again."

Geneviève exhaled sharply: "*Incroyable.*"

"I'm afraid the papers aren't a very good distraction for you today, *Mademoiselle P. Claire,*" Lucien apologized with a grin that crinkled the corners of his bright green eyes. "Might I suggest a visit to the Ansonia instead? I understand that Mrs. Jenkins is having a musical lunch concert. That will surely take your mind off of the news."

Geneviève glared at Lucien, her emerald eyes matching his, then suddenly laughed: "*Mon cher Monsieur P. Claire,* if you promise me an evening out afterwards, I'll be happy to listen to *Madame* Florence all afternoon."

"It's a promise. A Valentino film, or a night of dancing?"

“Dotty says Valentino is the 'bee's knees,' but after an opera concert, I'll be ready to move rather than fall asleep in a theater.”

“How about something south of the border... Argentina perhaps? I know a place where the house band will play tangos all night. Then we'll have a taste of Valentino *and* a night on the dance floor.”

“Only if you let me lead dear brother.”

*“Bien sûr, ma chère sœur.”*



## Glossary

**This Glossary contains slang of the 1920s as well as other terms indicated by (\*) in the text.**

**and how** - I strongly agree

**baloney** - nonsense

**(the) bee's knees** - fantastic, and extraordinary person or idea

**Big Cheese** - the most important or influential person; boss. Same as big shot

**blue-blooded** - a person of noble birth

**bootlegger** - producer or distributor of illegal alcohol

**booze** - alcohol

**broad** - woman

**Brownstone, a brownstone** - a residential building, normally 2-5 stories high, typically found in the boroughs of New York. So named because of the brown-colored stone used in construction. Cancila, Katherine (2012). *Walking New York*. Washington, D.C., U.S.A.: The National Geographic Society, pg. 142.

**buck** - a dollar

**bump off** - to murder, to kill

**CHCl<sub>3</sub>** - chloroform, a gas used for anesthesia in during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

**calamine lotion** - a zinc-compound used since 1,500 BC for calming skin rashes and sunburn

**(to) carry a torch (for someone)** - to have a crush on/be infatuated with someone

**cascara** - a plant, the dried bark of which is used to make medicine including laxatives

<https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-652/senna>

**(the) cat's meow** - splendid or stylish, the best, the greatest

**(the) Charleston** - a popular dance of the 1920s jazz scene

**Chicago overcoat** - a coffin or “cement shoes”, a death threat  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago\\_Overcoat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_Overcoat)

**chill off (someone)** - murder

**chump** - loser

**cirrhosis (of the liver)** - scarring and hardening of liver

**coloratura** - elaborate ornamentation of melody, usually in operatic singing.

**cop(s)** – police

**copacetic** - 1920s slang term for wonderful, fine, all right

**Corinthian capitals** - an ornate top to a column, often using carved leaves and other decorations

**croaks/croaking** - dies, kills

**Daddy, Big Daddy** - a young woman's lover, especially if he's rich

**dapper** - neat and trim in appearance or well-dressed

**deadbeat** - a person who tries to avoid paying their debts

**dead soldier** - an empty beer, liquor, or wine bottle  
<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/dead-soldier>

**DIA, Death in the Afternoon** - a cocktail made of absinthe and champagne, invented by Ernest Hemingway

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death\\_in\\_the\\_Afternoon\\_\(cocktail\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_in_the_Afternoon_(cocktail))

**diphthong** - the sound formed by combining two vowels in a single syllable, beginning as one vowel and moving towards another

**doll** - an attractive woman

**“Don't know from nothing.”** - don't have any information

**dough** - money

**egg** - a good egg – a slang term meaning: a man, a good man

**400** - see: (The) Four Hundred

**Fall Guy** - victim of a frame

**fishy** - arousing a feeling of suspicion or doubt

**Five Points** - a slum area of New York City located south of Canal Street at the eastern side of contemporary Chinatown, known as the poorest and most dangerous area of the City by the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Nevius and Nevius, *A Streetwise History of New York City*, p. 63

**(to) fix (i.e. the World Series)** - refers to when an outcome of a game is predetermined by people who are looking to cheat

<https://www.sports-king.com/dictionary.php>

**Flappers** - 1920s name for liberated young women who wore short skirts and bobbed hair, were seen out at speakeasies and rebelled against older social norms

**floozy (pl: floozies)** - a disreputable or loose woman

<https://www.etymonline.com/word/floozie>

**(The) Four Hundred/ 400** - the 400 high society people/families in New York; a designation from the Gilded Age (1870s to about 1900) made by Caroline S. Astor and Ward McAllister, Mrs. Astor's friend (who believed that there were "only 400 people in fashionable New York Society.")

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Four\\_Hundred\\_\(Gilded\\_Age\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Four_Hundred_(Gilded_Age))

**framing (someone)/to frame (someone)** - to give false evidence, to set someone up

**French 75** - a cocktail made from gin, champagne, lemon juice, and sugar

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French75>

**fumigate** – disinfect or purify with fumes of chemicals

**gams** - a woman's legs

**gilding** - covering in gold paint or gold leaf

**gin joint** - a shabby or low-level bar or speakeasy where alcoholic beverages are sold

<https://wordbueno.com/word/gin%20joint>

**gold digger** - a woman who gets involved with or marries a man for his wealth

**goon** - a person hired to intimidate or harm people

**goon squads** - groups of criminals usually involved in pro-union or anti-

union violence

**(The) Great White Way** - nickname for Broadway

Nevius and Nevius, *A Streetwise History of New York City*, p. 182.

**gumshoes** - detectives

**(to) have it coming** - to deserve something (almost always something negative, a punishment or justice)

**hinky** - suspicious

**Homburg hat** - a semi-formal felt hat, typically worn by men, with a central dent, a silk band and a brim

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homburg\\_hat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homburg_hat)

**hooch** - bootleg (illegal) liquor

**hoofers** - dancers

**Isabella Goodwin** - New York's first female detective *Overlooked No More: Isabella Goodwin, New York City's First Female Police Detective*, by Corey Kilgannon for The New York Times, March 13, 2019.  
<https://newyorktimes.com/>

**It** - having sex appeal, being popular at the time

**juice joints** - illegal bars/speakeasies, juice (in '20s slang is liquor) and a joint is a place

**killjoy** - someone who spoils the enjoyment of others

**knock off** - murder

**la bise** - cheek kisses used to greet someone

<https://www.thelocal.fr/20171108/whats-in-a-kiss-the-story-of-the-french-bise/>

**“leaves of three, let it be”** - a phrase to help identify poison ivy, a plant which coated with urushiol

<https://www.webmd.com/allergies/ss/slideshow-poison-plants>

**lesion** - a region of an organ or tissue which is damaged, such as a wound, ulcer, or abscess

**level with me** - be honest

**lifting** - to steal from

**lye** - an alkaline solution (often potassium hydroxide) used for cleaning

**marcelled bob** - a short wavy hair-style, popular in the 1920s among modern women

**(a) maroon** - a naive or gullible person

**methyl alcohol** - wood alcohol, a toxic form of alcohol often used by bootleggers

**Mickey Finn** - a drink containing knock-out drugs

**milk of magnesia** - a laxative containing magnesium hydroxide  
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com>

**mob** - short for mobsters, gangsters, criminals working in organized crime

**moonlighting** - having a second job outside a person's regular job, often in secret

**moonshine** - a high-proof, illegally distilled liquor

**muddle** - to crush together to bring out the flavor  
<https://www.tastingtable.com/drinks/national/how-to-muddle->

**muscle** – an enforcer, someone whose job is to use strength and violence against others

**Neosalvarsan** -  $C_{13}H_{13}As_2N_2NaO_4S$  - a synthetic medication based on arsenic and carbon, developed by Paul Ehrlich and used as a treatment for syphilis from 1912 until the discovery of penicillin  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neosalvarsan>

***Nom de Dieu!*** - In the name of God; an expression of surprise or shock

**on the lam** - fleeing from police

**out of line** - improper

**out of my league** - above me, unreachable, too good or expensive to have

**palming** - concealing something in one's hand, especially as part of a theft or a magic trick

**palooka** - a insulting term for a man (meaning: not very smart)

**pantone-colored** - meaning “all colors”

<https://learn.g2.com/what-is-pantone>

**Pinkerton** - an agent of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinkerton\\_\(detective\\_agency\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinkerton_(detective_agency))

**pneumatic tube** - a system that propels cylindrical containers through networks of tubes by compressed air or by partial vacuum  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pneumatic\\_tube](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pneumatic_tube)

**preening** - devoting effort to make oneself attractive and then admiring one's appearance

**Prohibition Agents** - agents of the Bureau of Prohibition of the Department of Justice, tasked with enforcing prohibition laws  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau\\_of\\_Prohibition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bureau_of_Prohibition)

**Prohis** - Prohibition Agents

**Radiendocrinator** - a device the size of a credit card enclosing paper loaded with radium sulfate behind a mesh window. To be placed in a jockstrap and worn against the scrotum to radiate the testicles. Sold by the Bailey Radium Laboratories, Inc., of East Orange, New Jersey

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/the-lethal-legacy-of-early-20th-century-radiation-quackery/2020/02/14/>

**Radithor** - a mixture of water and radium sold from 1918 to 1928 by the Bailey Radium Laboratories, Inc., of East Orange, New Jersey. It was advertised as "Perpetual Sunshine," with claims of curing many illnesses  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radithor>

**rag** - a derogatory (negative) term for a low class, sensationalist or tabloid newspaper

**Revigator** - a ceramic water crock/container lined with radioactive material (uranium or radium). It was advertised to cure various health problems  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radium\\_ore\\_Revigator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radium_ore_Revigator)

**rubbed out** - killed

**sacre bleu!** - good heavens! an expression of surprise or shock

**St. Benedict** - the founder of the Benedictine monastery, benefactor of students and school children and known as protector against poison  
[info.mcvaninc.com](http://info.mcvaninc.com)

**St. Jude** - the patron saint of desperate cases and lost causes  
<https://www.tbcschools.ca> › st-jude › about › patron-saint

**sapristi!** - good heavens! an expression of surprise or shock

**Sazerac** - a local variation of a cognac or whiskey cocktail originally from New Orleans

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sazerac>

**scoop** - the latest information, a piece of news published by a newspaper before its rivals

**senna** - an herb, the leaves and fruit of which are used to make medicine, including laxatives

<https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-652/senna>

**Sheiks** - 1920s name for men who styled themselves like the actor, Valentino, dapper dressers, often in the company of Flappers

**showing the ropes** - explaining or demonstrating how to do a job or task  
<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/show+the+ropes>

**(you) slay me** - to overwhelm with laughter or love, you're so funny

**sleep, the Big Sleep** - death

**sleepin' widda fishes** - sleeping with the fishes, dead and dumped in the water

**sleuth** - detective

**smoke houses/smoke joints** - low level speakeasies that sold "smoke" (a mixture of water and fuel alcohol, nearly pure methyl alcohol)

Blum, *The Poisoner's Handbook*, p. 52

**speakeasy/speakeasies/a speak** - an illegal bar selling bootleg liquor

**sticky fingers** - having a tendency to steal

**stiff(s)** - a corpse, or an uptight person

**stuck on** - having a crush on, being infatuated with someone

**Studebaker** – a U.S. automobile or it's manufacturer

**suffrage movement** - a decades-long fight to win the right to vote for women in the United States

<https://www.history.com/topics/womens-history/the-fight-for-womens-suffrage>

**sugar daddy** - a rich older man who gives gifts to a young woman in return for her company or sex

**sweatshop** - a factory or workshop, especially in the clothing industry, where workers are paid low wages to work long hours under poor conditions

**swell** - wonderful

**take a powder** - leave

**take the fall for** - accept punishment for

**Teetotaler** - a person who abstains from drinking alcohol

**Tiffany lamp** - a colorful style of glass shaded lamp made by Tiffany & Co.  
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/articles/tiffany-200-year-history>

**Un Bleu** - a drink of absinthe

**Undark** - a trademarked glow-in-the-dark paint containing radium ore, formerly produced by the Radium Luminous Material Corporation

**wet blanket** - a person who spoils the fun by failing to join in with or by disapproving other's activities

**wet rag** - a killjoy, someone who spoils the fun/enjoyment of others

**(the) World Series** - the annual American baseball championship game series

**wood alcohol** - CH<sub>3</sub>OH, methyl alcohol, used for embalming by the ancient Egyptians, as a solvent, for varnish and fuel, extremely poisonous if consumed

Blum, *The Poisoner's Handbook*, p. 38

**Ziegfeld Follies Girls** - women hired by Florenz Ziegfeld as showgirls and chorus girls in Broadway revue spectacles known as the Ziegfeld Follies  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziegfeld\\_girl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziegfeld_girl)

**zut!** - darn, damn, an exclamation of frustration or unhappiness with something



### **Additional Sources for this Glossary:**

[https://alcapones.com/slang\\_dictionary.php](https://alcapones.com/slang_dictionary.php): *1920s Slang Dictionary*;

[https://center.uoregon.edu/NCTE/uploads/2014NCTEANNUAL/HANDOUTS/KEY\\_1991992/Slangofthe1920s.pdf](https://center.uoregon.edu/NCTE/uploads/2014NCTEANNUAL/HANDOUTS/KEY_1991992/Slangofthe1920s.pdf) (citing: Dalzell, Tom. *Flappers & Rappers: American Youth Slang*. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1996);

<https://www.dictionary.com>;

<https://glamourdaze.com/2011/04/flapper-slang-guide.html>;

Lindberg, Christine A. (2004, 2008, 2012). *Oxford American Writer's Thesaurus*. U.S.A.: Oxford University Press (online version);

McCutcheon, Marc. *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life from Prohibition through World War II*. (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1995);

<https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>; and

<https://en.wiktionary.org> .

## Endnotes

### Chapter 1

1. The “article” quoted by Lucien in the novel is an edited excerpt from:

Siege, Lee (2012). *Star-Crossed Starchitect Shot Right in the Façade!* New York Magazine, March 30, 2012.

<https://nymag.com/news/features/scandals/stanford-white-2012-4/1906>  
(viewed August, 2021; last accessed December 12, 2021).

### Chapter 3

2. Frances Perkins' speech contains quotes and excerpts from Ms. Perkins' actual speeches and writing as reported in The Atlantic Magazine:

Brooks, David (2015), *How the First Woman in the U.S. Cabinet Found Her Vocation* Frances Perkins discovered her calling after she witnessed one of the worst industrial disasters in American history, The Atlantic Magazine, April 14, 2015.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/frances-perkins/390003/>  
(viewed September 4, 2021; last accessed November 11, 2021).

### Chapter 6

3. *Charlotte's Scoops* Article is based on:

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. 1925. *The Great Gatsby*. Charles Scribner's Sons. New York.

### Chapter 8

4. “an herbal blend”:

According to Patricia T. O'Connor and Stewart Kellerman of Grammarphobia, a grammar and etymology blog: In American English, the “h” in “herb” is silent, therefore, it is preceded by the article “an.” In

British English, the “h” in “herb” is pronounced, so it is preceded by article “a.” The bloggers refer to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed.): “The form *a* is used before a word beginning with a consonant sound, regardless of its spelling (*a frog, a university*). The form *an* is used before a word beginning with a vowel sound (*an orange, an hour*).

<https://www.grammarphobia.com/blog/2009/09/herbal-remedies.html#:~:text=In%20American%20English%2C%20the%20%E2%80%9Ch,it's%20preceded%20by%20%E2%80%9Ca.%E2%80%9D> (dated September 16, 2009, and accessed on December 10, 2021)

## Chapter 23

5. News Article on Zelda Fitzgerald is based on:

Wikipedia (2021):

Zelda Fitzgerald

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zelda\\_Fitzgerald#CITEREFMilford1970](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zelda_Fitzgerald#CITEREFMilford1970), quoting Zelda Fitzgerald's “*Eulogy on the Flapper*,” published in *Metropolitan Magazine* on June 1922, taken as an excerpt from Milford, Nancy. 1970. *Zelda: A Biography*. Harper & Row, New York. p.67; and Cline, Sally. 2003. *Zelda Fitzgerald: Her Voice in Paradise*, Arcade. New York. p. 87 (accessed on October 16, 2021).

## Biblical References

### Chapter 11

Exodus 21:24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot;

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search> (accessed on November 20, 2021)

### Chapter 12

Amos 5:24 “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search> (accessed on November 20, 2021)

Exodus 21:24 Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot;

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search> (accessed on November 20, 2021)

### Chapter 17

Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search> (accessed on November 20, 2021)

### Chapter 19

Proverbs 28:13 “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes%203&version=KJV> (accessed on December 6, 2021)

### Chapter 20

Ecclesiastes 3 To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die; ... A time to kill, and a time to heal ....

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ecclesiastes%203&version=KJV> (accessed on December 6, 2021)

## Bibliography

This work of fiction would not have been possible without background research and reliance on numerous sources including:

Blum, Deborah (2010). *The Poisoner's Handbook, Murder and the Birth of Forensic Medicine in Jazz Age New York*. U.S.A.: Penguin Books

Moore, Kate (2017). *The Radium Girls: The Dark Story of America's Shining Women*. U.S.A. Source Books.

Additional Source List available from the author upon request.

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