

Patricia M. Muhammad
presents

THE SPEAKEASY MURDERS

Getting to Know Some of the Characters:



Helen Williams. A young coloured detective who is serious about her case assignments as much as she is about her coffee. She is a little above average height with caramel skin and dark brown eyes. Williams enjoys wearing her cardigans. Her personality is soft-spoken and bashful, but when it comes to her work, she is serious and assertive. Her colleagues respect her. She is the only female detective in her precinct. Helen could have furthered her university studies but chose law enforcement instead. Murder did not take a hiatus in the 1920s. Shootouts and stabbings were part of the underground scene. However, despite the encroaching harshness of America's underworld, she does not compromise who she is. Williams had worked undercover before, but this was something new. Helen could never imagine leaving the comfort of her suburban upbringing and lifestyle to dress as a flapper and present herself at the local speakeasy. Yet this was her job—at least for now. She

would soon have a decision to make about her career options and a handsome gentleman with welcoming eyes dances into her life...

A handsome Englishman by the name of Thaddeus Nottingham. He first sets his eyes on Helen when he sees her sitting uncomfortably at one of the tables at the speakeasy. She polite, but weary. After all, she is undercover. Thaddeus doesn't mind her being distracted—at first. It allows for him to assess her to view her beauty without rebuff. He asks her to dance. Williams now must remember all that her station house partner's sister had taught her. Yet Thaddeus surprises her. He leads her to dance in the most traditional sense. Helen falls in synchronized grace, relying on the dances she learned when she had to prepare for her cotillion several years ago. Thaddeus is tall, handsome with mesmerizing eyes he locks with hers. Helen notices that his deep and engaging voice nearly knocks her off kilter. She feels the broadness of his muscular chest, hoping that her imagination does not take her further away from her sole purpose for being at the speakeasy—to catch a killer. Thaddeus is not all looks. He rescues Helen from a would be assailant and out from the speakeasy property when there is a raid. He is also patient, watching as Williams' mind wonders what is part of the underground scene and what is real. Thaddeus is able to show his growing affection for her is genuine, and hers for him is just as sincere.





Helen's magnifying glass. An inanimate object that holds much meaning to its owner. It belonged to her one of her ancestors who struggled for education while society and institutions provided every imaginable barrier for him not to attain it. It seems as though she sometimes hold onto it to keep herself centered. She has never let anyone borrow it. Williams usually keeps it locked in her desk when she is not using it to examine her case files. It is a hybrid of an heirloom and workplace tool. When she goes undercover, it appears that the magnifier is replaced by a more suitable accessory, a cigarette holder.

Detective Stephen Patterson. He is Helen Williams' station house partner. Stephen is much taller than she. Williams has an older sister, Ruby. He also had a younger sister who died tragically. He is also one of Williams' supporters. Though most at her job do not speak of it, when they learn of her relationship with Thaddeus, there are distant murmurs of disapproval. Patterson, however, respects Williams thoroughly, and not just for her work. They become better acquainted with one another when she helps through an ordeal during the workday at the precinct. Stephen has a condition that only now Helen knows about. She is discreet, and their bond as workplace brother and sister is strengthened.

Lieutenant Johnson partners Patterson with Williams to go undercover at the speakeasy. It is his sister Ruby who teaches Williams the modern version of certain dances so she could smoothly transition into her role as a flapper. When Helen staves off her attackers at the speakeasy, Stephen finds and physically defends her against one of the assailants. He likely remembers not being there when his younger sister was brutally murdered as he pummels the main assailant to the floor. Thaddeus takes her away from the underground club only after he takes care of the other attacker involved.



Lieutenant Johnson. He appears to be a hardliner, but as the supervisor of a coloured precinct, he knew more pressure would be on him than any he could burden his subordinates with. The lieutenant is tall with a commanding voice. He respects Williams and the rest of his detectives. Johnson would never say, but his mannerisms spoke the words silently. He viewed Helen like a daughter, but was careful not to play favourites. Johnson found it easier to reprimand one of her other station house employees who had a penchant for teasing Helen. She found him annoying though she maintained her composure. Williams also found it amusing when the lieutenant would let him know that he saw what he was doing. Most of the detectives were surprised to learn that Johnson was married with children. He seemed like a loner. The lieutenant just understood how to maintain his authority and keep his personal affairs separate from his job.

The local speakeasy. An underground club where black market liquor, jazz and a parade of all sorts of characters filter through seeking a temporary reprieve from their usual lives. Some of them are miserable, other patrons are just rebellious. All are present to enjoy themselves. The entry is a nondescript wooden door with a wooden slate moved horizontally. Two eyes appear from a man, likely a bouncer, who asks potential customers for the night's password. If they are fortunate, they will gain entry. If not, there is always tomorrow night. Inside, the flappers, dancers, servers, observers and anyone else are instantly transported to a venue of live music, wisps of smoke from cigarettes, illegal spirits and most of all, dance. The men and the women demonstrate their dance skills, with flips, swings of legs and long strands of pearls with hard-heeled shoes tapping against the wooden floor. Bright crystal chandeliers dazzle the newcomers while providing a spotlight for those who jump to the center of the grand room once the music starts again. The floors and the walls of the speakeasy have heard many tales and hold many secrets; one of which is a secret passageway. It will lead Helen and Thaddeus to the one room where the killers are revealed. The speakeasy never said who left alive or dead in all the years since it was established. It does not know who will leave alive this night—and neither does Helen.

