

The Lady Detective

Martha sat down at her desk, palms flat. “What a week,” she said to no one. She pulled open a side drawer and took out her case book to make her very first entries. She started with the date, August 21, 1912, then began to write, now and then fanning herself with her scented handkerchief. The clean smell helped her to feel cooler even if the stirring air did nothing.

She stopped for a moment to look out the window. She had taken the office, not only for its inexpensive price, but for the view onto the street. She had wondered why an office so splendidly situated cost so little. Now she knew. She couldn’t open the windows for the dust that came off the street. Not to mention the noise and smoke from the motor cars, too many of which tore up and down the street, scaring the horse-drawn carts and carriages. As Los Angeles was now experiencing the height of August’s heat, Martha was stifling in the closed up room. “I’ll have to purchase a kerosene motor fan for when clients come,” she thought out loud. “It would be rude and embarrassing not to.”

She had opened her office the previous Monday morning. And, most fortuitously, she had her first client by the middle of the day. There had been two additional visitors during the course of the week, both visiting in the morning when the heat wasn’t so terrible. The thought of her client brought Martha back to her casebook and she took up her pen again.

Martha Vangle, Private Detective. The caretaker had just finished the stenciling on the office door front when the woman had arrived. She was middle-aged, not very handsome, but dressed in well-kept clothes of medium quality. She looked extremely nervous and a bit haggard. Her name was Mrs. Beadie.

She glided slowly into the office, with a movement that suggested concentrated effort. After the niceties of introduction had been observed and each woman had taken a seat, Martha asked, “What brings you to my office madame?”

“My girl is in real trouble, Miss,” the woman began. Martha internally cringed thinking of what types of trouble girl’s usually got into. “She’s been working as a maid for a good family these last two years, no trouble at all, when last Friday they had her arrested for stealing.”

Martha sat up a little straighter, now very much interested. “I see. I will need all the details as you know them. Many particulars you might find, well, uncomfortable to speak about. But I will do my best to help you.”

She pulled open a blank notebook and arranged her ink and blotter within easy reach on the desk before her. As she arranged herself for note taking, Mrs. Beadie said, “Thank you, Miss Vangle. Mary Wright told me you could help. You know Mary I think? Her daughter is Beth.”

“Of course,” a smile breaking across Martha’s face. “I just saw Beth, Miss Wright, yesterday.”

“Well, Mary Wright and myself are in the same church social. She’s been under the weather you know, and last night was my turn to take over dinner. When I told her my troubles, she mentioned you.”

“That is truly wonderful, Mrs. Beadie. For you can see, I’ve only just opened my business. God works in mysterious ways.”

“Yes, he does. In fact, two weeks ago at prayer service, another friend, a Mrs. . . .”

“Mrs. Beadie, I think we should talk about your daughter’s arrest.” The woman’s face, which had lit up at the chance to talk about her church and things irrelevant to her current problems, fell back into the haggard appearance which she wore upon first entering the office. This time she broke into tears.

“Jeannie, that’s my girl, since she finished school, she’s been working as a maid for the Beardsley family. Mr. Beardsley is an attorney with a large practice here in town. Anyhow, Jeannie was taken on as the upstairs maid for the family and has worked there for two years. From what I’ve heard, Mrs. Beardsley is a very nice woman who really looks after Jeannie.” Mrs. Beadie paused as she sobbed afresh. Martha gave her time to recompose herself, noticing for the first time how the heat was rising in the room, then urged her quietly to continue.

“On Friday morning, Jeannie went to work as usual, but about mid-day a messenger came to my door telling me that she had been arrested. I went down to the police station right away, but wasn’t let in to see her until late on Friday. By that time, my nephew, Eddie Nester, had been arrested too.”

Martha frowned, “Do you know the details of their arrests? It would help if I knew what the charges are against Miss Beadie and Mr. Nester.”

Stifling another round of sobs, Mrs. Beadie took a deep breath, “Jeannie is accused of stealing a broach, emeralds and gold I think, that is a family heirloom of Mrs. Beardsley. They think Jeannie stole it on Thursday afternoon before leaving for home.”

“How does Mr. Nester fit in to the alleged theft?”

“Eddie, is a good-hearted boy, but just seems to make friends with the wrong crowd. My sister’s family lives up in Bakersfield, and Eddie works on the farm there. But he often comes down to Los Angeles to participate in the motorbike races.” Mrs. Beadie frowned deeply as she said this, obviously not approving of his hobby. “He arrived at my doorstep on Friday morning, just awhile after Jeannie left. He always stays with me while in town. After luncheon, Eddie went off to see his own friends and next I knew he was arrested too.”

Martha frowned. “What reason did they have to connect Eddie to Jeannie, other than that of cousin?”

“Eddie has done some time in prison for stealing,” she paused to consider, “No, not stealing. It was for selling goods that had been stolen. He always said he hadn’t stolen anything, but had bought the shoes for a dirt cheap price and was selling them for a profit,” Mrs. Beadie waved her hand dismissively, “but the law said that owning stolen goods was the same as stealing, so off to jail he went.”

“When was this?”

“Oh, it was February before last that he got out. He was only in for six months. And let me tell you, my sister was fit to be tied. Lordie!”

“How old is Mr. Nester now?”

“Eddie is, let’s see, two or so years older than Jeannie, so he’d be about 21 or 22.”

“So the police arrested Mr. Nester only because he has been convicted of receiving stolen goods before?”

“Yes, I think that’s right. He wasn’t even in town on Thursday night, but they are accusing him of collaborating with my girl to steal the jewelry.”

After another round of sobs, a glass of water, and some fanning, Martha continued, “Now, this may be hard for you, but I need to know something about your personal circumstances.” Mrs. Beadie looked confused, but Martha charged ahead. “Your daughter lives with you, yes?” Mrs. Beadie nodded. “Does she support you by working or do you have an income of your own?”

“I’ve got a small pension from my late husband. He worked on the railroad, you see. Jeannie helps me keep up the house with what she gets from the Beardsleys. When Jeannie was still at school, I kept boarders, but since she’s been able to work, we needn’t.” She sighed, “Let me tell you what a relief it is too.”

Martha smiled politely. She knew all too well about boarders in one’s home. She had three, and, while they were all quality persons, it was hard not having one’s home to oneself. “But your finances, well, are they in order?”

“Yes, we don’t have a lot, but we get by well enough.” Mrs. Beadie sat up straighter and pointed out her chin as she spoke. Lots of pride, Martha thought, she’d get no information on that front.

“Mrs. Beadie, can you tell me anything about Miss Beadie’s friends? What does she do with her free time?”

“Her friends are all neighborhood girls. Girls she went to school with. She usually spends Sunday afternoons with them. She goes to church with me and knows many of the ladies there. Her free afternoon is Wednesday. None of her friends have that time off, so she shops and visits the library by herself. A great reader, my Jeannie.”

“Very good. Do you know of anyone who is not a friend, who might have it in for Miss Beadie, maybe even has a grudge against you or even Mr. Nester?”

The look of shock, horror and distaste that passed over Mrs. Beadie's face was enough to answer Martha's question. She moved on to her next question amidst Mrs. Beadie's stuttering "no."

After determining that Miss Beadie was due before the judge the following morning and that Mrs. Beadie would be hard pressed to pay bail, Martha determined a course of action. "Mrs. Beadie, I will visit your daughter this afternoon. Afterwards, if you don't mind, I will pay a visit to your home and we can discuss further actions. Will that be alright?"

When Mrs. Beadie had left, Martha opened the window to the street and regretted it immediately. With a mouthful of smoke and dust, she hastily shut the window. She had seen the street oiled down just that morning and already it was nothing more than a dust cloud. That would not do.

Pouring herself a glass of water from the pitcher on the filing cabinet, which also served as her side table, Martha set about thinking over the case presented to her. The room was too stifling and it was long past luncheon time. She removed herself to the diner counter at Shay's just two blocks down on Hill Street.

Over sandwiches and tea, she mused on what Mrs. Beadie had told her. She had some experience with a thieving serving girl. A maid who had worked for her mother had been caught stealing. But that woman readily admitted to it. "What's wrong with stealing?" the maid had said, "That's how she got all her money." "She" was Martha's mother, the famous medium Edith VanGlory.

That had been an uncomfortable, hysterical scene. Mrs. VanGlory never took it well when someone accused her of being a fake. Both she and the maid were screaming at each other before the police could separate them. The maid, of course, had been sent to jail. Mrs. VanGlory went on to greater fame and fortune.

"For awhile anyway," Martha murmured aloud. Realizing herself, she snapped out of her reverie. She felt a tug of guilt, a usual phenomenon when she thought of her mother. She had died only four months before. Even though Martha had taken care of her until the end, even though her mother had been a medium more than twenty years, Martha still wasn't sure that she wasn't a fake and she felt false for not truly believing her mother.

Yet there were more immediate concerns at hand, Martha thought with resolution. She finished her tea, paid for her meal, and made for the city offices.

At the police office on West First St., Martha realized that she'd never had an occasion to visit an accused criminal before and did not know the protocol for requesting a visit. After enquiring at the main desk, she was directed to a room up two flights of stairs and down a corridor. When she located the women's ward, she found a guard inside the door to the jail cells. The woman was stocky of build with a surprisingly delicate face. Although her

crooked nose betrayed a rough life. She was succinct and professional as she had Martha sign a log book. The log requested date, time, name of inmate, name of visitor, nature of business. Martha took her time filling in the information so she could review the entries above her. Since Saturday there had been four other visits to Miss Beadie. Her mother had visited her everyday. The fourth visit was paid at 12:30, not three hours earlier, by a Mr. Stanwyck Topper. Mrs. Beadie had not mentioned anything about a gentleman caller.

After signing the log, Martha was shown into an adjacent room, the visiting area, and was locked in the by matron guard. The room was plain, decorated in only unfinished wood. The rough table was worn smooth in spots from long use. In a few minutes, through another door, a young woman was ushered in by another guard. Martha stood to introduce herself. The young woman was very pretty. The type of pretty that would long outlast her youth. She had large honey brown eyes and her hair, pulled into a tight bun, was a dark auburn. Even in the gray jail-issued smock she wore, the girl was rather striking.

“Miss Beadie, my name is Martha Vangle,” she held out her hand to the young woman, “your mother asked me to visit.”

A look of mistrustful confusion was replaced with a genuine smile on Miss Beadie’s face. “Nice to meet you, ma’am.” The women shook hands politely and each took a seat.

“I am a private detective. Your mother has asked me to look into the accusations against you.”

“Really? Mother did that?”

“A mutual acquaintance, Beth Wright, informed your mother of my practice. She left my office not two hours ago.”

“Alright. Its not that I don’t believe you. It is just so uncharacteristic of my mother.” Jeannie smiled weakly. “She loves to gossip, but is terribly quiet about our own affairs.”

“Yes, I can see how she would be,” Martha responded diplomatically as she agreed completely, but it wouldn’t do too agree to vehemently. “Can you tell me, in your own way, what happened? If there is anything that happened prior to last week that would have a bearing on the matter, please tell me.”

Jeannie, after a shaky breath, began to tell her story. It wasn’t long and much of it matched what Martha had already heard from her mother. She had worked as a maid in the Beardsley household for more than two years. The only other full time servant was the cook and downstairs housekeeper, Mrs. Johns. There was a washer woman who came on Wednesdays and a young man who kept the gardens and acted as driver for Mrs. and Miss Beardsley named Bill Garton. It was a good position and well paid. Mrs. Beardsley was an uncommonly nice woman. Her husband, whom Miss Beadie rarely saw, was stern but not unkind. The third occupant in the household was Miss Beardsley, a

girl two years younger than Miss Beadie. The two young woman had been very friendly at first, but Miss Beardsley had gone remote over the last year and now they only interacted in matters of the household.

“Is she as kind as her mother?” Martha prodded.

“She is not unkind,” Jeannie answered looking away, “There isn’t anybody who wouldn’t be hard pressed to be as nice as Mrs. Beardsley.”

“And is there nothing that you can think of that would have some bearing on the current accusations? Have any of the family made a similar fuss? Have they blamed you erroneously for other troubles?”

“No, no, not at all. As I said, the family has been very good to me. Even Miss Beardsley, she still gives me her old clothing,” she smiled sadly, a little humiliated in Martha’s opinion, “She’s shorter than I am, but more filled out, so I can easily take in the dresses.”

“Now, please tell me the exact circumstances of the theft, as you remember them.”

“It started last Thursday. Mrs. Beardsley had taken her grandmother’s broach into the jewelers to have a loose stone secured. The broach is made of gold and has six emeralds with seed pearl accents. It’s very lovely. That afternoon Mrs. Beardsley had brought home the broach, and, as she said, she left in on her dressing table to be put away in the safe later on. I never saw it that day. I had finished my duties upstairs before she came home.”

“What time was that?” Martha interrupted.

“It was probably nearly four o’clock. I was sitting downstairs, mending a hem in Mrs. Beardsley’s green dinner gown. She saw me there when she came in from her errands. I made one trip upstairs to hang the gown and left at my usual time, 6:30.”

Jeannie paused and suddenly became teary. Martha handed her a handkerchief. “Thank you,” she sniffled, “Then on Friday morning, it was just before noon, I think, and I was shaking out the bed linen when Miss Beardsley asked me to come to the drawing room to speak with her mother. Of course I went, and there,” a fresh round of sobs broke out.

“Mrs. Beardsley asked me, very stern like, if I knew where her grandmother’s broach was. I said ‘no ma’am’. She asked me if I was certain and I said that I was. I told her I hadn’t seen the broach since before she took it away to the jewelers.” Jeannie hiccuped, “She said that wasn’t true since I saw her with it yesterday. I had only seen her with a tied up box. Mrs. Beardsley said that I must have known what was in the box. I said that I had an idea, but never looked at it closely.

“Then she asked me if I took the box and the broach. I was horror struck ma’am, I couldn’t believe that she was asking me such a thing. I tried my best to keep from crying in front of her, but I could barely get out my ‘no’ with out the tears falling. She went on and asked me if I was sure. I said ‘yes, I’m certain ma’am,’ when a man stepped from around the door and told Mrs. Beardsley that he had heard enough. Then he arrested me.

“The police officer brought me here and asked me so many questions. That was when I found out that the broach had gone missing the night before and that I was the only one who had been to Mrs. Beardsley’s room after she brought it home.”

Martha had been holding her tongue to let Miss Beadie tell her whole story, but here she interrupted, “You were the only person to enter the room? Mrs. Beardsley herself did not?”

Miss Beadie scrunched her eyebrows together before answering, “The only servant, if that’s what you mean.”

Martha nodded, indicating yes and that Jeannie should continue, “It was when the police officer asked me if I knew any criminals that things got worse, for then they found out about Eddie being my cousin,” she stopped for a second looking at Martha, “Did mother tell you about Eddie?” Martha nodded. “I didn’t even know he had come to town.” Tears streamed down her cheeks as she explained, “Now they are accusing us both of being involved.”

“Are they accusing you of taking the broach Thursday night or Friday morning?”

“I...don’t know,” she gulped. “On Friday morning, I helped Mrs. Johns in the kitchen and didn’t even go upstairs until nearly 10:30.”

“What else did you do that morning?”

“After the kitchen work, I took Mrs. Beardsley’s correspondence to post and stopped in at the green grocer for Mrs. Johns.”

“What time did you leave?”

“Just before nine o’clock.”

“And what time did you return?”

“Well, that is a problem. It should have taken me only thirty minutes or so, but I took my time and was gone nearly an hour.”

“Why did it take you so much longer?”

She paused for a moment, her pale cheeks rose in color to make her skin very blotchy. “Nothing really. There was a line at the post office and I didn’t walk so fast as I could.”

“Alright then, Miss Beadie, I know this is very hard for you,” she reached out and patted Miss Beadie’s hand, “but would you tell me if you or your mother were in any financial difficulties?”

“Why no, not anymore than usual. We don’t have a lot extra, but we get by.”

“It seems like a hard job for you to be a housemaid. Wouldn’t it be better for you if you took a shop position and your mother still had some boarders?” Martha pressed on, interrogating in the most gentle way possible.

“No, I get paid very well by the Beardsley’s and I’m not afraid of the hard work. Mother, you see, has terrible arthritis and taking care of a house full of people was wearing her down. As soon as I could, I took a job that would let her be free from house chores. We did have one boarder left until last winter, a young woman who was no trouble at all. But she married. To make up the extra income, mother and I have both taken on extra sewing work. Mother is a wonderful embroiderer.”

“I see,” Martha thought that it wasn’t likely that Jeannie was lying. She was very earnest and if she were to turn to thieving, she would have done it sooner and with more subtlety.

“There is something that bothers me about this crime, why would you steal a rather unique broach that could be easily traced in a pawn shop or jewelers? If you needed the money, and you were a thief, it would be more sensible to start small—take some money from a purse, steal some silver, filch some food or drink.”

“Ma’am, I’ve never stole a thing in my life.”

“Yes, I believe you.” Martha shifted topics. “Do you know anyone who would want to harm you? Any enemies?”

“No, no, of course not,” Jeannie reacted automatically. Then she paused to give it some thought. “I really don’t think I know of any one. There was a girl in school who hated me, but I haven’t seen her in years. She wouldn’t even have known where to look for me.”

“Well, people sometimes turn up in unusual places. What was her name?”

“Susan Worth. I believe her family moved North four or five years ago.”

“Alright, I’ll keep that in mind,” Martha stood up to go. “One more thing, your mother has been into visit you everyday. I saw by the log book in the office. A person with a man’s name also came to visit you. Who was it?”

Miss Beadie’s face, already pale from so much crying, froze, then filled up with a rosy pink. She stammered, “I’m sure I don’t know who you mean. Only my mother has been to visit.”

“Ah, well then,” Martha held out her hand for a parting handshake, “My mistake then.”

Martha left the visiting room thinking that Miss Beadie must be telling the truth, on the whole, “She is about the most unconvincing liar I’ve ever seen, especially that bit about not having another caller.”

Martha’s next stop was the men’s ward. She would see Mr. Nester while she was there. While signing the log, she saw that Mr. Nester had been visited by Mrs. Beadie and no one else. In the visiting area for the men’s ward there were two other pairs already there. Martha took an empty seat and was soon sitting across from Eddie Nester. After introducing herself and explaining why she was visiting, Martha asked for Eddie’s version of events.

“I don’t know what happened. I got into town on the 8 o’ 5 train and went to my aunt’s house to drop off my things. Then went over to see a friend about a business transaction.”

“Which was?”

“We’re pooling our money to buy an oil well down south.” Eddie Nester was not a very handsome lad, though athletically built. He had an open face with an easy grin and lots of charm. Martha soon determined that his “heart of gold” was set on get-rich-quick schemes. Not surprising for a farm boy from Bakersfield.

“And you have no alibi for Thursday night?” Martha asked.

“Well, no ma’am. I was at my family’s home alone, my parents are off visiting family in Visalia.” For the first time during their interview Martha saw Mr. Nester’s face close up, he became tense and lost the easy grin. Now his smile was forced.

“Are you sure that no one can vouch for your whereabouts, Mr. Nester?”

“No, ma’am, you see, our house is off down a long road. No one could have seen the lights on.”

“Mr. Nester, I will be frank with you. I believe you are lying,” Eddie started, opening his mouth to protest, but Martha cut him off, “I believe you are lying about your alibi. I have no interest in your goings on if it has nothing to do with setting you and Miss Beadie free. If you tell me now, I won’t have to make a trip to Bakersfield to investigate.

Eddie’s face, for the first time, was stoic as he thought over her words. After a minute, he leaned forward and began to whisper, “Ma’am, this has to stay just between us.” He glanced around nervously, “I went to see my fiancé, Miss Mary Beebe, and left for the train station from her place.”

Equally conspiratorial, Martha leaned over and said, “Understood, Mr. Nester. Now I can get on with the real investigation.” Martha sat up straight and adjusted her hat. “Thank you for your time. I hope to have this all sorted out soon.”

Martha took her time walking home. It was only a little after 4 o'clock and dinner wouldn't be served until 6. Even though the afternoon heat was bordering on intense, home, at this time of day, was too noisy and busy for any proper thinking, so she did her thinking while walking slowly under her parasol and fanning herself. She had to admit that she did not have enough information to go on at this point. She would call on Mrs. Beadie later on and, with some luck, get to interview one or two of Jeannie Beadie's friends. She decided that she would call on Mrs. Beardsley in the morning. And from there? One could only guess.

Martha's home was at the top of Bunker Hill. She rode the Angel's Flight train up to the top, thanking the powers that be for installing it and saving her a dreadful climb, and walked the remaining few blocks. The neighborhood was rather expensive for her current means, but she owned the house outright and with a few boarders, could make do. Her mother had bought the house when they had moved to Los Angeles, at the height of her celebrity, some 14 years before. Half a dozen years at least before she became ill and could no longer be the celebrated Madame Van Glory. Even during those long years of illness, when the money had dwindled, Mrs. Vangle refused to let Martha sell the place.

The boarders included Mrs. Fenestrade, who acted as housekeeper and cook, but Martha didn't really think of her as a boarder, she had been living with them for so long, Mr. Olds, an octogenarian who had been a boarder for years, Miss Kurtser, a middle-aged teacher, and Mrs. Alamador, a young widow and secretary. Martha had room for one more, but couldn't bear having a sixth person living in the house. It was crowded at the dinner table as it was. They were all good people, but that many personalities made for some uncomfortable conversation. Yet by having so many boarders, Martha could afford to start her new detective business—long a dream.

Mrs. Alamador was helping to set the table when Martha came in. Martha went to help in the kitchen.

"How was your first day at your new office, dear?" Mrs. Fenestrade asked, her hands busy over the stove. Mrs. Fenestrade had been housekeeper to Martha's mother. Martha had known her since she was a girl.

"Surprisingly busy," Martha tied on an apron, "I have a client and quite a mystery."

"Really?" Mrs. Fenestrade seemed surprised.

"I was quite shocked by it myself. It bodes well do you not think?"

"Well, I was worried that you were getting in over your head, but it seems I was wrong. I'm glad for it."

After dinner, Martha freshened up and left just after 7 to pay a visit to Mrs. Beadie. She lived in a quiet neighborhood on the southeast side of town, on Tarlington St. just after it crosses 20th, rather near to the train line that headed south towards San Diego.

Mrs. Beadie answered the door herself and led Martha into her parlour, a comfortable room and well used. After explaining that she saw both Miss Beadie and Mr. Nester that afternoon, she asked, "If any of Miss Beadie's friends live nearby, would it be possible to pay a late evening call to one or two of them?"

"Well, I suppose that would be alright," Mrs. Beadie answered, "Unusual, really, but alright. Her close friend Jennifer Fahrer lives around the corner. That's one of the girls she usually spends Sunday afternoons with."

"That is just what I had in mind."

A short walk later, Martha found herself at a similar doorstep. While Mrs. Beadie rang the bell, Martha admired the sunset, now in its full glory just as it dipped below the horizon. Even though the summer's heat had still not broken, she somehow felt cooler for the sun being gone for the night.

They were soon ushered by Mrs. Fahrer into a parlour very similar to Mrs. Beadie's and joined by Miss Fahrer who had just finished her dinner. She also was in service and had been late in getting home that night.

After proper introductions were made, and Martha assured all the ladies that she was convinced of Jeannie's innocence, Martha asked Miss Fahrer about Miss Beadie's connections. "Any friends or acquaintance that she might have known through her work? Anyone she talked about?"

Miss Fahrer, a plump girl with a bright round face and blonde hair, took a moment, stealing a sidelong glance at Mrs. Beadie before answering, "No, only the housekeeper and the boy that drives Mrs. Beardsley. As upstairs maid, she didn't have much to do with delivery men. There was a seamstress that came often whom she liked a lot. Said they were always laughing at jokes when the family was out of the room."

"Do you know her name?"

Miss Fahrer shook her head side to side. "What about the driver boy?"

"She didn't talk about him often, but I think they got on fine. I think he may have had an eye on her, but she stopped him before he got started. Something of a flirt, I took it to mean." Again his eyes moved to Mrs. Beadie before darting back to Martha.

Martha was unconvinced that this was all that Miss Fahrer had to say, and had a feeling that there was something more that she didn't want Mrs. Beadie to know.

"That is very helpful. If you don't mind, I need to freshen up. Would you show me the way?"

Miss Fahrer jumped up, "Of course, this way." Mrs. Beadie and Mrs. Fahrer were already deep in conversation as Martha followed. She caught up with her down the hall, Miss Fahrer was about to speak, but Martha interrupted, "Miss Fahrer, I believe there is something you are not telling me, something that you don't want to speak of in front of Mrs. Beadie."

Miss Fahrer fidgeted, holding her hands in front of her. She peered down the hall. "I think Jeannie has a young man." Again she looked around nervously. "She didn't always come out with us girls on Sunday afternoons, but she told her Ma that she did."

"Did she ever indicate who her young man might be?"

"No, not really," Miss Fahrer was working herself up to a fit of agitation. "I think it was someone she met through her job. She mentioned that Mrs. Beardsley's driver was quite handsome, but was too forward a flirt for Jeannie. He's the only man she ever mentioned I think."

"Thank you, Miss Fahrer, you've been most helpful."

Martha walked with Mrs. Beadie home and left her on her doorstep with assurances that all would be well.

The following morning, Martha was up very early and went to her office to finish settling in. She found her calling cards had been delivered along with papers and envelopes printed with her business name and address. She sat for a full 10 minutes at her desk staring at the crisp white calling cards. I am a professional at last, she kept thinking.

At a quarter past ten, she typed up a short note to leave on her office door and left to pay a call on Mrs. Beardsley at her posh West Adams Street address. With a glimmer of pride she handed her new card to the woman who answered the door, it would be Mrs. Johns of course. After a minute, she was ushered into the drawing room and presented to Mrs. Beardsley.

"How do you do," Martha said politely, putting on her best airs.

"How do you do, Miss. . ." Mrs. Beardsley looked down at the card, "Miss Vangle. What may I do for you?" Mrs. Beardsley indicated she should sit in the chair opposite the couch she used.

"It's very kind of you to see me ma'am. I am working on behalf of Jeannie Beadie's mother. She has asked me to look into the theft of your broach. She is convinced of her daughter's innocence."

"Oh dear, that poor woman. I don't know what to think about it. Jeannie has been such a good girl."

"I have been hearing that she is. When I saw her yesterday she was terribly upset about it."

“You saw her. Is she alright? I can’t believe she’s in prison. I just don’t understand how this happened.” Mrs. Beardsley’s eyes had glossed over. Martha was wondering if she would cry. Jeannie had said that Mrs. Beardsley was uncommonly kind, but her behavior now seemed otherworldly.

“She is only in the local jail, for now ma’am, and she is holding up as well as can be expected under the circumstances,” Martha answered diplomatically.

“I know she isn’t the criminal kind,” Mrs. Beardsley went on, “I’m certain there must be some very good reason behind all this.”

“That I am looking to prove.”

“How can I help?”

Before Martha could answer a young woman came into the room. “Mother?”

“Oh darling,” she gestured for the girl to join them, “This is Miss Vangle, she is a private detective.” Martha, watching the girl closely, saw that she repressed a sneer. “She is here on behalf of Mrs. Beadie, Jeannie’s mother. Miss Vangle, this is my daughter.”

“How do you do.” The ladies both said in unison.

While Mrs. Beardsley was not uncommonly beautiful, she was very well looking. Her kind, well-meaning demeanor added considerably to her looks. Her daughter took after her a great deal in physiology, yet in demeanor she was closed up and cynical which pinched her features and made her look as if she had more years than 17 or 18.

“Now, Miss Vangle, what can we do for you?”

“I would like to hear your versions of events, if you don’t mind.”

“Not at all. Where should we start?” Mrs. Beardsley looked towards her daughter who had been looking sideways at the door.

“Why not tell me the events leading up to Friday morning, starting Thursday afternoon when you returned from the jewelers?”

“Yes, yes, that is a good place to start. Once I got home, I said hello to the servants and spoke with Mrs. Johns about dinner. Then I ...”

“Mother,” Miss Beardsley interrupted, “Miss Vangle doesn’t want to hear all that. Mother took the parcel up to her room and left it on her dressing table.” She looked towards her mother for confirmation. Mrs. Beardsley nodded.

“As we were retiring for the night, I asked Mother to see the broach. I wanted to see the repairs that had been made before she put it away in the safe. When we got to her room, the package was no where to be seen.”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Mrs. Beardsley, did you notice it missing when you dressed for dinner?”

“No, I’m ashamed to say that it didn’t cross my mind again until Anne asked to see it.”

“Mother can be very absent minded,” Miss Beardsley confided.

“I thought perhaps it had slipped behind the bureau, so . . .”

“We thought,” interrupted Miss Beardsley again. Even though Mrs. Beardsley seemed like an kind person, Martha couldn’t believe that she could stomach such rudeness from her own daughter. “We thought we should have Young Bill up in the morning to have a look behind the furniture.”

“Did he then?”

“Yes, and he found nothing. That’s when we thought that it must have been Jeannie.” Mrs. Beardsley nodded along.

Martha addressed the next question directly to Miss Beardsley, “Did you see behind the bureau yourself?”

“Oh, I wasn’t there. I had an appointment that morning and was not at home.”

“Mrs. Beardsley, were you able to see behind the bureau?”

“No, I don’t recall that I did. I was at my writing table and Young Bill just said that there was nothing there.”

“Approximately, what time did all this take place?”

“I was gone from 9:15 to 10 o’clock, so it must have been around 9:30. Wouldn’t you say mother?”

Mrs. Beardsley nodded.

“Perhaps, the parcel did fall behind the dressing table and if no one was looking, this Bill did find the parcel and took it.”

“Oh heavens, no. Young Bill is such a good boy, so well-meaning.”

“Well, we know it wasn’t Bill,” Miss Beardsley said with a smug smile, “for I found the pawn shop note in Jeannie’s apron yesterday.”

Martha had really been hoping that her first case could be so easily solved by throwing blame on to the driver, but she should have known. Nothing was that simple. “Do you have it here? May I see it?”

“I’m afraid not. I had Bill deliver it to the police yesterday,” Miss Beardsley said, still smug.

“Can you tell me what it said? Which shop it was for?” Martha got out her small notebook and prepared to write down the information.

“I only looked at it for a moment to confirm what I was seeing,” Miss Beardsley said, “But the shop name is Martini’s Fine Wares with an address on Fourth Street. Its right near Spring Street.”

“Thank you, Miss Beardsley.” Martha directed her next question directly to Mrs. Beardsley. “What does your husband have to say in the matter?”

“My husband was traveling on business at the end of last week,” said Mrs. Beardsley before Miss Beardsley eagerly burst in.

“Father was in Sacramento with his protege,” she said almost breathlessly, “They didn’t come home until Saturday.” There was something in Miss Beardsley’s manner that Martha took note of, but couldn’t quite describe.

“That must have been awful for you ma’am, to have to deal with the theft on your own.”

“Yes, it was.”

“But I was here for mother, so it was alright.” Mrs. Beardsley smiled weakly to that comment.

“Thank you for that information,” Martha put away her notebook and made herself ready to leave. “One more thing, if you don’t mind, why was Miss Beadie’s, Jeannie’s, apron here? Wasn’t she wearing it when she was taken by the police?”

“She must have hung it up in the kitchen when she retrieved her jacket and hat,” was Miss Beardsley’s quick response.

“Thank you again for all the help you’ve been. I appreciate your time.” The ladies all made their goodbye’s and Miss Beardsley showed Martha the door.

Once outside, Martha found a shady spot on the street, a few houses down from the Beardsley’s and took a few minutes to absorb all she had seen and heard. Jeannie Beadie had been right on the money about Mrs. Beardsley, but had been far too kind to the younger woman. Miss Beardsley seemed to gain no small amount of satisfaction for Jeannie Beadie’s predicament. Martha put it down to jealousy, for Jeannie was quite attractive and Miss Beardsley was anything but attractive. Martha would like to have interviewed the housekeeper and cook, Mrs. Johns, but couldn’t see how while she was still working. For that matter, she really ought to interview this young driver.

She wondered, as she girded herself to face the bright hot sunshine, how it was that Miss Beardsley saw the pawnbroker's note for only a second yet could remember so much about it. She walked towards the nearest trolley station heading for the court house.

When Martha arrived at the courthouse, she went directly to the hearing room only to find it adjourned for the midday break. After some further enquiry of the guard posted there, she found that Jeannie Beadie had been before the judge and had been sentenced.

Martha headed over to the jail. Jeannie Beadie must have been returned there as her bail had been set at \$150. Not a sum easily gathered by a person of Mrs. Beadie's standing. Yet, when she arrived at the entry room she had visited the day before, she found Miss Beadie, without prison apron in a solemn dress of dark green, gathering her belongings and getting ready to leave.

Before Martha could speak, Miss Beadie saw her and smiled, "I'm being released Miss Vangle. I don't think I've ever been happier to leave a place."

Martha smiled in return, "I'm glad for you Miss Beadie. Where to now?"

"Home, thankfully. Mother should have gotten there by now. She left right after the judge...well...made his pronouncement." Miss Beadie frowned and adjusted her jacket. "Eddie was set free, you know. I'm so glad."

"I'm glad to hear it too. Would you mind if I accompanied you home? I have some further details to discuss with you."

"Please do." The guard checking her out indicated that she needed to sign for her release. Martha watched her do it and then held the door open for her.

The sun was shining hotly as the ladies left the courthouse. "The sun never felt so good. It was stifling hot in the jail rooms, but this kind of heat is glorious."

Martha couldn't help but smile. "Incidentally, who paid your bail fee?"

"I don't know. Mother's church friends perhaps gathered the money," she answered feebly. Jeannie Beadie was really the worst liar. The ladies headed for the trolley line that went straight down Broadway.

"Very kind of them." Martha didn't believe it for a second, but continued, "About your case, did you know about the pawn shop receipt?"

“No, no I,” Jeannie choked up, “I’d never seen it before. I don’t know where it came from.” She stopped on the sidewalk to pull out her handkerchief, much in need of a good laundering. “It was such a surprise. But, Miss Vangle, how did you know of it?”

Martha explained her visit to the Beardsleys that morning. “And you’ve no idea how it came to be in your apron pocket?”

“No, I really don’t. I take two clean aprons to the Beardsleys, in case one gets soiled during the day. I was wearing one when the police took me away. I have it here, in my bag.” Miss Beadie was carrying a carpet bag. She opened it up and pulled a corner of it up from beneath her black maid’s uniform. “I take this bag with me to work occasionally, especially on my afternoon and always on Fridays. It holds my change of clothes.”

“Why on Fridays?”

“For the church meeting. I don’t have time to get home to change, so I bring my clothes with me.”

“That accounts for your current dress then.”

“Yes, this is the dress I had with me on Friday.”

“So you left one apron on a peg in the kitchen at the Beardsleys when you were escorted away?”

“Yes, my spare apron for the day.” Martha and Jeannie quickened their steps as they neared the trolley stop as one was just about to arrive. When they had found seats and were comfortably heading south, enjoy the slight breeze created by the trolley’s movement, Martha continued the conversation, changing the subject. “You didn’t mention to me yesterday anything about your young man.”

Jeannie pursed her lips resolutely, all of her womanly tears drying up. “What do you know about him?”

Martha was taken by surprise by her stoicism. “I know only that you have one. You have been very good at keeping him a secret.”

Jeannie was quite for a long block. Then she began, “He has nothing to do with this. I’d prefer to remain silent.”

“Perhaps then, we can talk around him. I can ask questions about who he is not.” Miss Beadie looked at Martha with anxiety and suspicion, but nodded in ascent.

“He is not someone you work with?”

“No.”

“But he is someone whom you met through work?”

“Yes.”

Martha felt like she was playing a parlor game. “Could you tell me why you are so determined to keep his identity a secret? Are you ashamed?”

“No, of course not!” Finally a real reaction, Martha thought. “He should be ashamed of me.”

“So he is of a higher station?” Jeannie nodded. Martha briefly wondered if Mr. Beardsley, her employer, might be involved after all, but she quickly banished it from her mind. If he was the beau in question it might be better to leave him out of this investigation altogether. Considering for a long while, Martha thought carefully before asking her next question. “Is it very serious?”

Jeannie’s tears made a comeback. She nodded, a tear coming loose and sliding down her cheek. She fumbled at her collar and pulled out a long chain with a ring hanging from it. “It’s very serious, ma’am.”

Martha examined the ring. It was a very pretty gold ring with a leaf motif, set with a ruby and two small diamonds. “It’s very lovely. But if he is as serious as you are, why not tell your mother at least?”

“He would like me to. He wants to meet her, but I . . . well, I want to be sure he’s ready. He has a lot to lose by being attached to me. Once we tell mother, the whole thing will have to come out in the open.” She sighed wearily. “We were planning on telling mother next week, on my birthday. But now, with all this, I couldn’t possibly drag him into it.”

Perhaps it wasn’t Mr. Beardsley. He wouldn’t be making plans to meet her mother. They reached the trolley stop closest to Mrs. Beadie’s home.

Martha and Jeannie Beadie walked slowly after they had exited the trolley, mostly silent. Martha was full of conjecture at who could be Jeannie’s beau. Jeannie trying to understand how best to proceed.

“Miss Vangle, I know you are trying to help me, but I can’t tell you anymore about him. He’s not involved in this, not really. Please don’t tell mother, I beg of you.”

“Very well, I won’t say anything, but I have my reservations about not pursuing this avenue of investigation.”

“You’ll have to take my word for it, ma’am.”

Martha nodded in response, too taken at that moment with Jeannie’s admission of “not really” involved in the matter to keep up the conversation. They soon arrived at Jeannie’s house and Mrs. Beadie, overjoyed to see her daughter at home, had Martha in for lunch. Eddie was already there. Martha, not surprised at all, found that Mrs. Beadie had no idea of who paid Jeannie’s bail and was convinced it must have been Martha’s arrangement.

Afterwards, Martha, feeling lethargic from the combination of a heavy meal and the exhaustive heat, went to Martini's Pawn Shop. The proprietor, Mr. Martini, was in the front window adjusting his displayed wares. There were necklaces, wallets, silver dishes, and many other bright items, even a crystal chandelier. Mr. Martini, it would seem, only went in for the very best quality items.

Martha entered the store, the bell above the door jingling. "I'll be right with you madame," came Mr. Martini's disembodied voice. Martha browsed the glass display of fine broaches while she waited.

After a few minutes, Mr. Martini made his appearance. "Good afternoon. What can I help you to find this day?"

"Good afternoon," Martha reached into her bag for one of her calling cards. "My name is Martha Vangle," she said handing him a card, "I am a private detective here on behalf of Miss Jeannie Beadie." Martha got a little thrill announcing herself as a private detective.

"Ah yes, very sad thing. You are a detective yourself?" He gave her an odd look. "That is very unusual, I would think."

"Not very unusual, Mr. Martini, I can assure you," was Martha's curt reply.

Mr. Martini nodded with resignation. Martha could almost see his thoughts. He was thinking what is this world coming to with "Lady Detectives." The only reason he wasn't rude to her was his genuine good breeding. Of that, Martha was thankful.

He went behind the counter before continuing. Mr. Martini's gregarious manner was taken down a few notches to only very good manners. "If I had known that the lovely broach was stolen, I would never have taken it."

"Would you mind answering a few questions for me?"

"Of course, of course, whatever I can do." He seemed rather wanting to get rid of her actually, but Martha persevered.

"Can you describe the woman who brought in Mrs. Beardsley's broach?" Martha took out her notebook to take down the information.

"She was very young, not twenty I would think. Maybe this tall," he raised his palm to show that the woman was a few inches shorter than himself. Mr. Martini not being very tall, the woman in question would be fairly short. "She wore a nice dress, dark blue."

"What color hair did she have?"

"I think it was dark brown, but it was hard to tell for she had it smoothed back from her face and wore a large hat. A very old fashioned type of hat, I think, but it covered a lot of her face and hair."

“And you had never seen the young lady before?”

“No, no, I really don’t think so.”

“Can you tell me what happened when the young lady came into the store?”

Mr. Martini made no effort to hide a large, annoyed sigh. “She came in and said she had something to sell. I saw her lovely broach and accepted it. I named a price and she said OK.”

“Then how did you proceed?”

“I filled out the receipt and she signed it and took it. She signed my master log book and then she left.”

“Could I see this book.”

Mr. Martini’s manners were ebbing along with his patience. He unceremoniously pulled out a large calfskin book and hurriedly flipped through the pages to find what he sought. “Here.” He pointed to the fourth-to-last entry.

Martha quickly examined the signature. Also written in print was Jeannie Beardsley’s name and an address that was not hers. It read 26 Menlo. Jeannie lived on Tarlington St. Having just witnessed Jeannie sign her name only hours before, Martha could tell, with a fair amount of certainty, that the signature in front of her was not written by Jeannie Beadie.

Martha heard the bell jingle on the door and knew her time was up. Even before she had straightened up, Mr. Martini had pulled the book away and was shutting it up under the counter. He nodded to her and went to help his new customer. She exited the store to the sound of Mr. Martini’s large voice saying, “Of course, we have many beautiful such things. I know just the one for you.”

For the second day in a row, Martha found herself walking in the worst heat of the day muddled in the details of this crime. She stopped in at Hamburger’s soda shop for something cool to drink. She knew with certainty that Jeannie had committed no crime, but was in fact being framed. Yet all the evidence she had collected was very circumstantial.

Most of the evidence now came from Mr. Martini. He’d helped a young woman in a blue dress. Jeannie, on an hour’s errand in the middle of her work day would have been wearing her maid’s uniform. She really wouldn’t have had time to change and her spare dress certainly wasn’t blue. Martha was sure that the signature in Mr. Martini’s book was not Jeannie’s, but how to prove that true? It could easily be argued that she had tried to disguise her handwriting, but if so, why would she use her real name? Then there was the fake address. Why use a fake address if using her real name? It just didn’t make sense.

Why would Miss Beadie work flawlessly for two years for the Beardsley's and steal something now? That's what the prosecution should be thinking about, but Martha knew they would be more interested in making a conviction. And another question, why would Jeannie Beadie put the pawn receipt in the pocket of an apron she was not wearing? Sure it could be argued she was trying to hide evidence, but wouldn't it have been safer to have the receipt on her person?

Mrs. Beadie was in no need of cash. According to both Beadies, they had no outstanding expenses, so no motive there. Then there was Jeannie Beadie's secret beau. From her intimations, he sounded as if he came from a much higher social bracket with perhaps some money to back it up, if Martha guessed right at the value of Jeannie's ring. Why then would she risk everything to steal a broach?

Unless, of course, she was lying about her young man and he wasn't better off than she. Perhaps she had stole it for him? But no, Martha, sitting over her iced soda at the counter, shook her head "no." She was convinced of Miss Beadie's innocence.

The only other possible thief, unless some other young well-dressed woman showed up, perhaps someone the driver knew, was Miss Beardsley. As little of an impression as she had made, Martha was loath to consider her as a candidate for thief. What motive could she possibly have in framing her housemaid? Yes, she would have received the cash for the broach, but her father was very rich and seemed a liberal man. What other motive could she possibly have?

Yet, what motive did Jeannie have, other than being a poor housemaid? None, so much as Martha could tell. She felt that she was missing something obvious. Some key bit of information that would be the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle. But until she found it, she didn't know what the puzzle was supposed to look like.

Martha finished up and left for home. She had planned to stake out the Beardsley's house that evening to try and catch up with Mrs. Johns when she left for the day, but had found out over luncheon that Mrs. Johns lived in. Miss Beadie had told her that Mrs. Johns afternoon off was Thursdays, so Martha would try to catch up with her then.

She had an uneasy night, what with the heat and the details of the crime filling her head. At home she did the wash and helped Mrs. Fenestrade make dinner. After dinner, sitting in the parlor, Mr. Olds played opera records on the phonograph. Alisha Alamador, the young secretary, had asked Mr. Olds to play French operas. She knew French and was practicing her stenography by listening to the songs. Martha and Mrs. Fenestrade were both catching up on sewing. Martha watched the young Mrs. Alamador with some awe. She was very impressed with the young woman's determination. And somewhat shamed by her ambition, for she couldn't be more than five and twenty, but she had done so well for herself, widowed and all.

That line of thinking did Martha no good, for then she was frustrated with the case and with herself. She may be 36, a frumpy old maid, but it didn't mean her life had no meaning. After all, she had, just that week, embarked on her life's ambition to be a detective.

Such thoughts plagued her all night through, yet, she was up early on Wednesday and left for her office before 8 a.m. She felt that finishing organizing her office, might help to organize her mind.

She had just undertaken to move her filing cabinet closer to the window when a young gentleman came into her office. With her shirt sleeves rolled up and her hair falling down, she introduced herself with as much dignity and politeness as she could muster. The young gentleman, who was likely in his late 20s and very good looking, introduced himself as Stanwyck Topper. Martha had to repress the urge to heartily say "Ah ha!" For in that instant, she felt a large piece of the puzzle come together. Stanwyck Topper had visited Jeannie Beadie while in jail. This must be her young man!

"Can I help you move that file box?" Mr. Topper asked politely.

"While I'm not in the habit of asking my visitors to help with moving furniture, I would sincerely appreciate your help. It's much heavier than I guessed."

The job was much easier with two persons and soon Martha was rolling down her sleeves and smoothing back her hair. Sitting down at her desk, Mr. Topper sat down opposite her. "Now, sir, how may I help you?"

"I've come about Jeannie, Jeannie Beadie," he said eagerly.

"Then you must be her young man?"

The lad blushed, "Yes."

"I imagine that you were the one who posted bail for her?"

"Yes."

"She wouldn't tell me who you were. Perhaps you can tell me why she was so reticent to name you?"

"I think she is too cautious, really, but I understand why she would want to be secretive," Mr. Topper looked out the window, collecting his thoughts, "I am junior partner to Mason Beardsley, her employer."

Everything this young man said was leading to a possible conclusion. Martha knew that Jeannie shouldn't have held back. All information is important. "Would you be the person who Miss Beardsley calls her father's protegee?"

"Ah, well, yes." Mr. Topper looked a bit uncomfortable. Martha waited for him to continue. "It's no secret, you see, that Mr. Beardsley has named me as his successor in the firm and fairly looks upon me as a son."

“No wonder Miss Beadie was concerned about word getting out.”

“She needn’t be. Mason is a wonderful man and isn’t all that concerned about social place keeping. My grandfather and his father were both loggers, until his father made it rich. He and my father were childhood friends so when my father died, about the time I finished university, Mason brought me out here to work for him.”

“And Miss Beadie knows this?”

“Yes, of course, I’ve told her, but she is very determined to do things properly.”

“I wouldn’t blame her you know. After all, you met her while she was working did you not?”

“Yes, but I don’t see why that should affect things.”

Martha could see that he didn’t, but of course he wasn’t in Jeannie’s position. She was the one who would have to deal with the gossip. “Mr. Topper, is it a possibility that Mr. Beardsley has in mind that you marry his daughter? After all, that would make you a true son of his.”

Mr. Topper looked sheepish. “It has been discussed and Anne I have been thrown together a lot since she’s come of age,” he paused to look out the window again. Martha looked too. “However, he has told me, outright, that I needn’t marry her. I know he and his wife would like it if I did, mostly because they think a great deal of me.”

“Yet you have no intention of marrying her.”

“No, not even before I met Jeannie. I did try to get to know her, but... it just didn’t happen.” He looked downright embarrassed now. “Will all this, all that I’m telling you, help?”

“It has helped immensely already,” Martha answered truthfully. “However, I do have another uncomfortable question for you, Is Miss Beardsley in love with you?”

Even the tips of his ears turned crimson. It took him a few seconds, but in the end he stammered out, “I believe so. I know so, for she has declared it to me more than once.”

“Ah. Yet Mr. and Mrs. Beardsley do not pressure you into choosing her for a wife?”

“Not at all. They are both perfectly cordial to me. In fact, last week when I was traveling with Mason, when all this happened to Jeannie, he joked with me about having girlfriends. I don’t think he would have made sport with the subject if it had been his daughter.”

“Not likely, no. So you were not in town when Jeannie was arrested?”

“No, we didn’t get home until Saturday. Jeannie and I had plans to meet on Sunday. When she didn’t show up, I became frantic with worry. I wasn’t suppose to contact her at home. I didn’t find out until the next morning at the office when Mason told me.”

“That is why you didn’t visit Jeannie in the jailhouse until Monday midday?”

“You knew about that?”

“I saw that someone of your name signed into see Jeannie just hours before I did.”

“Oh yes, I didn’t think about that. I just had to see her.”

“Mr. Topper, can you tell me if Jeannie has any enemies? Anyone who would want to frame her for this theft?”

“Jeannie is the best girl in the world. No one would want to hurt her.”

“Indeed. Do you think she may have taken the broach then?”

“No! Of course not. If she wanted a broach, I would have given her ten of them. I’d give her any money she wanted. If it were up to me, we would already be married and this wouldn’t have happened.” Mr. Topper had risen from his chair and was pacing about the small office.

“It’s alright, Mr. Topper, I don’t think she did it either. I just need to get all the information I can.”

He continued to pace, “But you’ll help her right? You’ll make sure she isn’t convicted?”

“I’m doing my best.”

“I’ll pay for your work. I know Mrs. Beadie contracted you, but that poor woman shouldn’t be worried with the bills. Please send them to me.” He pulled out his wallet and gave Martha a card with his address. “What else can I do to help?”

“I believe, Mr. Topper, that for today, you have given me quite what I need.”

After a few more declarations, Mr. Topper left the office. Martha took a minute to reflect. How fortuitous, the solution to the mystery walked right into her office and told her. For jealousy is a powerful motive and Miss Beardsley must have found out about Jeannie and Stanwyck Topper and their engagement. All the pieces fit together around Anne Beardsley and the actions she had taken during the last week.

Martha drummed her hands excitedly on her desk. She’d done it, she had solved the crime. She knew who stole the broach, she knew who had framed Miss Beadie.

Yet, knowing who committed the crime and proving it were two very different animals.

How could she prove that it was Anne Beardsley? Justice was decidedly in favor of the Beardsleys. Martha didn't think approaching the police would work. As far as they were concerned, they had a cut-and-dry case. Why would they want to complicated things?

Mr. Martini could, most likely, identify Miss Beardsley as the woman who pawned the broach, but how could Martha organize it so that Mr. Martini and she were together at the same time, especially without the aid of the police?

What if she approached Mr. and Mrs. Beardsley and presented to them the facts? Miss Beardsley would deny everything. Martha just knew that she wouldn't be the type to give in, she would lie until faced with incontrovertible facts.

Yet how could Martha get the hard evidence she needed to prove her theory? She took out her notebook and began reviewing all the different bits and pieces of information she had collected.

After a half hour deliberation, she decided to give up for the time being. She left the office and walked for a long time, keeping to the shade of the buildings as much as she could. She felt better for the exercise.

The one piece of hard evidence that was available was the signature and address written in Mr. Martini's book. If Martha could somehow get a writing sample from Miss Beardsley, perhaps it would be enough to prove Jeannie's innocence. Or at least enough with which to confront Miss Beardsley.

As Martha wandered along the streets, sometimes looking in shop windows, sometimes not. She was quite oblivious to who passed her or what was going on near by. She lost track of time altogether. So it was a surprise when she found herself facing the storefront of Hamburger's People's Store, looking at a large sign being hung in the window. The sign announced a raffle and the prize was a ladies hat designed and made up in Paris. Another surprise was when Martha realized the raffle had given her an idea to get a sample of Miss Beardsley's handwriting.

Consulting her watch, Martha found it was nearly two. She hurried back to her office to type up a letter.

It read:

Dear Miss Beardsley,

As a valued young customer of Broadway Department Store, we would like to extend to you the opportunity to enter a drawing to win a prize. We have just received delivery of a dress of olive silk from Antoine d'Aurilie's House of Fashion, Paris, France.

The first 25 customers who respond to this letter will be entered into the drawing. To enter, please send a letter with your name and address and a short note about why you would like to win our prize and mail it to: P. O. Box 5187, First Street East, Los Angeles.

The drawing will take place in the store a week from Saturday. Please be present to receive your prize.

Remember, only the first 25 respondents will be eligible for the drawing.

Sincerely,

Samuel K. Clarkson
General Manager
Broadway Department Store

A half hour later, she had delivered the letter to the post office and, upon enquiring, found that the letter would be delivered by afternoon post. As she walked home, she deliberated whether or not she should still interrogate Mrs. Johns, but decided against it. With the information she'd learned from Mr. Topper, she had everything she needed to know. At least she hoped that she did. A little voice of self-doubt kept telling her that it couldn't have been Miss Beardsley, but Martha pushed it away by going through and listing all the facts that she had accumulated.

The night passed very slowly for Martha. She knew at this point it would be a waiting game, but it didn't make it any easier to pass the time.

On the way to the office the next morning, Martha stopped at the post office to check her box, which she had kept for employment-related correspondence while living with her mother. She knew that the half day that had passed since she posted the letter was not enough time to expect a response, but she couldn't help herself. She kept thinking about a reasonable time in which she could expect a response. The very earliest was the early afternoon. She would just have to be patient.

The monotony of the day was broken by a very unexpected visit. Midmorning a middle-aged woman arrived. Martha, who had just been fretting about having nothing to do, was excited to potentially have another case. The woman, who introduced herself as Marie Firman, was not very pleasant, in looks or in manners.

Ungraciously taking the seat that Martha offered, Mrs. Stokes began, "I see that you've not heard of me."

"I'm afraid I have not."

"I am the original lady detective of Los Angeles."

Martha's face lit up with delight, "How wonderful to meet you." A colleague and, hopefully, a friend. She was very excited about the prospect.

"Nothing wonderful about it," was Mrs. Stokes' curt response. Martha instantly deflated. "I've just come here to check out the competition." She gave Martha an obvious look over. "I see I've nothing to fear."

Martha's deflation left her speechless.

“I’ve been around the longest and will be around when you’ve long given up. Stay out of my areas of expertise and I’ll leave you be.”

Martha was bewildered. She must have looked it to, for Mrs. Stokes continued, “Look, I take all the cheating husbands, the trysts, the runaways and those likes. The other cases the rest of you lot can divvy up between you.”

“The what?” Martha managed to stammer out.

“Just stay away from my business and I’ll keep out of yours. Just a friendly warning, you might say, among colleagues.” The woman just got up and left. No goodbye or anything.

Martha had known that there were other lady detectives in the city, for they were listed in the city directory, but it had never occurred to her to look one of them up or that they had specific business interests.

The only good thing about the visit, was that it gave Martha something else to think about for a good long while.

She went to luncheon late and took her time. She wandered the streets for awhile afterwards trying to distract herself. She knew it was unlikely that the morning post would be delivered before 3 o’clock, but by two thirty, she could wait no longer.

At the post office, she was rewarded with the anticipated response from Miss Beardseely. As much as she wanted to tear the thing open, Martha took her time, taking care not to harm any of the writing. She glanced at the letter quickly, not reading for meaning, only looking at the handwriting. She had to check it against Mr. Martini’s register, but she was fairly certain that it was as she had expected.

She took the quickest route possible by trolley to Mr. Martini’s shop. As she entered the shop, Mr. Martini’s beaming face fell slightly when he recognized her. There were two young ladies browsing. He glanced at them meaningfully.

“Hello Mr. Martini, I’m sorry to disturb you again.”

“I understand Miss, eh”

“Vangle”

“Miss Vangle, this is not terribly good for business you know.”

“Yes, I know. But if you would humor me, I would like to see your register again.”

“Of course you would,” Martini went around the counter and pulled it out and opened it to the correct page.

“Thank you,” Martha said as she peered over the countertop. She pulled from her bag the letter she had received and opened it up to compare the signatures. Mr. Martini watched her closely, then seeing what she was comparing, he leaned closer to study the signature too.

“Why that is the same handwriting, but it is a different name,” he expostulated.

“Yes, I know. It was as I suspected.”

Mr. Martini completely ignored her assurance. “But who is this Anne Beardsley?”

“She is the person who came to your shop last Friday with the broach. She is, in fact, the daughter of the woman who owns it. As you know, Jeannie Beadie is their housemaid.”

“But why?”

“Mr. Martini, I’ll make a bargain with you. I cannot tell you right now all the reasons, that would hardly be fair to either Miss Beadie or Miss Beardsley, but if you allow me to borrow your register book tomorrow morning for a few hours, I will tell you all when I come back.”

“Now, Miss, that is important to my business. What if something happened to it?”

“I understand your concerns, Mr. Martini. However, Jeannie Beadie may be facing time in prison if I can’t get the Beardsley’s to drop the charges against her.”

Mr. Martini completely deflated, “Yes, of course you must take it.”

“I will return tomorrow at 9:30 in the morning. Thank you very much.”

Martha left the shop and walked away, not really knowing where she was going. The heat of the day was terrible, but she hardly noticed so excited was she. She collected herself after a few blocks and then made her way to Mr. Beardsley’s offices just up the street on Third.

It was now quite late in the day, so she had to hurry so that she had ample time before the offices closed. Once there she hurried into the lift and attempted to make herself presentable while the porter had his back turned.

In the offices, she asked the clerk for Mr. Topper and gave her name. She was shown into his office three minutes later. Neither of them bothered with the niceties.

“Miss Vangle, have you found something?” he asked offering her a seat.

“Yes, I have proof as to the identity of the real thief,” she replied as she sat.

“It was Anne wasn’t it?”

Martha was dumbstruck. “You knew?”

“Well, I had my suspicions. When I saw her over the weekend she seemed a little too happy that Jeannie was in jail.” He looked a little sheepish. “I know I should have said something to you, but I had no proof you see.”

“Well, I do now.”

“Fantastic!”

“Yes, well, I need your help.”

“Anything,”

“Tomorrow morning I am going to call on Mrs. and Miss Beardsley at 10:15. I would appreciate it if you could persuade Mr. Beardsley to accompany you to his home at that time. I would like for you to be prepared to announce your engagement to Miss Beadie. It may not come to that, but I think it should.”

He looked a bit stricken for a second, “Does Jeannie know?”

“Not yet, but I intend to tell her when I call on her during the next hour.”

“She may not be very happy about it.”

“Its either announcing your engagement in this unceremonial way or go to jail. She seems like a sensible girl to me.”

“Couldn’t we get this over tonight? I mean, why wait?”

“I have my reasons, Mr. Topper. I know you are eager to put this scene behind yourself and Miss Beadie, but tomorrow will do as well as tonight.”

As she left she wondered if it wasn’t such a good idea to wait. She was so anxious to get the case done, she was ready for anything. She reviewed her reasoning for holding off until the following day as she made her way on foot and by trolley to the Beadie residence. To her, Mr. Beardsley was an unknown value, was he a doting father? If so, if she confronted the family tonight with her proof, there was every possibility that Miss Beardsley would be secreted away during the night. She had put much careful thought into the plan and was convinced it was the right thing to do.

She found both of the Beadie ladies at home. Mrs. Beadie was cooking dinner, so Martha had a chance to speak with Miss Beadie on her own. Within a few minutes, Martha had explained to her all that had happened since they had parted on Tuesday afternoon. Miss Beadie was at first angry that Mr. Topper had so blatantly revealed their secret, but that emotion was soon replaced with shock at the fact that Miss Beardsley had been the real thief. Then Martha explained the plan.

“You understand that the announcement of your engagement will, most likely, have to be made?”

“But, I...”

“No, there is no “but” at this time. Had your engagement been known, none of this could have happened. Miss Beardsley must some how know about your hesitation and has acted upon it.”

Jeannie visibly swallowed then nodded.

“Good,” Martha said with some little exasperation, “I believe you should not have your mother be the last to know. You really ought to tell her tonight.”

Just as Mrs. Beadie came into the room Jeannie was folding up the paper on which she had signed her own name and address and was handing it to Martha.

“Ma’am, this matter should be all cleared up by midday tomorrow. Good evening.”

“Thank you, Miss. Good night.”

The night seemed much cooler than when Martha had left the Beadie home just three days before. She strolled along peaceably reviewing again and again the scenario she would encounter the following day.

The next morning waxed bright and hot and beautifully clear. From her bedroom window, Martha admired the golden rolling hills to the northeast and did her best to keep herself focused. At 8:50 she left for Mr. Martini’s pawn shop. It was only fifteen minutes from her house by street car, and thirty by walking, but she didn’t want to be late for her rendezvous there at 9:30. By 9:33, with the shop book under her arm, she had left the shop. Mr. Martini was reluctant to let go of the book until the very end, but Martha persuaded him it was for the best.

At 9:57 she had reached the shade tree that she had stood underneath just the Tuesday before. At 10:06, she saw that Mr. Topper was arriving with Mr. Beardsley. He was driving an automobile, which she had not been expecting, but she had expected him to arrive early. She hurried up the drive to the Beardsley’s front door. She had it in her mind to be sitting in the parlour by the time Mr. Beardsley and Mr. Topper came in. As she waited for the door to be answered, she allowed herself a moment of worry. What if either of the ladies was not present? What if both had gone out?

Her fears were allayed as quick as they had come when Miss Beardsley herself answered the door. “Oh, it’s you again,” said Miss Beardsley with no attempt at politeness.

“Good morning, is your mother in? I would like to speak with her.”

Martha could see the girl hesitating. Martha was sure she was on the verge of slamming the door in her face when Mrs. Beardsley called out, “Who is it dear?”

“The lady detective.” Miss Beardsley looked daggers at Martha as she allowed her in. In the parlour, Martha and Mrs. Beardsley made their greetings and as Martha took a seat, the two gentlemen she had been expecting came in.

“Good morning Stanwyck,” said Mrs. Beardsley before turning to her husband, “Dear, I didn’t expect you this morning,”

“Stan insisted he bring me here, but wouldn’t let on what it was about.” All three Beardsleys looked at Mr. Topper for an answer.

Martha sat unobserved during the exchange. Mr. Beardsley was a tall, athletic looking man of about 55. Well-groomed, and imposing, there was something about him that made Martha feel as if she were looking at a brick wall. A small amount of nervousness came over her then, but it was far too late to back out from the plan.

Mr. Topper squirmed for a few seconds as everyone looked at him, but then took control of himself, “I believe Miss Vangle has something she would like to tell us.”

Martha felt everyone’s attention on her like a spotlight. “Who is this?” asked Mr. Beardsley. Mrs. Beardsley introduced Martha. “What have you got to say?”

“I would like to present to you a story of how I believe the theft of your wife’s broach took place.” She paused. Mr. Beardsley looked at her long and hard, but she did not look away from him. She had dealt with her mother’s bullying for so long, she could withstand anything.

“Very well,” he said, taking a seat, “let’s hear it.” Mr. Topper sat next to him. Miss Beardsley, who had been ignored, was the last one standing. She nervously looked about her before taking a seat next to her mother.

“Thank you, and I would appreciate it if you would let me tell my story to the end.” said Martha. She took a deep breath and began. “A week ago yesterday, Mrs. Beardsley retrieved from her jewelers her emerald broach. She brought it home and took it to her dressing room where she left it on the bureau. She meant to put it in the safe, but forgot to do so before dinner. The only people on the second floor during this time were the family and the housemaid, Jeannie Beadie. After dinner, Miss Beardsley asked to see the broach and went with her mother to the dressing room. The broach was not to be found. The next morning, while both Miss Beardsley and Jeannie were away from the house, Mrs. Beardsley had her driver look behind the bureau. When the broach could not be found, Miss Beardsley and Mrs. Beardsley decided that it was stolen and that the thief must be the housemaid and called the police.”

“Of course it was her, we found the pawn ticket,” Miss Beardsley burst out. After one look from her father, she was again silent.

“Now, a few days later a pawn ticket was found in the pocket of the housemaid’s spare apron, although the apron she had been wearing during that morning went with her to jail. The pawn took place during the 9 o’clock hour when both Miss Beardsley and the housemaid were absent from the house.”

“We know all the facts Miss, will you get to the point?” said Mr. Beardsley. Mr. Topper looked at him pleadingly, but he did not see.

“Certainly, I wanted to present all the facts, so that we are all agreed. Does everyone agree?” Martha looked at each Beardsley and each nodded in their own fashion. “Thank you. Now, other than the pawn ticket, the case against Jeannie Beadie is hearsay and I would like to fill in the blanks for you with another person’s name.”

“On the evening of that Thursday, after the housemaid had gone home, Miss Beardsley saw that her mother had left her heirloom broach on her bureau. At that time, before dinner, she took it and hid it in her own room.”

“I did not!” Mr. Beardsley held up a hand to his daughter and she shut up again, but Martha could see how hard it was for her to keep her tongue.

“After dinner, she mentioned the broach to her mother to bring her attention to the fact that it was no longer on her bureau. They decided to ask the driver to move the furnishing the next day in case it had fallen behind. Miss Beardsley left the house at 9 the next morning, ostensibly for a dress fitting. However, at that time she made her way to Martini’s Fine Wares on First Street and Spring Street between your office and the Broadway Department Store, and hocked her mother’s broach, signing Jeannie Beadie’s name and giving a false address in the shop’s pawn record. After returning home and convincing her mother that the housemaid was the only suspect, she arranged for Jeannie Beadie’s arrest. After the housemaid was taken away, Miss Beardsley put the pawn ticket in the housemaid’s spare apron.”

“That is the story that I have determined is the true one.” Martha said to the room at large. Miss Beardsley was bright red and looked ready to spit nails. Mrs. Beardsley looked confused, while Mr. Beardsley’s face had become even more severe. Only Mr. Topper looked at her with complete support.

“That is a very strong allegation you make towards my daughter. I certainly hope you can produce evidence to that effect.”

“Yes, but first let me have you understand my reasoning on three points. The pawn ticket in the clean apron, the location of the pawn shop, and the false address given in the pawn shop record book. Let me start with that one. If

Miss Beadie signed her own name, why would she then give a false address. The address written in the record is 26 Menlo Avenue.”

“The Mortimer’s,” said Mrs. Beardsley.

“Is that who it belongs to? I only saw that it was a house address in your neighborhood. I believe Miss Beardsley signed Miss Beadie’s name, but did not know her address and wrote down the first one that came to her.” Martha paused. Mr. Beardsley nodded for her to continue, while his daughter was rapidly turning pale. “I believe the location of the pawn shop speaks for itself. Miss Beadie lives close to two or three shops, while Miss Beardsley would have seen Martini’s had she traveled between your offices and Broadway’s. And the first item I mentioned, the pawn ticket in the apron. Why would Miss Beadie put the ticket in the spare apron? Wouldn’t she want to keep it close to her? Even closer than an apron pocket really. And why would she leave it in a place that the people she presumably stole from could find it?”

“Yes, but perhaps she was trying to hide the ticket before being arrested,” interjected Mr. Beardsley.

“In that case, why not destroy the ticket? It was the only thing that linked her to the pawn shop. As there was no money found on her, nothing that could prove she sold it or pawned it, so why the ticket?”

“Interesting,” said Mr. Beardsley, “but you said you have evidence. This is all circumstantial.”

“No, I believe the false address is not circumstantial.” Mr. Beardsley nodded conceding the point. Miss Beardsley grasped herself about the elbows and hunched over, looking much smaller than usual “But I do have physical evidence.” Here Miss Beardsley looked up sharply.

“It’s a lie. I didn’t do it,” she said this so weakly, her father didn’t even attempt to admonish her.

Martha pulled from her bag two pieces of paper. She opened up the book, which sat before her on the coffee table, to the entry from the week before. She turned the book around to face Mr. and Mrs. Beardsley. Mrs. Beardsley leaned forward and then gasped slightly as she recognized the handwriting.

“I apologize Miss Beardsley,” Martha said to the girl, “But the letter you received on Wednesday offering entry into a raffle was sent to you under false pretenses.” Here Martha produced the girl’s reply as well as Jeannie Beadie’s sample of writing.

“As you can see, both names have the same three letters at the beginning which would have made it hard for Miss Beardsley to disguise. Habit will always win out in handwriting.”

“I believe, ma’am, that you have made your point. Anne, what have you to say for yourself.”

Miss Beardsley sat crunched up with her balled fists tucked under her arms. She rocked back and forth a few times.

Mr. Topper, who had sat as silent witness to the unfolding events, said quietly, “How long have you known about me and Jeannie?”

With a cry of rage, Miss Beardsley jumped up and pointed at him accusingly. “How could you? She’s a servant, a maid. Why her?” Mrs. Beardsley got up to try to placate her daughter, but was roughly pushed away. “She doesn’t deserve it. Why should you marry her?”

“Enough!” Mr. Beardsley stood up. Miss Beardsley still stood, but now silent and shaking with anger. He turned to look at Mr. Topper. “What have you to say?”

“Jeannie and I are engaged. The only reason I haven’t married her yet is because she was concerned that you would disown me for it.”

“He should,” said Miss Beardsley bitterly.

“No more from you, girl,” said Mr. Beardsley. “Do you think I would Stan?”

“No,” Mr. Topper replied, “I don’t think you would, but I also think its more important to marry the one I love.”

“You’re right there. And of course I wouldn’t disown you. As for who you marry, that is entirely up to you. I would have liked for you to marry Anne, but now am wholly ashamed that I wished that. As my daughter does not seem to remember, but that I remember everyday, my father was only a poor lout until he made his money.” Martha was struck by the strength of kindness that surfaced in Mr. Beardsley. His wall seemed to have crumbled a bit and he had become quite gentle. He turned to Martha then, “What should we do now?”

“I believe a trip to the police would be in order to drop the charges against Miss Beadie.”

“Yes, of course. Anne, please get your things, you will accompany me to the police station.”

Miss Beardsley left with a stiff-gaited rage. Not one tear had that girl shed through the entire humiliating experience. Whatever else was wrong with Miss Beardsley, the girl had her father’s strength of character.

“Mr. Topper, would you like to come with me to relate the news to Miss Beadie? Perhaps you could drive?”

“Yes, of course yes,” he looked to Mr. Beardsley who had stepped across the room to comfort his wife. “Is that alright with you?”

“Yes, yes, go on with you.” He held Mrs. Beardsley by the arm and had his arm around her shoulder.

“I’m sorry that I had to do that to you Mrs. Beardsley,” Martha said suddenly feeling very sorry for the whole family.

“Nonsense, it was not your fault.” Mrs. Johns came into the room, the bell must have been rung, and was surprised to see the state of upset.

“What’s happened? Has someone died?”

“No, no, Mrs. Johns. Mrs. Beardsley will explain it to you, but for now could you call Bill to pull the car around. Anne and I will be gone for awhile and I would appreciate it if you would sit with her.”

“Of course,” Mrs. Johns hurried out. The teary eyed Mrs. Beardsley was sitting down once again and Mr. Beardsley ushered Mr. Topper and Martha to the door.

“Stan, tell your young lady that I’m truly sorry for this and that I look forward to meeting her under better circumstances. Oh, and I’ll let the office know that you won’t be in for the rest of the day.” Mr. Topper opened the door for Martha, but Mr. Beardsley wasn’t finished, “Miss Vangle, thank you for clearing this matter up. If only you could had taken up a position in the legal profession.”

“I am part of the legal profession, sir, of a sort. And as for the lady who would make a good lawyer, I think you need to look no further than your daughter. A clever girl like that needs to have something constructive to do with her time.” Martha held out her hand, “It was nice to meet you, sir, and I hope to meet again, as you say, under better circumstances.”

They shook hands like old friends and Martha and Mr. Topper left. They made it to Jeannie’s house in record time. Martha, not used to riding in automobiles, about had the life scared out of her on several turns.

The Beadie ladies must have been waiting, for as Mr. Topper pulled up next to the house, Jeannie Beadie was running down the stairs and Mrs. Beadie was right behind her.

“All clear,” Mr. Topper said taking Jeannie into his arms. Mrs. Beadie clapped with joy. Mr. Topper released Miss Beadie and stood looking at Mrs. Beadie, both of them suddenly awkward. Martha had forgotten that they had never met each other before, but she was glad to see that Mrs. Beadie at least knew to expect Jeannie’s young man.

Martha broke the silence, “It was Miss Beardsley all along. I’ve confronted her parents with the facts that I dug up and Mr. Beardsley is taking her to the police station to make her confession.”

Mrs. Beadie clapped again and came over to embrace Martha. “Thank you so much for clearing my girl. I can’t thank you enough.” Miss Beadie and Mr. Topper, both beaming, stood holding hands and saying their thanks as well.

“It was truly my pleasure Mrs. Beadie,” said Martha, “Now, I must be off to return this book to Mr. Martini,” the ladies looked at her quizzically. “The pawn broker. Mr. Topper can explain everything. Goodbye and I hope to see you all again very soon.”

Martha made her way back to the pawn shop and gave the record book to a very relieved Mr. Martini. His original convivialness returned upon hearing the whole story concerning the theft and the happy ending it engendered.

Martha was on top of the world as she returned to her office. The day’s heat was already stifling, but it didn’t matter. She had solved her first case and solved it well. A happy couple was united and a jealous girl set in her place.

As Martha sat behind her desk, thinking over everything that had happened, she said aloud to no one, “What a week.”

After finishing writing up the details in her casebook, Martha realized that she hadn’t eaten and was quite ravenous. Even though it was late in the afternoon, she thought she would get a bite to eat. She was getting ready to go, when the door to her office opened. Jeannie Beadie and Stanwyck Topper stepped in. They had lost none of their happiness in the intervening hours.

“I didn’t expect to see you both again so soon,” Martha said shaking hand with both of them.

“I wanted to make sure you were paid right away.” Mr. Topper pulled out his billfold.

“Mother is so excited, she had to take a tonic and lie down.” She beamed up at Mr. Topper, “We’ve set a date next week to get married.”

Mr. Topper handed Martha an envelope bearing the law firm’s name. “We would love for you to join us for the celebration. We haven’t figured out where it will be yet.” He looked at Jeannie Beadie as if that was the best the world had to offer.

“I’d be glad too.”

“Thanks again Miss Vangle. This time last week, I didn’t think I could ever be this happy,” said Miss Beadie only tearing her eyes away from Mr. Topper for the briefest of seconds.

“I was glad to help. And thank you, Mr. Topper for such a quick payment.”

“Of course.”

With a few more cheery words the happy couple was off and Martha was eagerly opening up the envelope. She hadn’t mentioned to Mr. Topper what were her rates, so she was hoping that she wouldn’t have to bill him for the extra.

When she saw the amount on the check, she found she had to sit down. She hadn't quite figured out what she would charge for her week's worth of work, but thought that thirty or thirty five dollars would be reasonable. The check on the desk before her, signed by Mr. Beardsley, was in the amount of one hundred dollars.

A swelling of pride rose up in Martha. A bit of pride that erased much of the self-doubt and inner criticisms that plagued her business enterprise. She could do it, she thought, she could really be a lady detective.