

## Peril in Pasadena

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Dorothy Henderson believed Lila Baldwin's story of sabotage at the California Institute of Technology, despite the woman's curly blond hair and drop-waist dress. She didn't look much like Dot's idea of a scientist.

"Who do you believe is tampering with your instruments?" Dot's partner Ruth Skinner asked as she looked up from her notepad in the office of the HS Agency, housed in the parlor of the Pasadena house Dot and Ruth shared.

"I'm not sure, Miss Skinner," Miss Baldwin said. "One fellow is particularly jealous because I'm a lady. He thinks the gentler sex should be confined to the home."

Ruth held up a hand. "I think we'd better proceed on a first-name basis. Please call me Ruth, and this is Dot."

Dot nodded her approval. Ruth, who'd grown up in undeveloped South Dakota, was often inclined to dispense with the niceties of conventional etiquette. Dot, raised in stolid Indianapolis, found she quite enjoyed doing the same.

"And I'm Lila. Using first names is quite modern." Their new client beamed. "I like the way you ladies operate. Anyway, the jealous fellow's a clerk for the institute. You'd think he was living in the last century instead of two days away from 1920."

Dot snorted. "What's his name?"

"Hiram Colby. Fancies himself a Mount Wilson astronomer like I am," Lila said. "And Mr. Owen Miller, assistant to the big cheese, seems to be scheming to get rid of me because I'm female."

Ruth jotted down that name, too. "What kind of instruments do you use, and what does the tampering consist of?" She pushed her cheaters back up her nose, which was as pert and petite as the rest of her.

Lila looked from Ruth to Dot and back. "It's hard to explain if you aren't in the field. Neither of you is a scientist, I wager."

"Indeed, we aren't." Dot had been about to be an English major at Cal when she'd fled an abusive man and driven away in one of her family's automobiles. She'd met little Ruth, who could shoot as well as she could bake, when they'd worked together to solve the murder of an abused woman. Ruth, five years older and wise about the world, and Dot had discovered a knack

for investigating. They'd opened an agency to help women out of jams small and large—and to bring their attackers to justice.

"Certain numbers were altered in my report." Lila frowned. "One of my delicately calibrated instruments had been roughly handled. Additional odd things have happened. Other men resent my hiring despite my Vassar degree and my Harvard experience. Mr. Colby is the worst."

Dot crossed one long trousered leg over the other. She peered out the window at the San Gabriel Mountains rising close in front of them. Mount Wilson, a majestic snow-tipped peak of nearly six thousand feet, topped them off. It housed the newly installed solar telescope and an observatory. "Do you work up there?"

"I'm the only lady scientist around," Lila said with a wry pull to her mouth. "I sometimes venture up the mountain, but I perform most of my work down here in the valley." She leaned forward. "Tell me, will you take my case? This is my dream job. It's going to ruin my career if I'm made to look like a sloppy researcher."

Dot glanced at her partner and inclined her head.

"We'd be happy to," Ruth said.

Lila opened her beaded handbag, pulling out a thick wad of bills. She handed Ruth four of them. "Will this be enough to get started?"

Ruth stared at the money. Dot covered her amusement with her hand. She'd grown up never wanting for a thing, but she knew her friend wasn't accustomed to handling large sums. Ruth handed Dot the money without speaking, then jotted down a receipt for Lila.

"We need to know where Mr. Colby lives," Dot said. "And we'll want a tour of the institute."

"He lives in a boardinghouse over on Del Mar not far from Cal Tech," Lila said. "Why don't you come to the institute at six today? Most people will have left, and my work will be done until tomorrow. I can show you around."

"An excellent idea," Dot said.

Ruth sat back and folded her hands in her lap. "Do you feel safe, Lila? You believe your work is threatened, but is your person in peril, as well?"

Dot cocked her head. Good for Ruth. The stakes were considerably higher if Lila's life was at risk.

The astronomer's mouth formed an O. "Gracious, Ruth. Do you mean...?" Her voice trailed off.

"In my experience, some men will stop at nothing to make their world into what they want it to be." Ruth shrugged. "I can train you to shoot and advise you on an appropriate ladies' weapon to purchase, if you wish."

"That might not be necessary." Dot summoned her most reassuring voice. "Still, we always advise our clients to take caution with their whereabouts. It's only prudent."

#

Dot walked Lila outside and said goodbye, then lit a cigarette and sank onto the top step to think. Ruth detested the smell of gaspers indoors.

Mr. Furuni tended his prize roses. Dot had kept on the Japanese gardener at the house the ladies rented from Dot's uncle.

"I don't know how you produce such beautiful blooms, Mr. Furuni," Dot said. Blossoms large and small in reds, pinks, whites, and yellows bloomed all around the borders of the yard.

"Thank you," he said. "You know they all go away tomorrow, *hai*?"

“For the Festival of Roses on Thursday.” The annual parade on January first, with elaborate floats and automobiles decked out in roses, was not something to be missed. The gardener had said he’d always donated her uncle’s roses to the parade and asked for her permission to continue.

“It’s very beautiful,” he said in his accented English.

A teenaged girl hurried down the sidewalk.

“Hello, Kay.” Dot greeted Mr. Furuni’s daughter, fresh from Pasadena High School by the looks of her white middie top, her dark tie and pleated skirt, and her book bag.

“Hi, Miss Henderson.” The girl waved, then went to her father’s side. “I’m sorry I’m late, *O-toh-san*.” She gave a little bow, then tossed back her black bob.

“Put down your books and help prune, *Keiko-chan*.”

The girl, who had adopted an American nickname, obediently laid her satchel on the walkway and picked up a pair of pruners. The bush she selected was next to the stoop where Dot sat.

In a soft voice, Kay asked, “Was that a new client I saw leaving?”

“Why, yes.”

“What’s the case?”

Dot blew smoke out of the side of her mouth. “She’s a scientist and thinks someone is tampering with her work.”

The girl’s expression brightened. “Miss Henderson, you know I aspire to become a policewoman. Won’t you please let me assist with this case?”

Dot regarded her. Kay had been asking to help ever since Dot and Ruth had hung out their shingle. The girl was sixteen, intelligent, and lively. Why not?

“Sure. I hope Miss Skinner and I can solve Miss Baldwin’s mystery.”

“Lily Baldwin?” Kay’s voice rose. “The lady astronomer?”

“The very same. You know of her?”

Kay glanced up at Mount Wilson with a starry look. “I read about her in the newspaper, and I’ve dreamed of meeting her. Oh, please introduce us.”

“We do have a plan to tour the institute with her at six today. Maybe you could—”

Mr. Furuni appeared at his daughter’s side, looking stern as only a father can. “*Musume*, I heard your talk of wanting to join the police. You will not, do you understand? Your late mother would not approve.”

“I’ve changed my mind, Daddy.”

He winced at the American moniker.

“I want to be an astronomer. Miss Henderson is working with a famous lady scientist. I want so badly to meet her.” She gazed at the gardener with wide, innocent eyes. “Miss Henderson said I might accompany her and Miss Skinner on a visit to the California Institute of Technology this evening.”

His expression softened. “Very well, *Keiko-chan*. Miss Henderson, you will see her home safely?”

Dot smiled. “I’ll drive her there myself.”

#

With Ruth to her right and Kay bubbling with excitement in the back seat, Dot pulled up to the impressive Throop Hall on California Boulevard at a few minutes before six. The domed three-story building, where they were to meet Lila in the foyer, stood alone on a parcel of land not a mile from the agency. The sun had set an hour earlier, and an ascending full moon made the

white stucco glow and lit up the mountains behind the building. Illumination spilled out from windows on the main floor.

Ruth pointed to an older-model Ford police wagon parked in front. She frowned at Dot. "I have a bad feeling about this."

"It might be nothing," Dot said. "Or Lila might need our help. Let's go see what's what."

Ruth bobbed her head. "Come along, Kay, but stick close to us."

"Yes, Miss Skinner."

As the three approached the broad front doors, two men emerged. One was a trim gentleman in his fifties wearing a three-piece suit and bow tie. The younger one wore a police uniform, with a wide belt around the waist of his hip-length jacket.

Bow Tie stopped short. "Ladies, may I help you?"

Dot stepped forward. "We're here to see Miss Lila Baldwin. She invited us to take a tour of the institute. I'm Miss Dorothy Henderson." She extended her gloved hand.

The man pursed his lips and shook her hand briefly. "This is most irregular." He turned to the officer. "Detective Ramirez?"

The dark-haired detective regarded Dot. "How do you know Miss Baldwin?"

She gestured to Ruth. "Miss Ruth Skinner and I operate the HS Agency. We're private investigators."

Ramirez frowned.

"Miss Baldwin came to us this afternoon asking to engage our services," Ruth said, clasping her hands in front of her.

"Regarding what?" asked Bow Tie, who still hadn't introduced himself.

"I'm afraid that information is confidential," Ruth demurred.

"Who's this girl with you?" Ramirez asked.

"She's our assistant, Miss Kay Furuni," Dot answered quickly.

Kay's eyebrows raised, but she nodded. Ruth stifled a laugh. Dot had seen the look of distaste on both men's faces when they gazed at the girl. Sure, she was of Japanese heritage. What of it?

"Is there a problem, gentlemen?" Dot asked.

"You could say that." Ramirez continued to frown.

The doors opened again. A young lady about Dot's age in a stylish tan coat pushed through, followed by a small woman wearing a service dress under a sweater, a handbag hanging over her arm. She looked Japanese, like Kay. The woman's eyes flickered when she saw Kay, then she focused on a spot of pavement in front of her.

"Father, that policeman in there said I have to skidoo, and Mrs. Takahashi must stop her cleaning." The American girl addressed Bow Tie. "It's phonus balonus. Do I truly have to go?" When she set fists on hips, her coat fell open to reveal a red and gray striped dress.

The detective cleared his throat. "Yes, Miss Miller. You need to leave, as does Mrs. Takahashi. Everyone must clear the building."

Bow Tie must be Owen Miller, the one who didn't like Lila.

Ramirez went on. "I'm afraid Lila Baldwin has been found dead."

#

"That certainly wasn't what we expected for our evening outing," Ruth said in a somber tone as Dot drove away from the institute.

Kay had asked if they could give the cleaning lady a lift home, saying Takahashi-san lived near her. The two murmured softly in their shared language in the back seat.

“No, it wasn’t,” Dot agreed. “Poor Lila. She was right to be worried. Do you think she had any clue her life was in danger?”

“No. You saw her reaction when I suggested she arm herself. What a pity she didn’t come to us earlier.” Ruth patted the handbag in her lap.

For as long as Dot had known Ruth, her purse had held a Remington derringer, no matter where she went, even to her beloved Baptist church.

Dot gripped the wheel as it shuddered over rough pavement. “I think we owe it to Lila to figure out who killed her, don’t you?” For that was what the detective had gone on to say. Lila’s death was not a natural one, and she hadn’t done herself in, either. “She did pay us, after all.”

“Good heavens, Dorothy. We should send that money back to her family. Surely Mr. Miller has their address.”

Dot glanced at her scrupulously moral partner. “Ruthie, anybody who pulls out a wad of bucks like that has greenbacks to spare. When we crack the case, those bills are going into the HS Agency operating coffers.”

Ruth scrunched her button nose. “Very well. In that case, our only path is to find the scoundrel who saw fit to end Lila’s life.”

“What did you think of the daughter?”

“A caricature of a spoiled rich girl. She nearly stamped her precious foot when the detective told her she had to leave,” Ruth said.

“And she wasn’t a bit broken up about Lila’s death.”

“I wonder what she was doing there, anyway.”

“We’ll draw up questions to ask Ramirez in the morning.” Dot slowed to peer at a sign. “Is this it, Kay?”

“*Migi*,” Mrs. Takahashi said.

“Yes, turn right,” Kay confirmed.

“Hiram Colby didn’t seem to be around Cal Tech this evening,” Ruth murmured.

“True,” Dot agreed. “We’ll look for him in the boardinghouses on Del Mar tomorrow.”

“I think Mr. Bow Tie Miller might bear investigating, as well.”

Dot smiled to herself. One could hardly dream up a better partner than Ruth. Despite their different personalities, talents, and statures, they frequently found their thoughts traveling similar paths. Dot hoped her business venture with Ruth would last a good long time.

Kay leaned over the back of the front seat. “Her house is there.” She pointed to a tiny bungalow.

Dot pulled to the curb.

“Thank you very much,” the woman said in a strong accent like Kay’s father’s. She climbed out and bowed from the waist, one hand flat atop the other in front of her skirt.

“You have a good night, ma’am,” Ruth called out.

Mrs. Takahashi bowed again, then shuffled toward her house.

After Dot pulled away, Kay said, “That detective needs to interview her. She hears secrets at work. Miller and his type? They think we’re all a bunch of ignorant foreigners, and that she’s invisible. But Takahashi-*san* understands English perfectly well.”

#

“Thank you for coming, Miss Henderson.” Ramirez’s desk chair creaked mightily at nine-thirty the next morning as he sat. He pulled out a notebook and a well-worn pencil. He’d telephoned at eight, asking Dot to call on him.

Dot crossed her legs at the ankle, smoothing down the skirt of her favorite green suit. She quite preferred the new loose slacks, but a police interview demanded a certain standard.

“Last evening Miss Skinner said she couldn’t reveal the content of your meeting with Miss Baldwin,” he began. “The scientist has been murdered, and we are in private. I need to know the victim’s concerns.”

“Very well.” Dot was obliged, of course, to reveal what they’d talked about. “But first I’d like to know how she was killed.”

“Normally I couldn’t reveal that. But this case is already hotter than the Mojave Desert in September. The institute’s founder is putting pressure on the department to solve it, and fast. Mr. Hale has a lot of influence in Pasadena.” He tented his fingers. “Miss Baldwin was stabbed in the neck with the very sharp point of a drafting compass.”

“An instrument astronomers would have at hand. This murder might not have been planned.” A chill ran through Dot. The poor woman.

“Precisely.”

“When she met with us,” Dot began, “Miss Baldwin didn’t feel her life was in peril. She worried only for her scientific reputation. She told us it seemed someone was out to make her research look shoddy. She wasn’t going to stand for it.”

“Did she suspect anyone?”

“She mentioned a clerk named Hiram Colby. He resides in a boardinghouse on Del Mar.”

“Anyone else?”

“She also named Owen Miller, saying he didn’t like her because of her sex. Thinking he was scheming to get rid of her, she hired us to investigate. Showing us around the institute was going to be the first step.”

“Interesting.” He leaned back in his chair.

“Detective, you should interview the cleaning lady, Mrs. Takahashi.”

“Oh? You think she had a hand in Miss Baldwin’s death?” He crossed his arms. “Some of these Orientals...”

“Of course not!” Dot glared. “We gave her a ride home last night. Our assistant told us people like Miller reveal attitudes and secrets in front of Mrs. Takahashi because they don’t think she understands English. But she does.”

“Did she tell the girl anything specific?”

“Miss Furuni said she hadn’t. You’ll need her to translate Mrs. Takahashi’s responses, though, and Kay attends Pasadena High School until the afternoon.”

“So noted. Where does this Takahashi lady live?”

“On West Green Street.”

“Very well.” He tapped his pencil on the desk. “We’ll need to look within the institute, and perhaps this lady can help us.”

#

Dot had checked the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph directory earlier. Now she rang the bell at the only boardinghouse on Del Mar near Cal Tech. A robust woman in an apron opened the door and gave Dot the once over.

“I hope you’re not wanting a room, miss. We’re full up, and it’s not the kind of place a fine lady like yourself should be lodging.”

“No. I’m looking to speak with a Hiram Colby.” She hoped he was in, with the institute still shut down.

“He’s here, all right, moping about. He went into work and came straightaway back.” The proprietor glanced behind her and leaned forward. “I hope that dewdropper hasn’t lost his job. He’s behind on the rent as it is. The man gambles away a perfectly good salary.” She shook her head, *tsking* at the thought.

“He went to work as usual yesterday?”

The woman bobbed her head.

“What time did he return home?”

“It was well past dark, and he missed supper by a long shot. Must have been after eight by time he showed his face. You can ask him. Will you step in, miss?”

“Thank you, ma’am, but I’ll wait here.”

A minute later a thin, spectacled gent in shirtsleeves and suspenders appeared. “You wanted to see me, miss?” He rubbed his fingers together in a nervous gesture.

“Mr. Colby.” Dot clasped her hands. “My name is Miss Henderson. I’m a private investigator looking into the death of Lila Baldwin. You worked with her?”

He gaped. “You’re...what, now? Miss Baldwin kicked off?”

“I’m afraid so. The institute didn’t inform you?”

“Lordy, no. I went in this morning, but some copper at the door turned me away, wouldn’t say why.” Hiram squinted at her. “Wait a second. If you’re a private gumshoe, that means somebody popped the kitten.”

Dot nodded. “Would you have any idea who might have been responsible?”

“No. No.” He clamped his lips together and shook his head fast and hard. A sly look came over his face. “Well, if you’re paying, I might have a thought or two.”

She straightened her spine and smiled politely. “An interest in justice being served should be adequate recompense, sir.”

He made *pshu* sound. “Doesn’t pay the bills, though, does it?”

“I’ll be going, then. Thank you for your time.” She half turned.

“Hang on, lady.” His tone was gruff. “You oughta look into that Nettie Miller. She’s been scheming to ditch Miss Baldwin since day one. Just like her old man.”

#

Dot swallowed a bite of pound cake in a kitchen redolent with the aroma of sweet baked goods. Ruth slid hot sugar cookies onto a piece of brown paper to cool. She turned off the oven and sat across from Dot, polishing her glasses with a handkerchief.

“You’ve outdone yourself, Ruthie.”

Dot’s petite partner was all steel with a gun, but when she was thinking furiously, she’d said there was nothing for it but to bake. Tall, hollow-legged Dot was the beneficiary.

Ruth batted away the compliment. “What did you learn?”

“Poor Lila was stabbed with a compass. The arc-drawing kind.” Dot ticked points off on her fingers. “Colby didn’t get home until eight that night. He says Nettie Miller has been gunning for Lila for some time.”

“Good work. I could have been out nailing down alibis instead of baking. I did a portion of thinking, instead. Lila told us Miller didn’t like her, so he must not have been the one to hire her. But we need to find out why he was against her. Unless...”

“Unless it’s because Nettie wanted Lila’s job?”

“Right.” Ruth nibbled on a cookie.

“Colby’s finances are a train wreck because he gambles.” Dot flipped through the *Pasadena Star-News*. “Look, there was a prize fight last evening. If someone can vouch for him being at it, we could eliminate him, despite what Lila said.”

“Surely the good detective is checking the whereabouts of these characters,” Ruth said.

“One would hope so.” Dot folded the paper. “The daughter bears looking into.”

“And Miller, himself, but how?”

The doorbell at the front chimed. Ruth glanced down at her batter-smearred apron.

“I’ll answer it,” Dot said.

“And I’ll get cleaned up in case it’s a new client.”

Dot hurried into the parlor-office. Through the door’s glass she spied Owen Miller and his daughter, Nettie. Had she and Ruth conjured them here?

Dot pulled open the door. “Good morning, Mr. Miller, Miss Miller.”

“Miss Henderson.” He removed his bowler. “I wonder if I might have a word about a business proposition.”

“Please come in.” Dot gestured toward chairs at the round table and fetched paper and pen before joining them.

Ruth slid into the room and sat, having shed the apron and tidied up her hair and hands.

“You remember my associate, Miss Skinner?” Dot asked.

“Miss Skinner,” Miller said.

Nettie didn’t speak.

“How can we help you?” Ruth gazed at them with a pleasant but businesslike expression.

He gazed past her ear. “We’re concerned about the reputation of our institute, naturally, and I’m not particularly confident in the abilities of that Mexican detective.”

How dare he think poorly of Ramirez because of his heritage? Ruth pressed her lips together. Dot waited to hear what else Miller would say.

“I believe Hiram Colby harbored deep resentment against Miss Baldwin. He might have killed her in order to advance his own prospects.”

“Is he also an astronomer?” Dot asked.

“Self-taught, but he’s fairly knowledgeable.”

“Was he alone with Miss Baldwin on Tuesday evening?” Ruth inquired.

“I suppose. I was in my office, of course.”

Dot jumped in. “Miss Miller, do you also work at Cal Tech?”

Nettie shifted her gaze to her father. “After a fashion, and I’ll be doing more soon.”

A fond look crept over Miller’s face. “She’s smarter than a whip, my girl.”

“I suppose you were studying under Miss Baldwin.” Ruth kept her tone casual.

“I wanted to.” Nettie lifted her sharp chin. “I hate to speak ill of the dead, but Miss Baldwin wasn’t a bit nice to me. She said I needed considerably more training before she’d let me touch her precious instruments.”

Miller slapped both hands on the table. “But that’s neither here nor there, is it? I shall engage your services to investigate Mr. Colby. We need to clear up the matter expeditiously. Mr. Hale isn’t pleased with this turn of events, even from his retirement. We can’t have a death on the premises imperil the future of the institute. Tell me your fee, ladies.”

“As it happens, our agency is already investigating Miss Baldwin’s death. I’m sure the good detective will inform you of our results as soon as we convey them to him.” Dot stood.

“The devil, you say.” Miller scowled up at her.

Ruth rose, as well. “Good day, Mr. Miller, Miss Miller.”



Nettie's nostrils flared, but she followed her blustering father out.

"He's a pompous egg, isn't he?" Dot stared at the door.

"Dorothy, he's a male of the species. Enough said."

"He must not have understood we don't hire ourselves out to men. And Nettie wasn't asking." At the *snick* of Mr. Furuni's clippers outside, Dot cocked her head. "We need to talk to Mrs. Takahashi."

"Her workplace is closed. She'll be at home. I'll meet you at the automobile in a jiff."

Dot donned cloche, coat, and gloves, and slung her handbag over her arm. Outside, the gardener carried a trug of roses to a Ford truck and loaded them into the back. He bowed to the driver before the vehicle drove off.

"Mr. Furuni," Dot said. "Are you finished with the flowers?" The yard was entirely devoid of spots of color.

"*Hai*. They are off to the decorating place."

"Then will you please come with us to see a Mrs. Takahashi? We urgently need a translator. Your daughter knows her, but we can't wait for school to be out."

He blinked. "Takahashi-*san*'s husband and I helped build the Mount Wilson toll road. I will come." He dusted his hands on his work pants.

"Thank you. I'll bring the car around."

#

After removing their shoes at the door—at Mr. Furuni's urging—Ruth and Dot perched on low chairs in Mrs. Takahashi's small sitting room. Mr. Furuni joined his compatriot, who wore an indigo kimono, to sit on a braided rug. Both tucked their feet under them. The spice loaf Ruth had brought as a gift rested on a side table.

Dot spoke directly to Mrs. Takahashi. "If you will, please tell us anything suspicious you saw yesterday afternoon relating to Miss Baldwin's death."

Mrs. Takahashi turned toward Mr. Furuni at the word "suspicious." He murmured something in Japanese.

"Especially concerning Mr. Miller, Miss Miller, or Mr. Colby," Ruth added.

Mrs. Takahashi tilted her head. After she spoke a couple of sentences, Mr. Furuni held up his hand for her to pause.

"She says Mr. Colby wasn't there after four. She saw Miss Baldwin alive after that." He gestured for her to continue.

"Mr. Miller was in his office, second floor," the gardener translated after she next paused. "Never goes down to the lab."

Mrs. Takahashi spoke again, her gaze on Dot and Ruth. Mr. Furuni blinked, as he had back at the house, but otherwise didn't change his expression.

"She saw Nettie Miller in the washroom trying to scrub the skirt of her dress," he murmured. "Her hands were red. Takahashi-*san* saw pink water in the sink."

*Nettie*. Ruth's breath rushed in. Dot exchanged a look with her. Stabbing Lila must have caused blood to spurt out. Maybe Nettie's dress yesterday bore a fresh red stripe?

"What time was that?" Ruth asked.

"Faibu-certy," Mrs. Takahashi answered in a near-whisper. She rattled off another stream of Japanese.

"Five-thirty," Mr. Furuni said. "Miss Miller didn't see Takahashi-*san*. She backed out of the washroom and went to clean the lab, where she found Miss Baldwin."

“I see,” Dot said slowly. Last evening no one had mentioned it was the diminutive cleaning lady who had discovered the body.

A furious knocking came at the door. Mrs. Takahashi inhaled sharply and covered her mouth with her hand.

Dot stood and pulled open the door to see Detective Ramirez and a slender Asiatic man standing behind him.

“Miss Henderson? What are you doing here?”

“Gentlemen.” Dot stood back. “We just heard an eyewitness account you’re going to be extremely interested in.”

#

The rose-bedecked floats crawling down Colorado Boulevard the next morning were a wonder.

“Those are *O-toh-san*’s flowers.” Kay pointed at the Pasadena Woman Suffrage Association float. Standing next to a giant ballot covered in white rose petals, women in white dresses waved. Kay turned to Dot and Ruth. “How did you solve the case so quickly?”

“You said the police should speak with Mrs. Takahashi, but we couldn’t wait for you to translate,” Dot said. She figured the detective, apparently as hardened against Orientals as Miller was against *Californios*, never would have talked to Mrs. Takahashi without Kay’s tip.

“After the detective appeared with a translator, Mrs. Takahashi went on to tell us the terrible, spiteful things Miss Miller said about Lila,” Ruth added. “It was Mrs. Takahashi’s testimony about the daughter trying to cover up the murder that clinched it. Detective Ramirez went straight off to arrest her.”

“*Hai*,” Mr. Furuni affirmed.

Dot had also slipped Ramirez a word about Owen Miller trying to hire them and advised the detective to question him. She suspected Miller might be onto his daughter murdering Lila.