С. *Р. DONNEL, JR.*

RECIPE FOR MURDER

Just as the villa, clamorous with1 flowers, was not what he had expected, so was its owner a new quality in his calcu­lations. Madame Chalon, at forty, fitted no category of mur­derers; she was neither Cleopatra2 nor beldame3. A Minerva4 of a woman, he told himself instantly, whose large, liquid eyes were but a shade lighter than the cobalt blue of the Med­iterranean twinkling outside the tall windows of the salon5 where they sat.

"Dubonnet6, Inspector Miron?" As he spoke, she pre­pared to pour. His reflex of hesitation lit a dim glow of amuse­ment in her eyes, which her manners prevented from straying to her lips.

"Thank you." Annoyed with himself, he spoke forcefully.

Madame Chalon made a small, barely perceptible point of drinking first, as though to say, "Se, M.7 Miron, you are quite safe." It was neat.8 Too neat?

With a tiny smile now: "You have called about my poi­soning of my husbands," she stated flatly.

"Madame!" Again he hesitated, nonplused. "Madame, I ..."

"You must already have visited the Prefecture. All Villefranche believes it," she said placidly.

He adjusted his composure to an official calm. "Madame, I come to ask permission to disinter the body of M. Charles Wesser, deceased January 1939, and M. Etienne Chalon, deceased May 1946, for official analysis of certain organs. You have already refused Sergeant Luchaire of the local station this permission. Why?"

"Luchaire is a type without politeness. I found him re­pulsive. He is, unlike you, without finesse. 9 I refuse the atti­tude of the man, not the law." She raised the small glass to her full lips. "I shall not refuse you, Inspector Miron." Her eyes were almost admiring.

"You are most flattering."

"Because," she continued gently, "I am quite sure, knowing the methods of you Paris police, that the disinter-ment has already been conducted secretly." She waited for his colour to deepen, affecting not to notice the change. "And the analyses," she went on, as though there had been no break, "completed. You are puzzled. You found nothing. So now you, new to the case, wish to estimate me, my character, my capacity for self-control – and incidentally your own chances of maneuvering me into talk that will guide you in the direction of my guilt."

So accurately did these darts strike home10 that it would be the ultimate stupidity11 to deny the wounds. Better a dis­arming frankness,Miron decided quickly. "Quite true, Mad­ame Chalon. True to the letter.12 But – " he regarded her closely – "when one loses two husbands of some age – but not old – to a fairly violent gastric disturbance, each with­in two years of marriage, each of a substantial fortune and leaving all to the widow ... you see ...?"

"Of course." Madame Chalon went to the window, let her soft profile, the grand line of her bosom be silhouetted against the blue water. "Would you care for a full confession, Inspec­tor Miron?" She was very much woman, provocative woman, and her tone, just short of13 caressing, warned Miron to keep a grip on himself.

"If you would care to make one, Madame Chalon," he said, as casually as he could. A dangerous woman. A consumedly dangerous woman.

"Then I shall oblige." Madame Chalon was not smiling. Through the open window a vagrant whiff of air brought him the scent of her. Or was it the scent of the garden? Caution kept his hand from his notebook. Impossible that she would really talk so easily. And yet ...

"You know something of the art of food,M. Miron?"

"I am from Paris, you remember?"

"And love, too?"

"As I said, I am from Paris."

"Then – " the bosom swelled with her long breath – "I can tell you that I, Hortense Eugenie Villerois Wesser Cha­lon, did slowly and deliberately, with full purpose, kill and murder my first husband, M. Wesser, aged 57, and likewise my second, M. Chalon, aged 65."

"For some reason, no doubt." Was this a dream? Or in­sanity?

"M. Wesser I married through persuasion of family. M. Wesser, I learned within a fortnight, was a pig – a pig of insatiable appetites. A crude man, inspector; a belcher,14 a braggart, cheater of the poor, deceiver of the innocent. A gobbler of food, an untidy man of unappetizing habits – in short, with all the revolting faults of advancing age and none of its tenderness or dignity. Also, because of these things, his stomach was no longer strong."

Having gone thoroughly into the matter of M. Wesser in Paris and obtained much the same picture, he nodded. "And M. Chalon?"

"Older – as I was older when I wed him."

With mild irony. "And also with a weak stomach?"

"No doubt. Say, rather a weak will. Perhaps less brutish15 than Wesser. Perhaps, *аи fond16,* worse, for he knew too many among the Germans here. Why did they take pains to see that we had the very best, the most unobtainable of foods and wines, when, daily, children fainted in the street? Murderess I may be, Inspector, but also a Frenchwoman. So I decided without remorse that Chalon should die, as Wesser died."

Very quietly, not to disturb the thread. "How, Madame Chalon?"

She turned, her face illuminated by a smile. "You are familiar, perhaps, with such dishes as *'Dindonneau Forci aux Marrons'? 17* Or *'Supremes de Volaille а l'Indienne'? 17* Or *'Tournedos Mascotte'?17* Or *'Omelette en Surprise a la Napolitaine'?17* Or *'Potage Bagration Gras',17 'Aubergines a la Turque', 17 'Chaud-Froid de Cailles en Belle Vue', 17* or..."

"Stop, Madame Chalon! I am simultaneously ravenous and smothering in food. Such richness of food! Such ..."

"You asked my methods, Inspector Miron. I used these dishes and a hundred others. And in each of them, I concealed a bit of ..." Her voice broke suddenly.

Inspector Miron, by a mighty effort, studied his hand as he finished his Dubonnet. "You concealed a bit of what, Madame Chalon?"

"You have investigated me. You know who was my fa­ther."

"Jean-Marie Villerois, chef18 superb, matchless disciple of the matchless Escoffier. Once called Escoffier's sole worthy successor.''

"Yes. And before I was twenty-two, my father – just before his death – admitted that outside of a certain negligible weakness in the matter of braising,19 he would not. be ashamed to own me as his equal."

"Most interesting. I bow to you." Miron's nerves tighten­ed at this handsome woman's faculty for irrelevancy. "But you said you concealed in each of these incomparable dishes a bit of ..."

Madame Chalon turned her back to him. "A bit of my art, and no more. That and no more, Inspector. The art of Escof-fier, or Villerois. What man like Wesser or Chalon could re­sist? Three, four times a day I fed them rich food of the richest; varied irresistibly. I forced them to gorge to bursting, sleep, gorge again; and drink too much wine that they might gorge still more. How could they, at their ages, live – even as long as they did?"

A silence like the ticking of a far-off clock. Inspector Miron stood up, so abruptly that she started, whirled. She was paler.

"You will come with me to Nice this evening, Madame Chalon."

"To the police station, Inspector Miron?"

"To the Casino,20 Madame Chalon. For champagne and music. We shall talk some more."

"But Inspector Miron...!"

"Listen to me, Madame. I am a bachelor. Of forty-four. Not too bad to look at, I have been told. I have a sum put away. I am not a great catch, but still, not one to be despis­ed." He looked into her eyes. "I wish to die."

"The diets," said Madame Chalon finally and thought­fully, "if used in moderation, are not necessarily fatal. Would you care to kiss my hand, Inspector Miron?"

**notes**

1. ***clamorous with***: full of, abounding in. The suffix ***–ous*** forms adjectives meaning "full of," as in *joyous, enorm­ous, vigorous,* etc.
2. ***Cleopatra*** (69-30 B. C.), daughter of Ptolemy XI, thesixth queen of Egypt by that name, a brilliant, ambi­tious woman of great charm
3. ***beldame***: an ugly, filthy old woman
4. ***Minerva***: the Roman goddess of wisdom; *a Minerva of awoman:* a clever woman
5. ***salon***: a drawing-room
6. ***Dubonnet***: a French aperitif
7. ***M.*** (Fr.): Monsieur
8. ***neat*:** very skilfully done
9. ***finesse*:** skill in dealing with a difficult or delicate sit­uation, so that one gets what one wants without mak­ing people angry
10. ***so accurately did these darts strike home*:** so accurate wasMadame Chalon in stating the purpose of his visit ...
11. ***stupidity*:** the suffix **-*ty*** ***(-ity***, *-ety*) forms abstract nouns,as in *cruelty, necessity,* etc.
12. ***true to the letter*:** true in every detail
13. ***just short of*:** almost, a little less than
14. ***belcher*** *(fig.):* a person given to using violent, obscene language
15. ***brutish*:** like an animal. The adjective-forming suffix ***-ish*** has here the meaning of "having the qualities of", as in *brownish, womanish,* etc.
16. ***au fond*** *(Fr.):* at bottom
17. ***Dindonneau Forci aux Marrons*:** индейка, фарширо­ванная каштанами; ***Supremes de Volaille a l'lndienne*:** котлеты «де-валяй» по-индейски; ***Tournedos Mascotte*:** блюдо «секрет молодости»; ***Omelette en Surprise a la* *Napolitaine*:** омлет с сюрпризом по-неаполитански; ***Potage Bagration Gras*:** суп жирный по-багратионовски; ***Aubergines a la Turque*:** баклажаны по-турецки; ***Chaud-Froid de Cailles en Belle Vue*:** жаркое из пере­пелов
18. ***chef*** *(Fr.):* in full ***chef de cuisine*,** a head-cook
19. ***braise*:** stew in a closed vessel
20. ***casino*:** a public room or building for music, dancing, gambling, entertainments, etc.

***EXERCISES***

**1. Answer the following questions.**

1. How different were both the villa and its owner from what Inspector Miron expected to see? 2. What was Madame Chalon like? 3. What was the nature of the charges against her? 4. How much did Madame Chalon know about the sus­picions of the police? 5. How did she give Inspector Miron to understand that she knew all about the purpose of his vis­it? 6. Why did Madame Chalon think it unnecessary to ref­use the Inspector's request concerning the disinterment of the bodies of her deceased husbands? 7. What did she know of the methods of the Paris police? 8. What confession did she make to the Inspector? 9. How had she got rid of her husbands? 10. Could the method by which she had brought about their deaths be qualified as murder in the true sense of the word? 11. What were Madame Chalon's motives? 12. Why did In­spector Miron decide to marry Madame Chalon? 13. How did she comment the Inspector's statement that he wished to die?

**2. Paraphrase or explain.**

1. His reflex of hesitation lit a dim glow of amusement in her eyes, which her manners prevented from straying to her lips. 2. I refuse the attitude of the man, not the law. 3. So now you, new to the case,wish to estimate me, my character, my self-control — and incidentally your own chances of maneuvering me into talk that will guide you in the direction of my guilt. 4. She was very much woman ... and her tone, just short of caressing, warned Miron to keep a grip on himself. 5. Caution kept his hand from his notebook. 6. M. Wesser I married through persuasion of family. 7. ... my father — just before his death — admitted that outside of a negligible weakness in the matter of braising, he would not be ashamed to own me as his equal. 8. I am not a great catch, but still, not one to be despised. 9. The diets, if used in moderation, are not nec­essarily fatal.

**3. Find in the text the English for**

не входить ни в одну из известных ему категорий преступников; ее глаза засветились насмешкой; недовольный собой; заявить прямо; просить разрешения; произвести эксгумацию; отказать в просьбе; быть озадаченным; оценить свои возможности; обезоруживающая прямота; чистосердеч­ное признание; держать себя в руках; сказать небрежно; осторожность; искусство приготовления пищи; намеренно; по настоянию семьи; ненасытный; хвастун; мошенник; обманщик; отвратительный недостаток; внимательно изу­чить дело; получить примерно ту же картину; кивнуть го­ловой; мягкая ирония; слабая воля; взять на себя труд; угрызения совести; усилием воли; единственный достойный преемник; признать себе равным; повернуться спиной; противостоять; жирная пища