




Dorothy Parker Mysteries

*Agata Stanford*



A  
Moveable  
Feast  
of  
Murder



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of MURDER**



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*For Brenda Bright, who loves a good mystery.*

Also by Agata Stanford

*The Dorothy Parker Mysteries Series:*

***The Broadway Murders***

***Chasing the Devil***

***Mystic Mah Jong***

***Death Rides the Midnight Owl***



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## *Who's Who in the Cast of Dorothy Parker Mysteries*

*The Algonquin Round Table* was the famous assemblage of writers, artists, actors, musicians, newspaper and magazine reporters, columnists, and critics who met for luncheon at one p.m. most days, for a period of about ten years, starting in 1919, in the Rose Room of the Algonquin Hotel on West 44<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. The unwritten test for membership was wit, brilliance, and likeability. It was an informal gathering ranging from ten to fifteen regulars, although many peripheral characters who arrived for lunch only once might later claim they were part of the “Vicious Circle,” broadening the number to thirty, forty, and more. Once taken into the fold, one was expected to indulge in witty repartee and humorous observations during the meal, and then follow along to the Theatre, or a speakeasy, or Harlem for a night of jazz. Gertrude Stein dubbed the Round Tablers “The Lost Generation.” The joyous, if sardonic, reply that rose with a laugh from Dorothy Parker was, “*Wheeee! We’re lost!*”

*Dorothy Parker* set the style and attitude for modern women of America to emulate during the 1920s and 1930s. Through her pointed poetry, cutting

theatrical reviews, brilliant commentary, bitter-sweet short stories, and much-quoted rejoinders, Mrs. Parker was the embodiment of the soulful pathos of the “Ain't We Got Fun” generation of the Roaring Twenties.

**Robert Benchley:** Writer, humorist, boulevardier, and bon vivant, editor of *Vanity Fair* and *Life Magazine*, and drama critic of *The New Yorker*, he may accidentally have been the very first standup comedian. His original and skewed sense of humor made him a star on Broadway, and later, in the movies. What man didn't want to *be* Bob Benchley?

**Alexander Woollcott** was the most famous man in America—or so he said. As drama critic for the *New York Times*, he was the star-maker, discovering and promoting the careers of Helen Hayes, Katherine Cornell, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, and the Marx Brothers, to name but a few. Larger than life and possessing a rapier wit, he was a force to be reckoned with. When someone asked a friend of his to describe Woollcott, the answer was, “Improbable.”

**Frank Pierce Adams (FPA)** was a self-proclaimed modern-day Samuel Pepys, whose newspaper

column, “The Conning Tower,” was a widely read daily diary of how, where, and with whom he spent his days while gallivanting about New York City. Thanks to him, every witty retort, clever comment, and one-liner uttered by the Round Tablers at luncheon was in print the next day for millions of readers to chuckle over at the breakfast table.

**Harold Ross** wrote for *Stars and Stripes* during the War, where he first met fellow newspapermen Woollcott and Adams. The rumples, “clipped woodchuck” (as described by Edna Ferber) was one of the most brilliant editors of his time. His magazine, *The New Yorker*, which he started in 1925, has enriched the lives of everyone who has ever had a subscription. His hypochondria was legendary, and his the-world-is-out-to-get-me outlook was often comical.

**Jane Grant** married Harold Ross but kept her maiden name, cut her hair shorter than her husband’s, and viewed domesticity with disdain. A society columnist for the *New York Times*, Jane was the very chic model of modernity during the 1920s. Having worked hard for women’s suffrage, Jane continued in her cause while serving meals and emptying ashtrays during all-night sessions of the Thanatopsis Literary and Inside Straight Club.

**Heywood Broun** began his career at numerous newspapers throughout the country before landing a spot on the *World*. Sportswriter and Harlem Renaissance jazz fiend, he was to become the social conscience of America during the 1920s and beyond through his column, “It Seems to Me . . . .” His insight and commentary made him a champion of the labor movement, as did his fight for justice during and after the seven years of the Sacco and Vanzetti trials and execution.

**Edmund “Bunny” Wilson:** Writer, editor, and critic of American literature, he first came to work at *Vanity Fair* after Mrs. Parker pulled his short story out from under the slush-pile and found it interesting.

**Robert E. Sherwood** came to work on the editorial staff at *Vanity Fair* alongside Parker and Benchley. The six-foot-six Sherwood was often tormented by the dwarfs performing—whatever it was they did—at the Hippodrome on his way to and from work at the magazine’s 44<sup>th</sup> Street offices, but that didn’t stop him from becoming one of the twentieth-century Theatre’s greatest playwrights.

**Marc Connelly** began his career as a reporter but found his true calling as a playwright. Short and



bald, he co-authored his first hit play with the tall and pompadoured **George S. Kaufman**.

**Edna Ferber** racked up Pulitzer Prizes by writing bestselling potboilers set against America's sweeping vistas, most notably, *So Big*, *Showboat*, *Cimarron*, and *Giant*. She, too, collaborated with George S. on several successful Broadway shows. A spinster, she was a formidable personality and wit and a much-coveted member of the Algonquin Round Table.

**John Barrymore** was a member of the Royal Family of the American Stage, which included **John Drew** and **Ethel** and **Lionel Barrymore**. John Barrymore was famous not only for his stage portrayals, but for his majestic profile, which was captured in all its splendor on celluloid.

**The Marx Brothers:** First there were five, then there were four, then there were three Marx Brothers— *awww, heck*, if you don't know who these crazy, zany men are, it's time to hit the video store or tune into Turner Classic Movies!

Also mentioned: **Neysa McMein**, artist and illustrator, whose studio door was open all hours of the day and night for anyone who wished to pay a call; **Grace Moore**, Broadway and opera star,

and later a movie star; Broadway and radio star **Fanny Brice**—think Streisand in *Funny Girl*; **Noel Coward**, English star and playwright who took America by storm with his classy comedies and bright musical offerings; **Condé Nast**, publisher of numerous magazines including *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, and *House and Garden*; **Florenz Zeigfeld**—of “*Follies*” fame—big-time producer of the extravaganza stage revue; **The Lunts**, husband-and-wife stars of the London and Broadway stages, individually known as Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne; **Talulah Bankhead**—irreverent, though beautiful, southern-born actress with the foghorn drawl, who later made a successful transition from the stage to film—the life of any party, she often perked up the waning festivities performing cartwheels sans bloomers; **Irving Berlin**, **George Gershwin**, and **Jascha Heifetz**—famous for “God Bless America” and hundreds more hit songs; composer of *Rhapsody in Blue* and *Porgy and Bess* and many more great works; and the violin virtuoso, respectively.

**A Moveable Feast  
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Murder**



## Chapter One

It was only natural that I should be nervous—all right, I panicked; after all, my Uncle Martin went down with the *Titanic*.

A February blizzard was raging fury over the East Coast as the *S.S. Roosevelt* was being tugged out of the harbor at Hoboken toward open seas. I shook from trepidation as I stood out on the open deck of the ship this midnight, the flurry of thick flakes, a disappointing substitution for confetti, changing to hard, biting pellets of mean sleet.

Mr. Benchley, collar pulled up and fedora pulled low over his brow to ward off the stinging assault, had accompanied me at my nervous desire to view, perhaps for the very last time, the island of Manhattan. We couldn't see much more than the blurred lights of the skyline beyond the ship's railing.

“To your right, you will see the Battery,” bellowed Mr. Benchley like a tour guide, waving a hand through the howling gale and in the general direction of the southern tip of the city. He wrapped an arm around my shivering shoulders. “Ah! The Statue of Liberty; her flame lights our way out of the harbor, how thoughtful. Well, she’s out there, somewhere in that general direction . . .”

“I must have been mad, out of my mind!”

“Your usual self—”

“What could I have been thinking?”

The wind whipped us, and Mr. Benchley held onto his hat. “Oh, Lord! What a night to go out in a storm! It wouldn’t be so bad if the crew wasn’t yellow. You must write a short story about this. Wait! I have the first line: ‘It was a dark and scary night . . .’ No, that won’t do. ‘It was a stark and starry night.’ No! Let me think!”

“Don’t, you’ll strain yourself.”

“Listen, why don’t we do something useful to pass the time. Keeping busy will make you less anxious.”

“A drink will make me less anxious.”

“We’ll begin by throwing overboard all the children’s life jackets—won’t the little tykes be surprised?—and then we can set about cutting the ropes of the lifeboats.”

The blast of the ship's horn vibrated along the icy deck and thrilled through my body like the voice of Jehovah from out of the fog. I jumped, slid, and grabbed the rail.

"Mrs. Parker, I understand that you want to face death bravely and head on as it approaches, but let's let death sneak up on us while we're safe and warm inside," shouted my friend as he secured his footing and pulled me in toward the doors. "Too late to change your mind, my dear! We can't swim back now, much as you'd like; these are crocodile-infested waters, and you hate it when you get your hair mussed."

I started to laugh and a shiver quivered through me. I allowed Mr. Benchley to lead me in out of the storm, and the sudden absence of pummeling weather made my ears ring. I leaned against the door with relief, before the feeling of dread rose once more from within my lower regions. But, when the very weather-drenched Mr. Benchley looked at me and said, "Next time we go out for a midnight swim, bring a towel," I felt the fear abating.

As we walked along the interior deck toward the passenger cabins, I said, "Weren't there any cancellations? You don't have accommodations! Where will you sleep?"

"You'd think, sailing off in this tempest, people would remember the *Titanic* and call the

whole thing off. But for our heroic captain and crew, people are beginning to believe the fantasy that the ship might actually make it across the pond—this time around.”

I cringed, and then laughed. Gallows humor always perked me up.

“If I were a betting man, I’d wager our Captain Fried is due for a big loss. He can’t sustain this winning streak,” he said.

“We’ll go down knowing we sailed with the savior of the wrecked English freighter the *Antinoe*,” I stated, stoic and head held high for the fate that awaited this doomed voyage.

I needed a drink, and as we entered my cabin, to the joyful tail-wagging welcome of my canine companion, Woodrow Wilson, we threw off our wet overcoats onto the dozen bon-voyage fruit baskets sent by well-meaning friends. I pointed to a crate in the corner, behind my new steamer trunk, from which Mr. Benchley extracted one of the bottles of scotch we’d purchased from a bootlegger in Paramus on our way to the pier, and from which he poured two neat tumblers of the golden elixir.

After the flash-fire effect of genuine imported booze had warmed the cockles of my heart, I regained a modicum of sanity.



“I suppose I should feel safe. After all, we are aboard the ship whose captain was given a tickertape parade only a few days ago.”

“I’m sure his Key to the City can get us out of any chance encounter with icebergs or tidal waves along the way,” nodded Mr. Benchley, referring to the gift presented to the captain of our vessel by Mayor Jimmy Walker three days ago at a banquet at the Roosevelt Hotel to honor Fried and his crew. The rescuers were honored with a welcoming salute to “Hail to the Chief,” accolades, and hyperbolic speeches spun out by every handy politician, as well as a concert at Carnegie Hall, and an audience with the President. I guess the Pope couldn’t make it.

Knowing that an international hero was at the helm did not quiet my anxiety. Of course I knew what I was getting into. *I had boarded a ship!*—for a trans-atlantic journey to France during a season beleaguered with storms rocking the Atlantic Ocean, the worst in recent years. Mr. Benchley had come along for the ride to hold my hand, knowing my fear of the sea. At least, that’s what he told his wife, Gertrude, who finally agreed that he could accompany me, only on his promise to return home on the next ship.

My decision to leave New York for Paris had been made only the week before, and over the next

six days I scrambled around making the arrangements, tying up loose ends, and saying good-bye to my friends.

Ernest Hemingway had arrived in New York two weeks ago. He came to sign with a new publisher, Scribner's, who have agreed to publish his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. Our mutual friend, Scott Fitzgerald, now living in Paris, told Hem to drop in for lunch to meet me and my friends at the Algonquin. He did just that and we showed him the town—all the best watering holes. We hit it off. Hem talked about his life in Paris, and of the other writers and artists living and working there. It sounded like a creative paradise, a beautiful city where one could sit and write all day at a delightful, sunny outdoor café, sipping a *fine*. In the evening, one mingled with the best and brightest, artists like Picasso, Miró, Léger, Dali, and Man Ray, and the new writers, those employing a new style, James Joyce and Ezra Pound among them. When Hem mentioned that the exchange rate made it possible to live well on little money, and that liquor was legal, well, I thought a move could be the answer to my prayers.

For I had found it more and more difficult to do any serious writing. I have wanted to start work on a novel, but I seem to have fallen into a routine of doing everything else except starting on it. A clean slate, that's what I need; I love New

York, but I've been getting weary of my routine, of being in a rut. I could do with a new environment for a while, one that would stimulate my creative juices. I will return home with a completed manuscript and rise up from poetess to novelist. It might take some time, but I will learn to speak French (with a lot of sign language), and perhaps I will find out exactly what a *fine* is and why I should be sipping it. So I booked passage on the same ship that Ernest was returning on to Paris. Mr. Benchley had tried to get a cabin in First Class, but landed on the waiting list. And as we steamed out into the Narrows, I told him that he was now officially a stowaway.

"I'll talk to the purser. There must be some sort of accommodation, even if it's in Third Class."

"You'll bunk with the crew, matie!"

"I suppose I'm destined to a week of swapping seafaring tales: the time that big white whale pulled my leg, and when I wrestled that fifty-foot octopus, the minnow I landed—"

"What about the mermaid you romanced off the coast of—"

"I asked you never to mention her name again!"

There was a knock at the door. I bade enter, and in walked Hemingway.

“You’re just in time for a basket of fruit,” I said. “Please take one away with you, Hem; they’re cluttering up the cabin. And while you’re at it, take Mr. Benchley away, too, please.”

“I see he’s cluttering up the cabin, too,” said Hem, laughing at my friend, who had sprawled out on the bed. “I know there’s no place else on the ship to put him, sadly. I’d take him in, but I’ve been told he snores and kicks in his sleep.”

“Who told you such lies?” said Mr. Benchley, leaning up on his elbows.

“I’d rather not say.”

I poured Hem a scotch. We were all a little drunk. We’d been partying all day with friends and my sister and her husband who’d come to see me off. An additional stop on the way to the pier to get a case of champagne had led to a roadside speakeasy where we’d had a very liquid dinner.

“I want to hit the sack. Just stopped in to say goodnight. We’re all a little pie-eyed,” said Hem.

“What do you mean *a little*?” objected my friend.

“Mr. Benchley always does things in a *big* way.”

“That is so,” nodded Mr. Benchley, swiveling his legs down from off the bed. “Very well, I’m

off to see the purser," he said as he rose with a false dignity, throwing his coat over his arm and putting the soggy hat on his head. "Off to dream-land I shall go, if I can recall under which pillow I stashed my pajamas." He turned to look at me with scrutiny as he made for the door. "Will you be all right now, my dear?" The indignant drunk act was replaced by sudden sobriety. "If you like, I can ask the steward for a deckchair outside your door—"

I touched his arm and kissed his cheek. Endearing is my best friend and champion. His warm and genuine concern made me suddenly courageous. "I'm just fine, now," I said. "Woodrow Wilson will alert me if the ship takes on water. Good night, boys," I said, sending them out the door.



I awoke with a start at ten o'clock; Woodrow, the scoundrel, laid sloppy kisses on my face. He flew off the bed when I shot bolt upright, and stood scratching at the cabin door. There was activity outside in the corridor and he wanted to investigate. The ship was rocking, but I'd heard no impact against the hull. I had fallen off to sleep from exhaustion a little before dawn, every creak and deep list of the ship wracking my nerves. I

saw icebergs everywhere, phantom ships on the brink of collision.

A few minutes later, bundled up in my coat and scarf, we walked onto the deck, and as far as the eye could see there were the treacherous waters, great waves rolling toward us from a gray and undefined horizon. The storm had retreated, but visibility was low, and staring out into the filmy void I tried to shake off my fear, to embrace the mysteries of the great expanse, to conjure up visions of pirate adventures and Melville tales in an effort to calm my nerves. I must look toward the future; I was heading for a new life in Paris, and it excited me. There was hope for me, a fresh start, and I was suddenly high with expectations. Or, was it the salty air that made me feel heady? My face was damp from mist, which was not unpleasant. I returned indoors, energized, to find the dining room, for I was suddenly ravenously hungry for breakfast, a meal I rarely ate. Yes, I thought, *I am changing my ways.*



“Saltpeter?” said Hemingway, offering a small vial containing the stuff to Mr. Benchley.

“Are you making gunpowder for the troops?” I asked, sprinkling what was undoubtedly Morton’s on my scrambled eggs.

“Got to keep the ‘troops’ from raising the flag, ’f you know what I mean,” said Hem, with all seriousness, his voice rumbling in his throat as he mixed the stuff into his oatmeal. “A sprinkle, Bob?”

“I can feel my sperm dying just looking at the stuff,” replied Mr. Benchley, stirring a draft of gin from his hip flask into his orange juice. He popped two aspirins into his mouth and washed them down.

I stifled a giggle at Hem’s assertion that he needed to keep his “troops” under siege—under wraps—out of the direct line of fire, or whatever *double entendre* suited the visual that flashed across my mind.

“I thought a ration of rum keeps the ‘seamen’ from raising a mutiny,” I said. “What ever happened to self-control?”

Mr. Benchley said, “We are a generation that doesn’t have self-control, didn’t you know? It’s gone out of style with high-button shoes and corsets. The term was banned from use to make room for the phrase, “No accommodations for you, sir!”

“Oh, my dear Fred, is that so?” I said, talking through the toast I’d ripped into. “Where did you sleep last night?”

“I laid my head on a sack of oats in a cubby in the stores.”

“No!”

“*Ya-voll!*”

“A character-building experience, I should say,” said Hem.

“That’s what I told the harbor rat who stowed aboard and tried to wrestle me for a burlap blanket. I stood my ground, though, and now we are great friends. And I am on good terms with the rest of his clan.”

“Cards after lunch?” I said, feeding a sausage link to Woodrow, who sat daintily on the chair next to mine.

“Need a fourth for bridge,” said Mr. Benchley.

“We can play three-handed.”

I returned to my cabin to unpack what I was too tired to get to last night, only to discover that my case of scotch had been stolen!

*What fresh hell?*

Nothing else had been touched. The remaining half-dozen bottles of champagne were right where I’d left them, next to a big gaping space where the case of scotch had been. How was I to get through the voyage on just a few bottles of champagne? I stormed down the deck to the



purser's office, where I got little sympathy, a lot of head nodding, and a lecture after lodging my complaint. Why I bothered, I don't know. "The *S.S. Roosevelt* is an American ship of the United States Line, and abides by the U.S. prohibition laws, etcetera, etcetera."

Far from chastened, and dramatically chuffed, I marched back to my room, where Woodrow lay huddled atop the mess of clothing spilled out of my open steamer trunk. A glare from me did nothing to shift his position from off my lamé evening dress. He just snuggled down deeper, let out a sigh, and closed his eyes for a late-morning nap. My gay mood of just an hour ago had turned morbid.

Although I was still rabid and determined to ferret out the rat who stole my hooch, by lunch-time, with the news that there was an adequate store of gin and whiskey, the genuine articles of Napoleon cognac and Bordeaux, available through enterprising passengers for the purpose of providing such, my spirits were raised. Our destination was France, after all, and what was brought on board upon departure from New York was of no interest to American agents. Of course, it did race through my mind that it was probably one of these convenient on-board "bootleggers" who had stolen my supply in the first place and would sell it back to me at a premium, but what could I really

do about it? There was still plenty of reason for a good time.

We played bridge with a man we picked up in the card salon. Although he was young, he possessed a rather forlorn, hangdog expression about him. I thought he was just lonely at first, but then, in spite of our joviality as we played our hands, I noted a protective reticence, as if he had buttoned close around him an old familiar sweater. Mr. Benchley had a way about him, with little said and no obvious effort, of drawing out even the most taciturn of characters until they were telling him their life stories and perhaps a few secrets. Mr. Benchley's interest would leave the storyteller, who may have previously thought his life ordinary and dull, with the newfound belief that he was really a most fascinating individual. And so, during a break, the young man told us that he had been wounded, nearly fatally, in Italy during the War. Hemingway was a Red Cross ambulance driver wounded in Italy. And to instantly bond the two old soldiers, they discovered that they had both been wounded at Fossalta di Piave and sent for treatment at the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan. As Hem always said, there were those who had fought in the War and were wounded and those who had not. You only trusted those who had.

And so, Mathew Hettinger, age twenty-eight, a native of Philadelphia, became a fast friend. That

he was the son of wealthy parents, the third generation of a fortune made during the Civil War, did not cancel out Hem's respect. For Ernest Hemingway had been growing suspicious of the rich, even though so many of his fabulously wealthy friends had championed his work and helped to support him and his wife, Hadley, during the lean years in Paris. Mathew, traveling through Italy when war broke out, defied his father's order to return home to the States and enlisted in the Italian army, rather than go home and off to university. He told Hem about the beautiful Italian girl he'd been in love with, whom he'd married while on leave, and how he had been in hospital recovering from wounds, never knowing for many months that she had succumbed during childbirth along with his daughter. To Hem, these recollections made him even more romantic and attractive. And the revelation that Mathew Hettinger was a journalist, sent to Paris as a foreign correspondent for the *Detroit Register*, as well as an aspiring novelist sealed the deal.

A steward arrived in the card room with an invitation from the captain of the ship for our party to join him at his table for dinner this evening. I invited the men to come to my cabin for drinks, where we popped open a bottle of champagne to wash down a plate of hors d'oeuvres ordered from room service. Hemingway was excited at the chance to speak with our captain, being especially

impressed by the heroic rescue of the *Antinoe* several weeks before. Two bottles emptied, the men went off to their cabins, except for Mr. Benchley, who didn't have a cabin as yet and went down to the purser's office to see if there was any news about where he would sleep tonight. He needed a permanent place to keep his steamer trunk during the trip, and certainly a room where he could dress in his evening clothes for dinner.

There was plenty of time for me to dress, so I took Woodrow Wilson for little stroll around the deck to do his business and to enjoy the salty smells of the ocean. The seas were calmer, and through a break in the overcast sky I could see the red strains of sunset streaking across the western sky. The vast expanse was awe inspiring; one certainly doesn't see the horizon while walking the streets of Manhattan. Our ship was a lonesome tub floating on an infinite pool. There was nothing to see any which way I looked, and as evening fell, the dark-blue waters grew black and foreboding, and the harder I looked into the great inky depths, the more mesmerized I was by the unfathomable mystery that surrounded me. It frightened me.

While my attention was arrested by the undulating waves, Woodrow was pulling at his leash. I came out of my morbid reverie and turned my attention to my canine companion, who was being entertained by a gentleman out on deck.

“Well, isn’t he a cute little fellah!” said the tall, wiry gentleman with a New York accent, as he leaned over his cane.

He wore his leather visor cap and dark-brown corduroy suit with a scholarly air. It was a good suit, the cut very English, although it appeared to hang on him at the shoulders, as if he’d lost a lot of weight since its purchase. Why I should take notice of his clothes, I can’t say. But there was something compelling about his countenance. Perhaps the very large, clear, and open moss-colored eyes out of which he viewed the world with an empathetic compassion? How could I know this? How could I size up a stranger so easily? I recognized something in him that had not so much to do with his outer, physical shell, but rather with that which emanated from within. I thought him immediately sympathetic, and for a woman who has grown more and more cynical over the years, and has shielded herself from the “slings and arrows” of supposed friendships with her own brand of piercing humor, I was strangely curious to know this man. I felt there was much to know.

The wind threatened his cap, and when he brought up a hand to secure it, I saw the long scar that streaked across his forehead.

“Terrier, is he?”

“Of the Boston variety,” I replied.

“But of course he is,” said the gentleman.

The wind was kicking up, and he grabbed his hat again to keep from losing it. He gave up the struggle and ran long aristocratic fingers through his hair, and I saw that the scar had scalped an inch-long line into his thick black hair. He tried to cover up the mean scar; it did no good; we both resembled victims of electric shock. Woodrow braced himself against the stiff gale. We made for the door leading into the ship, followed by Woodrow’s newfound friend. Before I could ask his name or invite him in for a drink, he bade us good evening and walked in the direction of the first-class cabins.

Mr. Benchley appeared at my door, a bottle of scotch in one hand and two glasses in the other.

“Lookee what I found.”

“Why, that looks like one of the bottles from my stash.”

“Prob’ly, my dear Mrs. Parker!”

“So you are the scoundrel who absconded with my booze!”

“On the contrary, I just purchased this from a fellow down the hall. He probably did the dastardly deed, for all we know.”

Mr. Benchley followed me into my cabin, and before I knew it he was stretched out on my bed unwrapping the chocolate from the box sent by a friend as a bon-voyage gift. "Delicious," he said, balling up the gold wrapper for a high toss into the wastebasket.

"Oh, get a room," I said, going to my steamer trunk to sort out the tangled mess of gowns. I chose a blue silk with Delmonte clips, and then went to sort through my jewelry drawer.

"Would if I could," said Mr. Benchley, taking off his shoes.

"Making yourself at home, are you?" I said. "Can't you bunk with Hemingway?"

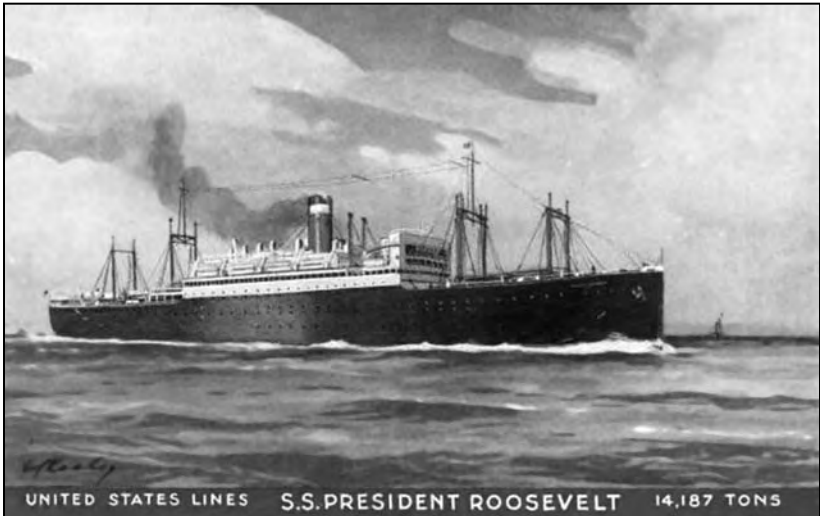
"Out of the question," he said with a yawn. "He has the smelliest feet. But the purser promises he might find me a place with some Russian dancers from the Ballets Russes. Six high-steppers sharing a room in third class. I suppose that's better than accommodations with the rodent family. Does someone have to die for me to get a room?"

"What about the infirmary?" I asked.

"Those beds are reserved for sick people. I suppose I could pretend to be ill—claim seasickness, or something."

“I could have you committed, if you like. Mr. Benchley,” I said, “you have the pathetic look of that proverbial lamb lost in the woods. I suspect a willing lady would take you in once she sees a few manufactured tears in your eyes.”

I shuttled him out of the room, shoes in one hand, the scotch and drinking glass in the other. I told him I would meet him in the dining room at eight o’clock. He looked forlorn as I slammed the door in his face.



*The S.S. Roosevelt*





*A view from the bridge*



*“Writers are either twenty-nine or Thomas Hardy.”*

This is the end of the book sample.

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Available at the author's website,  
DorothyParkerMysteries.com, iTunes, Amazon,  
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## **Praise for *Dorothy Parker Mysteries***

Those of us who since childhood had wished there was a time machine that could let us experience and enjoy life in other periods, should read Agata Stanford's "Dorothy Parker Mysteries" series. They wonderfully recreate the atmosphere and spirit of the literary and artistic crowd at the Algonquin Round Table in the 1920s, and bring back to life the wit, habits, foibles, and escapades of Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, and Alexander Woollcott, as well as of the multitude of their friends and even their pets, both human and animal.

**—*Anatole Konstantin***

Author of *A Red Boyhood: Growing Up Under Stalin*

Agata Stanford's "Dorothy Parker Mysteries" is destined to become a classic series. It's an addictive cocktail for the avid mystery reader. It has it all: murder, mystery, and Marx Brothers' mayhem. You'll see, once you've taken Manhattan with the Parker/Benchley crowd. Dorothy Parker wins! Move over, Nick and Nora.

**—*Elizabeth Fuller***

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Dorothy Parker and the Regulars of the Algonquin Hotel Round Table are alive and well in Agata Stanford's *The Broadway Murders*. Descriptions are fantastic in this whodunnit as Stanford writes very colorfully. This is an adult's picture book, too, which in the end turned out to be pretty terrific.

—**Terri Ann Armstrong**

Author of "Medieval Menace" for *Suspense Magazine*

If you like murder mysteries, the fast-paced action, witty conversation, and glib repartee of the flapper era, you will love Agata Stanford's recreation of the atmosphere of the crowd at the Algonquin Round Table in the 1920s.

—**Mr. Tomato**

for *TheThreeTomatoes.com*

Dorothy is presented with wit and sarcasm sprinkled with tremendous insight. The life she lived is believably recreated, including the escapades of the Marx Brothers, the late nights of theater and dinners, even the famous speakeasy they drank at; all serve as backdrop to the investigation. The writing style affects the breezy language and popular slang to further transport you to that era when jazz artists and flappers coined modern terms. It is a heady mix and an escapist pleasure.

—**A.F. Heart**

for *Mysteries and Musings*

## *About the Author*



Agata Stanford is an actress, director, and playwright who grew up in New York City. While attending the School of Performing Arts, she'd often walk past the Algonquin Hotel, which sparked her early interest in the legendary Algonquin Round Table.



## Dorothy Parker Mysteries



“It was only natural that I should be nervous—all right, I panicked; after all, my Uncle Martin went down with the *Titanic*. A February blizzard was raging fury over the East Coast as the S.S. Roosevelt was being tugged out of the harbor at Hoboken toward open seas. I shook from trepidation as I stood out on the open deck of the ship this midnight, the flurry of thick flakes, a disappointing substitution for confetti, changing to hard, biting pellets of mean sleet.”

Thus begins Dorothy Parker's real-life 1926 trans-Atlantic crossing to France with Robert Benchley and Ernest Hemingway. Soon, there is more to worry about than whether the ship will hit any icebergs. The question is: Who is trying to kill Mr. Benchley? And once arrived in Paris, why is the City of Lights, famous for its Jazz Age clubs and cafés, so full of Soviet spies and kidnappers?

Join Parker, Benchley, and their friends, Ernest Hemingway, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, and the sensational American expatriates, Sara and Gerald Murphy, for dinner at Michaud's, drinks at Bricktop's, the floorshow at the Moulin Rouge, and an adventure of murder and international intrigue in the Paris of 1926.

*A Jenevacris Press Publication*

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