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L. A. Murder

'Purple Cult' Linked to Slain Dancer



Victim in Mystery

This picture bearing the name of Nina Susoff, yesterday was identified as that of Anya Sosoyeva, former San Francisco dancer, by her roommate, Beulah Ann Stanley.

Suspecting a bizarre answer to the mysterious murder of husky blonde Anya Sosoyeva on the Los Angeles City College campus Friday night, Los Angeles police last night delved into the history of a strange secret order known as the Purple Cult.

The San Francisco dancer and film aspirant, it was reported, frequently had been seen in the company of a large, heavily built man believed a leader in the cult.

The Purple Cult, police were told by Regina Kahl, drama teacher at the college, is only the students' name for a religious organization called Thelema, which meets every Sunday night in Hollywood.

GRUDGE ANGLE

But one member of the drama class in which Miss Sosoyeva was a student said that the cult members gather around an altar, coffin shaped, covered with lighted candles.

Against this weird background police saw jealousy or revenge as a likely motive for the murder.

They emphasized that her assailant had fractured her skull with a heavy board, but apparently had made no attempt to criminally assault his victim.

"The evidence indicates," said Police Captain D. R. Patton, according to Associated Press dispatches, "that it was a revenge or grudge slaying or the work of a sex fiend who laid in wait. I lean to the grudge theory."

LOVE AFFAIR BARED

Captain Patton said Beulah Ann Stanley, dramatics instructor and roommate of Miss Sosoyeva, who had been reported missing by her mother Saturday night, explained she had been so shocked by her friend's death she sought quiet and rest.

He said Miss Stanley said she knew Miss Sosoyeva had lived in Los Angeles with a man as his wife for a time.

"Anya told me about the affair," Miss Stanley was quoted. "But said she had split with him entirely. Then recently she had sought a reconciliation, but this failed. She was very despondent."

Still holding Bernard Sutton, 33, janitor, on probation on a morals charge, police sought this man and others for questioning. The list included a man whose name was furnished by Fred Suffoff, brother of the slain girl, who went to Los Angeles to return the body to San Francisco for burial.

In the hope of finding a key to the tangled puzzle, police began checking a list of the girl's friends—both men and women.

Among them was a San Francisco man whom the dancer frequently telephoned since going to Los Angeles. Officers, according to United Press dispatches, said they knew him only as "Red."

Another male friend, who supposedly lived at the same hotel where the girl lived several months ago, also was to be questioned. Still another sought was an accountant to whom the dancer was believed to have loaned money on numerous occasions.

A list of the dancer's acquaintances, including a card index of students in a dramatic class at the college, was supplied police by roommate, Miss Stanley.

Miss Stanley also turned over to police a sheaf of letters from the slain dancer's room.

In the meantime police sought three Negroes as possible suspects.

There were splotches of green paint on the piece of two-by-four with which the former 32-year-old Ziegfeld Follies girl had been struck on the head by a strange man while walking to the campus auditorium from her apartment across the street.

Yesterday a 12-year-old schoolboy, Floyd Nicholson, told detectives that three hours before the fatal assault he saw three Negroes stop their automobile at a sign shop about a mile from the campus. They got out, he said, and picked up a few pieces of lumber from a garage under construction next door.

He jotted down their license number when they left. It proved to be that of 1938 licenses either stolen from or discarded by a truck. Contractor Walter Scruggs, building the garage, reported that several cans of green paint and other articles had disappeared from the premises recently. Chemists are comparing the green paint in use with that found on the death bludgeon.

CRIMINAL ATTACK DENIED

Early police reports that Miss Sosoyeva had been ravished were refuted yesterday by County Autopsy Surgeon Frank R. Webb, who said examinations showed she had not been. Investigators now are of the belief her assailant was frightened away.

Beatrice Mollach, who lives a few blocks from the college, said a Negro followed her to her door on three successive nights last week. Two other girls reported that a Negro, acting strangely, had screamed at them from a corner of the campus.

Police continued to round up suspected degenerates, but could find no evidence against any of them. The rumor that a rejected suitor might have committed the murder began to fade when one of the slain girl's fellow drama students at the college told of a brief conversation with her before she died.

LAST WORDS CITED

This student, Kenneth Kremith, 21, said that when Miss Sosoyeva came stumbling toward the auditorium and was carried into the office he asked her what had happened and she told him:

"I was walking on the campus when a man came up behind me and asked where the administration building was. As I turned around, he struck me on the head."

When asked if she knew her assailant, Kremith said she replied:

"Oh no, no. I don't know him."

Miss Sosoyeva, whose true name is Susoff and whose family lives in San Francisco, was on her way to take part in a student revue at which motion picture talent scouts were to be presently.

Miss Stanley could not be found the night of the murder, but yesterday satisfactorily explained her whereabouts.

Authorities said yesterday that an osteopath, Dr. Richard S. Murray, had told them that about two weeks ago Miss Sosoyeva had come to him for a physical examination, complaining that she was indifferent to the attentions of men. Mrs. A. L. Miller of Dr. Murray's clinic disclosed to police she had seen the Russian-born dancer several times in the company of "a large man, who I have been told is a member of a strange cult, on the Los Angeles City College campus."

Police said they were investigating various reports that the secret order, called the "Purple Cult," held weird rites at the home of a faculty member.