● SERIAL STORY

5 WOULD KILL

BY TOM HORNER

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ARNOLD BENTHORNE — Five persons wished him dead.

HELEN BENTHORNE — His charming young wife.

WILLIAM ALSTON — Benthorne's father-in-law and business associate.

JOEY DI TORIO—Night club owner and gangster.

ARA JOHNSON—The mystery girl.

CAPTAIN DAWSON—A detective who likes to listen.

* * *

Yesterday: Captain Dawson begins the investigation after Benthorne's murder. He hears that the door to Benthorne's room was blocked by a heavy chair, that there was some delay in getting into the house. Searching the wastebasket, he finds Benthorne's last note.

CHAPTER IV

Flynn read on, in speechless amazement. When he had finished, he handed the paper back to Captain Dawson.

"He named five of them, Captain. Only Mrs. Benthorne and Mr. Alston were here. Now all you have to do is find out which one—"

"Are you sure the other three were not here, Flynn?" Dawson shot at him. "Joey di Torio, 'Big Red,' and a woman named Ara? The way you and Krone were letting people by, there could have been a murderers' convention here last night. How do you know—"

"That's it, Captain. That's it! The girl in the taxicab—her name was Ara—Ara Johnson!"

"I was wondering when you'd get around to remembering that," Dawson smiled. "You know, Flynn, if your memory doesn't improve, you'll be off the homicide squad and back on a beat."

"Aw, now, Captain—why you and me—"

"Yes, I know. If it weren't for your all-fired Irish luck I'd never put up with you. Now see if your luck will hold and bring in those two who wanted to get married. The taxi driver should be easy to find. Route him out, threaten him with accessory to murder charges. He'll talk," Dawson concluded.

Flynn understood. "Okay, Captain. I'll have them here by dawn. I'll get Joey first."

"I'll give you until 10 o'clock. But before you do, bring Mrs. Benthorne here. I want to talk to her. I want to talk to all of the five persons Benthorne feared."

Flynn went out, grinning. Dawson liked the big Irish officer, insisted on having him in his detail. Flynn was a buffer—he knew the chief did not mean half he said when he exploded in anger. And Dawson had reason to believe in Flynn's uncanny luck. On several puzzling cases the Irishman had bungled and in doing so had revealed the clews that solved the murders. "Flynn falls into solutions," Dawson told his superiors. "I couldn't work without him."

* * *

Dawson had seen Helen Benthorne's picture in the society columns many times, and he had glimpsed her as he came into the house after Benthorne was shot, but he had not realized she was as young or as beautiful as she appeared at the door of the study.

"Captain Dawson is here, Mrs. Benthorne," he heard Flynn say as the door swung wide.

Helen Benthorne was straight and tall, like her father. She had asked, and received, permission to change from the pajamas and negligee she had on when Benthorne's body was found. Now she was dressed in a long, black hostess gown, that sheathed her rounded figure and slim hips, fell in swishing folds around her ankles. Her blond hair was curled softly on her forehead. Her eyes were red from weeping. She looks like a girl, a very little, and a very frightened little girl, Dawson thought.

As she caught sight of him, seated behind the desk, Helen Benthorne uttered a strangled little cry; her hand went to her throat.

Dawson was on his feet, leaning into the light. "I'm sorry to bother you, Mrs. Benthorne," he began.

She regained self-control quickly. "You gave me a start, Captain Dawson," she explained as she seated herself beside the desk. "Being you behind the desk, in the shadows, I almost believed—Oh, this is all so terrible!"

She forced back her tears by sheer will power. Only the quivering of her chin and the nervous twisting of her handkerchief betrayed her emotional struggle. Dawson waited patiently. At last he began:

"I know how difficult this is for you, Mrs. Benthorne. I wish that we might leave you entirely alone until the inquest. Under the circumstances, however, I am sure you see that is impossible. Will you please tell me, just where you were, and what you were doing when you heard the shot?"

"I was in my room, Captain Dawson. I was awaiting the arrival of my father. At the instant of the shot I was reading—I can't even remember the title of the book now—I slipped into a robe, hurried down the front stairway and to the study—"

"You didn't see anyone in the lower hallway, before you started down the stairs?" Dawson queried.

Mrs. Benthorne paused. "No—I saw no one. I tried to open the door, found it locked. Then Jameson came from the back hallway and let the officers in the front door. I told the officers the door couldn't be locked—"

"How were you sure of that?"

"There was no lock on the door, only the knob. The lock had been sticking and only a few days ago Arnold — Mr. Benthorne — mentioned it. I had Jameson take the lock to a locksmith yesterday."

"Do you think Mr. Benthorne put the chair in front of the door?"

"No, I don't, Captain Dawson." Her voice was firm. "I'm sure that he did not. I heard someone moving about in this study, after the shot was fired. I tried to tell the officers that, when they tried to smash in the door, but they wouldn't listen."

"They thought you were hysterical," Dawson said.

"I know—maybe I was. But I am sure I heard someone in the room after Arnold was—was—" She could not keep the tears back, and Dawson let her weep, without comment. After a few minutes she wiped her eyes, met his steady gaze once more.

* * *

"Tell me, Mrs. Benthorne," Dawson said suddenly, "did you love your husband?"

"Captain Dawson!"

"I have reason to believe"—Dawson ignored the interruption—"that there was more cause for your marriage to Arnold Benthorne than love. How long have you been married?"

"Two years." She was staring at the red stain on the carpet, near her feet.

"And in that time, you learned much more about Arnold Benthorne than anyone—other than Benthorne and a few more, including myself—knew. You married Benthorne to save your father's business. You admired him then, you were sure you could learn to love him. You were willing to try—"

"You're wrong, Captain Dawson. I did love Arnold. I married him because I wanted to. He was everything a girl of 20 could wish for—handsome, wealthy, polished. Any girl would have jumped at the opportunity to marry him—"

"But you had quarreled with him—last night?"

"Yes," she answered slowly. "That's why I had called my father. It was nothing serious—just an argument over—over money matters."

Dawson's smile revealed nothing. He leaned toward Helen Benthorne, demanding:

"And it is true, isn't it, that you are an excellent pistol shot?"

Helen Benthorne was out of her chair, her eyes blazing.

"Are you insinuating—?" she demanded angrily.

"I am insinuating nothing, Mrs. Benthorne. Your husband has been murdered and it is my job to find out who killed him." Dawson's voice was steady, his tone reassuring. Helen Benthorne sank back into the chair.

"Yes, Captain Dawson," she said evenly, "I was captain of the girls' pistol team at college."

(To be continued)

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"My coffee is boiling over—the children are screaming—the cog is barking—the phone is ringing—and you ask if you've disturbed me!"

Banquet Honors Oregon Journalism Professor

EUGENE, Dec. 4.—(AP)—George S. Turnbull, the kindly little professor of the University of Oregon journalism school, went to classes today with the plaudits of hundreds of students who have learned to respect him in the past 23 years.

Telegrams and letters are piled high on his desk. Most of them express regret at being unable to attend a Saturday night banquet which was attended by about 100 of the state's newspapermen.

The banquet was given Turnbull on the date of publication of his new book, "The History of Oregon Newspapers." Harris Ellsworth, Roseburg publisher; Eric W. Allen, dean of the school; Dr. Donald M. Erb, president of the university, and Roy Vernstrom, Portland, president of Sigma Delta Chi, joined in praising the professor's long services and his book.

Indiana Corn Raiser Wins National Title 4th Time

CHICAGO, Dec. 5—(AP)—C. E. Troyer, 53-year-old La Containe, Ind., farmer, was named "corn king" of North America yesterday at the 21st international grain and hay show.

Troyer, who has won the corn title three times before, exhibited a yellow corn variety known as the seed parent of hybrid U. S. 13.

W. C. Blumenshine of Bloomington, Ill., won the reserve grand championship.

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Recall Move Hits Two in Josephine

GRANTS PASS, Dec. 5.—(AP)—Preliminary recall petitions were filed in the county clerk's office here Monday naming County Judge W. A. Johnson and Commissioner Richard E. McElligot.

The petition charged mismanagement in that Dr. Blaine B. Pruitt, osteopathic physician, was barred from the county-owned hospital, that secretarial help from the hospital was employed outside the county, that $1600 was budgeted for expenses of the court without "just cause," that salaries were paid to commissioners in "excess of the legal amount" and that "unwarranted money advances" were made to the hospital. The petition seeking the judge's recall further alleged that he used a county-owned car for private purposes.

The petitioners, all Grants Pass men, were named as Henry J. Soderberg, E. W. Britton, William L. Schroeder, J. C. Eades, I. A. Cole and T. H. Dawson.

Dawson and Schroeder have been unsuccessful candidates for county commissioner.

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